



It said that only in some specific conditions can WhatsApp read "business messages" and share the data with Facebook to help those businesses with targeted ads and user optimisation on partner platforms.

Womenia

TWEET PATROL

**GENELIA DESHMUKH****@GENELIAD**

For the love of the viral video..

♥♥♥ & of course @Riteishd

& the cutest ting ting @realpreityzinta



Kaleido, an unfettered collection



Pankaj & Nidhi

TEJAL SINHA

Pankaj & Nidhi's geometrically sharp and precise collection comes in a burst of rainbow hues of brilliant reds, luscious oranges, unabashed pinks, ultra-violet blues and electric greens.

The silhouettes are holiday ready flowing maxi and mini dresses to kick back and let loose and tailored co-ord sets with sporty elements, to acknowledge our pursuits towards wellness and fitness. The fabrics are sheer, translucent, breathable and easy to wear. Over the past few years, Pankaj and Nidhi have always focussed on their pret la-



bel and in 2019 they also launched our couture label.

Sharing about the brand 'PankajandNidhi', Pankaj shares, "For our pret label we focus on various interesting silhouettes which include dresses, co-ord sets, jumpsuits, blazers, bomber jackets where we work on our signature embroideries and for couture, we have both Indian & western couture. Our western couture comprises of silhouettes like form fitted long evening dresses and skirts- a crossover between the Indian lehenga and skirts giving the Pankaj and Nidhi consumer a new and exciting flexibility whereas in our Indian couture we have lehengas, sarees, suits & shararas."

Pankaj is a graduate from the National Institute of Fashion Technology (N.I.F.T.) where he won the 'Uma Nath Gold Medal' for topping academics and the 'Ritu Kumar' Award for Best Graduating Collection 1995 & Smirnoff International Fashion Award in 1994. He worked with one of the India's top designers, Rohit Bal as Head of Design for 10 years. During his tenure, he married his colleague Nidhi, who was a bright and creative alumnus of N.I.F.T. She worked with one of India's leading Export Firms. After which he knew the time was right to take the plunge and started his own label in 2006.

He adds, "I see many aspirants very eager to start their own business. They can't wait to get the high of designing and putting together their new collections and putting them out

there, I would tell them to gather all the knowledge, all the experience, all the technical excellence that they can before they take this plunge. Gather some precious work experience, some amazing courses to make you technically sound, enrich your skills. Once you start there is no going back. We really believe there is a lot to learn in good jobs, even internships, work hard and absorb all the learning."

Kaleido

Kaleido is geometrically sharp and comes in a burst of rainbow hues of brilliant reds, luscious oranges, unabashed pinks, ultra-violet blues and electric greens. The silhouettes are holiday ready flowing maxi and mini dresses to kick back and let loose and tailored co-ord sets with sporty elements, to acknowledge our pursuits towards wellness and fitness. The fabrics are sheer, translucent, breathable and easy to wear.

A kaleidoscope generates changing symmetrical patterns from small pieces of coloured glass, symbolising constant evolution. Creatively, too, we are always evolving, and this is the essence of our collection.

The collab with Lakme Salon

Lakmé Salon, unveiled its latest hair collection at the much-awaited FDCI X Lakmé Fashion Week, in collaboration with award-winning designer duo, Pankaj and Nidhi. The show, titled "Kaleido", marries the designers' graphic-cool aesthetic with the textured, free-flowing hair looks by Lakmé Salon, inspired by the fine hairdressing craftsmanship of TIGI Bed Head's hair collection.

The collaboration is a way to forget the past and ring in a brighter future and new beginnings. After a truly testing year, the designer duo and the experts at Lakmé Salon are striving to

spread joy and laughter, in the most trendy, stylish way possible.

Pooja Singh, National Creative Director, Hair, Lakmé Salon shared, "Kaleido is our way of honouring the Indian woman's natural hair and beauty, to enhance her already exquisite features. With glamorous waves, textured curls and beachy bobs, each look is crafted with the thought that she should flaunt her natural locks and feel like her best self, every day. These looks will look just as wonderful on women ruling the real world as they did on the runway, and we're looking forward to launching the commercial collection in salon for our customers soon."

Designer duo Pankaj & Nidhi said that with the collection they wanted to bring about a sense of freedom, hope and happiness.

They add, "I think with the bright colours, versatile silhouettes, and edgy geometric patterns, we were able to do justice to that vision on the runway. Each piece we created exudes joy and optimism, and is also extremely wearable. Lakmé Salon's haircut and style collection enhanced our clothes, and we're so glad we partnered with their incredibly talented team for this show."

Five distinct haircuts complementing the collection

Complementing this collection are five distinct haircut and style looks curated by the team of experts Lakmé Salon. Taking inspiration from TIGI Bed Head's latest collection, each look is a celebration of a woman's natural hair texture and form, inspiring her to break free of last year's confinement and be her best self, living her best life. From easy, undone glam waves, to textured bobs and edgy curls, this hair collection represents every woman in all her innate glory.

The haircut and style collection

has been designed and crafted by the experts at Lakmé Salon, inspired by looks by TIGI Bed Head. Each style is wearable, free-flowing and embraces the natural hair texture, type and form. There are five looks in this collection that suit different hair lengths and types:

- Glam waves to enhance thick, long hair and add movement
- Glam waves with half tied ponytail to add an edge to layered, thick hair
- Tight curls for short- to medium-length hair that are structured yet loose and free
- Beach waves on bob to take the short, stylish look to the next, free-spirited level
- Textured curls with a slick top to add some runway drama to the trendsetting look

Each hair look beautifully complements the flowy, kaleidoscopic garments that were shown on the ramp, and is a testament to Lakmé Salon's commitment to celebrating a woman's innate beauty.

The Lakmé Salon haircut and style collection, created and curated by the team of Lakmé Salon experts, is inspired by the global collections from TIGI Bed Head. It plays up the natural hair type and texture to give trendsetting looks that can be styled in different ways. From free-flowing waves to a textured bob and crown-caressing curls, each look represents the intrinsically magnificent spirit of the Indian woman. The makeup looks created by the Lakmé Salon Backstage Heroes used the water-colour technique in happy shades like aqua, orange, and pink to mirror the essence of the collection.

Combined, this collaborative collection was nothing short of a celebration of life and an ode to new beginnings. An optimistic look at the future, this partnership was about breaking the shackles of the past, moving ahead with joy and embracing one's intrinsic self.

Sustainability and style at FDCI x Lakme Fashion Week

Moving away from conventional stereotypes, three designers came together to highlight the process and techniques used for creating sustainable fashion that is not just fair to the people and the planet but also stands for an ethical style statement.

Designers Sohaya Misra of Chola, Gaurav Khanijo of Khanijo and Pranav Mishra and Shyma Shetty of Huemn showcased their latest sustainable collection at the second edition of the All About India show by Rise Worldwide during the at the ongoing phygital FDCI x Lakmé Fashion Week.

Misra presented his collection 'Human Nature', made in just black and white in free size silhouettes. The collection comprised separates, detachable hoods and sleeves along with mix and match options, along with striped robe, wide flowing pants with black side stripes, the high collared blouses, hoodies and the high-low hemline for the tunic, Pheran-style tunic, dresses with circular hemlines and boxy shoulders.

The designer sources fabrics from various clusters around India -- organic cotton from Pondicherry, post-consumer waste recycled cotton from Tirupur, hand woven khadi from West Bengal, mulas from Bhopal and linens from various states of India. The label uses recycled and upcycled or biodegradable usage for pockets or collars of garments that are all made in-house.

Misra said: "I am so happy to be presenting my collection, 'Human Nature' especially on a platform that profligate's sustainability. It is something so important these days and needs to be inculcated into everyday life.



I am really happy to be a part of that and really excited to see what this year has in store for us!"

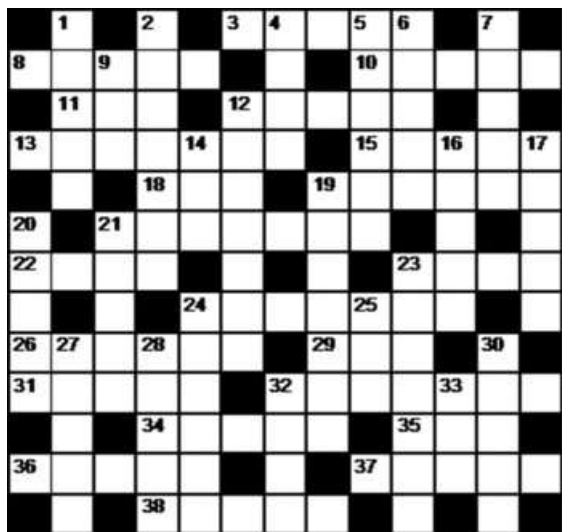
Designer duo Pranav and Shyma launched their unisex collection "Huemn 21" that is inspired by the current global emotions. Designed in a variety of 100 per cent cotton and silk home grown fabrics, the shapes were lounge worthy.

Anti-fit and baggy silhouettes were the basis of the line, with shirts with giant printed patch pockets, denim biker's jackets. The 2-tone denim/knit pants with frayed edges and matching sweatshirt with 3D embroidery.

It also comprised pleated, knit skirt and over-sized sweater dress as well as the black knit midi with high slits that gave women's wear a comfortable semi-formal fashion vibe. The designers have used 3D placement embroidery in the garments and surface texturing using traditional embroidery.

"Huemn 21" is inspired by quiet, everyday snapshots informed by the cultural landscape of our times. Separates are meant to be conversational pieces, reflective of both- scenic landscapes of pastoral India and reflective bits of urban India; with our signature handcraft and finishing techniques. It pays homage to a sense of nostalgic beauty and comfort but draws a strong reference from modern, urban lives of those who drive our communities," say the designers.

Designer Khanijo's Autumn/Winter 21 collection was a unisex line, made using natural and pure fabrics like linen, cotton Khadi and silk. The brand also uses bamboo, hemp and Tencel for the woven fabrics with hand embroidery.



SOLUTION TO MARCH 19

CROSSWORD

Across

- The fundamental character of a culture (5)
- Small songbird (5)
- Ascends (5)
- Haunch (3)
- ___ fish : fish with winglike fins ? (5)
- Followers of Bacchus (7)
- Deposits of ores (5)
- Years ago, years ago (3)
- Declare (6)
- Generally (2,1,4)
- Tallies (4)
- Attitude (4)
- Paving substance (7)
- Has being or is (6)
- One's individuality (3)
- Circular path (5)
- Czech composer (7)
- Deep-sea fish (5)
- Tennis star Henman (3)
- Zimmermann alias (5)
- Wild (5)
- Harvests (5)

Down

- Islamic religious war (5)
- Cool character's quality (7)
- Heaps (4)
- Ultimatum phrase (2,4)
- Grain stores (5)
- Smaller in number (5)
- Large tart (3)
- Formal speech (7)
- In the style of (1,2)
- Bus garage (5)
- Problems with peepers (5)
- Medieval chemistry ? (7)
- Star's tiny role (5)
- Unrehearsed (5)
- Schemed (7)
- Adjust (6)
- A period of time (3)
- Takes photograph of the bone, as it were (1-4)
- Shankar's instrument (5)
- Cause to lose courage (5)
- Cut off a bit (4)
- Express publicity (3)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO MARCH 19

NEWS ROUNDUP

Surbhi Jyoti decodes chemistry with Karan Singh Grover in 'Qubool Hai 2.0'

Surbhi Jyoti has opened up on why she thinks she shared a special Chemistry with Karan Singh Grover in the new series "Qubool Hai 2.0".

"I think Karan is a very good co-actor who takes his work very seriously. For me, anyone, who dedicates his effort to make something work naturally gains respect. Then, following the script, once we went under the skin of the characters, once he was Asad, and I was Zoya, the magical chemistry was bound to happen. I think off-camera, Karan is gentle and courteous as an individual. He really knows how to respect a woman. When all these are combined, you see the on-screen chemistry between Asad and Zoya," Surbhi told.

The actress emphasised that teamwork helped create the world in the new season of the show, and she mentioned how closely she worked with her stylist to create the look for her character Zoya.



"I am very involved with every character I play. I literally lived the character. I do not act it out just like that, I become the character -- her body language, the way Zoya thinks -- as if I can read her mind," said Surbhi who gained visibility on TV with 'Qubool Hai' when it first telecast in 2012 and ran till 2016.

While shooting of the show took place in Serbia post lockdown following protocol, few crew members of the show, including Karan had tested positive for Covid. "We were almost through when two people from our direction team and Karan tested positive. Of course, we had to stop shooting but it was just a few scenes that were rescheduled," she recalled. The new season of the show also features Mandira Bedi, Arif Zakaria, Saurabh Raj Jain, Nehalaxmi Iyer, Priyal Gor. It streams on Zee5.

Control ISI before talk on stability: Punjab CM to Pak's Bajwa

CHANDIGARH

TERMING Islamabad-sponsored terrorism as the biggest hurdle to normalizing relations between the two nations, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday said Pakistan Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, should back his rhetoric on peace with India with solid action.

Bajwa should first control his ISI, and then talk about stability in Indo-Pak relations, said the Chief Minister, adding that India cannot afford to go soft with Pakistan till they walk the talk and prove their sincerity with concrete actions. "Infiltration into India from across the

border is still happening, Indian soldiers are being killed at the borders every day. They (Pakistan) are dropping arms and heroin into Punjab via drones every other day. Efforts to create trouble in my state continue to take place. All this should stop first, only then we can talk peace," said Amarinder Singh.

For India to trust Pakistan, the latter will have to do much more than offer an olive branch, said the Chief Minister, citing his own experience of 1964 as ADC to GOC-in-C, Western Command.

"We used to receive daily reports then of firing and trouble from the western border, as we continue to do now," he said. It is important for not just Bajwa



but the entire Pakistan military apparatus to be on board with the idea of burying the past and paving the way for peace with India, said Amarinder Singh, adding that it is not New Delhi but Islamabad which has obstructed the path of peace between the two countries.

"Are they all of the same view as shared by General Bajwa? Are they withdrawing all support to terror groups immediately? Have they asked the ISI to back off and leave India alone?"

These, said the Chief Minister, are questions that need to be answered before India can start believing in, and responding to, Pakistan's overtures of peace. "India is all for peace, all Indians

stand for peace, but India cannot compromise on its security and integrity, a he stressed, adding that peace cannot be conditional. Given the way the situation has evolved over the past few months, Pakistan's increasing collusion with China, which has been causing a whole lot of trouble for India on the other border, is a matter of concern, the Chief Minister said.

"If Islamabad seriously wants peace with New Delhi, they should send out the message to Beijing, loud and clear, that Pakistan is not with them in the dangerous escapades at the Line of Actual Control (LAC)," the Chief Minister added

5 MORE ARRESTED IN MURDER CASE

NEW DELHI: Five more persons have been arrested in connection with the killing of a 32-year-old man here, police said Friday.

Rupesh, a resident of Raghuraj Nagar, was allegedly beaten to death by his neighbours in west Delhi's Rajouri Garden area on Monday. So far, 11 people have been arrested in the case.

Puneet (20), Amit (43), Nitin (24), Suman (32) and Deepak (39) were arrested on Thursday night from west Delhi's Nangloi area, the police said. Soon after the incident, police arrested six people -- Tarun (23), his wife Priyanka (21), his parents Ravinder (48) and Anita (45), his cousin Deepa (30); and friend Gaurav (19). On Monday night, Rupesh got seriously injured during a quarrel among his neighbours.

He was taken to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. His brother Mukesh told police that around 11 pm, a quarrel broke out between their neighbour Tarun and his wife Priyanka. Subsequently, other members of the family got involved and created a ruckus. When Mukesh and his mother tried to intervene, the accused allegedly beat them up, police said.

Rupesh, his father Rajbahadur and uncle Rajbir tried to pacify the accused, but Deepa, Puneet and Ravinder called their friends Nitin, Kaju, Summi and Gaurav, police said, adding all of them allegedly assaulted Mukesh. Rupesh and their family with sticks. By the time, the police were informed of the incident, the accused had fled the spot, they added. Mukesh sustained injuries on his head and right hand in the incident. His parents, uncle and sister-in-law also got injured, according to police.

Fuel price hike: Youth Cong workers protest in Delhi

NEW DELHI

HUNDREDS of protesting Youth Congress activists were stopped by the Delhi Police from marching to the residences of Union Ministers of Smriti Irani, Dharmendra Pradhan, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar on Friday here.

They were protesting against inflation, hike in the prices of petrol, diesel and liquified petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders.

The activists, led by Youth Congress national president Srinivas B.V., carried placards, raised slogans against the government, and wanted to gift bicycles to the ministers.

The activists alleged that the BJP government at the Centre has damaged the household budget of the people across the country by increasing the fuel prices and cost of LPG cylinders.

Speaking to the media, Srinivas alleged that when the BJP was in opposition, it carried out a protest even if the prices of petrol were increased by Rs 5.

"But today when all-round inflation has hit the families, all the BJP leaders are silent. To-



Indian Youth Congress workers take part in cycle march to protest against the fuel price hike, in New Delhi on Friday

day, the IYC has tried to awaken the BJP government from deep slumber, as petrol prices have crossed Rs 100 per litre, diesel crossed Rs 90 per litre in many parts of the country, and the prices of gas cylinders are increasing day by day," he said.

He further said that the BJP government has made such a dent in the budget of the house-

wife and the common man, which they are unable to cope with. He said that the prices of gas cylinders have increased up to Rs 225 in the last few days, and the government has set a new record in the prices of petrol, diesel and gas cylinders.

He emphasised that farmers, youth, labourers, businessmen, women were badly hit by infla-

tion but the BJP leaders were not at all concerned.

He further said that the anti-people and anti-national face of the BJP has been exposed.

Srinivas also lamented at the statement of Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who attributed the winter season as the reason for the hike in the prices of petrol and diesel.

Nepal yet to remove encroachments on 'no-man's land' with U'khand border

DEHRADUN

DESPITE reminders, the Nepalese security agencies are yet to remove "encroachment" from the no-man's land on the sensitive Uttarakhand-Nepal border.

"We had talks with our counterparts in Nepal and requested the concerned authorities to immediately remove the encroachment, however, no action has been taken yet," Himanshu Kafaltia, SDM, Tanakpur of the border district of Champawat told IANS on Thursday, adding, "we hope that things will change in a day or two in the 'no man's land'."

Recently a large numbers of Nepalese citizens, reportedly carrying Indian Aadhaar cards



tried to enter into India using the porous border.

The SDM of the border district said that temporary construction was detected at the 'no man's land' from the Nepal side. Subsequently the SDM and team of Indian police officials went to the border area on Tuesday. Later a meeting was held with the concerned Nepalese authorities.

"We have given them a day's time to remove the encroachment. But now we have been informed that the concerned

agency has sent a report to their higher ups. If they do not remove the encroachment by Friday we will be holding a meeting on March 20," the SDM Himanshu Kafaltia informed on phone.

In recent times local border disputes have escalated between both the countries, especially along the sensitive Uttarakhand-Nepal border.

In Tanakpur, particularly near the no-man's land in Brahmdav area, such issues have been raised from time to time. Porous border between the two countries and disappearance of border pillars play a part in escalating such disputes.

Earlier in 2019, Nepal had claimed parts of Indian territory in border area of Uttarakhand by unveiling new maps.

Priyanka takes dig at BJP leaders over 'ripped jeans' remark

NEW DELHI

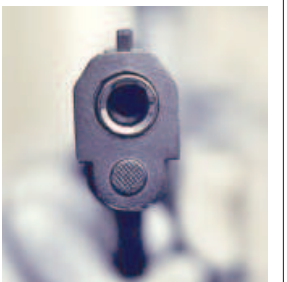
CONGRESS General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra took a dig at BJP leaders over the 'ripped jeans' controversy, tweeting pictures of various saffron party leaders in 'khaki' half pants with the caption: "Oh my God!!! Their knees are showing." Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat had stirred a controversy on Tuesday when he said that due to a lack of values, young people, including women, follow strange fashion trends these days by wearing jeans ripped at the knees.

Congress leader Alka Lamba also attacked the BJP over the remarks, alleging that many leaders have



made similar comments against women in the past, and the country is angry as the latest remarks have come from a Chief Minister.

"The Congress strongly condemns this kind of thinking towards women. We demand that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should ask the Uttarakhand Chief Minister to apologise immediately," she said.



Sarpanch's son guns down 2 sisters in Punjab

CHANDIGARH

TWO young sisters were allegedly shot dead by their acquaintance in a fit of rage with his father's licensed revolver in Punjab's Moga district, police said on Friday.

The accused, Gurveer Singh, 30, son of Congress-backed woman sarpanch of Sekha Khurd village, was arrested on Friday on charges of killing Amanpreet Kaur (24) and Kamalpreet Kaur (18) on Thursday night.

They were travelling in his car when the crime occurred. Victims' father Gurmail Singh told the police that the accused used to harass his daughters.

Engineering graduate Gurveer's father Jagdev Singh is a former sarpanch, while his mother, Sukhwinder Kaur, is the sitting sarpanch.

Describing the crime a horrific incident, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh directed the police to ensure speedy investigation into the incident and to bring the culprits to justice.

"Such offenders will be sternly dealt with," he said in a tweet.

Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said the accused was arrested after a long chase, seized the weapon and the car used in the incident.

'Azaan' sound off: IG bans loudspeakers from 10 pm to 6 am

PRAYAGRAJ

THE Inspector General of Police, Prayagraj, has asked the district magistrate to ensure a ban on the use of loudspeakers between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

This is in response to a complaint filed by Allahabad University Vice Chancellor Sangita Srivastava seeking restrictions on the use of loudspeakers, early morning in mosques.

The ban will cover use of all loudspeakers and public address systems at public places.

In a letter to the district magistrates and Senior Superintendents of Police in the four districts that fall under the Prayagraj Range, IG K.P. Singh said the officials must implement orders of the Supreme Court and the Allahabad High Court.

The letter directs the district magistrates and police chiefs to implement a ban on use of loudspeakers between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. in accordance with environmental laws and past court orders.

In her complaint, Prof. Sangita Srivastava has stated that she is 'forced to wake up too early every



day' due to 'azaan' being recited on a loudspeaker. This, she stated, leads to headache through the day and impacts her work.

Sangita Srivastava had sent her complaint to District Magistrate Bhanu Chandra Goswami on March 3.

In January 2020, the Allahabad High Court had ruled that no religion advocates use of loudspeakers for worship.

The petitioner had challenged an administrative order in the Jaunpur district of Uttar Pradesh where the use of loudspeaker for azaan had been banned.

The high court had said, "No religion prescribes that prayers are required to be performed through voice amplifiers or by beating of drums. If there is such a practice, it should not adversely affect the rights of others, including that of not being disturbed."

Delivering its order, the high court cited a Supreme Court judgment from 2000 in which the court held that the freedom to practice religion was subject to public order, morality and health. Prof. Sangita Srivastava had cited the court order in her letter.

Woman who turned 100 during pandemic gets first Covid shot

NEW DELHI

SINDH-BORN Kamla Das who turned 100 during the height of the pandemic in Delhi last September, got her first shot of COVID-19 vaccine here on Thursday, her daughter said.

The centenarian woman, wife of late Maj Gen (ret'd) Chand N Das, was born on September 3, 1920, and said the jab was "totally painless". "My mother turned 100 during the pandemic and we held a three-day celebration from September 2-4 to allow guests to come, as large gatherings were not allowed then. My siblings were fearful that she could contract COVID-19, but we thought she has lived a good life and not everyone gets to see their 100th birthday. So, we made it a special one for her," her youngest daughter Jyotika Sikand told PTI.

Resident of south Delhi, she was administered the vaccine at BLK Hospital here, a day after Brij Prakash Gupta, also born in 1920, had received his first shot of Covishield vaccine at the same facility, a spokesperson of the hospital said. Sikand, 72, said, "We allowed her to live a very normal life



even during the entire pandemic last year. And, she's fine and today also got her shot." "She told me that the shot was so painless, she doesn't recall which hand it was administered in," the daughter said in a lighter vein.

Sikand remembered her father, Maj Gen Das, who had served in the Second World War and retired from the Army in 1965, and also authored many books on the armed forces. "He was born in Lahore and educated at Government College, Lahore and received his military training at Royal Military College, Sandhurst in England, and Staff College, Quetta (now in Pakistan). He was commissioned in the British Indian Army in 1933 and posted as a Subaltern with the Lancashire Fusiliers. He joined the 5 Battalion of the Rajputana Rifles in North West

Frontier Province in 1934.

"During his 32 years of service with the Army, he held both command and staff appointments at many levels. During World War II, he served in Hong Kong, Burma, Italy and Greece and was awarded the Officer Class of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in recognition of his distinguished service," according to information shared by his daughter. She said her mother's father was in the railways and the family lived mainly in Lahore. "My mother, who has so many stories and memories, was born in Sukkur in Sindh province (now in Pakistan). She went to Sacred Heart School and Kinnaird College, both in Lahore. None in my family migrated, and my father just happened to be posted in Delhi when the partition happened," Sikand said.

"My father was born in 1911 and died in 2006, aged 95. When my mother turned 100 last year, defence personnel had come from the Rajputana Rifles regiment to honour my mother with a ceremonial gesture on September 4. And, later a small event was held at Raj Rif here to mark her 100th birthday.

Why vaccination is a must as pandemic returns

THE challenge for India in handling the second wave of Covid-19 in the country is humongous. How does one vaccinate 1.3 billion people before the new variants take over? This challenge comes at a time when elections to the Assemblies are being held and the process would last till May. On the other hand, we have adamant farmers unions continuing their dharna in Delhi and they are also holding massive public meetings being dismissive of Covid-19 threat.

All this at a time when new Covid-19 strains are rapidly engulfing the population. Nearly three-fourths of India's Covid-19 cases have been traced to five states as the country witnesses a spike in March after two months of reduced tally. The country, which experts say may be facing a second wave of the pandemic,

has recorded more than 100,000 cases of the coronavirus disease in the second week of March. The likely signs of the second wave are surfacing almost a year after India announced its first lockdown triggered by rising cases in March 2020. This lends greater urgency to India's vaccination drive, which aims to inoculate 300 million people between mid-January and August.

At present, there are four mutations of the Covid-19 virus in India, namely, U.K. variant 1, U.K. variant 2, South African variant and Brazil variant. The country has a long history of successfully running immunization programs across daunting, difficult geographies and inoculating hundreds of millions of people against polio, measles, tuberculosis and other diseases. But the Covid-19 vacci-

nation drive did not get off to a great start. On March 1, as the second phase of the vaccination drive started, eligibility was expanded to citizens above age 60 and those above 45 years with comorbidities.

Amid reports of vaccine wastage in the country, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday urged everyone to take the vaccine shots and reiterated their safety. "No one should have any doubts about the Covid-19 vaccines. I urge all to take the vaccine shots," Vardhan said in Lok Sabha. Vaccine scepticism is reportedly leading to wastage in the country. The Centre, while monitoring the vaccination drive across the country, has identified inadequate training of vaccinators in drawing vaccine from multi-dose vials and lack of detailed plan-

ning at sites as two key gaps that has led to vaccine wastage.

Over 3.39 crore people have been vaccinated till now. This is not time to underestimate the virus. The WHO has gone ahead and stated that this could now be called a seasonal virus. This only means that like common cold and flu this could return often. The danger is in its coming back as a new strain that could be fatal to us.

Vaccination does a very good job of preventing symptomatic infection, but does a less good job at preventing asymptomatic cases. However, it is always better to have a population with a weak virus residue that cannot spread. Let us leave aside our preferences and politics and line up before the vaccination centres. We simply cannot afford another lockdown that affects millions of marginal lives. Also, let us follow the SOPs' studiously. It is criminal to spread the virus.



Imran Khan sells illusions again, forgets UNSC resolutions dead

JUST a few days after India and Pakistan armies announced cease-fire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan Prime Minister, Imran Khan once again resorted to political 'jumble-bazi' by terming Kashmir as the only issue in way of better ties between the two countries.

Addressing the first edition of the Islamabad Security Dialogue, a two-day summit organised by Pakistan's National Security Division in collaboration with the country's leading think tanks, he said: "India will have to take the first step for improving bilateral relations by addressing Kashmir."

It seems Khan has forgotten that India took a decisive step vis-a-vis Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019, by abrogating its special status and merging it completely into Union of India.

Rhetoric again

His assertion that his country would make efforts for peace but it cannot move forward due to the decisions taken by India on August 5 has no takers. It appears that the Pakistan Prime Minister is once again trying to threaten India. It seems that he has forgotten that soon after August 5, 2019, he had used similar language and had dropped enough hints about a war breaking out between the two countries. But all his rhetoric was punctured when he realised that his army could not match the skills of Indian Army and any misadventure could lead to even Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) falling into India's lap.

Prime Minister Khan is aware of the fact that his country is not in a position to fight a conventional war with India as it has no resources. If he wants Pakistan to survive, he and others should give up their obsession with Jammu and Kashmir. After August 5, 2019, Khan knocked the door of every country in the world to build pressure on India but he didn't get any support. Even the Muslim countries turned their back towards the Pakistan Prime Minister.

In his speech, he once again raked the outdated United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. "We still hope that they (India) give the Kashmiris the rights they were given by the UN Security Council to decide their own lives. It will be as beneficial for India as for Pakistan," he said.

J&K people have made their choice

It looks like that Prime Minister Khan is unable to digest that people of Jammu and Kashmir have already made their choice and are very much happy with India. No one in J&K even talks about the UNSC resolutions as people of Kashmir have no interest in Pakistan. The stooges who were hired by Pakistan and used to talk in the language of their bosses sitting across the Line of Control (LoC) have become a history. No one in J&K wants to carry forward their legacy.

UNSC Resolutions dead and buried

The UNSC resolutions that Khan is talking about are dead and stand buried.

Despite Pakistan waging a proxy war in J&K in 1990 by sending militants and hiring people to orchestrate street protests, region has witnessed tremendous development as New Delhi has ensured that people of J&K live a decent life. On the other hand PoK that's under the illegal occupation of Pakistan has remained underdeveloped and has emerged as the terror hub. It houses terror training camps that produce terrorists who spread hate and violence. The visible difference between divided Kashmiris is enough to prove how sincere Pakistan and its leaders are. Prime Minister Khan should stop worrying about Jammu and Kashmir and look towards the PoK where people have no idea about what peace, prosperity and development mean.

Height of hypocrisy

From the day Imran Khan has taken over as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, he is trying to project himself as the Messiah of Muslims. But the irony is that he has been unable to stop human rights violations being committed by his own army against the people of Gilgit and Baltistan - under Pakistan's control.

If someone asks him about the atrocities being faced by Uighur Muslims in China, he says that he is unaware about it. About 10 million Uighurs live under state surveillance in Xinjiang, and there are reports that since 2017, hundreds of thousands have been confined in internment centres. The detainees who have stayed in these detention centers have revealed that Uighurs and other Muslims are made to eat pork on Fridays and are harshly punished if they refuse.

But the Pakistan Prime Minister lacks courage to condemn the acts of Chinese Government as he knows that he cannot annoy Beijing as Pakistan's survival is directly linked to China's help and financial aid.

Whenever Khan was asked about the Uighurs, he came up with different excuses like "knowing little about the issue" or "I am discussing the matter privately with China".

One of Khan's advisors in October 2020 had said that Pakistan Government is "100 per cent satisfied" and the situation of Uighur Muslims was a "non-issue".

China has been claiming that its policies toward Uighurs are aimed at curbing terrorism and extremism, and it is their internal issue.

Give up obsession

Prime Minister Khan needs to be told that people of Jammu and Kashmir are living their lives happily and they have got full religious freedom. In J&K, Muslims enjoy equal rights as India is a secular country and it's an abode of unity in diversity. Before talking about human rights of minorities in other countries, he should see how his own country and China treat the members of other communities.

If he really wants to do something for Pakistan, he should persuade his masters, on whose tunes he dances, to give up their obsession with Jammu and Kashmir and allow him to do something for his own country. If he keeps on harping about Kashmir, his country may vanish from the world map. The New India cannot tolerate anyone interfering in its internal matters. No power on earth can snatch Kashmir from India. During the past 70-years every attempt made by Pakistan to look towards J&K has been thwarted and if it doesn't mend its ways it would have to pay a heavy price for beating round the bush.

J&K India's integral part

Khan's assertion that road to peace passes through Kashmir is an old political stunt which has lost its relevance. He should stop worrying about the "big benefits" that India will get, he needs to show some concern towards the nation he heads. He seems unaware about the fact that Pakistan is caught in the quagmire of uncertainty and it can crumble under its own weight at any point of time.

He needs to muster courage and tell his countrymen the truth that J&K is an integral part of India and if they want Pakistan to prosper they should forget Kashmir and move on.

IN MY OPINION

V RAMU SARMA

DISINVESTMENT is the present day mantra. The union government says it has no business to be in business. According to them government should not manage industry, mining, trade, airports, airlines etc. Government should focus on governance it says. This has now raised another important issue if Government has no business to be in business should it continue to manage temples? What qualifies them?

This is an issue which is highly debatable. A demand to free temples from the control of government is presently gaining greater momentum in Tamil Nadu which is going to have Assembly elections soon.

The Isha Foundation urged Tamil Nadu government to free temples from its control, to enable their upkeep, preserve their sanctity and reverse their alarming state of decline in the south Indian State.

Head of the foundation, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev in a tweet said, "To protect the thousands of temples in Tamil Nadu that are gradually being ruined, the Tamil Nadu government should free temples from the clutches of the government and hand them to the devotees," Sadhguru tweeted tagging Chief Minister Edappadi Palanisamy, Opposition Leader MK Stalin and actor Rajinikanth in Tamil.

Quoting the Government Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department's submission in Court, Sadhguru tweet in Tamil read, "11,999 temples (are) dying without a single pooja taking place. 34,000 temples are struggling with (revenue of) less than Rs 10,000 a year and 37,000 temples have (appointed) just one person for pooja, maintenance, security etc."

Sadhguru called the temples "the source of our Tamil culture," and said that they must be cared for and managed by devotees who "value temples more than their lives." He termed the desecration of temples "slow poison" adding that he was pained by the neglect and apathy towards these vibrant spaces of worship.

This issue had become a mat-

ter of intense debate ever since the case of Sabarimala temple hit the headlines. Those who support freeing of temples from government control say that the practice of government control over the temples began with British rulers interference in temple management and even today the Hindu educational institutions, temples and religious traditions are subject to government control. The Hindu Religious Endowment Board assumed powers to take over and administer temples through Act XII of 1935.

Similarly, States have their own Acts - for instance, Tamil Nadu has the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act 1959. Kerala's five Devaswom boards which govern a majority of the Hindu temples are covered under the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950, Madras Hindu Religious Act and Charitable Endowment Act, 1951, Guvayoor Devaswom Act, 1978 and Koodalmanikyam Devaswom Act, 2005.

Appointments to these boards are done by a Devaswom Board which came into being in 2015. In Andhra Pradesh, there's the Andhra Pradesh Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions and Endowments Act, 1987. Karnataka and Telangana have similar laws.

Those who want temples to be free from Government control argue that 65-70 per cent of the temple income is used for non-temple or merely administrative purposes, the Archakas who perform the prayers are paid meagre salaries, and sometimes nothing at all. Further temples, originally centres of learning, hardly use funds to run Veda Pathshalas and share knowledge about the Sanatan Dharma.

Those who support the free temples movement feel that despite the Constitutional provisions and judicial decisions, Hindu temples and religious and charitable institutions are being taken over by the secular State on the pretext of maladministration, mismanagement, etc., whereas mosques and churches of the minorities are allowed to be exclusively managed by the respective communities even though Article 26 confers right equally upon all sections of citizens.

They further argue that state control results in large scale misappropriation of the temples' income and properties and its redirection to other purposes by the State. This leaves the temples



This issue had become a matter of intense debate ever since the case of Sabarimala temple hit the headlines. Those who support freeing of temples from government control say that the practice of government control over the temples began with British rulers interference in temple management and even today the Hindu educational institutions, temples and religious traditions are subject to government control. The Hindu Religious Endowment Board assumed powers to take over and administer temples through Act XII of 1935

and priests in poverty.

But those who feel that the temples should continue to be under the Endowments department say that all hundi collections are deposited in the designated temple bank account. The bank account is in the name of the deity or the Devasthan. Since these temples are constituted under a State Act, their income is exempt from income tax under section 10 (23BBA) of the Income Tax Act and that there is no possibility of diversion of funds.

They also raise the question, if the temples are free from government control, is there any guarantee that they would be administered properly and that there would be no politics in the Devasthanams? What kind of checks and balances should be there to ensure that there is no misappropriation of funds by the private trustees.

Despite different arguments, the fact remains that 14 per cent of the funds in government controlled temples go as administration fees, 4 per cent as audit fees (Section 92), 25-40 per cent as salaries and 1-2 per cent for prayers and other festival expenses. Between 4-10 per cent of the total collections go to the 'Commissioner Common Good Fund' (Section 97). Further, money is transferred to various

Court asked as to why should government officials manage religious places and temples in the country while taking note of the fact that several devotees visiting the Jagannath temple in Puri were being harassed.

A bench of Justices S A Bobde and S A Nazeer observed this while hearing a plea which has highlighted difficulties faced by the devotees at Jagannath temple and their alleged harassment and exploitation by the 'sevaks' (staff). "It is a matter of perspective. I do not know why government officials should manage temples?" Justice Bobde observed during the hearing.

They referred to the apex court's 2014 order by which administration of 1,500-year-old Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram was taken out of control of Tamil Nadu government, a bench of Justices S A Bobde and S A Nazeer said, "We had occasion to examine the issue in case of Chidambaram temple. I do not know why government officers should run the temple. In Tamil Nadu, there are many cases of theft of idols. What are government officers doing? It may be added here that Justice Bobde, was part of the bench which passed the order on Chidambaram temple.

The people who are active in free temple movement further argue that in 1925, the Sikh Gurdwaras Act was passed that brought gurdwaras under the control of an elected body of Sikhs. So the British had one set of laws for Hindus and another for the Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. This is one aspect which the NDA government needs to seriously examine and debate in the Parliament.

LETTERS

World Sparrow Day

MARCH 20 is celebrated as "World Sparrow Day". On this environmentally significant day, we recall these tiny, winged birds - Sparrows and look out in our surroundings to find them and listen to their chirping. How beautiful it is to listen to the chirping melodies of these tiny birds in mornings/ But alas/ nowadays we hardly notice them around us in our urban concrete jungles. We wonder with despair whether sparrows have vanished completely from our surroundings as an extinct species as ruled by our environmentalists and we have lost the pleasant experience of these tiny birdie chirping melodies in mornings.

It's time for our governments to take effective measures to save these tiny winged beauties from extinction and people must also make efforts for the survival of sparrows by providing some space in and around their houses with nesting boxes along with food and water. To have a legion of sparrows flapping their tiny wings and chirping incessantly on our com-

pound-walls and tree-branches in mornings is indeed a heaven of experience for all lovers of birds.

Dr Venugopala Rao Kaki, Kakinada

Of hit parents and flop offspring

PROPOS Dr Mohan Kanda's article on dynastic politics, the adage "Pandita Putra, Parama Sunthaha" has proven to be generally true. If not outright dunces, the offsprings have failed to reach the heights achieved by parents. May be, the parental name and fame becomes a burden on them to shine in their own right. It is generally seen that original brilliance is missing in the offspring of legends. If we see the Nehru family, Indira Gandhi didn't inherit her father's erudition or spirit of democracy.

While Nehru penned many books, Indira hardly did any. She didn't imbibe her father's quest for democratic values. Nehru was respectful to even his opponents while Indira could not stand any opposition. Further down, her son Rajiv didn't inherit her political acumen and her decisiveness. His son Rahul didn't acquire his magnetic charisma. In the case of Mahatma Gandhi, the position is even more stark. None of his children could stand up to his reputation.

In the field of sports, Gavaskar and Sachin Tendulkar are the all-time greats of cricket. Their offspring could reach nowhere near them despite all the facilities and encouragement. Chiranjeevi ruled the Telugu filmdom for two decades. However his son Ramcharan failed to make a mark.

In our state politics, CBN is a successful and wily politician where as his son lacks the former's grit and wit. Only AP CM Jagan seems to have overtaken his father YSR in a short time. All those who have become legends had to struggle and strive for their success. Obviously, their children lack that 'fire in the belly.'

Vinay Bhushan Bhagwat, Hyderabad

'Freebie for all' is here!

ITS election time in India and the "freebie astras" are being used by political parties to target the vote banks. Ranging from loan waivers, washing machines to government jobs these promises just keep growing and growing like the magic tree in Jack the giant slayer. Neglecting the long term vision and lessons pandemic has taught, political parties are just hypnotising the people with their manifestos. Political parties are often resorting to this freebie trick and people are always taking the bait. There's a famous dialogue in a movie "If you are looking for the culprit then you

need to look in the mirror". Yes we need to look in the mirror.

Political leaders are only looking at the throne, they are not thinking about the future. Well certainly they think about the future of their heirs. And people are letting it to be that way. We have the right to ask for highly efficient public healthcare, education, good living standards etc but both politicians and people lack something important - intention. One has no intention to deliver and the other has no intention to ask.

Viswamithra Bagam, Hyderabad

II

ON parties' manifestos and freebies on the eve of elections, I would like to use the lines (which even BJP leaders have no qualm in using) of Pakistani social influencer "Hum Voters Hain, Woh Neta Log Hain, Aur Hum Logon ko Bewaqoof Banane Ki Tayyari Ho Rahi Hai! The voters should understand the parties and leaders are like pickpockets who cut our pockets and use the money to give anything and everything free. It's not their money and it's ours which they are using to come to power. We understand better now rather than when we are asked pay more for petrol etc including the taxes.

N Nagarajan, Hyderabad

BJP SEEKS PROBE INTO ATTACKS ON BANDI

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

A State BJP delegation led by former minister and State vice-president Dr G Vijaya Ramarao, former MP Ravindra Naik, former MLA Kuna Srisailam Goud, national secretary BJP SC Morcha and spokesperson Anugula Rakesh Reddy met Director General of Police M Mahender Reddy on Friday and lodged a complaint over the attacks on party State president Bandi Sanjay Kumar.

The delegation said that Bandi Sanjay Kumar, being the State BJP president and Karimnagar MP, has to visit different places in Telangana, as well as his own Lok Sabha constituency, Karimnagar. They said that the Karimnagar MP has been aggressively campaigning to strengthen the party across the state. However, some vested interests have developed ill-will against him and were trying to attack him physically, as well as on his vehicle and convoy. They briefed the DGP on a few such attacks during the GHMC elections, during RTC employees, strike, Dubbaka by-elections, when attempts were made to physically attack him.

Recently, a group of people attacked Sanjay Kumar's party convoy with sticks and roads while he was travelling from Kodad to Hyderabad. During this, the miscreants had blocked the road and stopped the convoy. It was observed that there were a couple of police constables on the spot but they could do nothing to disperse the mob.

Considering these incidents, the delegation sought the intervention of the DGP for filing cases against the culprits who have participated in the incident. Besides, they sought a Special Security (Y-Category) with a bullet-proof vehicle to Bandi Sanjay Kumar.

Historic budget; TRS will win polls: Talasani

The budget is for inclusive growth and welfare of the poor, farmers and other sections he said. He lashed out at the opposition parties for their comments that the budget is just a jugglery of numbers and the funds of the previous budget were not spent



HYDERABAD

TELANGANA budget 2021-22 is historic at national level as it focuses on both welfare and development of the state, according to Minister for Animal Husbandry Talasani Srinivas Yadav. The minister claimed that the TRS candidates will win the graduate MLC polls as the leads continue in our favour. "The voting was good and the graduates responded positively as we saw a huge number of turn out in the polls. The TRS candidates Vani Devi and Palla Rajeshwar Reddy will clinch the

Hyderabad and Nalgonda segments," he said.

Addressing a press conference at TRSLP office here, along with whip G Sunitha and others, the Minister said credit went to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for the huge budget of Rs 2.3 lakh crore. The budget is for inclusive growth and welfare of the poor, farmers and other sections he said. He lashed out at the opposition parties for their comments that the budget is just a jugglery of numbers and the funds of the previous budget were not spent.

The minister accused the opposition parties of the BJP and the Congress of resorting to misinformation campaign for political gain. "It is the historic budget in any state at national level and we continue to focus on the welfare of the poor and continuous development," he maintained.

The minister further hit out that the BJP and the Congress members in the house were trying to hijack the session during the Assembly budget procedures. The government allocated adequate funds to his animal husbandry and other sectors priority-wise, he said. The minister said that the allocations made as per directions of the Chief Minister and all sectors would be developed. The sectors that got better allocation of the funds are animal husbandry, welfare, agriculture, loan waiver, irrigation, IT and others, he said.

Also the city got funds for

water, roads and facilities the minister said. Srinivas Yadav said that the dairy development wing which was facing Rs 30 crore debts is now on the growth path with Rs 60 crore benefits. This significant development can be attributed to the plans and vision of the Chief Minister.

There are about 30 lakhs of families who rely on the milk production and supply and they get timely help and support from the government. He listed out the programmes like sheep, fish and others for community development, While Mission Bhagiratha, Kakatiya, loan waiver, Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Vedika, Bhima and pensions are a big help for the people and various communities. In the same way the State government is gifting Rs 1 lakh and above to the marriage of girls of poor community through Shadi Mubarak and Kalyana Lakshmi, he added.

Selection rally for AOC Boys Sports Company



HYDERABAD

ARMY Ordnance Corps (AOC) Centre, Secunderabad will be conducting an open induction rally for sports cadets in Boys Sports Company scheduled from April 20 to 24 in weightlifting discipline. In these selection trials, physical and technical skills test in the weightlifting discipline will be held under Sports Authority of India coaches and board of officers. The selection will be provisional until approved by Sports Authority of India. Educational qualification for the candidates is minimum Class 5 pass with adequate knowledge in Hindi. For the candidates of age 11 years, minimum height and weight is not applicable. Whereas candidates for the age of 12 years, minimum height should

be 153 cm & minimum weight 35 kg, for 13 years 155 cm - 42 kg and for 14 years 160 cm - 47 kg. Medical test will be ascertained by medical officer of the AOC Centre and specialist of Army Sports Medicine Centre. Applicants should not have any type of permanent tattoo on any part of the body. Eligible candidates should report at Ordnance Hall, Wellington road, AOC Centre, Secunderabad, by 7 am on April 20. All the candidates to carry mask, gloves, sanitizer and will have to produce RT-PCR / Rapid Antigen Negative report when they report for the rally.

For further details, candidates can contact weightlifting coach on mobile number 9860113739 or Boys Sports Company, AOC Centre, Trimulgherry Post, Secunderabad, Telangana - 500015.

Eye in sky to keep tabs on plantation growth in TS

HYDERABAD

THE Telangana Remote Sensing Application Centre (TRAC) has developed a Plant Growth Monitoring System which was presented to Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar IAS and other senior officials during a meeting on plantation at BRKR Bhavan on Friday. The system facilitates in identifying potential avenue, block and individual sites for plantation through a high-resolution satellite data. TRAC also created a portal through which potential plantation site information can be accessed through mobile. A dashboard containing total information about the plantation was also developed by TRAC.

Chief Secretary congratulated the TRAC team headed by Srinivas Reddy for doing an excellent job and observed that this can

usher in real change in the field. This system will be a game changer, very timely and is in sync with the Chief Minister's vision of making the state green. It would help the officials to focus on multi-layer avenue plantation, inch by inch plantation along the lakes, roads and scattered lands so as to ensure that no area is left vacant, he added. Shanti Kumari, Special Chief Secretary, Forest, Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary, MA&UD, Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, I&C, Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Secretary, PR&RD, R Sobha, PCCF, Ronald Rose, Special Secretary, Finance, Dobriyal, PCCF (SF), Dr N Satyanarayana, CDMA, Swetha Mohanty, Collector, Medchal, Amoy Kumar, Collector Ranga Reddy, Priyanka Vergies, OSD to CM, and other officials attended the meeting.

24 test +ve for Covid at ST Boys Hostel

● They include 22 boarders, watchman and hostel welfare officer

HYDERABAD

AS many as 22 boarders along with Hostel Welfare Officer and watchman of ST Boys Hostel, Rajendranagar in Ranga Reddy district tested positive for Corona virus on Friday. Out of the total 92 hostel boarders and staff who were randomly tested by the health team on Thursday, 22 boarders, including seven students each of 8th, 9th and 10th class and one student of 7th class along with one hostel welfare officer and watchman tested positive, informed Commissioner of Tribal Welfare Dr Christina Z Chongthu. The affected ones have been quarantined in the hostel and remaining boarders who tested negative were sent home by arranging transportation.

"The quarantined boarders and staff are provided with a duty doctor and medicines by District Medical and Health Officer and food supplements including dry fruits are provided to them," said the Commissioner.



Covid tally crosses 3L mark in State

A total of 313 cases recorded; two more deaths take toll to 1,664

HYDERABAD

TELANGANA'S Covid-19 tally crossed 3-lakh mark on Friday as the State continued to see a spike in cases. A total of 313 positive cases were registered during the last 24 hours, pushing the tally to 3,02,360. After gap of more than two months, the state saw the daily count climbing over 300. The surge is mainly due to government-run schools turning new hot spots. More than 150 students, teachers and other staff of about 10 schools have tested positive during last 3-4 days. As many as 39 students of government-run hostels and a school tested positive on Wednesday.

It was on January 14 that daily count had dropped below 300 and 10 days later it plummeted to under 200. However, the surge over the last two weeks has again pushed the tally to over 300. Greater Hyderabad reported highest number of cases at 47 during the last 24 hours while the surge continued in some other districts. Rangareddy reported 29 cases, followed by



Nirmal (25), Medchal Malkajigiri (20), Kamareddy (16), Nizamabad (15), Sangareddy (13), Adilabad (10) and Mancherial (10). Districts bordering Maharashtra saw a surge in the new infections during last few days, worrying the health authorities. The state government is likely to decide in a day or two whether to shutdown the schools again in view of large number of cases being reported from some schools.

Two more persons succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative death toll to 1,664. The fatality

rate rose slightly to 0.55 per cent against the national average of 1.4 per cent. While 44.96 per cent of deaths were due to Covid-19, remaining 55.04 died due to comorbidities. The number of active cases rose further to 2,434 including 943 who are in home or institutional isolation. A total of 142 people recovered from the virus during the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative recoveries to 2,98,262. The recovery rate dropped to 98.64 per cent but still higher than the national average of 96.2 per cent.

A total of 62,972 tests were conducted during the last 24 hours. Of this 57,488 samples were tested in government laboratories and remaining 5,484 in private laboratories. With this the number of tests conducted in the State so far climbed to 94,82,649. Samples tested per million population rose to 2,54,772. Bed status in 62 government hospitals treating Covid-19 shows that 7,974 out of 8,419 beds were vacant. Similarly, in 215 private hospitals 6,520 out of 7,567 beds were vacant.

TIRUPATI LS BYPOLL

Spare no effort for victory, Jagan tells party leaders

AMARAVATI

CAUTIONING the party rank and file against being overconfident, YSRCP president and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday asked them to spare no effort to secure victory for their candidate M Gurumurthy in the April 17 byelection to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat.

A minister and an additional MLA would be appointed as in-charges for each of the seven Assembly segments under the reserved (Scheduled Caste) constituency to work for the YSRCP's win in the bypoll, he told a meeting of ministers, legislators and senior party leaders at his camp office.

Jagan Mohan Reddy asked his party leaders to remind every voter of the various "good deeds" of his government and "seek their blessings" for Gurumurthy, the Chief Ministers Office said in a statement.

"By God's grace we secured good results in the recent urban local bodies elections. Now the entire country will look to the Tirupati byelection. Party leaders should not be overconfident.



Chief Minister and YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy holds a review with Ministers, legislators and party leaders on Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll at Tadepalli on Friday

■ In a meeting with Ministers, legislators and party leaders, the Chief Minister asks them not to be overconfident on the win

■ Tells them to remind people of the 'good deeds' of the YSRCP govt and seek their blessings for party candidate Gurumurthy

■ Wants the leaders to visit each house and assure voters that the welfare agenda of the govt will continue in future

All of you should work in close coordination and ensure Gurumurthy's victory by a good margin. The margin of victory should be our message (to the nation)," the Chief Minister said.

Gurumurthy, 36, is a physiotherapist, who accompanied the YSRCP chief in his 3,600-km-long padayatra (foot-march) criss-crossing the state in 2017-

19 and tended to the latter.

He also wanted an action plan prepared to make the whole country look towards Andhra Pradesh and asked the leaders to visit each house and assure voters that the welfare agenda of the government would continue in the coming days.

The YSRCP won the Tirupati Lok constituency in 2014 and again in 2019, improving its vote

share from 47.84 per cent to 55.03 per cent.

Ministers Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, Balineni Srinivasa Reddy, Perni Venkataramaiah, YSRCP general secretaries V Vijayasai Reddy, S R K Reddy, MP V Prabhakar Reddy, former MP TTD chairman Y V Subba Reddy, MLAs and other leaders attended the meeting.

HC stays CID probe against Naidu

AMARAVATI

THE AP High Court on Friday stayed the CID inquiry against former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu and former minister P Narayana in Amaravati land deals. The High Court took up hearing on the quash petition filed by Chandrababu Naidu on CID case filed against him over assigned lands of Amravati region. Mangalagiri MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy lodged a complaint against Naidu and Narayana alleging forcible takeover of assigned lands from Dalits in Amaravati capital region violating rules.

Supreme Court senior advocate Sitharth Luthra argued on behalf of Chandrababu Naidu and Dammalapati Srinivas on behalf of former minister Narayana. Additionally AG J Nagabushanam represented the case on behalf of state government. When the High Court asked the CID officials for findings of preliminary inquiry in the case, the CID officials sought permission for full-fledged inquiry to get the facts. Chandrababu's counsel argued that the Jagan Mohan Reddy's government has been foisting false cases against TDP leaders and as part of it, the CID filed case against Naidu on March 12. The advocate appealed to the court to issue interim orders to prevent arrest of Chandrababu Naidu and quash the case filed by CID.

When the court asked for the findings of preliminary inquiry in the case, the CID officials seek permission for a full-fledged inquiry



Dalit JAC fumes at MLA Alla over CID case

AMARAVATI

Dalit JAC leaders of Amravati region warned Mangalagiri MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy to withdraw case against TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu, or else they are ready to file SC, ST atrocities case against him. The JAC leaders questioned how can a forward caste person could file SC, ST case against Naidu. They said that the previous TDP government benefited Dalits by increasing the value of assigned lands. They said that the present government is try-

Several Dalits who attended inquiry deny their lands were taken away forcibly

ing to distance the Dalits from state capital.

Meanwhile, several Dalits who attended the CID inquiry on Friday made it clear that their assigned lands were not taken by any one forcibly. They said that they received the compensation for their lands. They revealed that they gave their lands to the government on their own.

Privilege notice lacks jurisdiction, says SEC

AMARAVATI

STATE Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar in reply to the Assembly privilege committee notice served to him over the complaint lodged by ministers Botcha Satyanarayana and Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy,

said that 'at the out set, I wish to deny any such infringement'.

In a letter addressed to secretary to Legislature, Legislative Assembly, the SEC said the letter received by him asked him to make available to answer the charges relating breach of privilege.

Seema making rapid strides in edu sector: Governor

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

DELIVERING his address at the I, II and III Convocation of Dr. Abdul Haq Urdu University, Andhra Pradesh Governor and Chancellor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan said that with emerging higher education institutions, the Rayalaseema region is witnessing considerable advancement in education sector. The Governor, who partici-

pated in the Convocation through video conference from Raj Bhavan on Friday, said he has been closely monitoring the progress of the newly-established universities in the state and was happy to know that these universities are progressing in the right direction.

The Governor said the Urdu University that made its beginning in the state just five years ago has made considerable progress with the implementation of both

Urdu and English in the curriculum. He said the Rayalaseema region is now witnessing development with implementation of several projects and emerging as a hub of higher education institutions.

In his welcome address, Prof Muzaffer Ali, Vice-Chancellor of Dr Abdul Haq Urdu University said with eight departments and 13 courses, the university is making good strides.

Minister for education Audimulapu Suresh said that learning more than one language always helps students achieve better career opportunities. "The State government has been giving top priority to higher education in the state and more funds will be allocated for education sector in the coming budget," he said.

Dr Mohammed Aslam Parvaiz, former Vice-Chancellor of Maulana Azad National Urdu Uni-

versity delivered the key note address.

Prof Muzaffer Ali, Vice-Chancellor, presented the gold medals to 11 students and degrees to graduating students of Dr Abdul Haq Urdu University on behalf of the Chancellor. Mukesh Kumar Meena, secretary to the Governor, Prof Srinivasulu, registrar, the faculty, the students, the parents and others attended the Convocation programme.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	73.23	South	
Euro	87.11	African Rand	5.67
UAE Dirham	20.33	Hong Kong Dollar	10.74
Thai Baht	2.59	Japanese Yen	0.77
British Pound	102.03	New Zealand Dollar	52.47
Australian Dollar	56.76	Saudi Riyal	21.26
Canadian Dollar	58.68	Swedish Krona	9.77
Swiss Franc	78.86	Singapore Dollar	55.09

DELHI SATURDAY 20 MARCH 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

SoftTech forays into global mkt

SoftTech Engineers Limited has forayed into the global market by expanding its business activities in the US, UK, Malaysia, and Singapore with its novel CIVIT platform. The company is betting on the AEC (architecture, engineering & construction) domain, leveraging technological innovations. Vijay Gupta, founder and CEO, SoftTech Engineers Limited, said: "AutoDCR is an artificial intelligence based approval system that automatically approves digital building plans, without need for human intervention. Today, more than 600 urban local bodies are using AutoDCR for issuing construction permits across India. Our go-to-market strategy specially focuses on the US for the next three years. We have started participating in many bids around CIVIT, with a target of business value of 10-15 million \$ in the span of three years".

Vedantu's new initiative

Vedantu has launched a series of student-centric initiatives and the organisation is democratizing education in India through a national, student-centric programme that will help kids prepare first-hand. With an aim to impact more than one million students to make a comeback in learning, the company is taking the first step with launch of V.O.T.E (Vedantu Online Talent Exam) - assessment exam for students of grades 5th-12th. Students can be benefited with guaranteed scholarship from a pool of Rs 500 crore and daily challenges along with exciting prizes worth Rs one crore. Vamsi Krishna, CEO and co-founder, Vedantu, said: "V.O.T.E. will provide learners with the right platform to prepare first-hand, in-depth performance analysis and discover their all-India rank. With personalized report cards for students, it will cover skill, subject, topic, and question level analysis of every student".

New DFI to support speedy infra development in India

SUSHMA RAMACHANDRAN

DEVELOPMENT finance institutions were the drivers of infrastructure growth for many years after independence. The government created several such entities, the first being the Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI), followed by the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) and the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI). These were the premier DFIs right up to the time of economic liberalisation in 1991. Loans were provided on soft terms for creating infrastructure projects like huge thermal and hydel power plants as well as fertilizer and engineering projects. The funds were sourced at the time both from the central bank as well as from global financing agencies. The situation has now altered dramatically. The original DFIs were either transformed into normal commercial banks or as in the case of the IFCI, downsized into a non-banking financial company (NBFC). Other specialised DFIs, however, continue to operate such as the Power Finance Corporation, the Small Industries Development Bank of India, NABARD and the National Housing Bank. These provide funding for specific segments of the economy.

Basically a DFI can be described as a financial institution that provides risk capital for economic development projects on a non-commercial basis. One of the key characteristics is that the majority stake in these entities is owned by the government though there is a provision now for private DFIs too. This enables the institutions to provide credit guarantees as well as to raise funds more easily. The initial set of DFIs faced problems in financing projects at low rates of return and ended up with huge defaults. It was also increasingly felt after liberalisation that the normal commercial banks were capable of funding infrastructure projects and there was no need for a separate set of financial institutions for this purpose.

An initial capital infusion of ₹20K cr is being made in NaBFID



In recent years, however, there has been a revival of interest in DFIs. These have played a significant role in financing development projects both in emerging economies as well as in the developed world. One study says there are as many as 250 such institutions currently operating throughout the world. The role of development banks in countries like China, Brazil and the East Asian economies have apparently been pivotal to economic growth. The government's decision to create another DFI is thus timely since there is an urgent need to invest in large infrastructure projects and kick start economic growth. The new bank will be called the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID). According to details released by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, it will be fully owned by the government initially but the equity stake can be brought down to 26 per cent. However, this level of government equity stake will be retained for the institution at all times. An initial capital infusion of Rs 20,000 crore is being made in the institution and it is expected to leverage this to fund projects valued at about Rs 3.25 lakh crore.

Government's grant of Rs 5000 crore will also be given in the form of tax saving bonds to the DFI.

The aim is to attract financing from overseas pension and sovereign wealth funds. It could also rely on multilateral agencies. A ten year tax exemption is being given on funds invested in it as an added incentive.

Operational efficiency, however, needs to be the hallmark of the new DFI. It should not go the way of the previous institutions that had to be transformed into other entities. There may have to be less stringent NPA norms and perhaps reduced governmental controls to enable it to function effectively. It has to be recognised that one of the reasons for creating a DFI is that there is need to bridge the gap in funding for large infrastructure projects that give low rates of return. So the institution needs to be given adequate support but without being constrained in functioning like a normal public sector enterprise.

If this kind of freedom is given, it should be possible to ensure that the DFI is professionally managed and performs efficiently. DFIs in the past lost large amounts of finances due to de-

fault by promoters. Though there are critics who feel the new institution could well go the same way, as the earlier ones, it is more likely that the experience of the past will make the management more cautious in its outlook.

With the formation of the new DFI, it looks more likely that the projects envisaged in the National Infrastructure Pipeline will be implemented more quickly. The pipeline had laid a road map for 7,671 infrastructure projects costing Rs 111 lakh crore from 2019-20 till 2024-25. So far work has been initiated in only about 1700 projects in the pipeline.

Media reports suggest the government is expecting DFIs to be set up in the private sector and is even considering providing a five year tax holiday to such institutions. This is lower than the ten year tax holiday for the government-owned institution and thus may not be enough of an incentive to lure private sector into this area. The aim is obviously to ensure that there a larger ecosystem for funding infrastructure which is badly needed in the country.

There continues to be some concern over whether the new DFI will go the way of the earlier ones like IFCI and ICICI. It is felt that the experiment of creating DFIs did not turn out well in the long run. But one cannot forget that ultimately it was these institutions that enabled the setting up of projects that can only be described as nation-building in the years after independence. At this juncture, with the economy in a downturn, it is essential to invest heavily in infrastructure and the DFI is the right medium to provide long-term financing. It can only be hoped that with a professional management, it fulfils the potential of being a support to faster development of the economy.

Mkt rebounds amid weak global cues; Sensex up 642 pts

Nifty surges 186 pts; investors snap up RIL, FMCG and IT stocks

MUMBAI

EQUITY benchmarks Sensex and Nifty regained footing on Friday after five days of losses as investors snapped up RIL, FMCG and IT stocks even as global markets tumbled amid concerns over rising US Treasury yields.

Participants shrugged off a spurt in Covid-19 cases in multiple states, though reimposition of localised lockdowns can pose a threat to economic recovery, traders said. After opening with significant losses, the 30-share BSE Sensex made a U-turn to end 641.72 points or 1.30 per cent higher at 49,858.24. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty surged 186.15 points or 1.28 per cent to finish at 14,744. NTPC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.58 per cent, followed by HUL, PowerGrid, Reliance Industries, ITC, UltraTech Cement



and HCL Tech. Index heavyweight Reliance Industries accounted for the lion's share of the gains. On the other hand, L&T, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Auto and Titan were among the laggards, slipping up to 1.20 per cent. During the week, the Sensex sank 933.84 points or 1.83 per cent, while the Nifty declined 286.95 points or 1.90 per cent. "The highly volatile domestic markets witnessed a smart recovery from its morning weakness and was swinging between gains and losses during the day owing to strong buying seen in FMCG, Pharma and Energy stocks.

However, auto stocks were under pressure after the announcement of the government's new scrapping policy. "The unsettling pace of US bond yields and a surge in Covid cases worldwide resulted in the global markets trading deep in red," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

India's GDP may grow at 12%: Moody's

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S economy is likely to grow by 12 per cent in 2021 following a 7.1 per cent contraction last year, as near-term prospects have turned more favourable, Moody's Analytics said. A stronger than expected December quarter GDP growth of 0.4 per cent following a 7.5 per cent contraction in the previous three months has turned India's near-term prospects more favourable, it said. Domestic and external demand has been on the mend since the easing of restrictions, which has led to improved manufacturing output in recent months. "We expect private

consumption and nonresidential investment to materially pick up over the next few quarters and strengthen the domestic demand revival in 2021," it said. Moody's saw real GDP growth of 12 per cent in the 2021 calendar year, partially due to a low base-year comparison.

"This forecast is equivalent to real GDP, in level terms, growing by 4.4 per cent above pre-Covid-19 levels (as of March 2020) by the end of 2021, or equivalently, by 5.7 per cent above the GDP level in December 2020 by the end of 2021," it said. It said monetary and fiscal policy settings will remain conducive to growth.

REAL CORNER

Hyd witnessing robust realty sales

Sales likely to accelerate in the new few quarters, says Credai Hyderabad

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD, owing to world-class infrastructure and the pro-active government, has been at the forefront of the Covid recovery, attracting investments, recording consistent growth in office space absorption, and launch of new residential and commercial projects, said P Ramakrishna Rao, president, Credai Hyderabad.

The unit sales and capital values across micro-markets in the Hyderabad real estate continue to remain robust and are expected to further escalate over the next few quarters, he added.

The growth in the city is further facilitated by the State government's Grid policy promoting IT and industrial corridors all around the city, including non-traditional areas, resulting in Hyderabad being preferred by many MNCs and Fortune 500 companies, Rao explained.

"The city offers the lowest costs of construction, land, and rentals along with a great cosmopolitan culture, availability of skilled workforce etc., making it a preferred place to live and work. It is an ideal time to purchase a property in the city before the prices escalate rapidly," Rao told the media here after announcing the details of Credai Hyderabad Property Show 2021.

Telangana has witnessed IT export growth of Rs 1.25 trillion, with 18 per cent annual growth. Hyderabad's real estate industry has witnessed investments of about \$1 billion (Rs 7,254 crore) during 2019-2020 and is expected to see a further surge in investments in the coming quarters, said V Rajashekar Reddy, General Secretary, Credai Hyderabad.

Hyderabad has contributed about 20 per cent of the leasing activity in India in 2020, with large global giants picking up space during the year - 1.18 million sq feet by Wells Fargo, 0.3 million sq feet by Google, 0.25 million sq feet by IBM, 0.24 million sq feet by Smartworks and 0.18 million sq feet by Wipro, among others, he added.

The demand for flexible office spaces has risen after pandemic-induced lockdowns. Companies are weighing a hybrid working model work from home and office amid the need to maintain social distancing to reduce the risk of contracting the novel corona virus, Reddy said.

The city has seen the highest number of launches for residential and commercial real estate, backed by rapid absorption in the last quarter, said Reddy.

Credai Hyd property show from April 16

THE Hyderabad Chapter of Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (Credai), an apex body of private real estate developers, announced its 10th edition of 'Hyderabad Property Show 2021' exhibition for three days from April 16.

The property show has been planned, keeping in mind all the Covid protocols.

Stall designs and exhibition layouts have also been changed in accordance with pandemic prevention norms.

The property show will bring together all the member developers, material vendors, building material manufacturers, consultants, and financial institutions from across the city to exhibit the advances in the real estate sector. The exhibition will showcase properties suiting every requirement and budget by the developers, providing consumers a chance to get the best options for home solutions in the twin cities.

"We have planned the property show to help the buyers identify the best projects in the city under one roof. We also request the people to visit and book their dream houses from the very best and most trusted developers in the city," said P Ramakrishna Rao, president, Credai, Hyderabad.

The three-day property show will bring together all the member developers, material vendors, building material manufacturers, consultants, and financial institutions from across the city to exhibit the advances in the real estate sector



V Rajashekar Reddy (3rd from left), General Secretary, and P Ramakrishna Rao (4th from left), president, and other office bearers of Credai Hyderabad, launching Credai Hyderabad Property Show 2021 logo in Hyderabad on Friday

importance. We have taken into account all the protocols for Covid-19 by planning bigger stalls - facilitating adequate social distancing, more open spaces, larger corridors, and large meeting lounges which will be properly and frequently sanitized," said V Rajashekar Reddy, General Secretary, Credai Hyderabad.

The outer ring road was a direct

'TS Budget 2022 will boost Hyd real estate'

Over ₹2.3 lakh cr allocations on infrastructure projects will help the real estate market, says Rakesh Reddy

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Budget for 2021-22 with Rs 2.3 lakh crore has significant allocations towards roads, transport, power, irrigation and other infrastructure development projects with emphasis on Hyderabad, said Rakesh Reddy, Director, Aparna Constructions and Estates. The city's strong fundamentals, combined with continued infrastructure development, will help aid the revival of Hyderabad's real estate market in 2021. Reddy says, "Hyderabad real estate prices are expected to appreciate in 2021 because the city offers affordability without compromising on amenities. The development of Hyderabad's growth corridors has buffered the city from market downturns by providing a way to meet demand without unrealistic price surges."

Accordingly, there will be a greater shift in demand to the growth corridors of the city such as Kompally, Tellapur, and Patancheru. The allocation of Rs 1,000 crore for Hyderabad Metro rail will improve connectivity across the city. Hyderabad's growth corridors give the city many avenues for real estate development, he added.

The outer ring road was a direct

factor in the emergence of growth corridors. The allocation of Rs 750 crore for land acquisition for regional ring road will allow for further expansion and development in Hyderabad. As demand for Hyderabad real estate rises, the expanse of the growth corridors offers a way to meet growing demand.

Affordability will be a key driving force of growth demand. To bolster affordable housing in the city, Rs 11,000 crore has been allocated towards a 2 BHK housing scheme for the low income segment.

"Hyderabad is renowned for its high quality of life. In keeping with this commitment, the Budget allocations include Rs 250 crore for supply of free drinking water to every household in the city, Rs 725 crore for a new project in Sunakesula to cater to future water needs of the city, Rs 200 crore for restoration and beautification of the Musi river, and Rs 250 crore to provide drinking water to the newly-formed colonies within the outer ring road," said Reddy. The real estate market in Telangana is supported by proactive governance and business-friendly policies. The emphasis on infrastructure development reinforces the city's core strength and is a positive outcome for the sector, he added.



Rakesh Reddy

Bosphorous Boxing tournament

Nikhat Zareen on giant-killing spree

24-year-old Indian from Telangana stuns two-time world champion, storms into semis

NEW DELHI

INDIAN boxer Nikhat Zareen continued her spectacular form as she defeated two-time world champion Nazym Kyzaibay of Kazakhstan to enter the women's 51 kg semi-finals at the Bosphorus Boxing Tournament in Istanbul, Turkey.

Nikhat, who had earlier defeated 2019 World Champion Paltceva Ekaterina of Russia in the pre-quarter-finals, looked unfazed and confident on Thursday against her opponent from Kazakhstan.

The 24-year-old from Telangana stamped her authority right from the beginning and prevailed in a 4-1 win over Kyzaibay, a gold medallist from 2014 and 2016 World Championships, and ensured at least a bronze medal with a place in the last-4.

Apart from Nikhat, 2018 Commonwealth Games gold medallist Gaurav Solanki (57 kg) also sailed into the semi-finals after a tough contest against local boy Aykol Mizan. Both the boxers attacked throughout the bout but Solanki showed his technical supremacy to secure a 4-1 win and assured himself of at least a bronze medal.

Among other women boxers, Sonia Lather (57 kg), Parveen (60 kg) and Jyoti (69 kg) made exits with losses in their respective quarter-finals. Meanwhile, Shiva Thapa (63 kg) lost 4-1 to Turkey's Hakan Dogan in an intense bout.

The fourth day of the tournament on Friday will see two Indian boxers

fighting in their respective semi-final bouts later today. Zareen will face another tough challenge as she takes on 2019 World Championships silver medallist Busenaz Cakiroglu of Turkey while Solanki will be up against Argentina's Nirco Cuello.

(IANS)



5th T20I: Buoyant India look to seal series

AHMEDABAD

INDIA will look to build on the confidence they gained in defending a target in the fourth T20I and win the fifth and final match at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Saturday to clinch the series.

The hosts have levelled the series from a match down twice. They lost the first and the third matches, but won the second and fourth matches. The latest victory on Thursday came while defending a target of 186 runs.

The first three matches went in favour of teams chasing and it seemed like England would win Thursday's game when they put India in and got the early wicket of Rohit Sharma. However, Suryakumar Yadav, playing his first innings in international cricket, hit a quick half-century to put India on track.

In each of India's wins, one of the two Mumbai Indians' stars -- Ishan Kishan or Suryakumar, has clicked with the big-hitting and caught England by surprise.

The pitch given for the fourth T20I was a black soil surface, which had lesser pace than the one used for the third T20I. The pitch for the final match is also likely to be a black soil wicket and could see plenty

of runs. Captain Virat Kohli had praised the surface dished out for the fourth match. "The pitch was better than any other game," said Kohli after the game.

India's fast bowlers' change in pace has played a crucial role in both their wins. Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Hardik Pandya and Shardul Thakur made use of it to trouble the hard-hitting English batsmen.

In the second T20I, the change in pace helped India keep England to a below-par total batting first. In the fourth T20I, when England, powered by Ben Stokes's big-hitting, looked set to chase a massive target, change in pace again brought India back into the game.

For England, the key has been keeping the Indian top-order at bay in both matches they have won. However, their bowlers have faltered whenever someone from the top order like Kishan or a Suryakumar has clicked.

A big focus will be on opener KL Rahul, who

has failed to get big scores in the series. After scores of 1,0,0 in the first three games, the right hander managed a 17-ball 14 in the fourth match. (IANS)

SQUADS

India: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma (vice-captain), KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wicketkeeper), Ishan Kishan (wicket-keeper), Yuzvendra Chahal, Varun Chakravathy, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Rahul Tewatia, T. Natarajan, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Deepak Chahar, Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur.

England: Eoin Morgan (captain), Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonathan Bairstow, Sam Billings, Jos Buttler (wicketkeeper), Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Reece Topley, Mark Wood.

Indian captain Virat Kohli and boys celebrates team's victory in the fourth Twenty20 match against England in the cricket stadium of Sardar Patel Sports Enclave in Ahmedabad on Thursday



Krishna, Krunal, Suryakumar in Ind's ODI squad for Eng series

NEW DELHI

M Prasidh Krishna has received a maiden call-up to the Indian squad for their upcoming three-match ODI series against England. The 18-member squad, which was announced on Friday, also includes Suryakumar Yadav, who made his international debut in the five-match T20I series and scored a match-winning half century in the fourth T20I.

Krishna took 14 wickets at an average of 22.21 in the Vijay Hazare Trophy to help Karnataka to the semi-finals, where they lost to

eventual champions Mumbai.

All-rounder Washington Sundar, who played his only ODI match against Sri Lanka in December 2017, has been included in the team. Fellow all-rounder Krunal Pandya also finds a place. Pandya is yet to play an ODI match and his last international game was a T20I against Bangladesh in November 2019. Fast bowler T Natarajan, who missed the T20I series due to a niggle, has been included. Natarajan played in the third ODI during the Australia tour on December 2 and took two wickets to help India to a 13-run win. Mayank Agarwal, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Manish Pandey, Navdeep Saini and



M Prasidh Krishna

Sanju Samson, all of whom played in the ODI series in Australia, are missing from the squad.

The series against England will be played on March 23, 26 to 28 at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune. (IANS)

India's ODI squad: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma (vice-captain), Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav,

Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wicketkeeper), KL Rahul (wicketkeeper), Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Krunal Pandya, Washington Sundar, T Natarajan, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Shardul Thakur.

CONQUEROR OF THE HIGH SEAS



G. Syamala of Hyderabad became the first Telugu lady and the second in the world to successfully swim across the 30 km Palk Strait from Sri Lanka to India. She started from Sri Lanka coast at 4:15 am on Friday and reached Dhanushkodi in Rameshwaram after continuously swimming for 13 hours and 43 minutes. The 47 year old is an entrepreneur and was being trained and guided for this sea-swimming event by senior IPS officer Rajiv Trivedi who also crossed the Palk Strait in 2012 in 12 hours and 30 minutes. Considering that Syamala learnt swimming just a few years back her successful effort and the timing are very creditable

All England Open: Lakshya crashes out in quarters

BIRMINGHAM: India's Lakshya Sen crashed out of the All England Open Championships quarter-finals on Friday, losing to Mark Caljouw of the Netherlands 17-21, 21-16, 17-21. The match, which lasted 55 minutes, saw the end of Indian challenge in men's singles.

Caljouw, who had beaten Sen once before, won the first set 21-17 in 17 minutes. The world No. 36 Caljouw, however, won the last game 21-17 to seal the clash.

Earlier, Indian women's doubles pair Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy lost in the quarter-finals on Friday after a straight-games defeat to the Netherlands' Selena Piek and Cheryl Seinen.

Ashwini and Sikki lost the match 22-24, 12-21 in 39 minutes. This leaves reigning world champion PV Sindhu as the only Indian in the Super 1000 tournament. (IANS)

MP scores 42-0 win in women's sub jr hockey

BHUBANESWAR: Following their 0-5 defeat on the opening day, Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy bounced back in style to score a monumental 42-0 win over Tamil Nadu Hockey Academy on the third day of the 1st Hockey India Sub Junior Women Academy National Championship here on Friday.

Swati (3rd minute, 4, 10, 13, 22, 25, 28, 34, 39, 52) scored 10 goals while captain Bhumiksha Sahu (2nd minute, 3, 8, 12, 30, 35, 47, 55, 59) netted nine goals in what turned out to be a goal fest.

Krishna Sharma (15th minute, 31, 38, 41, 44, 55, 56) bagged seven goals whereas Huda Khan (16th minute, 32, 46, 52, 60) scored five goals. Sneha Patel (7th minute, 9, 23, 41) scored four and Palak Gupta (45th minute, 49, 60) scored three in the Pool B match. Ritika Ahirwar (42nd minute, 47) and Shileima Khaidem Chanu (29th minute, 40) scored two goals each.

Delhi World Cup: Panwar, Babuta in 10m air-rifle final

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S world No 1 Divyansh Singh Panwar and Arjun Babuta entered the eight-man final in the men's 10 metres air rifle event on the opening day of the World Cup here at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Ranges. The final will take place on Saturday.

In the 60-shot qualification round, teenager Panwar, who has won an Olympics quota place, shot 629.1 points to finish sixth. The 22-year-old Babuta scored 631.8 points to earn a third spot.

But Jakarta Asian Games medallist Deepak Kumar, the third shooter in fray, was off target as he finished in 12th place. The 33-year-old Air Force shooter scored 626.4. He had got an Olympics quota place in the 2019 qualification cycle. Since January, he has been out of form due to skin ailment and started normal training only in the first week of March.




Korea's Taeyun Nam exhibited good form to finish atop the field with 632.1 points. Israel's Sergey Richter was second with a score of 631.8 points.

Ukraine's Oleh Tsarkov was fourth with a score of 630 points. Hungary's Istvan Peni ranked 3rd in the global ranking shot 629.1 points to finish fifth.

Lucas Kozeniesky of the USA was seventh with 628.8. Korea's Byounggil Choo was the eighth and last shooter to make cut for the final.


Hungary's shooting legend Peter Sidi too missed the final. He shot 625 to finish 15th in the highly competitive field of 39 shooters. (IANS)





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