



WINDOWS



Joe DiMeo brushes back his hair while posing for a portrait on Monday at NYU Langone Health in New York, six months after an extremely rare double hand and face transplant. During a recent medical checkup, he practised raising his eyebrows, opening and closing his eyes, puckering his mouth, giving a thumbs up and whistling. DiMeo can feel his new forehead, and often reaches up to push his long hair off of his face

Andy Jassy to replace Jeff Bezos as Amazon CEO



NEW DELHI: Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos will leave his post later this year, turning the helm over to the company's top cloud executive Andy Jassy. Jassy joined Amazon in 1997 and has led Amazon's Web Services cloud team since its inception. Bezos said he will stay engaged in important Amazon projects but will also have more time to focus on the Bezos Earth Fund, his Blue Origin spaceship company, The Washington Post and the Amazon Day 1 Fund. Bezos will transition to executive chairman of Amazon's board. Bezos, 57, founded Amazon in 1994 and has since morphed the one-time online bookstore into a mega-retailer with global reach in a slew of different categories from gadgets to groceries to streaming. Amazon surpassed a \$1 trillion market cap under Bezos' leadership in January of last year — it's now worth more than \$1.6 trillion.

BUSINESS



Sensex makes history as Budget puts mkts on fire

SPORTS



Getting big first innings total and countering spinners crucial: Trott

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Anti-CAA protest

Jamia's plea seeking FIR against police dismissed

NEW DELHI

A court here on Wednesday dismissed an application filed by Jamia Millia Islamia University seeking an FIR against Delhi police officials for allegedly breaking into the campus without its permission and assaulting students and security guards during anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests in December 2019.

Metropolitan Magistrate Rajat Goyal held that the acts allegedly committed by the police officials fell within the purview of the acts committed in discharge of official duties, and a requisite sanction was a must

from the authorities concerned to prosecute them. "Thus, as per law down by the Supreme Court, existence of requisite sanction is a must even before jurisdiction could be exercised. That being so, present application cannot be allowed for want of sanction," the court said.

The application had sought registration of an FIR claiming that on December 15, 2019 police officials committed various atrocities, including "vandalizing public/university property and unnecessary use of force against hapless students who were only exercising their democratic right to protest peacefully."

Take action OR face action

CENTRE'S NOTICE TO TWITTER ON 'FARMER GENOCIDE' HASHTAG

NEW DELHI: The Centre has issued a notice to social media giant Twitter to comply with its order to remove content and accounts spreading fake news and inflammatory speech on farmers' protests in India. The government's response came after Twitter "unilaterally" unblocked over 250 such accounts despite blocking them after the government's advice on January 1.

The IT ministry said Twitter is an intermediary and is obliged to obey "the direction of the government and refusal to do so will invite penal action under Section 69A of the Act".

Notably, the Section 69 of the IT Act allows the central government to block access to information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource if it believes the content impacts the security, defence, sovereignty and integrity of India.

The notice says that the "impracticability or disproportionality of the said measure cannot be decided at the instance of Twitter, which is an intermediary bound by the orders of the central government."

Amid attempts to change status quo at border

'INDIA READY TO DEFEND ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY'

Will defeat any misadventures, asserts Defence Minister at Aero India

BENGALURU

INDIA is vigilant in the face of attempts to change status quo at its border and prepared to defeat any misadventures to defend territorial integrity, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday, amid continued military standoff with China.

"We have long witnessed unfortunate attempts to employ force to change the status quo at our unresolved borders", Singh said at the inaugural ceremony of Aero India-2021, the country's premier Defence and aerospace show, at Yelahanka Air Force Station here.

"India is vigilant and prepared to counter and defeat any misadventures to defend our people and territorial integrity at all costs", the Minister said. China and India are locked in a military standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last.

The two countries have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the face-off, but no significant headway has been made so far. Singh also said that India plans to spend USD 130 billion on Defence modernisation in the next seven to eight years



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh along with Karnataka CM BS Yediyurappa during the inaugural ceremony of Aero India 2021 show, in Bengaluru on Wednesday

with focus on domestic manufacturing of bigger and complex platforms.

The government has since 2014 brought in many reforms in defence sector to

create a conducive ecosystem for exports, Foreign Direct Investment and offset discharge, he noted.

To achieve the twin goals of self-reliance and exports,

India Inks biggest Make-In-India defence deal for Tejas

BENGALURU: The Union government on Wednesday formally sealed a Rs 48,000-crore deal -- the "biggest Make In India defence contract" -- with state-run aerospace giant Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at the Aero India show in

Bengaluru. The contract for 83 indigenous fighter jets LCA Tejas was signed in presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who inaugurated the 13th edition of

the government has set a target to achieve a turnover of Rs 1,75,000 crore in the field of Defence manufacturing, including export of Rs 35,000 crore in Aerospace and Defence goods and services, by 2024, Singh said.

"We plan to spend USD 130 billion on Defence modernisation in the next seven to eight years", he added.

Like many of our friendly countries India also faces threats and challenges emanating from multiple fronts, the union minister said adding the country was a "victim of state-sponsored and state inflicted terrorism which is now a global threat".



Asia's premier aeronautics and defence exhibition earlier this morning. "It is probably the biggest 'Make in India' defence contract till date," Singh said at the three-day show, first of its kind to be held in the Covid era. It will focus on showcasing and augmenting India's indigenous defence sector capabilities from the lens of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India campaigns.

Rihanna, Greta back farmers' protest

- Kamala's niece, Mia Khalifa among others to echo support
- Kangana calls Rihanna a 'fool', Thunberg a 'fancy activist'

NEW DELHI

TEEN climate activist Greta Thunberg and US Vice President Kamala Harris' niece are among several people from the international community who have come out in support of the farmers protest against the Centre's new agriculture laws. Their remarks came soon after international pop star Rihanna shared a news article highlighting the Centre's crackdown on the farmers by cutting off



internet services in many regions. "We stand in solidarity with the #FarmersProtest in India," Thunberg

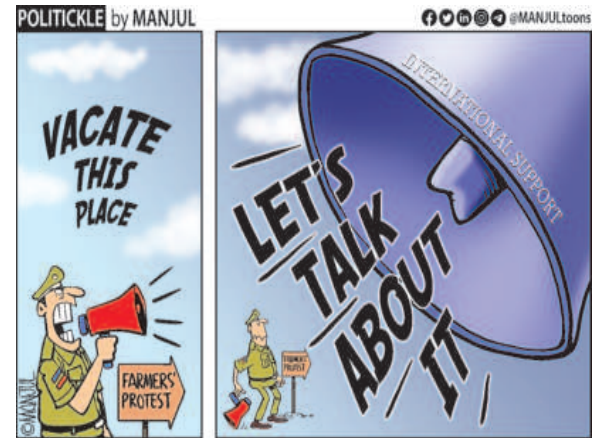
tweeted on Tuesday. Meena Harris, an American lawyer who is the niece of Kamala Harris, had said: **Continued on Page 5**

Irresponsible: MEA

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of External Affairs reacted sharply to the comments by foreign celebrities and others, including pop singer Rihanna and Greta Thunberg on farmers' protests, saying a very small section of farmers in parts of the country have some reservations about the farm reforms and a proper understanding of the issue is needed before rushing to comment on the agitation. "The temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and others, is neither accurate nor responsible," MEA said in a statement.

Matter of pride: Farmers

NEW DELHI: The umbrella body of the protesting farmers' unions has acknowledged the international support towards its protest with pride. The farmers' leaders are happy over the international acknowledgement. Samyukta Kisan Morcha's Darshan Pal said it was a matter of pride that international personalities have shown sensitivity towards the cause of farmers.



CONTAINING CORONA

Saudi bans entry of passengers from India

NEW DELHI: Saudi Arabia has banned arrivals from 20 countries, including India and the United States, in an effort to contain the spread of the deadly coronavirus pandemic. While the Middle Eastern country had suspended air travel from India in September last year itself, the list of banned countries has now grown significantly longer.

The "temporary suspension", which begins on Wednesday, does not apply to diplomats, Saudi citizens, medical practitioners and their families, AFP reported. But it does include Saudi

Arabia's neighbouring nations — Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

The ban also includes Lebanon, Turkey, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. Apart from the US and India, travellers from Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, Pakistan, and South Africa have also been barred from entering the country.

The temporary ban will also apply to travellers who passed through the 20 banned countries during the 14 days preceding the implementation of the ban, Saudi Arabia's interior ministry said.

Venkaiah reprimands MPs for using mobile phones in RS

NEW DELHI

RAJYA Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday reprimanded MPs for using mobile phones to record proceedings of the House, stating that such "unwarranted" activities inside the chamber are against "parliamentary etiquette".

"There is a restriction on the usage of cellular phones within Rajya Sabha chambers. It has been observed that some members are using their



mobile phones to record proceedings of the House while sitting in the cham-



ber such conduct is against parliamentary etiquette," said Naidu. He

said that the members should desist from such "unwarranted" activities

inside the chamber as its circulation on social media may lead to a breach

of privilege and contempt of the House.

"Such unauthorised recording of proceedings of House and its circulation on social media may lead to a breach of privilege and contempt of the House," the Rajya Sabha Chairman added.

Meanwhile, several opposition parties including Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), Communist Party of India (CPI), DMK MPs have moved suspension of business notice in Ra-

ja Sabha to discuss farmers issues and their ongoing protest against Central farm laws.

The Opposition on Tuesday staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha after Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu rejected the 'suspension of business notice' to discuss ongoing protest over the contentious farm laws.

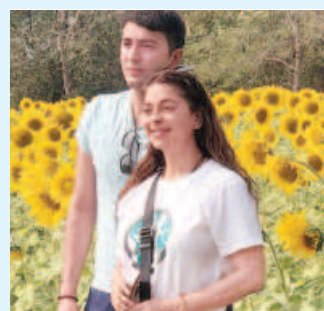
The Lok Sabha also witnessed three adjournments on Tuesday as Opposition parties protested the new farm laws.

Womenia

TWEET PATROL


JUHI CHAWLA
@IAM_JUHI

On the way to the Wada farm..
a field fulllll of Sunflowers... stunningly
beautiful!! but up close one realized..
sadly they've been pumped with Urea.....!!!!



KOPPARA GANDHI

B Rajakumari, SP of Vizianagaram district has been honored with 'Frontline Covid warrior award' by the union government. She is the only police officer from entire Andhra Pradesh receiving this award. Actually the national commission for women has selected one woman from each sector (Police, Doctors, Sanitation) of services and presented the award. She received the award at New Delhi from Prakash Jawadekar, the union minister for forests, science and technology.

On receiving the award, The Hans India spoke to Rajakumari. Excerpts from an interview:

What are the challenges you faced during lockdown?

Initially, we struggled to convince the public to remain in their homes

and not to roam on roads. But within few days the people understood the importance of lockdown and started co-operating with us.

What were your efforts during the pandemic?

We spoke to social service organizations apart from our own staff and toured hundreds of villages and visited every mandal, spoke to the public and made them to follow Covid protocols like wearing masks, using sanitizers.

How did you manage your duties during Pandemic?

Actually, I couldn't take rest a single day during those days. Even some of my colleagues suffered with Covid. Sometimes I used to take a nap in my car during journey. I used to step out at 4 am and reach to office at 11pm and sometimes it was 12 am.

No family life during pandemic, says Covid warrior awardee Rajakumari

B Rajakumari, is the only police officer from entire Andhra Pradesh who has been honored with 'Frontline Covid warrior award'. She speaks about her work and more

Do you feel that your efforts yielded good results?

Not only our police, but also the other frontline staff worked to stop the spread of virus in our district. Just because of the coordinated efforts only Vizianagaram district was in green zone for more than 45 days.

What were your personal efforts?

One mid night I got a call from a migrant woman labourer, who came here from Nellore. No shops were opened then. I immediately cooked food at my home and reached her with food packets prepared by me.

She along with her children, age old parents blessed me with tearful eyes. It was a unforgettable moment in my career.

What were your efforts, services during Pandemic?

We maintained special camps for migrant labourers and provided food, even cheppals, umbrellas for pedestrians. We have taken special care on behalf of police department with the support of donors and other NGOs. We plied vehicles to drop them at interstate border. Thousands of migrant labourers belong to Odisha, Bengal, Chattishgarh, Uttarpradesh, Jhark-



hand walked through our district and we supported them in all aspects.

What were your personal struggles?

Yes, those days were very hard. I lost some of my colleagues here due to Corona. Some were quarantined

with the infection. I too personally felt bad as I couldn't see my age old parents. Even I couldn't hug my children. I used to see them from distant. I missed my family a lot but the recognition I got from the public and the government has wiped out all those painful days.

Katrina speaks about fashion

PUJA GUPTA

Actress Katrina Kaif says she endorse only those brands that are relevant to her and can be part of her daily life.

In a candid chat, the actress, who is the brand ambassador of Reebok, gives an insight into her brand collaboration while sharing how she adopts sustainable fashion.

Read excerpts:

What does fashion mean to you?

Fashion to me is a way to express myself. It's a mode of communication to the world and defines your individuality.

What is your idea of sustainable fashion and how do you feel you contribute to it?

My idea of sustainable fashion is to use products that are organic and sustainable in nature. A few changes that I adapted to be eco-friendly and I recommend others to follow too are:

- Buy only what you need and don't believe in compulsive shopping
- Limit the use of plastic items

as much as possible

- Always keep reading about sustainability and educate yourself in order to contribute towards sustainable fashion
- Always share your knowledge with others to create and spread more awareness
- Most importantly, support fellow artisans with their innovations and vision about an eco-friendly future.

How can people contribute towards sustainable fashion?

Before adapting to sustainable fashion, I believe a person needs to adapt to a sustainable lifestyle, be it the products that we use on a daily basis or the food that we use in our homes. Once we start adapting sustainable practices in our daily routines, our fashion choices will also start to improve.

What's your criterion to select a brand before you start endorsing it?

Katrina: I endorse brands that are relevant to me and can be a part of my daily life. This is one of the most important criteria for me.

You have collaborated with Reebok for their new campaign. Tell us about it and why did you decide to be a part of it?

In honor of the [Ree]Cycled Classic Leather Legacy and Legacy 83, Reebok is soon to reveal its second iteration of the "Write Your Legacy" campaign. The campaign was created by three 'Classics Collaborators' from across the globe who use their talent and creations to pave the way for a better future for their communities. While the means of how they impact their communities varies, their legacy is alike: you can't change what came before you, but you can change what comes next. Reebok and the 'Classic Collaborators' recognise that what and how we create now impacts our future. Therefore, the campaign celebrates the new [Ree]Cycled Classic Leather Legacy alongside the Legacy 83. The shoes are also designed to celebrate community: the different backgrounds, personalities and outlooks that shape all of our legacies. The importance of community and the ability to make positive change for those to come is what each of the Classic Collab-



orators embody and celebrate.

What do you think such campaigns like this help?

The campaign is a celebration of creators who use their talent and skills to create a positive future for those around them. The whole idea behind the campaign is to celebrate people with a legacy of work that can make positive change in the world. If brands like Reebok come forward and celebrate such changes, then consumers will

have a positive messaging to relate to and that is what the brand aims to drive.

Any fashion tips for readers?

Fashion is all about comfort, you need not blindly follow the latest trends to look stylish. Your confidence is your most special accessory. Don't be afraid to play around with colours and garments, and remember, you have the power to make anything cool if you're comfortable and confident.

TODAY IS WORLD CANCER DAY

I AM AND I WILL

In the last century, people have forgotten that their food, thoughts and actions have a direct relation to health. Nutrition therefore plays an important role in our well-being. What we put into our body does matter and whether we feel at ease or diseased is important. So get up and say "I Am and I Will" make personal commitments for a better future as together we can make a difference!

Today is World Cancer Day so let me share with you some knowledge that I have gained over the years on nutritional immunology.

A quick science snippet on how cancer is formed. A byproduct of breathing is free radicals in the body. These get attached to healthy cells and may cause cancer. Carcinogens are also caused due to extraneous factors such as refined and processed foods like any sugar, pollution, high temperature cooking, reused oils, chemicals, pesticides. Avoid these like the plague.

Luckily, Mother Nature provides an antidote - antioxidants found abundantly in the plant kingdom.

I am constantly adding on natural sources of the most powerful antioxidants to win the fight against cancer. These are Beta-carotene, Lycopene, Vitamin E, Vitamin C, Selenium, Allium and cruciferous group of vegetables. Additionally, my experience of 21 years has led me to add on the wonderful herbs and spices present in the Indian diet that too aid. This is one of the reasons that Indians have a lower rate of cancer when compared to westerners.

Let me run you through the local Indian foods that have the highest antioxidant content:

Beta-carotene: Pumpkin, Coriander
Lycopene: Cooked Tomatoes



Naini Setalvad

Vitamin C: Amla, Guava, Lemon

Vitamin E and Selenium: Barley (Jav), Brown rice

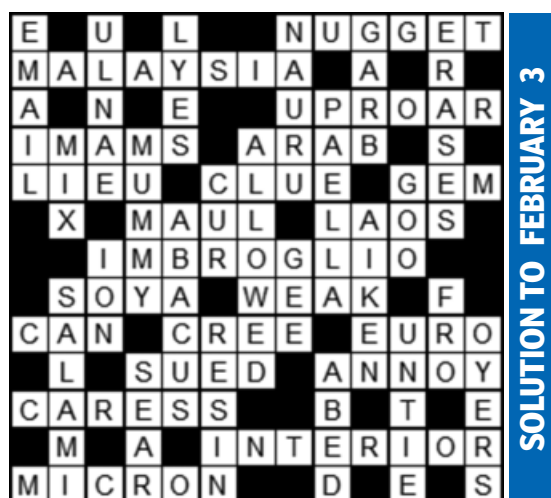
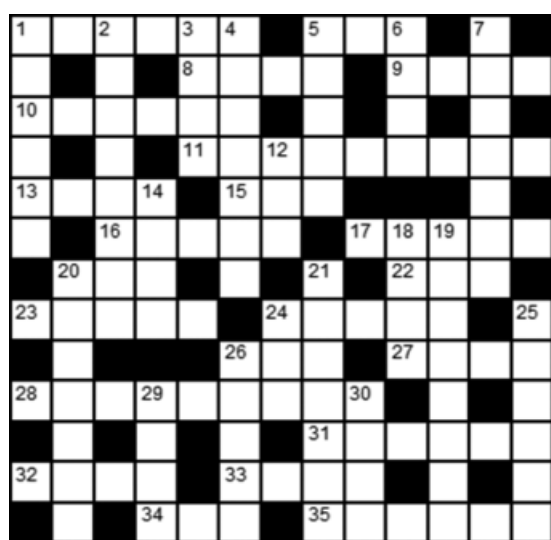
Allium: Onion, Garlic

Cruciferous vegetables: Cabbage, Cauliflower, Mustard Leaves

Indian spice box: which let me tell you are your natural medicines for fighting cancer. Turmeric helps fight all cancers. Combine that with black pepper and cow's ghee to make its potency even higher. Ginger, Cumin, Fenugreek, Cloves, Tulsi, Cinnamon and Cardamom to name a few have a wide range of health-promoting phytochemicals which help protect you against cancer.

The word 'cancer' overwhelms. For women, hope, faith, positive attitude and good nutrition is the best way to prevent, retard and reverse cancer. Over the years of working with cancer patients I realized all bodies have cancer cells and a nutrient malnourished woman's body generates even more cancer cells. A well-nourished woman is the key to nip cancer. There is no one solitary ingredient to triumph over but a synergy of different antioxidants available from different food groups.

Add these wonderful foods into your daily diets and reduce the risk or progression of cancer and overall boost health and build your family and your own resistance to diseases.



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 3

CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 A sacramental anointing (6)
- 5 Male child (3)
- 8 A writer of verse (4)
- 9 Not up (4)
- 10 Parisian tower (6)
- 11 Humiliating failures (9)
- 13 Pace, stride (4)
- 15 Path for Confucians (3)
- 16 Big name in copiers (5)
- 17 Correspond (5)
- 20 Not many (3)
- 22 Obese (3)
- 23 Young girl (5)
- 24 Clique (5)
- 26 Designer Anna (3)
- 27 Depend (4)
- 28 Uneven (9)
- 31 Faultfinder (6)
- 32 French military hat (4)
- 33 Oceans (4)
- 34 Monetary unit of

Myanmar (3)

35 Thatched (6)

Down

- 1 A dairy product (6)
- 2 Involuntary reactions to stimuli (8)
- 3 Raced (4)
- 4 An explosive cocktail (7)
- 5 Office worker in short (5)
- 6 Mr Patekar of Bollywood (4)
- 7 Turn aside (7)
- 12 Cerumen (3)
- 14 Church seats (4)
- 18 A long way off (4)
- 19 Having ability (8)
- 20 Bride to be (7)
- 21 Bogie (7)
- 24 Young animal (3)
- 25 Matched in a way (6)
- 26 Hot sauce (5)
- 29 Wisecrack (4)
- 30 Gaelic language (4)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 3



Looks like ‘international border’, farmers on unprecedented barricading

NEW DELHI

FARMERS’ agitation sites just outside Delhi resemble “international border” now with authorities building makeshift walls, planting huge metal spikes on roads and deploying concertina wire fences, protesters alleged on Wednesday, even as officials defended the heavy-barricading citing law and order issues.

The heightened security measures and various restrictions have been imposed at the three protest sites -- Singhu (Delhi-Haryana border), Ghazipur (Delhi-Uttar Pradesh

border) and Tikri (Delhi-Haryana border) -- since the Republic Day violence that had left over 500 police personnel injured and one protestor dead.

On January 26, breaking away from the designated routes for a tractor parade, hundreds of protestors clashed with police in various points to lay siege to the Red Fort and climb the flagpole. While at the Singhu border, the epicenter of the ongoing farmers’ agitation, shipping containers, iron rods between barriers and cement slabs have been used to seal the entry points, the tried-and-tested barbed wires, stone boulders



and iron nails have been deployed at Tikri and Ghazipur

borders to block people’s entry into Delhi or to the protest sites.

“The protest sites are looking like international borders. It is as if we have come from Pakistan. On one hand, they (the government) want us to talk, and on the other hand they are doing everything to de-link us (from the city),” farmer leader Kulwant Singh Sandhu told PTI. “This shows the restlessness of the government,” he said. In addition to heavy-metal barricades and concrete slabs, measures like digging trenches and using DTC buses as roadblocks have been deployed at the said Delhi-Uttar Pradesh and the Delhi-Haryana borders. Zamhoori Kisan Sabha General

Secretary Sandhu claimed the barricading of national highways and stopping the movement of people and vehicles is the authorities’ “strategy” to “irritate” the common people and try to make them stand against the protesting farmers.

“But the farmers won’t budge,” he said. “No matter how much obstructions they create in our path. They are stopping people so that they get irritated and turn against us.” “They (the authorities) don’t know that the locals and people across the country support our movement.

Sadly, the government has not learnt its lesson from the

Ghazipur incident,” he said. Mandeep Singh (26), who has been camping at the Singhu border for the past 15 days, echoed his leader’s sentiment and said the show of force and blocking the roads pose problems for the locals, not the protesting farmers. “These multiple-barriers cannot dampen our spirit or affect our movement. We are following the instructions of our leaders, who have clearly told us to stay put at our respective places. We won’t move ahead or take a step back. So, ultimately it is the locals who have to face trouble in

Raj IPS officer held in PCA, to be presented in court

JAIPUR

RAJASTHAN’S Anti-Corruption Bureau officials have arrested IPS officer Manish Agrawal on charge of accepting a bribe of Rs 38 lakh from a highway construction company.

After spending a night in ACB custody following his arrest on Tuesday, the accused officer will be presented in court on Wednesday after undergoing coronavirus test.

Agrawal has been arrested under the Prevention of Corruption Act, ACB Director BL Soni said.

Sources said that a team of two ACB officials had interrogated Agrawal. His mobile phones were earlier seized by the ACB.



Agrawal’s name cropped up in the case when petrol pump owner Neeraj Meena was arrested on charge of demanding money from the construction firm on the IPS officer’s behalf. The ACB was in the process of gathering evidence

of corruption against him in the last 20 days after Meena’s arrest.

A 2010-batch IPS officer, Agrawal is posted as Commandant of State Disaster Response Force, Jaipur. Earlier, he served as the Dausa SP.

The accused has spent six years in Rajasthan which were quite controversial, officials claimed. During this period, he served as Superintendent of Police for 10 months in two districts -- four months in Barmer and six months in Dausa.

While he was posted as an SP in Dausa, he was transferred to the SDRF after an anonymous complaint that he demanded a bribe of lakhs of rupees for a project.

Earlier, as SP in Barmer, he was declared APO (awaiting posting orders).

Along with the petrol pump owner, the ACB had arrested two Rajasthan Administrative Service officers on January 13 for allegedly taking bribes from the same company.

REC GETS ‘MAHATMA AWARD’



REC Limited was conferred the ‘Mahatma Award for CSR Excellence 2020’ for its endeavours in the fields of education, nutrition, health, and the extensive humanitarian efforts undertaken to provide relief from the Covid-19 pandemic. On behalf of REC Limited, Dr S N Srinivas, CEO - REC Foundation received the award. Dr Srinivas said that REC has been providing aid through its CSR activities even before it became mandatory in 2015.

115 farmers lodged in Delhi jails: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

DELHI Chief Minister said on Wednesday that he has received a list of farmers who have been put in different jails in Delhi after the Republic Day incident. The Chief Minister told reporters that a group of agitating farmer leaders had approached him on Tuesday evening and sought help to find these missing farmers.

The Delhi government has also circulated a list containing the names of 115 farmers who are reportedly missing. “A group of farmer leaders approached me yesterday to seek Delhi government’s help to find these missing farmers. Family members of these farmers are tensed and they are not able to contact them. The Delhi government is circulating the names of missing farmers who are lodged in different jails in the national capital,” he said. Meanwhile, Kejriwal also assured farmers that, if needed, he would meet Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal and the Centre to reunite these farmers to their families.

Woman stabbed, ‘forced to consume acid’ by neighbour

BUDAUN

A 30-year-old woman was allegedly stabbed by her neighbour in Uttar Pradesh’s Budaun district, with her family accusing the suspect of also forcing her to consume acid.

Police, however, did not confirm charge of giving acid to the woman. Satyendra Singh entered the house of Kajal at Kasimpur village in Kadar Chowk area late on Monday night, forced her to consume acid and was stabbed by him, according to a complaint by victim’s family.

The woman was rushed to a hospital, which referred her to Bareilly for better treatment. An FIR has been registered and Singh was arrested, Superintendent of Police Sankalp Sharma said. The reasons of the attack are not known yet as the woman could not speak and a probe is on, the SP said. The woman used to live with her children and family members as her husband worked in Delhi as a labourer, police said.

In another case, a 37-year-old inebriated man was allegedly beaten to death by his cousin brother here over a dispute, police said on Wednesday.

Plea questions CBI silence in Sushant case, SC says go to HC

NEW DELHI

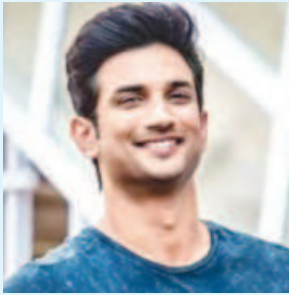
THE Supreme Court on Wednesday declined to entertain a PIL seeking direction to the CBI to submit a status report on the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian dismissed the plea filed through advocate Vineet Dhanda on the behalf of petitioner Puneet Kaur Dhanda.

The bench said: “We are not going to entertain this. You go to the High Court.”

The counsel for the petitioner insisted that the top court should examine the matter, as the CBI has been investigating the matter since August last year, but it has not filed the status report so far. The apex court passed an order for the CBI inquiry on August 19, 2020.

The plea contended that the top court posed serious faith in the premier inves-



tigative agency of the country and directed an investigation in the unnatural death of the actor, as his death shook the entire country and even the fans abroad got a setback due to his untimely and unnatural death.

“This court passed an order for CBI enquiry on August 19, 2020 and despite lapsing of almost four months the Central Bureau of Investigation is yet to conclude its investigation and all the eager family members, fans, well-wishers of the late actor are yet to get solace regarding the exact reason of the death of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput,” said the plea.

Mussoorie's ITBP Academy bags best training centre for officers

NEW DELHI

THE Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Academy in Uttarakhand’s Mussoorie has been awarded for best national gazetted officers training centre for 2016-17 by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

The ITBP in a statement said that the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) carried out inspections of various police training institutes of the nation for four consecutive years starting from 2016 to 2020. Each year, there were prizes for the best police training centers in the country in three levels- National level for CAPFs/ CPOs, National level for States and UTs and Zonal level in 3 categories of each level- Gazetted Officers (GOs), Non-Gazetted Officers (NGOs) and Others (Constables) training.

It said that the ITBP Academy is one of the best police training centre of the country.

The ITBP Training Academy in Mussoorie is located at 6,000 ft and the centre trains officers of the force. It also imparts training to other state police in Identification and Handling of Explosives (IHE), Rock Climbing, Karate and other training skills.

Jind ‘mahapanchayat’ passes resolution to revoke farm laws

JIND

THE Kisan Mahapanchayat amid the presence of thousands of farmers in Jind district of Haryana on Wednesday unanimously adopted a resolution to revoke the three contentious farm laws where BKU leader Rakesh Tikait announced that “if their demands were not accepted, they will hold another ‘mahapanchayat’ of India level”.

To gather support and build up momentum for the farmers’ agitation, Tikait reached Kandela village near here to address the ‘mahapanchayat’ where he was given a grand welcome.

Tikait was accompanied by state Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) President Gurnam Singh Chaduni.

Kandela ‘khap’ President Tek Ram, the organiser of the ‘mahapanchayat’, said besides revoking the farm laws, the resolution demanded that the government ensure that the farmers get MSP (minimum support price) for their crops and withdrawal of cases against farmers booked for violence on Republic Day in Delhi.

Ram said representatives of at least 50 ‘khaps’ or community courts from across the state participated in the ‘mahapanchayat’,



An activist holds a placard during a protest in support of farmers’ agitation over the new farm laws, at Mandi House in New Delhi on Wednesday

which came days after the other mahapanchayat held in Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh.

Addressing the gathering, Tikait, showing his aggressive posture, said: “If the farmers’ demands are not accepted by the Centre, they would hold ‘mahapanchayat’ at national level.”

“When the ruler is afraid, he does fortification,” he said, indicating his tough posture to the government.

He said a campaign would be carried out from village to village in Haryana till February 10 to gather momentum against the agitation.

A day before attending the

‘mahapanchayat’, Tikait said the farmers protesting against the three Central farm laws will take out a pan-India tractor rally if the government doesn’t listen to them. Earlier too, Kandela, the venue of the ‘mahapanchayat’, has been a centre of farmers’ agitation. The farmers had launched an agitation from Kandela in 2002, demanding waiver of electricity dues.

Interestingly, after the Delhi violence on Republic Day, the farmers’ agitation has shifted from Singhu and Tikri, where Punjab unions are camping, to Ghazipur where Tikait is holding the fort.

Gurugram Health Dept conducts raids to check sex determination tests

GURUGRAM

TO check sex determination tests in Gurugram and adjoining states, the Gurugram Health Department has conducted 14 raids in the last one year, of which eight were conducted in other states and the rest in Gurugram district, health officials said.



A raid was conducted on January 29 in south-west Delhi’s Najafgarh area in which seven persons, including three women, were arrested and Rs 75,000 recovered from them.

“We have instructed our team to keep a strict watch on hospitals and

clinics by visiting them on a regular basis and collect information about such wrong practices. In the last one year, the Health Department conducted several raids in Gurugram, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh to curb sex determination tests,” said Gurugram Chief Medical Officer Virender Yadav.

Nearly 107 FIRs were registered in Gurugram district from April to November 2020 under the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act and 434 cases are pending in the courts, he informed.

However, the health officials said they faced problems during raids in other states.

“The police in other states don’t support our team during the raids and didn’t even register cases. Recently, during a raid in Rajasthan, the local police refused to file a case and even told us not to conduct a raid here but after the intervention of the higher authorities, a case under PNDT Act was registered there,” Yadav said.

UP ATTEMPTS SETTING RECORD WITH 50K SINGING ‘VANDE MATARAM’

LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is all set to attempt creating a world record during the Chauri Chaura centenary celebrations, when around 50,000 children from all districts will recite ‘Vande Mataram’ from 10 a.m on February 3 to 12 noon on February 4.

The state government plans to make it to the Guinness Book of World Records with this feat.

Vinay Kumar Pandey, director, secondary education, said that at present, this record is held by a gathering of 20,000 who sang it together.

As part of the preparations, thousands of students are making their videos by reciting the first stanza of ‘Vande Mataram’ while standing in the salute pose.

They are required to send these clips to their respective



schools, after which these videos will be uploaded on a link that will be made available by the Guinness Book of World

Records. Jagdish Gandhi, founder of the City Montessori chain of schools, said that a large number of stu-

dents from all school campuses will recite ‘Vande Mataram’ in a bid to enter the record books on Chauri Chaura Diwas on Febru-

ary 4.

The Guinness world record team will share a link at 10 a.m on February 3 for the schools to upload all videos by February 4 till 12 noon. They will assess the videos, and after verification, issue a certificate.

The district inspector of schools (DIoS), Mukesh Kumar Singh, has held meetings with principals in this regard.

Additional chief secretary (secondary education), Aradhana Shukla, said: “We are expecting a large number of videos from schools across UP.”

The UP Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad has asked principals of secondary schools to prepare students for the exercise.

They have been asked to ensure that the chosen students learn ‘Vande Mataram’ and are able to recite the same flawlessly with correct pronunciation.

Budget looks bright, nevertheless sounds dubious

THE common man is confused and is wondering about whether he should welcome the Union budget or not. A close reading of the budget clearly indicates that it will not lead to higher consumption. Jump in the fiscal deficit would push prices up and adversely impact the ability of the country to attract foreign capital. Commodity prices have already started increasing and therefore the possibility of inflation cannot be ruled out. The signal given is that it will take some time before the fiscal deficit reaches the level of 4.5 per cent.

Many feel that this is the best possible budget under the circumstances arising out of corona pandemic which had shattered the global economy and hence the proposals are focussed on the expenditure side. Fine, but the common man

who suffered most during the pandemic did not get any relief as there has been no change in the tax structure. As a result, it will not help in higher consumption.

The only benefits a taxpayer got is more to housing since the tax benefit scheme has been extended. The government has increased the capital expenditure but a big chunk of this will go to roads and railways. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a development financial institution (DFI) to enable long term funding worth Rs 5 lakh crore in three years for infrastructure projects with a capital of Rs 20,000 crore. It may prove to be an accelerator resulting in higher investment as it may be used for lending in future. But then, it has its own limitations. It cannot drive

the entire investment cycle.

Another important issue is that of jobs. While the unemployment has been on the rise year after year even before the pandemic had set in, many had lost jobs during the last one year. The capex will certainly lead to increase in demand for metals, cement etc and it can create some employment. But it will not be on a large scale. Another important aspect that needs to be seen is: Will the budget proposals help lift the GDP growth? Though the government has announced a capex of Rs 5.5 lakh crore, it will not be possible to accelerate the GDP, unless the private capex cycle recovers.

Another cause of worry is the prices of commodities. The fuel prices have been rising and the imposition of cess will increase the prices further. Hence

the possibility of inflation rising appears to be a certainty. If the government had focussed its attention on measures that could have helped increase the savings rate, it would have been a great help for the common man. But on one hand, the interest rates on small savings were reduced sharply and on the other, the government refused to provide any incentive to the genuine taxpayer, majority of whom are from the middle and upper middleclass sections.

If some correction with regard to the savings rate was taken, it would have also helped the senior citizens who want to lead a respectful life after retirement. The Centre and the States will have no other option but to borrow more from the market and it will result in intrinsic pressure on liquidity. The philosophy behind the budget is academically correct but execution will remain a major challenge.

PART-II

TALKING OF MANY THINGS



Dr Mohan Kanda

THE International Criminal Court (ICC or ICCT) is an inter-governmental organisation, a tribunal with its headquarters in Hague, Netherlands. The ICC is the first and only permanent international Court with jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and aggression. It aims to complement existing national judicial systems and exercises jurisdiction only in situations when national courts are unwilling, or unable, to prosecute criminals.

Computerisation of court administration in India began about two decades ago, with the government of India (GoI) taking the initiative. That step has paid rich dividends, cost and time wise. As the common people can also access the information, the system has increased the confidence reposed by them in the judicial system. The benefit is, however, yet to spread to the rural areas of the country, account of poor internet connectivity, ignorance about the operation of electronic gadgets and also lack of awareness.

Increasing the penetration of internet services and arranging for greater availability of computers and mobile phones, together with a programme of awareness generation, will ensure the inclusion of those areas also into the coverage of the programme.

The government of India has taken proactive steps such as

the establishment of the computerisation and computer networking of Consumer Fora (CONFONAT) to strengthen consumerism. The Fora have played a significant role, particularly in the area of consumer protection. Their services, being information technology enabled, have paved the way for the dispensation of justice in a speedy and effective manner.

In 1990, the National Informatics Centre (of the Ministry of Information Technology, Government of India), started the process of computerisation in the Supreme Court. As a result, many applications have been computerised which have had a positive providing relief to litigants. Similar computerisation is also in place at 18 High Courts of the country.

The Indian judiciary is taking steps to apply e-commerce for efficient management of its work. In the near future all the courts in India will be computerised in that respect, and new judges who are being appointed will be expected to have basic knowledge of the computer operation.

Among the most important issues that attracted my attention, during my tenure as the Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh, was the huge pendency of civil and criminal cases in the High Court and subordinate Courts. Alarmed by the situation, the Advocate General (AG) and I set about trying to computerise the entire information with regards to pending cases, especially those involving the government as a party.

Part of the attempt comprised an A, B, C classification of pending cases. The A category consisted of cases which required immediate attention either in terms of the amount of public money involved or other reasons such as the possibility of imminent criminal proceedings being launched against a government servant etc. The C category comprised trivial and petty matters, about which the



AG and I felt that summary disposal should be requested, without bothering too much about the way the verdict went.

The middle category, namely B, we felt, could safely be left to the system to handle, as neither in terms of importance, not in terms of number, did that category demand immediate attention. As a result, it was expected that, both in terms of attention being paid to matters requiring immediate action, and securing satisfactory disposal of cases in terms of numbers, substantial progress could be achieved in a short while.

What we need to understand clearly is the fact that, just as morality does and every code of ethics does, the concepts of crime and punishment were, are, and will be functions of time and space, subject to variations which can, sometimes, even be significant.

Take, for instance, the question of abortion. While it is now legal in India, it was a crime until recently, in countries where the laws in force were influenced by the philosophy of the Catholic sect of Christian religion. While the UK legalised abortion in 1967, Northern Ireland followed suit as recently as in 2020.

On somewhat similar lines, the Catholic sect of Christian religion, while permitting divorce to take place, prohibits remarriage. The practice of slav-

ery, for instance, was legal until the 19th century, in the United States. And, even today, there are those who nurture the feeling that black - on black crime attracts much little less attention in that country then even such a minor thing as the disappearance of a white teenager. To cite another example, the notorious criminal Jack the Ripper, was believed to have been allowed to remain on the loose, as the London police force could not believe that a 'gentleman' could commit crimes.

The much talked about nexus, between criminals, political leaders, businessmen and civil servants has, for long, threatened to shake the foundations of the edifice of governance in India. So much so, that, in the year 1993, the government of India appointed the Vohra Committee to look into the matter. The Committee highlighted the nexus between the criminals, politicians and government functionaries.

It also stated that the network of the mafia was virtually running a parallel government, pushing the State apparatus to irrelevance. The Committee made various important recommendations, including a suggestion that an institution be set up to effectively deal with the menace, following which many steps have since been taken to deal with the menace of the nexus. That is not to say, however, that

the problem has gone away.

However, given the strong foundations on which the three wings of State in our country rest, one hopes that clean politics, sound governance and a free and impartial system of justice will soon prevail over forces that threaten to undermine the strength and character of our institutions and seek to compromise their integrity.

Clearly, there is immediate need to decriminalise politics and bring about a range of reforms in the criminal justice system, including police reforms. Before we conclude this discussion, it is necessary for us to remember that, no matter what other criticism may be levelled against the British, and their rule, they did leave behind a sound and robust justice system, whether criminal or civil.

That system not only answered to the demands of the times when it was established, but has also shown that it possesses the inbuilt resilience, and flexibility, needed to respond to the varying demands, over time and space, made on it by a vast and diverse country such as ours.

And the democratic system of governance we have chosen, with the edifice of the State resting on the firm tripod of the executive, judiciary and the legislature wings, has also come of age, with the three wings learning to coexist in an atmosphere informed by a spirit of harmony, coordination and mutual respect. The problems we have discussed earlier, therefore, can safely be expected to be resolved effectively, and soon.

Purely in a lighter vein, I must here recall the words of a Very Very Important Person who, while inaugurating the functioning of a newly constituted High Court, following the formation of a new state, expressed the hope that, from then on, justice would be speedily "dispensed with!"

(The writer is former Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)

A cause of concern for India

MILITARY toppling democratically elected government with overwhelming majority in Myanmar is certainly a cause of worry for complete world but more significantly for India because of Myanmar having 1500 kms long border with four north-eastern states of India including Arunachal Pradesh which also has border with China. It is noteworthy that China is the only country which has avoided criticising murder of democracy in Myanmar leading to doubts that China might have backed military toppling government in Myanmar that too when democratic design in Myanmar provided dominating say and role in governance of that country.

China is trying to influence Nepal for diluting relations of Nepal and China. In such a scenario, India will have to adopt a cautious approach on affairs of Myanmar in a manner that China may not be able to have a proxy-control on governance in Myanmar now under military rule. Myanmar under rule of Aung San Suu Kyi always supported India in tackling insurgency when Myanmar even allowed India to use its land for fighting insurgency. Many people of Indian origin came to India by leaving Myanmar with all their big assets voluntarily handed over to military rulers in earlier military coup more than half a century back.

Madhu Agrawal, Delhi

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WITH COVID-19 CASES DOWN



What India should do now

DR KRISHNA REDDY NALLAMALLA

- ▶ India should continue with proven mantra of 'face mask, hand wash, and social distancing'
- ▶ Should focus on strengthening its weak health systems

INDIA has been witnessing a steady decline in Covid-19 cases since mid-September despite gradual withdrawal of lockdown restrictions and ramping up testing. Case fatality rate, compared to many OECD countries, has been low around 1 per cent. Mobility of people has reached pre-Covid levels. Economy is showing 'V'-shaped recovery. Population in Delhi is inching towards natural herd immunity as per recent seroprevalence study that showed seroprevalence rate of 50 to 60 per cent.

Based on the last two rounds of seroprevalence studies, it is estimated that there are approximately 40 to 50 asymptomatic infections for every positive detected case. Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) has been granted to two vaccines and nearly 3 million frontline health workers have received the vaccine within first 2 weeks of nation-wide vaccination program.

It is important to have a realistic assessment of the pandemic behaviour in India so far so as to plan ahead in a pragmatic way. It is clearly evident that the infection has spread to sizeable number of people despite containment measures. It is also clear that the case fatality rate at -1 per cent or 1 in 100 (number of deaths per Covid-19 positive cases) and infection fatality rate at -0.025 per cent or 1 in 4000 (number of deaths per infected cases - asymptomatic and symptomatic) has been low compared to high income countries.

Since India had same strains as rest of the world, virus related factors may not explain the behaviour so far. It is most likely that the host related factors explain the behaviour. Similar behaviour is being witnessed in low-to-middle income countries (LMIC) in South and

South-East Asia and Africa, while the behaviour is quite different in South America.

Simple measures like use of face masks, hand washing, and social distancing have convincingly demonstrated to be effective in reducing spread of infection. They may also reduce the number of symptomatic cases. We do not have comparative data on compliance to above measures across countries to explain different behaviour of the pandemic. Role of immunity is being studied extensively to explain the differences. It is known that people who live in crowded and unhygienic habitats may have more robust innate immunity (body's first defence response to any pathogen irrespective of prior exposure).

BCG vaccine is known to enhance non-specific immune response to various pathogens. Research evidence on the role of BCG has been mixed so far. Corona viruses are responsible for nearly one third of common colds. It is demonstrated that people do exhibit both antibody and cell-mediated cross-immunity to SARS-CoV 2 virus that causes Covid-19 illness. Despite the above pointers, the behaviour remains a puzzle!

World has witnessed an unprecedented global collaboration amongst researchers to come up with diagnostic tests, repurposed drugs like steroids and Remdesivir, innovative therapies like monoclonal antibodies, and variety of vaccines within one year of the pandemic. Not unexpectedly, the virus too has been undergoing many mutations to evade these human efforts. The World War III - the one between humanity and the SARS - CoV2 virus, continues! Vaccines are only one more weapon in our armamentarium.

India has to be cautious against many unknowns at this stage of the pandemic. Behaviour of the new variants coming up in different countries is a cause for concern. Uncertainty about the duration of immunity gained through natural infection and vaccination is another area of concern. Whether the new strains evade existing immunity is the third concern. Given these concerns, India can adapt the following strategies to remain ahead of the curve.

India should continue with its proven mantra of 'face mask, hand wash, and social distancing'. Relentless public messaging should continue on these measures. It should maintain border controls as per emerging data on new strains. It should continue with its surveillance system to spot reinfections, emerging spikes or even slowing of declining case rates. Existing and emerging vaccines should be continuously tested against new strains for their efficacy. Efforts should continue on developing novel antiviral drugs.

In addition to the above, India should focus on strengthening its weak health systems. Recent economic survey makes a strong case for increased public health spending to not only reduce impoverishing and catastrophic out of pocket health expenses but also to improve economic productivity. Focus on existing health issues should not be diluted. India should also leverage its strength in pharma and vaccine capacity to help people across the world.

Covid pandemic has thrust reluctant health systems into the rapidly changing world of digital and molecular technologies. Healthcare may accelerate towards genomic based precision medicine. India has an opportunity to prepare itself for the future of personalized health care. Two of the major policy reforms - National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) and National Science, Technology and Innovation (NSTI) Policy - announced during the pandemic are apt to make this possible.

Post-Covid world will go through a massive geo-political, economic, technological and social change just as the change the world witnessed after two world wars. India has an opportunity to regain its rightful place in global affairs. Great leaders see opportunity in every crisis where others falter!

(The author is President, InOrder, Regional Director (South Asia), ACCESS Health International)

LETTERS

Congrats to life savers

At a time people are fed up with routine news items that conveys hate, violence, fear, gloom and other negative aspects, the news that live heart was transported by Metro train in a record time to save a patient comes as an encouraging one (Metro makes special run to transport heart, saves life, February 3). Such reports show that humanity, compassion and service still exist in the present society. Kudos to all life savers.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

Inter-faith marriages

It is quite disturbing that the Lok Sabha was informed that there is no intention of the Central government to bring any anti-conversion law for curbing inter-faith marriages. Ayat 221 of Surah-2 of the Holy Koran says, "do not marry unbelieving women until they believe: a slave woman who believes is better than unbelieving woman, even though she allure you. Nor marry your girls to unbelievers until they believe: a man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever...Unbelievers do beckon you to the fire. But Allah beckons by His grace to the guardian (of bliss)." . In the light of this it is clear that a Muslim marries a non-Muslim, a Hindu only if he or she converts to Islam. This is what is going by the name "Love Jihad". Hindu girls are allured by Muslim boys and either before or after marriage the girl will compulsorily be converted. This preaching is not in Christianity. As

this is outrageous and certainly an assault on Hindus the inter-faith marriages ought to be banned. A Muslim cannot convert to the other faith because the punishment is beheading.

Dr T Hanuman Chowdary, Secunderabad

Pollution and electric vehicles

THE article under the City Hans section draws the reader's eye which states that electric vehicles will not bear any government taxes. The slow paced shift from fuel automated to battery automated vehicles is being witnessed in the city. It is appreciable if there is a rise in the use of such battery driven vehicles which in turn help to control the pollution. The buyers can grab the opportunity of taxes waiver if there is an investment in such vehicles. Electric vehicles will not cost a fortune to its buyers. There are concerns like the quantum of electric consumption, fixing up of charging stations and time involved in equipping each vehicle with advanced features of electric or battery running. The automobile industry can endeavour for a new leap with such automated vehicles.

Madhulika N, Hyderabad

Budget fails to address inflation

A common man from the lower strata of society will only try to find out which items, products and services have become dearer and which ones are easy

on his pocket in every budget announcement. The macroeconomic parameters are anathema to him. Though we boast of surplus production in every commodity or availability of service, the general trend of inflation continues with no relief for the lower middle and middle class segments of society whatsoever. No budget document seems to ponder over this dire necessity of controlling inflation.

The so-called visionary direction which the budgetary allocations seem to portray will take years to peter down and help the teeming millions of middle class. Therefore, the common man doesn't show any inclination to carefully browse the policy document. It's only the academically inclined who make a deep study and come out with their opinions thru many forums. I am of the opinion that this budget despite all the praise heaped upon its policy pronouncements has failed to address this burning issue of price rise as usual.

N R Raghuram, Hyderabad

Discriminatory Budget

THE Union Budget 2021 really disappoints the common people. Government's step motherly attitude towards Telangana state is exposed. People of Telangana are surprised that not a single paisa has been allocated for Telangana state, not even a new train has been announced. The Centre has focussed on the four states where elections would be held in this year and they allocated big infrastructure funds for these states. The post of prime minister is a symbol of unity, equality, diversity and would give the same opportunities to every state.

Syed Nisar Mehdi, Hyderabad

Couple celebrates pet dog's baby shower

They even threw a grand party on the dog's first birthday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KHAMMAM

WHEN people are still afraid to host parties and celebrate any occasion due to Covid-19 pandemic, a couple from Sattupalli town of Khammam district has surprisingly hosted a baby shower to their pet dog.

Nutaki Navakumar and his wife Aasha brought a puppy on October 31, 2019. They named the dog Stephen and celebrated its first birthday a year later on a grand note by cutting a cake and throwing party for around 30 children. On the advice of doctors, they took the dog for crossing. After the dog became pregnant, the couple hosted the baby shower for the pet dog and invited more than 100 guests for the party. After



A woman blessing the dog during its baby shower at Sathupalli in Bhadradi-Kothagudem district on Wednesday

cake cutting, the guests blessed the dog. Nutaki Navakumar and Aasha, speaking to The Hans India said, "We have a son and a daughter who are studying medicine and engineering, and we treat our pet equal to our children. We love our pet and wanted to celebrate all important occasions of its life like we do for our children."

Meanwhile, many people who attended the function praised the couple's love for their pet dog.

Mayor seeks suggestions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

DEVELOPMENTAL activity is in full swing in the limits of Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC), Mayor Gunda Prakash Rao said. Inaugurating road expansion works in the 34th Division here on Wednesday, he said that the civic body has taken up works worth around Rs 1,100 crore since he took over the mayorship. The civic body is keen to develop the infrastructure in the city with the coordination of people's representatives, he added.

He said that measures were being taken to improve sanitation in the city. "Drinking water supply on daily basis to all the households will be ensured from Ugadi," the Mayor said. He said that the civic body was ready to examine the pleas from denizens with regard to construction of community halls and other developmental works.

BJP leaders released

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

A court in Warangal has on Wednesday granted bail to BJP Warangal Urban District president Rao Padma and 44 others. It may be mentioned here that 45 BJP leaders, including six women, were arrested and sent to judicial remand on Monday in connection with the attack on the residence of Parkal TRS MLA Challa Dharma Reddy. The BJP leaders pelted stones at Challa's residence in retaliation against his controversial remarks on fundraising for the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on Sunday.

Learning that the court had granted bail to them, the Warangal Central Prison was abuzz with BJP leaders and activists, right from the afternoon. The release of the leaders was delayed due to some technical reasons, it's learnt. MLC Ramchander



The released BJP leaders greeting people during a rally in Warangal on Wednesday

Rao, former MPs Garikapati Mohan Rao and Chada Suresh Reddy were among others who gave rousing welcome to the leaders. Later, the released leaders paid tributes to those who sacrificed their lives for separate State at the Telangana Martyrs

Stupa at Adalat Centre. Rao Padma said, "The police let off TRS leaders who attacked party office and foisted false cases against BJP workers." The administration made heavy bandobast at the prison to avoid any untoward incident.

Cops nab murder accused

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

THE police arrested a cable TV operator of Palakurthy who allegedly murdered a taxi driver on January 23. The police seized a car, four motorcycles, two pepper spray bottles and two cell phones from him. Disclosing the details, Commissioner of Police P Pramod Kumar said that they have arrested 20-year-old Parankusham Roshan, who hatched a plan and killed Madana Narsimha, a native of Hanamkonda, residing in Hyderabad.

He said that Roshan who used to operate cable TV network has become a habitual offender to lead a lavish life. Roshan has a past record of stealing bikes. Against this backdrop, Roshan has decided to steal cars and sell them to make easy money. And in the process, Roshan chose to use a trick which he watched on a television serial. As per it, he purchased two pepper spray bottles online.

He went to Hanamkonda where he engaged a car owned by Narsimha. He told Narsimha to take him to Jangaon on the pretext of handing over a computer motherboard to a customer. The plan was to kill Narsimha somewhere at a secluded location and decamp with the car. Looking for an opportunity, he asked Narsimha to take him to Palakurthy. On their return journey to Hanamkonda, Roshan attacked Narsimha with pepper spray and bludgeoned him to death near Raghavapuram village under Palakurthy mandal.

The West Zone DCP Srinivas Reddy formed special teams to nab the accused. The police who used the latest technology arrested Roshan near Palakurthy.

The Commissioner lauded the efforts of Wardhannapet ACP Ramesh, Palakurthy Inspector Cheralu, IT & Cybercrime Inspectors Raghavender, Janardhan Reddy and other cops for arresting the accused.

Govt ready to sanction funds for mini stadium in Husnabad: Harish

Inaugurates constituency-level cricket tournament in Koheda

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KARIMNAGAR

FINANCE Minister T Harish Rao stated that playing sports help in keeping the body fit and also in developing organisational skills. In this regard, he said that the State government has determined to sanction funds for the construction of a mini stadium in Husnabad.

Ahead of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's birthday on February 17, the leaders of TRSV conducted a constituency-level cricket tournament here at mandal headquarters in Koheda.



Finance Minister T Harish Rao playing cricket after inaugurating constituency-level cricket tournament in Koheda on Wednesday

The Finance Minister who attended as a chief guest for the

event, inaugurated the tournament by batting to the bowling of Husnabad MLA V Satish Kumar.

Speaking on the occasion, Harish said that due to change in the eating habits and the food, many strange diseases have been witnessed in the recent past. Physical fitness is most important and for keeping the body fit and healthy, everyone should workout for at least half-an-hour besides playing various sports and games. Later, the Minister appreciated the Husnabad MLA V Satish Kumar for addressing the needs of his constituency people. Meanwhile, those attended the inaugural ceremony were surprised to see the Finance Minister playing extraordinary cricket shots on the ground.

Employees oppose privatisation of electricity sector, boycott duties

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KARIMNAGAR

AS part of the call given by the National Coordinate Committee of Electricity Engineers and Employees, the engineers and employees of electricity department on the behalf of Karimnagar Electricity JAC boycotted their work and made the programme successful here in Karimnagar on Wednesday.

As the Central government is going to introduce Electricity Amendment Bill in the coming up Parliament session, the employees of electricity department of all centres present across the country are gearing up to start a movement against the new Bill 2020-21.

Speaking on the occasion, the convenor of the Karimnagar Electricity JAC, K Anjaiah, said that if the Bill was made into law, the people across the country mainly weaker sections and farmers would face severe economic problems. "For the past 70 years, the employees of electricity department are rendering better services not only to consumers, but also to industrial sectors and are playing key role in the development of the nation. But the Central government, to favour some of the corporate biggies, is trying to hand over the electricity department to private corporate companies which is totally unfair," he alleged

APP TO MONITOR STUDENT ATTENDANCE

AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday directed the officials to brace up for starting the second phase of Nadu-Nedu works from April 15, considering the experiences during the first phase.

Taking part in a review on Manabadi Nadu-Nedu and Gorumuddha schemes at his camp office, the Chief Minister instructed authorities to efficiently implement the Nadu-Nedu initiative without compromising on quality and standards. The officials informed that the second phase will be completed by December 31 with an expenditure of Rs 4,446 crore, while the cost of first phase was Rs 3,700 crore.

The Chief Minister also enquired about the student attendance at schools after reopening and instructed the officials to develop an app to record the attendance. He said that in case the children are absent from school,

► On instructions from the CM, the officials inform that the app will be developed by Feb 15

► CM directs officials to start Nadu-Nedu second phase works from April 15



Chief Minister in a review on Manabadi-Nadu Nedu at Tadepalli on Wednesday

an SMS has to be sent to the parents and a volunteer would be sent directly to their house on the second day to find out the reasons for student's absence. The authorities informed that the app on student attendance will be ready by February 15. On Gorumuddha programme, the Chief Minister directed the officials not to compromise on quality and implement it properly without any errors. Similarly, he told the authorities to ensure the toilets in

schools are maintained well. In this context, the state government signed an MoU with Sulabh International, where 49,000 toilet maintenance staff will be trained on maintaining clean toilets.

Education minister Audimulapu Suresh, principal secretary for school education Buditi Rajashekar, commissioner of school education V Chinaveerabadhrudu, SSA state project director Vetri Selvi and other officials attended the review.

TDP MPs meet Shah, appeal for intervention in AP

AMARAVATI

TDP MPs met and complained to Union home minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Wednesday about the ongoing 'attacks and atrocities' being committed by the YSRCP ministers, MLAs and leaders in Andhra Pradesh with utter disrespect to all the constitutional systems and institutions.

The TDP MPs appealed to Shah for urgent intervention by the Centre to restore law and order to ensure a free and fair election in the state.

Later, MPs Galla Jayadev and K Ravindra Kumar told media that they had taken to the notice of the Union home minister how the YSRCP was resorting to all-round attacks and atrocities on women, media, judges, weaker sections, opposition leaders and temples. They said YSRCP leaders were resorting to kidnappings and killings to prevent the rival candidates from contesting polls.

The TDP MPs said that Shah assured to look into the memorandum they had submitted and to take suitable action that would be necessary.

SSC exams from June 7

AMARAVATI

THE SSC exams will be held from June 7 to June 16 and the schedule was released by minister for education Audimulapu Suresh here on Wednesday.

The exam dates are common for regular, private, OSSC and vocational candidates and exams will be in a single shift from 9.30 am to 12.45 pm.

Speaking to media here on Wednesday, the minister said that the exams will be held for seven papers, of which three are languages, two are group subjects and two are of science papers, where all the examinations except science papers will be held for 100 marks each.

Considering the shortened academic year due to Covid pandemic, the syllabus was reduced by 35 per cent and the examinations will also be held according to the updated syllabus, he said adding that the last classroom day for Class X will be June 5.

Similarly, the annual examinations for students studying between Classes 1 to 9 will be



Minister for Education, Audimulapu Suresh addressing the press conference at Secretariat in Velagapudi on Wednesday

- Exams will be held for 7 papers, in a single shift
- For students of Classes 1 to 9, the exams will be between May 3 to 10

held between May 3-10, with a last working day on May 15. The summer vacation for the school students starts from May 16- June 30, while the academic year 2021 begins on July 1.

The minister announced that the Intermediate students of the previous academic year both first and second year students who were just awarded pass marks due to Covid situation can now appear for examinations for im-

provement. The students can either appear for all the subjects or only selected subjects. Further, he said that the examination fee for Intermediate students shall remain the same as last year, without any hike.

The examinations schedule include: June 7: First Language, June 8: Second Language, June 9: English, June 10: Mathematics, June 11: Physical Science, June 12: Biology, June 14: Social Studies

Rihanna, Greta back farmers' protest

Continued from P1

"It's no coincidence that the world's oldest democracy was attacked not even a month ago, and as we speak, the most populous democracy is under assault."

"This is related. We ALL should be outraged by India's internet shutdowns and paramilitary violence against farmer protesters," Meena Harris tweeted.

Nine-year-old climate activist Licypriya Kangujam had asked Thunberg to support the farmers protest, saying they were already battling climate crisis. "Hi @GretaThunberg! Please extend support to the voice of millions of Indian farmers. This is the world's biggest historic protest for their rights," Kangujam, who is also called "India's Greta Thunberg", tweeted.

Vanessa Nakate, a Ugandan climate activist, has also come out in support of farmers. "Let us talk about what is happening in India right now #FarmersProtest," Nakate tweeted, tagging Kangujam.

In another tweet, Kangujam had said: "Dear friends, Our millions of poor farmers sleeping in the streets in this cold

weather don't expect anything from you. Just your one tweet of love and supports /solidarity to their cause means a lot to them. Our Indian celebrities get lost. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been protesting at Delhi's borders for over two months against the laws."

Former adult star Mia Khalifa too showed support by dropping tweets reacting to the agitation. Condemning the government for the "human rights violations", Mia Khalifa tweeted, "Human rights violation is going on! They cut the internet around New Delhi!! #FarmersProtest."

Rihanna and Greta Thunberg's tweets stirred controversy with actor Kangana Ranaut attacking both of them for supporting the ongoing unrest. Calling Rihanna a "fool", Kangana slammed her for her tweet and said, "No one is talking about it coz they are not farmers, they are terrorists who are trying to divide India, so that China can take over our vulnerable broken nation and make it a Chinese colony much like USA... Sit down you fool, we are not selling our nation like you dummies."

The actor also attacked Greta Thunberg for her tweets, calling the Swedish climate activist and Nobel peace prize nominee a "spoilt brat."

Sharing a story of a 105-year-old organic farmer, Kangana slammed Thunberg, calling her a "fancy activist."

"No fancy activists will talk about genuine environmentalist our own grandma ... but they will definitely promote dumb and a spoilt brat ?@GretaThunberg? who is being used by entire left lobby and in return she gets to skip her education and school."

Hyping up Rihanna's support to farmers' protest, Punjabi singer and actor Diljit Dosanjh shared a picture of the American singer on his Instagram stories, but stopped short of adding any caption to it, rather added a background song of Rihanna, Run This Town.

Meanwhile, actress-model Shibani Dandekar came out in support to Rihanna's tweet by sharing it in her Instagram story where she wrote, "THIS!!!" Other celebrities like Richa Chadha and Hansal Mehta also reacted to Rihanna's support for farmers' protest.

ESIC okays 100-bed hospital in Vizianagaram

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

EMPLOYEES State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has given approval for setting up of a 100-bed hospital in Vizianagaram. This was disclosed by the Union Minister of State,

Santosh Kumar Gangwar, in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday in response to a question by the YSRCP MP V Vijaysai Reddy.

The hospital will be equipped with primary and secondary care facilities i.e., specialised care with out-patient, in-patient, emergency

care, operation theatre, labour room, diagnostic services, drugs distribution and facilities under AYUSH, the Union minister said. The sanctioned cost of the project is 73.68 crore and the timeline for completion of the project is March, 2023, he said.

TRINITY IN ACTION



TPCC president and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy along with Congress MPs A Revanth Reddy and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy addressing the media in New Delhi on Wednesday. The Congress MPs released the misleading & factually incorrect replies by the Central government in Parliament in response to 3 unstarred questions raised in Parliament on farm laws and MSP related issues

Doctors deaths: Who is lying? IMA refutes Centre's data

NEW DELHI

THE Indian Medical Association (IMA), a national voluntary organisation of doctors, on Wednesday expressed shock over the underreporting of data by the Centre on the total number of doctors who have succumbed to the coronavirus infection.

On Tuesday, Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey had said that coronavirus has so far claimed the lives of 162 doctors, 107 nurses and 44 ASHA workers in the country. In a letter to Choubey, IMA President J.A. Jayalal wrote that the Centre's data is contrary to the one released by the association which contained the names of 744 doctors.

He further stated that even though doctors suffer a higher viral load and a higher Case Fatality Ratio as a

community, they still chose to serve the nation in the best traditions of the medical profession. Besides condemning the apathy of the government of India in verifying the data, the issue of delay in disbursing the solatium for the Covid-19 victims' families was also raised. IMA has made some requests to the government, first is to expedite the process of giving solatium to families at the earliest possible time. Secondly, constitution of a high-powered committee for a thorough study on the entire data of deceased doctors and for all those who had succumbed to be honoured.

Meanwhile, about one in four of India's 135 crore people may have been infected with the coronavirus,



said a source with direct knowledge of a government serological survey, suggesting the country's real case-load was many times higher than reported, according to NDTV report.

India has confirmed 1.08 crore COVID-19 infections, the most anywhere outside the United States.

But the survey, whose findings are much more conservative than a private one from last week, indicates India's actual cases may have crossed 30 crore. The state-run Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which conducted the survey, said it would only share the findings at a news conference on Thursday.

The source declined to be named ahead of the official announcement. It was not immediately clear how many people participated in the latest survey.

Following another survey done in August and September using blood samples of more than 29,000 people older than 10, ICMR had concluded that one in 15 Indians had COVID-19 antibodies. The figure jumped to one in six in densely-populated urban slums.

A survey released by the government of the capital New Delhi this week found that more than half of its two crore inhabitants may have been infected with the coronavirus. Even just the first of the two-dose Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine can cut coronavirus transmissions by around 67 per cent and therefore have a "substantial effect" on controlling the spread of the deadly virus, according to a new Oxford University study on Wednesday.

SC refuses to entertain pleas on tractor rally violence on R-Day

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that law will take its own course, as it declined to entertain a PIL urging it to issue directions to register FIR against persons or organisation responsible for dishonouring of the national flag at the Red Fort on Republic Day.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde said the government is already inquiring into the matter and it is apparent that it will also take necessary action. The Chief Justice said: "We read PM statement in press that the law will take its own course."

While addressing arguments on violence unleashed on Delhi streets amid the tractor rally on Republic Day, the Chief Justice stressed that the court is not condoning it.

The Chief Justice said, "We are sure government is inquiring into it and taking appropriate action."

The top court also declined to entertain another PIL seeking directions for an NIA probe against anti-social elements, part of the tractor rally, who engaged in violence on the streets of the national capital on Republic Day. The plea, filed through advocates Shashank Shekhar Jha and Manju Jetley Sharma, said the attack on the Red Fort and the national flag on Republic Day needs immediate attention.

Tikait warns of 'gaddi wapsi'

Oppn demands repeal of farm laws, asks govt not to treat farmers as enemies
British Labour MP Webbe says farmers' issue to be debated in UK Parliament

JIND/NEW DELHI

IN a show of strength by protesting farmers, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday warned the government that it could find it difficult to stay on in power if the new agri-marketing laws are not repealed.

Just before Tikait was to begin his speech at the 'mahapanchayat' in Kandela village, the stage on which the farmer leaders had gathered collapsed under their weight. Nobody was reported hurt and the BKU leader went on to address the large gathering. Calling for a "wapsi" (withdrawal) of the three new central laws, the BKU leader indirectly warned the Narendra Modi government that it could lose its "gaddi" (power) if the agitation continues.

"We have so far talked about "bill wapsi" (repealing the farm laws). The government should listen carefully. What will you do if the youth call for "gaddi wapsi" (removal from power)?" he said. He asked the Centre to repeal the three laws and frame a new one to assure the continuation of the minimum support price (MSP) system. The BKU leader from Uttar Pradesh has been camping at Ghazipur on the Delhi-UP border as part of a campaign by farmer unions against the central laws enacted in September.

Several opposition parties including the Congress and the DMK on Wednesday asked



the government to withdraw the three contentious farm laws without making it a prestige issue and not to treat the agitating farmers as "enemies". Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress member Ghulam Nabi Azad suggested that Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself should make the announcement on repeal of the laws. Modi was present in the House at the time.

British Labour Party MP Claudia Webbe said they will be taking up the issue of Indian farmers' protest for a debate in the UK parliament, as an online petition they had started gained more than 100,000 signatures, which qualifies the petition to be taken up for a debate in Parliament.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said India's reputation has taken a

"massive hit" and its biggest strength, its soft power, has been "shattered" by the BJP and the RSS.

Referring to the multi-layered barricading and roadblocks at protest sites, the former Congress chief asked why the national capital was being converted into a "fortress", and asserted that farmers work hard for the country and should not be treated in this manner. Alleging that there is no leadership in the country anymore, Gandhi said.

The Shiv Sena said video recordings of the flag incident at Red Fort during the farmers' tractor parade on Republic Day do not show anything insulting to the Tricolour.

"Making a hue and cry about an incident which did not happen is also an insult of the national flag," an editorial in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' said. The comments in the Marathi publication came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the country was saddened by the "insult" to the Tricolour on the Republic Day.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor and senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai have moved the Supreme Court against multiple FIRs registered against them over their alleged "misleading" tweets on the violence during the farmers' tractor rally here on Republic Day. Journalists Mrinal Pande, Zafar Agha, Paresch Nath and Anant Nath also approached the top court on Tuesday evening against the FIRs.

Diljit releases new track on Rihanna after she supports farmers

MUMBAI

PUNJABI singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh on Wednesday released his latest track dedicated to international pop star Rihanna, less than 24 hours after she voiced her support to the ongoing farmers agitation in the country.

The 2.16 minute-long Punjabi number draws its title, 'RIRI (Rihanna)', from the Grammy-winning artiste's nickname. The audio track, which was released on Dosanjh's YouTube channel around 1.30 pm, has been penned by lyricist Raj Ranjodh, with music by Intense. The song acknowledges Rihanna's Caribbean roots, with the opening lines describing the singer as a "beautiful woman from Barbados" with "shining, bright eyes" who "spreads colours" all around her.

According to the lyrics, Dosanjh, 37, thanked God for sending "this angel on earth", before further expressing his wish to gift the singer a Patiala suit and jhaanjar (pair of heavy anklets). "All Punjabis are your fans, people are jealous of your fanbase," he sings.

Rihanna shared a CNN news article with her 100 million followers on Twitter, calling out the internet shutdown at the protest sites near Kaithal, Panipat, Jind, Rohtak, Charkhi Dadri, Sonapat and Haryana districts in Haryana. "Why aren't we talking about this? #Farmers Protest," the 32-year-old singer wrote.



Kerala CM's ex-aide gets bail

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

THE former principal secretary to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, M.Shivashankar got bail from the Economic Offence special court, Ernakulam in the dollar smuggling case. The senior bureaucrat has already got bails in the gold smuggling and money laundering cases. In the third case, he was charged for smuggling dollars to the UAE. The court granted him bail after the arguments by the Customs were countered by his legal team.

Shivashankar came out of the Kakkannad sub jail in Ernakulam on Wednesday after 98 days of incarceration. He was granted bail after furnishing a bond of Rs 2 lakh and two personal securities of the same amount.

PM Modi's brother sits on dharna in UP

LUCKNOW

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Modi staged a dharna at the Lucknow airport on Wednesday, alleging that police arrested his supporters who had come to receive him.

"Today, I was to go to Prayagraj and my programmes are going on since yesterday. It will be unfair if I walk free outside while my supporters stay lodged in jail. Hence, I have decided to sit here [Lucknow airport] on a hunger strike. I have given up water and food. I will not get up from here, even if my life ends," Prahlad Modi said.

Prahlad Modi further said, "When I asked the police why was this done, they said it was done on the orders of PMO. I asked them to show me a copy of the order, but they didn't. Either they are trying to defame PMO or there is no order copy."

Prahlad Modi's supporters were arrested for violating Section 144 for assembly at the high-security zone in the airport, according to India Today report. Prahlad Modi said that around 100 of his supporters had come to receive him at the airport.

According to Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport's Additional General Manager (Operations) Bhupendra Singh, Prahlad Modi arrived at Lucknow by an Indigo flight around 4 pm.

He sat on a dharna on the airport premises as he was unhappy over police stopping his supporters from reaching there, Singh told news agency PTL.



Jharkhand health worker dies after Covid jab

RANCHI

A health worker has died 36 hours after being administered COVID vaccine in Jharkhand, officials said on Wednesday. The health worker, identified as Mannu Pahan, was administered the Covishield vaccine at his workplace Medanta Hospital in Ranchi on February 1 and he died on Tuesday night, the private medical establishment's CEO Dr Pankaj Sahni said.

Though 52-year-old Pahan did not have comorbidities, the cause of his death is being investigated, he said.

After being administered the vaccine, Pahan returned to his village in Ormanjhi near Ranchi and even came to work on February 2. He fell ill in his village on Tuesday night and died while being taken to the hospital, Dr Ajit Prasad, nodal officer for the COVID-19 vaccination programme in the state, said.

"Post-mortem examination will be conducted on the body by a medical board at state-run Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences to ascertain the cause of his death.

"A total of 151 health workers including Pahan had been vaccinated at Medanta Hospital on February 1. Nine others received the vaccine from the same vial from which Pahan was vaccinated and they are all fine. So, it is yet to be confirmed whether he died due to the vaccine," Prasad told PTL.



Indian Air Force's aerobatic team 'Suryakiran' performs during the inauguration of the 13th edition of Aero India, at Yelahanka air base in Bengaluru on Wednesday

BMC official drinks sanitiser instead of water at meeting

MUMBAI

IN a surprising incident, an official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) while presenting the civic body's education budget drank sanitizer instead of water. He drank the sanitizer by mistake and immediately spat it out, the officials said. The incident comes three days after 12 children were administered hand sanitizer drops instead of oral polio vaccine drops at a village in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district.

Ramesh Pawar, the assistant municipal commissioner of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), took a sip of sanitizer from a bottle kept on his desk in the gen-

eral body meeting hall after he sat on the dais along with other officials to present an e-budget for education.

A video of the incident also later went viral on social media in which the official was seen opening a bottle with a white cap and taking the sip.

According to BMC officials, Pawar immediately realized that he drank sanitizer instead of water and some civic staffers present there also alerted him.

He then rushed out of the hall, spit out the sanitizer and rinsed his mouth, they said.

Pawar returned within a few minutes and presented the civic body's education budget having an outlay of Rs 2,945.78 crore for the year 2021-22.

Barricading local administration issue: Tomar

Academicians from IITs, IIM support agitating farmers

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

OVER 400 academicians from across the country and several universities abroad have urged the central government to immediately abandon the three new farm reform laws which they said "pose a major threat to farming communities all over India".

In a joint statement issued on Wednesday, the academicians have expressed concerns about the ongoing farmers' protests and their suffering at the borders of Delhi.

Last month, over 850 academicians from various educational institutions across the country had signed an open letter backing the legislations. The 400-odd academicians in their statement said, "The three new laws that have been enacted by the gov-

ernment are aimed at bringing in fundamental changes in the way farming will be done in the country and they pose a major threat to farming communities all over India."

"The government must re-look at these issues. A nationwide debate should be launched starting at the village level, involving stakeholders from all sections of society before framing laws and policies which will help farming communities and other marginalised communities in the long-term. To pave the way for solving farmers issues, the current laws should be abandoned without any further delay," it added.

The 413 signatories to the statement include academicians from universities and institutions including Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jadavpur University, IIT Kanpur, IIT Madras, IISc Bangalore, Indian Statistical



Institute Kolkata, Delhi University, Punjab University, Tezpur University, Central university of Punjab, IIT Bombay and IIM Calcutta.

A few signatories are from foreign universities including University of Zagreb, Croatia; London Film School, University of Johannesburg, University of Oslo, University of Massachusetts and University of Pittsburgh.

The academicians recommended that farming could be made into a sustainable and profitable activity by announcing minimum support price (MSP) for a large number of crops, specifying state-wise quotas for government procurement, and making the MSP rate legally binding for all other buyers as well.

The statement also called for price control on farm inputs such as manure, seeds and power, farm

loan waivers, and a revival of the village-based development model so that migration to cities could be curtailed. It warned that the Centre's proposed "commodity market model" was not viable in India as it could lead to food instability and exploitation of small farmers.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the Centre is not holding any informal talk with protesting farmers and described putting up of more barricades and suspending internet in and around agitation sites as law and order issues related to local administrations.

Asked when the government will hold the next round of talks and if it was engaging with the unions informally, Tomar replied in the negative. "No. We will inform when formal talks will be held," Tomar told PTL.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Air India staff's interest will be protected


“The interest of the employees of Air India will be safeguarded in accordance with the guidance of the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management, Ministry of Finance and same will be reflected in the Share Purchase Agreement to be signed with new owner post disinvestment.”
— Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister



LOSS

Inox reports Q3 loss of ₹102 cr

Multiplex chain operator Inox Leisure Ltd on Wednesday reported a consolidated loss of Rs 102.50 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2020. The company had posted a profit of Rs 35.01 crore in the October-December period a year ago, Inox Leisure said in a BSE filing. Its total income stood at Rs 21.51 crore.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.33	South	
Euro	92.06	African Rand	5.61
UAE Dirham	21.84	Hong Kong Dollar	10.82
Thai Baht	2.79	Japanese Yen	0.8
British Pound	103.48	New Zealand Dollar	55.17
Australian Dollar	58.33	Saudi Riyal	21.38
Canadian Dollar	59.87	Swedish Krona	9.95
Swiss Franc	84.39	Singapore Dollar	57.43

DELHI THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Sonalika Tractors logs record sales

SONALIKA Tractors said it registered registered highest ever overall January sales volume of 10,158 tractors, which is well above 7,220 tractors sold in January last year. The company has powered ahead with a significant margin to sell 8,154 tractors in domestic market in January 2021, which is around 46 per cent higher than 5,585 tractors sold in January 2020. Sonalika Tractors introduced Sikander DLX potato special edition series in January 2021. The advanced tractor is a customised solution equipped with 5G controlled valve with superior hydraulics that offer better sensing during potato farming. Raman Mittal, Executive Director, Sonalika Group, said: “While driving farm mechanisation, our aim is to raise increase customer productivity significantly without increasing total cost of product ownership.”

Hindware unveils campaign

HINDWARE brand has kick-started its new brand campaign ‘Thoughtful is Beautiful’. The new campaign is first of its kind in the category and aims to showcase how innovative performance led product solutions that offer convenience to consumers. MagicCircle Communications conceptualized the film and directed by Karan Shetty and produced by Fingerprint Films, the ads are centered on the playful and relatable onepmanship of a millennial couple. Sudhanshu Pokhriyal, Chief Operating Officer, Bath Products, Brillloca Limited said: “Today, Hindware has carved a niche for itself as a relevant and trusted brand, as it has proven with time its dynamic capability to evolve with changing aesthetics over the years. It understands its consumers”.

JSW Cement's new product

JSW Cement, a part of JSW Group, has begun test marketing an eco-friendly alternative to river sand. This special slag sand product is a nonmetallic product where in industrial slag is converted into sand through world-class manufacturing process involving proprietary technologies. The test marketing has begun in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. Rajesh Pallantia Assistant General Manager JSW Cement, said: “The ever-growing demand of raw materials for roads and building construction, and rampant reclamation of natural resources is creating constant strain on environmental balance.”

NCC gets 5 new orders

NCC has received five new orders totaling to Rs. 1,200 crore (exclusive of GST) in the month of January 2021. Out of these, orders worth Rs. 607 crore pertain to water & environment division and order worth Rs. 593 crore pertain to buildings division. These orders are received from Central/State Government agencies and do not include any internal orders.

Mahindra's kisan awards

MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA'S Farm Equipment Division, a part of Mahindra Group, announced the winners of the inaugural Krish-e champion awards. These awards take forward the spirit of the Mahindra Samridhi India Agri Awards that were instituted in 2011. A biannual event, aligned with the Kharif and Rabi seasons, the Krish-e Champion awards recognize and felicitate individual farmers as well as institutions who have risen above the ordinary by accepting no limits, thinking innovatively & driving positive change in the agriculture sector.

Sensex makes history as Budget puts mkts on fire

BSE benchmark scales Mt 50k, ends at 50,255.75; Nifty at fresh high

MUMBAI

THE BSE Sensex closed above the historic 50,000-mark for the first time ever on Wednesday as the post-Budget euphoria continued for the third straight session amid a spurt in buying by foreign funds and positive global cues.

Banking, finance and pharma counters hogged the limelight, while cement and FMCG stocks succumbed to profit-taking. After touching a record intra-day high of 50,526.39, the 30-share BSE benchmark ended at 50,255.75, up 458.03 points or 0.92 per cent. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 142.10 points or 0.97 per cent to its fresh closing record of 14,789.95. It touched an all-time high of 14,868.85 during the day. IndusInd Bank topped the Sensex gainers' chart, zooming 7.65 per cent, followed by PowerGrid, Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma, NTPC and Axis Bank. On the other hand, UltraTech Cement, Maruti, ITC, Kotak Bank, Asian Paints, Nestle India and TCS were among the losers, slipping up to 0.90 per cent. “Domestic equities continued to remain in the grip of bulls and broader indices made fresh record highs today,” said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.



Optimism created after the announcement of bold measures in the Union Budget continued to attract investors. Favourable global cues also supported the market rally. Notably, market cap of Indian market is just fraction away from surpassing Rs 200 trillion levels, he added. “Given sharp increase in capital expenditure along with a number of reforms to give impetus to investment activities, momentum in corporate earnings is expected to sustain in subsequent quarters. Further, higher fiscal stimulus in the US, persistent soft monetary policy stance of global bankers and weak dollar should continue to act as key tail-

winds for FPIs flows. “In the near term, monetary policy outcome will be a key focus area for market, which is broadly expected to remain favourable,” he noted.

Sector-wise, BSE utilities, healthcare, power, metal, telecom and finance indices rose as much as 2.47 per cent, while realty and FMCG finished with losses. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices rallied up to 1.47 per cent. Global markets marched higher following renewed hopes for the passage of the \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill in the US. In rest of Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended with gains, while Shanghai was in the red. Stock ex-

Investor wealth zooms ₹12.31L cr

INVESTOR wealth has jumped by over Rs 12.31 lakh crore in three days, taking the market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies to a record Rs 198.43 lakh crore on Wednesday as equities continued their Budget-driven rally. Following the bullish investor sentiment, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped by Rs 12,31,140.96 crore in three sessions to a record Rs 1,98,43,784.99 crore (\$2.7 trillion). The BSE-listed companies' market valuation had crossed the Rs 100 lakh crore milestone on November 28, 2014.

changes in Europe were also trading on a positive note in early deals. Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.36 per cent higher at \$58.01 per barrel. The Indian rupee ended on a flat note and settled 1 paisa higher at 72.95 (provisional) against the US dollar. Stepping up their purchase of domestic shares, foreign institutional investors were net buyers to the tune of Rs 6,181.56 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

YuppTV partners with BSNL to launch ‘YuppTV Scope’

NEW DELHI

YUPPTV, a leading global OTT platform, has partnered Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) to launch a tech-enabled single subscription video streaming platform YuppTV Scope. Having previously signed an MoU with BSNL to offer bundled OTT services to broadband subscribers as a triple-play offering, YuppTV is now launching video services for BSNL broadband users.

Being the first platform in the world to offer such a unique service, YuppTV Scope offers users a single subscription to all premium OTT apps such as SonyLiv, ZEE5, Voot Select and YuppTV-aggregator of live TV channels, while eliminating the tedious task of accessing and managing multiple apps.

Considering BSNL's vast audience base across demographics, the platform caters to all users, both tech-savvy and legacy cable TV users. For legacy users, plat-

form offers a traditional TV-like experience for consumers who are attuned to cable TV, while allowing them to switch live TV channels in a seamless manner.

As a cross-platform service, YuppTV Scope can be accessed from device types including smart TV, PC, mobile, tablet and streaming media players. Additionally, users can carry out live chats, participate in live polls, and also request content of their choice, all while watching live TV. Uday Reddy, Founder and CEO, YuppTV, said, “With this launch, we are enabling the convergence of prominent content partners, broadcasters, telecom and broadband providers to create a holistic ecosystem for all key stakeholders across industries. This unique and seamless video entertainment experience using a technologically-advanced, all-encompassing platform will first be offered to BSNL customers. We will soon be adding more apps to the platform.”



Budget will enhance growth in mfg, trade: Commerce Secy

NEW DELHI

THE Budget for 2021-22 extensively and comprehensively envisages several initiatives and areas of focus, aimed at enhancing India's overall competitiveness and manufacturing capacities, which would enable growth, diversification and technological enhancement of India's exports, Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan said on Wednesday.

These cover both ease of doing business in the area of approvals and procedures, and the physical environment for investment, targeting a plug and play eco-system for investors, he said. Briefing the media on the Budget 2021-22 initiatives, the commerce secretary said that one primary area of focus is the creation of a robust infrastructure, logistics and utilities environment for the manufacturing sector. Some of these measures include a scheme for Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA), which will create world class infrastructure with plug and play facilities to enable the creation of global champions in the sector, benefiting from economies of scale and agglomeration.

Internal audit: RBI's risk-based steps for select NBFCs, UCBs

MUMBAI

THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday unveiled the risk-based internal audit (RBIA) system for select non-bank lenders and urban co-operative banks, with a view to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their internal audit system.

All the deposit-taking non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and the ones with an asset size of over Rs 5,000 crore, and urban co-operatives banks (UCBs) with assets of over Rs 500 crore will have to migrate to the new system, the RBI said. Currently, all the entities supervised by the RBI have their own approaches on internal audit, resulting in certain inconsistencies, risks and gaps in the system, the RBI said.

The NBFCs and UCBs face risks similar to the ones for scheduled commercial banks which require an alignment of processes, it added. The central bank said the RBIA is an audit methodology that links an organisation's overall risk management framework. It provides an assurance to the board of directors and the senior management on the quality and effectiveness of the organisation's

All the deposit-taking non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and the ones with an asset size of over ₹5,000 crore, and urban co-operatives banks (UCBs) with assets of over ₹500 crore, will have to migrate to the new system



internal controls, risk management and governance-related systems and processes, it added. The internal audit function is an integral part of sound corporate governance and is considered as the third line of defence, it said.

Historically, the internal audit system at NBFCs/UCBs has generally been concentrating on transaction testing, testing of accuracy and reliability of accounting records and financial reports, adherence to legal

and regulatory requirements, which might not be sufficient in a changing scenario. A shift to a framework which focuses on evaluation of the risk management systems and control procedures in various areas of operations, in addition to transaction testing, will help in anticipating areas of potential risks and mitigating such risks, the RBI said.

RBIA should undertake an independent risk assessment for the purpose of formulating a risk-based audit plan, which considers the inherent business risks emanating from an activity/location and the effectiveness of the control systems for monitoring such inherent risks, it said. The entities have to implement the RBIA framework by March 31, 2022, and have been asked to constitute a committee of senior executives with the responsibility of formulating a suitable action plan.

West Godavari: Flush with agro, aqua units

SANTOSH PATNAIK
ELURU

WITH its fertile lands, prosperity fuelled by agriculture, West Godavari is considered one of the prosperous districts in Andhra Pradesh with no dearth of entrepreneurship to make it one of the leading hubs for food processing industries and aquaculture.

The district is situated on the west banks of River Godavari. It is well known as the rice granary of Andhra Pradesh. The total area of the district is 7742 Sq. Km. The gross cropped area is 72,4584 hectares.

It has a population of 39.37 lakh as per 2011 census. Kolleru lake, the biggest fresh water lake in India, is situated in the southwestern part of the district. The drainage is mainly dendritic in the northern part. Drainage density is more in the northern part. The delta area is served by the Godavari canal system and hundreds of drains. The gross

district domestic product (GDDP) is \$7.5 billion with agriculture contribution estimated at \$3 billion, according to the Economic Development Board of Andhra Pradesh.

West Godavari has varied industries set up with massive investment providing employment to many and contributing to GDP. As the multi-purpose Polavaram project is under construction, the district prospects for investment opportunities in agro-based and food processing, including poultry and aquaculture units, are further brightened.

The district with its vast delta area and enterprising individuals is home to sugar mills, sanitary ware, food processing, bottling, aqua and poultry feed units. The Sarvaraya Group and Jeypore Sugar factory are well-known names. The district over the years has emerged as a leading centre for Vannamei (white-leg shrimp) farming due to its culinary value and demand in overseas markets for low price.



The Sarvaraya Group's Andhra Sugars hit the headlines when it made solid, liquid and cryogenic fuel for ISRO's GSLV with technical guidance from the nation's premier space agency way back in 2012.

In four years from 2014-15, 14 large and mega projects with an investment of ₹849.28 crore have gone into

production providing employment to 2545. During the same period, 2090 MSME units registered with an investment of ₹1,929.87 crore employing 25,165.

The Industries Department has identified several potential activities including paper board making, straw board making, milk chilling, process-



ing, ice cream making, ready-to-eat foods, fish oil, automobile components and sanitary ware.

The district under food-based industries segment at present has edible oils, sugar, coffee powder, aqua processing units, ready-to-eat items like potato chips, bakery products, papads and chilly powders; It also has several cashew processing units and plastic, construction, packing based enterprises.

The District Industries Centre has

The district with its vast delta area and enterprising individuals is home to sugar mills, sanitary ware, food processing, bottling, aqua and poultry feed industries

identified certain major thrust areas, which include food and agro-based, mineral, textile sectors. The total area under horticulture crops in the district is 1,204 lakh hectares. The district is one of the major producers of mango and oil palm. The major horticulture crops are mango, lime, banana, oil palm, coconut, cashew, cocoa, vegetables, spices and flowers.

There is scope for cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants. The major crops grown are paddy, sugar cane, maize, tobacco, red gram, green gram, black gram, groundnut, sun flower and pulses. There is also good potential for investment in palm oil processing, rice bran oil processing, cashew processing, cocoa, lime processing, fruits and vegetable processing units.

Getting big first innings total and countering spinners crucial: Trott



File photo of England batting consultant Jonathan Trott (left)

CHENNAI

POSTING big first-innings total and countering the spinners will be crucial to England's chances in the upcoming Test series against India, the visiting team's batting consultant Jonathan Trott said on Wednesday. Trott spoke to the media after his team's training session and he was asked about the message being given to the players ahead of the series opener here from Friday.

"This varies from player to player. For some it's the first tour of India and some have been quite a few times. "Different players, different messages but the fundamentals of playing in India are pretty much the same. Big runs, early on, first innings like everywhere else in the world but it is very, very important in India," Trott said during a virtual press conference. "...And playing spin, having your own method and able to execute that under pressure is most important thing," he added.

While Trott stressed on handling the spin challenge effectively, he was also reminded about India's lethal pace attack, riding on which the hosts did exceedingly well in the recent past. "We saw their pace attack in Australia did really well. They are talented, all round with the ball.

Everyone got the good pace attack these days. That's crucial to prepare for both. "Confront the new ball, spin in the middle, skill has to be very very high and playing in the heat and humidity of Chennai, you have to be very fit and strong."

Talking about captain Joe Root, who is set to appear in his 100th Test, Trott was lavish in his praise. "Baby faced... you won't say he has played 100 Test matches. But not surprised one bit. In warm-up games (in 2012 when he came into the side), he impressed everybody. "He has gone from strength to strength. The way he leads by example. He has passion for the game and desire, still wants to improve and that rubs on others. We are lucky to have a player like him, leading and the way he bats in middle order."

Trott was asked if his batting would be key in India. Root struck two double hundreds in the recent series in Sri Lanka. "Captaining in India is a skill in itself, conditions, rotating bowlers. He has done well, we saw that in Sri Lanka. Seems to be very natural, his captaincy and decision making.

It's going to be a real challenge but we have the confidence in Joe. Can't wait to get started." Trott said his role in India would be to help the players adapt to

conditions. Batting deep in India is considered key, but Trott said having a balance would be very important.

"You got to make sure you have right options of bowlers as well, it is paramount when it comes to winning Test matches. You try to get balance and that is where players like Ben Stokes adds that balance.

Key is to have good game plan as a batter and chip in and hold on, understand what your role is." Test cricket is back in the TV sets of England on free-to-air basis with Channel 4 getting the rights. Trott said nothing can be better than that. "I think the more people we can get watching the game is a great idea and fantastic for the sport," he said. "I'm sure it's going to be exciting for everybody.

For people in lockdown, hopefully they can watch it and we can get the nation behind the side and give a little bit back in what is quite a testing time all around the world. "It's always the ECB's thought to try and inspire a generation and people to play the game.

"By doing that on free-to-air - and through Sky as well -- it's about reaching those people and making sure we get as many people playing cricket and playing sport as it's very important at the current time especially." (PTI)

India just two short of 100 Test wins in 21st century

CHENNAI

AS India gear up to face England in a four-Test series from Friday, the host country is only two wins away from becoming the fourth team to notch 100 wins in Test cricket in the 21st century. India have played 216 Tests since January 1, 2000, and have won 98 matches -- for a 45.37 per cent success -- lost 59, and drawn 59.

Remarkably, India's number of wins in this century is already far more than what they managed in 68 years in the previous century. Between June 1932, when India played their first ever Test, and December 31, 1999, India played 330 Tests and won just 61 for an 18.48 per cent success. They drew 159 matches and lost 109. One Test, against Australia in 1986-87 in Madras, ended in a tie.

India can complete a cen-

tury of Test wins when they play England in a four-match series starting at the MA Chidambaram Stadium here on Friday.

In this century, the most number of wins for Australia have come against Australia, against whom they have also played the most number of Tests overall. India have won 19 of the 46 Tests they have played against the Aussies while losing 16 and drawing 11. Their second most number of Test wins have come against West Indies, 15 out of 28 matches, and losing just two.

India have faced England the most number of times, behind Australia, winning 12 times and losing 15.

Australia have won the most number of Tests since January 1, 2000, winning 138 matches out of 232. England come second with 120 wins in 266 Tests while South Africa are on 100 wins out of 204. (IANS)



Buoyant NEUFC look to snatch fourth spot from Goa



GOA

JUST when all hope seemed lost for NorthEast United, Khalid Jamil's appointment as interim coach has proved to be a breath of fresh air. The Highlanders found themselves in the wrong half of the table and there was uncertainty surrounding their playoff hopes after the departure of Gerard Nus. But three wins on the trot under Jamil has put them back in contention of a top-four spot again.

And after making a big statement by beating leaders Mumbai City FC, NEUFC will hope to prove their credentials once again as they face FC Goa at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, here on Thursday. Both sides have accumulated 21 points after 14 games with fifth-placed NEUFC just below their opponents. While NEUFC have been unbeaten in their last four games, Goa have not suffered a loss in their previous seven matches, making this an encounter to savour for the neutrals.

"We have analysed them," said NEUFC assistant coach Alison Kharsyntiew. "We have to approach the game well, put our best effort and try to win."

Although NEUFC have not managed to record a clean sheet in eight games now, under Jamil they won three matches in a row -- the first time in history that they have managed to do that.

"I would like to give credit to coach Khalid, the technical director, the coaching staff and all the players who have done very well. We haven't changed anything. We have just strengthened our attacking and defensive principles and that's the only thing. We've been trying to play creative football."

The two sides played out a draw 1-1 earlier in the season but Goa coach Juan Ferrando is expecting NEUFC to come hard at them. "The (NorthEast) players are happy, they are enjoying every game, every minute," he said. "The ambiance in their dressing room will be nice. They won the difficult games. The players are free on the pitch. They have gained a lot of positives." Goa will also miss the services of Edu Bedia (suspended) and Brandon Fernandes (injured), making their task difficult. Ferrando admitted he's feeling the heating of the playoff race but feels that has been a positive for his side.

RR DISTRICT TRIUMPHS



Ranga Reddy district has won the " CM KCR Telangana State Senior Men's Inter District Football Championship held at Gajwel, Medak District. Ranga Reddy Dist defeated Vanaparthy in the final. P D Joshua scored the winning goal for Ranga Reddy Dist. P D Emmanuel, coach, V Shiva Kumar, manager expressed sincere thanks to P Rajendran, president, Ramesh Babu, secretary, R Anand Kumar, International, R Umainandan, R Arunkumar, R Diwakaran and Duruvasan all national players for their encouragement and support

Hyderabad FC to promote HFL football tournaments this month

HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD Football league (HFL) announced the schedule of HFL Rookies Cup for amateur football enthusiasts, and HFL Women's Cup for ladies of all age groups. The tournament is promoted by ISL Club Hyderabad FC. The Matches will begin from February 5th and the finals will be played on February 14th. The initiative is an effort to promote interest in football for all and make it more popular in the city. The tournament will be held at Food Ball Park, Jubilee Hills and will allow individuals to be part of a team and play regularly. Around 120 boys and girls will be



part of this tournament which will feature various football academies across the city. This approach emphasizes HFC's commitment to build relationships and a footballing culture in the city. Speaking on the collaboration, Varun Tripuraneni, co-owner HFC said,

" We are happy to promote the HFL tournaments and are keen to build on the footballing culture in the city. HFL has made great inroads with initiating a level of competition. Promoting their tournaments will add to impetus to the participants."

Murad Jasani, MD- HFL said, "HFC is the best thing to happen to Hyderabad Football. They have all the right ideas and are willing to invest their time and money in developing a football culture in the city. We at HFL are very excited to be a part of this journey with HFC and hope that this is just the beginning of many such initiatives by HFC."

'The actual growth of Kabaddi has happened after PKL'

JAIPUR

DEEPAK Niwas Hooda, Captain, India National Kabaddi team recently spoke at length on Sports Tiger's show 'Building Bridge' about his career, coping up with the pandemic, his journey from a village in Rohtak to leading the National team.

Deepak's journey has not been easy and he had to multitask and take on a lot of responsibilities from a very early age. In a recent interaction on Sports Tiger's show 'Building Bridge', he spoke about his early days and said, "When I was 4 years old, my mother passed away and in class 12, I lost my father. I also have an elder sister who was married but due to some family problems, she was staying with us with her two kids and I was taking care of them. I had to leave my studies at that time.

To run the household expenses, I used to go teach in a private school. I also started playing Kabaddi side by side. I used to practice till 6-6:30 am in the morning and then go and teach in the school. I used to comeback home by 2-2:30 pm and then again go for the evening practice till 7:30-8pm at night. He added, "During those days, for around 1.5-2 years, I used to also practice post dinner for 2-3 hours under

street lights." Kabaddi, being a contact sport was one of the sports to have the maximum impact of the lockdown restrictions. Deepak, like most other sportsmen had to stay away from playing the game for a long time due to the nationwide lockdown. He said, "During the start of COVID-19, there were a few problems but we managed." Now that competitive sports and tournaments have started, Deepak is happy about the development and said, "I feel good, we were waiting for Kabaddi to start. We were tired of just practicing, we wanted to play Kabaddi. We were always at home, roaming inside or may be on terrace. We were missing the compe-

tition." He also spoke about the years 2014 and 2016 which turned out to be milestone years for him. He said, "In January 2014 Nationals in Patna, I played so good that I have not been able to replicate such performance in the Nationals ever since." Basis his performance, Deepak was called to the national camp and eventually got the second highest bid in the Pro Kabaddi League auctions a few months later. He also spoke about his India debut and said, "In 2016, I made my India debut and played the South Asian Games and the World Cup in the same year and have been playing since then." Arjuna Awardee Deepak has led the Indian team to a gold medal at the 2019 South Asian Games.





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