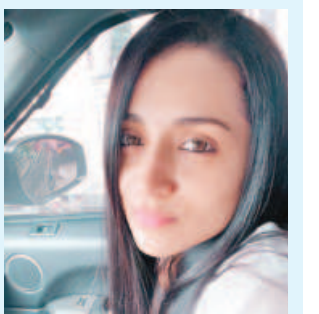


Earlier, a large number of COVID-19 patients from neighbouring states were coming to Delhi for treatment. This number has reduced to a large extent due to the difficulty in travel due to the ongoing protest, Jain said.

Womenia

TWEET PATROL


RAKUL SINGH
@RAKULPREET
2021
How's
that going?


TEJAL SINHA

Poonam spent her childhood hopping across India as her dad used to get transferred every three years. Growing up in different states developed an aesthetic that's appreciative of and deeply rooted in various Indian subcultures.

Poonam established her brand 'Maalicious' after a traumatic incident that took place in her life.

She adds, "Maalicious was born as a pet project conceived at my home in New York while mending a broken heart caused by a miscarriage in my 36th week of pregnancy. As they say, adversity leads to opportunity, and delving into arts helped me during those dark times. I have always had a deep appreciation for Indian art forms and I wanted to work with women artisans. This combined with long standing desire to create and wear my own designs lead me to everything Maalicious is today."

She partnered with differently-abled students studying jewelry in Mysore, India, on her visit to India a few weeks later. She eventually worked with various women artisans to integrate various Indian art forms into our jewelry.

"A lot of research, learning, sweat

and blood later, we've grown into what Maalicious is today. We have had some amazing moments in the last few years including being featured in British Vogue, Harper's BAZAAR Thailand and more. We have showcased our jewelry in New York fashion week and Paris fashion week in 2020," shares Poonam.

Having immense appreciation for Indian handicrafts, she always dreamt of making products using dwindling art forms but chic enough to cater to the urban crowd. Poonam's goal for Maalicious is two-fold; one to provide a platform for women artisans in India and secondly to help rejuvenate traditional arts. She wants to innovate and create quintessential jewelry that takes Indian workmanship with a touch of urban flair.

Poonam says, "We support traditional arts, and each of our pieces have a story to tell. Our jewelry is designed in NYC, and is 22k gold plated and handmade. We strive to ensure that our materials are responsibly sourced and some of our earrings are even made of sustainable materials like clay, wood, silk, etc. As a women-only run firm, we stand in solidarity with skilled and marginalized women."

For Poonam, the fashion weeks was the highlight of their journey.



Poonam

Sharing about the same she said that It was a great feeling to have her designs appreciated by the people in the industry. The growth, both as a designer and as a brand, while preparing for the weeks was tremendous for her. All the pieces of the brand are designed in New York by her and are further made by women artisans across India.

She adds, "We have around 6 women artisans we work on a regular basis in India and we have collaborated with a few others in Italy and Ukraine. The kind of work and amount depends a lot of the kind of work they do."

The celebrities that collaborated with 'Maalicious' in America has been Radhi Shetty. In India Divya Khosla Kumar that wore their jewelry recently.

The 'Amrita Shergill' design

Most of their pieces tell a story from India's glorious past. Amrita Sher-Gil is a tribute to the famous Indian painter. She is known as the pioneer of modern Indian art. Often known as "India's Frida



Kahlo" she painted many self-portraits and captured the daily lives of Indian women in the 1930s, often revealing a sense of their loneliness. She wanted to bring out these amazing stories through my pieces.

Their goal is to give their customers beautiful, lasting jewelry while holding the values of quality, labor rights and sustainability paramount.

"We are unique in our designs and in the way we give them life. Everything is handmade and so imperfect but that's what makes them unique. The uniqueness also comes from our need to innovate in this space. For instance, we have earrings that are made of terra cotta clay and then hand

painted like our Vintage earrings. We also have customizable earrings like our Alice earrings which can be personalized with a picture from our customer," adds Poonam.

Everything was a challenge for Poonam as she did not belong from a fashion industry.

"Operations and inventory were quite a challenge since I was working out of New York and the artisans were in India. Being visible is always difficult when you are just starting out. Initial sales came mainly from friends and family. I am immensely grateful for all the people that have helped me through this journey, we still have a long way to go and many things to improve," concludes Poonam.

The Indian jewellery designer who dazzled in New York & Paris

Art of dressing curves

Styling is important for everyone, no matter what size you are. If you are curvy and feeling sidelined by trends, don't worry! We have your back. There is no need to go back to baggy clothes; there is nothing to hide. These tips will help you to celebrate your curves, much to everyone else's envy!

Bring your confidence to the table every time. Experiment with your style and take some fashion risks. Keep that smile on and live life large!

There is no shame in having curves

Before we delve into styling, let's address what is most important. If your curves are stopping you from living life to the fullest, we have a problem. Carrying the shame of being a full-figured woman is not acceptable anymore. It's just a body type and a beautiful one at that! Accept and embrace yourself. Stop fixating on your size and do the things you love with passion. The only accessory you need is your confidence!

Wear what makes you happy

Enough about which body type can wear what! While it may be important aesthetically, break the rules if that makes you happy. Get that crop top, girl! With an increasing number of brands embracing size inclusivity- you will get almost every trendy piece in the market to rock your style. In fact, get an arsenal of crop tops and leggings because they are so comfortable and chic.

Invest in good lingerie

Pay good attention to this point and listen well, ladies! Wearing the right lingerie means a well-fitting bra and comfortable panties. It's so important for us curves to get this right. Choosing the right bra will give your body a flattering shape and your clothes will fit you better. There are bras designed for push-up effect so your dresses fit you at all the right places. You can go a bust size down by wearing a minimiser - tricking the eyes to make your bust line smaller can actually make you look more slender than before. This helps tremendously to balance out the proportions.

Shapewear- A game-changer

If you want a super-sculpted look where everything is cinched and tucked- Shapewear is your BFF. Let's say you want to wear a figure-hugging dress on New Year's eve; here's what you do - Get your hands on a well-fitted bodysuit. The aim is not to drastically alter your shape but to enhance your curves and ensure there are no lumps and bumps. Similarly, if you are planning to wear a high-waisted skirt and wish to tuck in your stomach, get yourself a



tummy tucker. The point is if you need help boosting your confidence, use the necessary tools!

Accessorize to suit your look

This is such an important but under-discussed point. An accessory can make or break your look. It is applicable to people of all sizes. An accessory could be anything- a belt, shoes, bags, jackets, jewellery among others.

For curvy women - If you wish to appear taller, lengthen your silhouette by wearing high heels. You can wear it with slim-fit jeans or a pencil skirt. You can also greatly benefit from a double-breasted jacket or a coat. It flatters curves like magic! Throw in a belt to the mix when in doubt. Contrary to what you may think, your cinched waist looks fantastic! If you are feeling conscious about your apple booty, which you shouldn't (it's a trend on its own), carry a big tote! It's all about proportions!

In the end, remember to never sell yourself short. Bring your confidence to the table every time. Experiment with your style and take some fashion risks. Keep that smile on and live life large!

Skirt trends that nailed 2020 and still continue



Skirts were, are, and will remain one of the most prized collections in the wardrobe of bold and beautiful. If you are bored of wearing traditional jeans or trousers, then skirts are here to give you the much-needed variety. Thankfully, designers are going beyond the traditional approach and creatively combining skirts with trousers to make it universal for all types of bodies. Fashion is all about the freedom to wear what you like the best, however, you should be very careful about body-to-skirt suitability.

Transparent mesh skirts

The spring and summer are all about openness and uncovering. Nothing works better than transparent mesh skirts to let legs feel

the freshness. Oops, it isn't designed transparent to embarrass you. To make it complete, you should get a long blazer, trench-coat with a belt, or a tunic.

Leather skirts

Leather is evergreen and goes well for all types of occasions. Thankfully, designers are creatively adding patches, fringes, and rivets to make leather skirts trendy and glamorous. Be creative in your combination as leather pencil skirts are suitable for casual as well as formal business dressing. A simple T-shirt and blazer will make you stand out in any gathering.

Wrap skirts and asymmetry

If you are looking for something fresh and innovative, you should

look for asymmetry on the skirts. The side cuts and diagonal cuts add fresh charm in your skirts. Be bold in your selection and go for contrast like shiny and metallic colours.

A-shaped skirts

This is all-time great for spring and summer collections. Checkered and neutral coloured skirts with matching blouse, blazer or sweater give you a perfect stylish contemporary look. You can opt for embroidered or straight skirts as well, as these are in vogue. You can play with your look with the right combination of shoes and glasses.

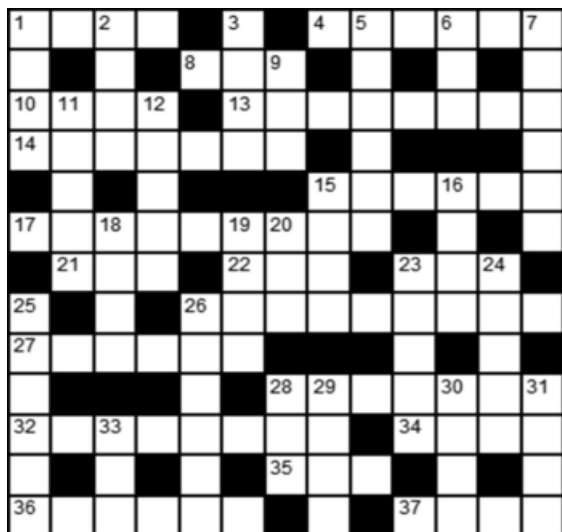
Tutu skirt

If you want to go bombastic and

leave a deep impression in the party circle you should get tutu skirts matching your personality. This rock style tutu skirts are in trend as designers are replacing the traditional nylon with mesh pattern to make it bolder. You can wear tutu skirts with vibrant leather jackets and cowboy boots to look fabulous.

Frills and ruffles

This is most popular in all fashion circuits. The high-waist, tight hips, and flared hem with ruffles give you a glamorous look. It is all about the right combination of colours as ruffles and folds are getting normalised. However, you should choose it according to your body type as excessive ruffles could be challenging to manage.



SOLUTION TO JANUARY 22

CROSSWORD

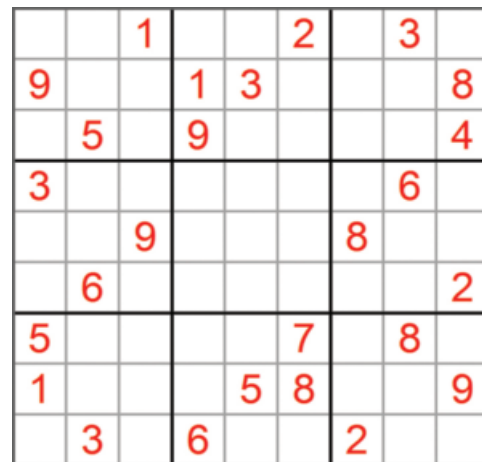
Across

- 1 Conduit (4)
- 4 N.E. state of India (6)
- 8 Impudence (3)
- 10 Devilish ones (4)
- 13 Unfaithful (8)
- 14 Unlawful liquor (7)
- 15 Free of an obstruction (6)
- 17 Admonish (9)
- 21 Plaything (3)
- 22 Give help (3)
- 23 Unit of current (3)
- 26 Fixed (9)
- 27 Judge's private room (6)
- 28 Cries or laments over (7)
- 32 Chief support (8)
- 34 After deductions (4)
- 35 Itch or desire (3)
- 36 Craftiest (6)
- 37 Break (4)

Down

- 1 Negligible amount (4)
- 2 Mafia kingpin (4)
- 3 An extra run (4)
- 5 Away from the sea (6)
- 6 Lock opener (3)
- 7 Speak evil of (6)
- 9 Sty-dweller ? (3)
- 11 French impressionist (5)
- 12 Tale (5)
- 15 Loosen (4)
- 16 A young sheep (4)
- 18 A composition in verse (4)
- 19 An informal term for a mother (4)
- 20 Direct a gun (3)
- 23 Brother of Moses (5)
- 24 Factory (5)
- 25 Mischievous children (6)
- 26 Flowers of the eyes (6)
- 28 Body of water (3)
- 29 Looked at (4)
- 30 An immense time (4)
- 31 Cease (4)
- 33 A climbing vine (3)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO JANUARY 22

NEWS ROUNDUP

Kirti Kulhari: Gender-based violence is a harsh reality

Actress Kirti Kulhari feels gender-based violence is a harsh reality, one that has gone up amid the pandemic.

"Together, we are facing the largest social, economic and health crisis, known to humankind, in the form of Covid-19. But there are many who are suffering, perhaps much more than us, in silence. Lockdown was enforced to ensure our safety. But many women are not safe in their own homes. Cases of domestic abuse and domestic violence have risen by an alarming percentage," Kirti said.

She continued: "This is the shadow pandemic and you and I can actively work towards putting an end to it. It could be you, your neighbour, your friend, your help, your colleague or anyone else facing gender-based violence and suffering in silence. It is happening to women around us which is why this concerns you, me, all of us."

"One in three women in the world face violence usually by their partner. Gender-based violence is a harsh reality and as a society, we must do our bit to make a difference. If you see anyone experiencing violence, lend your hand and your voice to the situation. It is time we stand with survivors, and initiate a much-needed conversation. While we are actively working towards ending the Covid 19 pandemic, let's also treat this as an opportunity to build back a better and equal world," she added.

In sync with her thoughts, the actress has supported the cause of #BuildBackBetterAndEqual, an initiative by UN Women.

Incidentally, her latest release, Criminal Justice: Behind Closed Doors, had her playing a victim of marital rape.

Kirti will soon be seen in the third season of Four More Shots Please and the Hindi film, The Girl On The Train.



‘Hunar Haat has given jobs to over 5 lakh artisans in 5 yrs’



Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi visits the Hunar Haat in Lucknow on Friday

LUCKNOW

EMPLOYMENT opportunities have been generated for over five lakh artisans, craftsmen and people associated with them through the “Hunar Haat” initiative of the government in the last five years, Union Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Friday.

“Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the 24th Hunar Haat of indigenous products of artisans and craftsmen in the state capital on Saturday. Artisans and craftsmen from 31 states and Union territories will participate in the event,” Naqvi told reporters here.

He said the “Hunar Haat” initiative has proved to be immensely beneficial and encour-

aging for artisans and craftsmen as lakhs of people purchase their indigenous handmade products at the event. “More than five lakh artisans, craftsmen and people associated with them have been provided with employment and employment opportunities in the last about five years through the Hunar Haat,” the minister said.

About 500 artisans, craftsmen and culinary experts from 31 states and Union territories, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, will participate in the event starting on Saturday, he added. The minority affairs ministry is organising the “Hunar Haat” at the Avadh Shilpgram here from January 22 to Febru-

ary 4 with the theme of “Vocal for Local”.

Naqvi said Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Dinesh Sharma and senior ministers will also grace the occasion. Indigenous products such as ajrakh, applique, art metal ware, Bagh print, batik, Banarasi saree, bandhej, Bastar art and herbal products, block print, brass metal bangles, cane and bamboo products, canvas painting, chikankari, copper bell will be available at the “Hunar Haat”.

Handloom textile, kalamkari, mangalgiri, Kota silk, lac bangles, leather products, Pashmina shawls, Rampuri violins, wooden and iron toys, kantha embroidery, crystal glass items, sandalwood products will also be avail-

able, Naqvi said. People can also enjoy traditional delicacies from different parts of the country at the event, he said, adding that renowned artistes of the country will perform on the theme of “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” (self-reliant India) every evening.

Those expected to perform are Kailash Kher, Vinod Rathore, Shibani Kashyap, Bhupendra Bhuppi, the Mirza sisters, Prem Bhatia and Rekha Raj, among others. Naqvi said people can buy “Hunar Haat” products from the hunarhaat.org website as well. In the coming days, the event will be organised in Mysore, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Indore, Mumbai, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Ranchi, Kota, Surat or Ahmedabad, Kochi, Puducherry and other places, the minister said.

We have *neta, niyat* to take BJP forward: Nadda

LUCKNOW

BJP president J P Nadda here on Friday said his party has a leader and the intention to take it forward unlike other political outfits, which he accused of being dynastic. He said “parivarvaad” (dynastic politics) can be found in all political parties except the BJP, in which an ordinary person can become a prime minister, defence minister or home minister.

The BJP chief was speaking at the party’s “Booth President Conference” here. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also attended the event. “We have ‘neta’ (leader), ‘niyat’ (intention), ‘niti’ (policy), ‘karyakarta’ (workers) and ‘karyakram’ (programme). We have no reason to stop,” Nadda told party workers. He said “parivarvaad” exists in all political parties, with the baton being passed on to the son by the father.

“But it is in the BJP that an ordinary person can become a prime minister, defence minister or home minister,” he said. Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nadda said, “Even the US was fighting against it, but what happened? It could not decide between the options of ‘arth’ (economy) and ‘swasthya’ (health). As a result, it was a political issue, an electoral issue and there was an electoral loss.

They had a better health system than us. Spain and Italy had better health system than us, but all of this collapsed because the leadership did not take the decision at the appropriate time. Here, Modi ji took the decision at



BJP National President JP Nadda speaks during 'Booth Adhyaksh Sammelan', in Lucknow on Friday

the right time, imposed a lockdown with timely intervention and bold decision, and saved the country.” He added that at the time of the imposition of the lockdown, the testing capacity was 150 samples per day and today it is 10 lakh per day and in UP, it is over 1.5 lakh per day.

“At the onset of the lockdown, PPE kits were imported and today over 5 lakh PPE kits per day are being made,” he said. “India has the best recovery rate and lowest mortality rate. Today,

our recovery rate is above 97 per cent and it is increasing every day. UP’s population is 24 crore and the population of the US is (nearly) 33 crore. There, the number of people who have died is four lakh. Every life is important. Here, it is 8,000. We have to understand this difference,” the BJP chief said. Nadda said the image of India has changed due to the ‘swachhhta abhiyan’ and the toilets constructed in various households are not merely toilets, they are “izzat ghar for women”.

1ST CHILD-FRIENDLY POLICE STATION IN UTTARAKHAND

DEHRADUN

UTTARAKHAND Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat inaugurated the state’s first child friendly police station here on Friday describing it as a major reformative step by the police.

It is a new initiative and a major reformative step towards protection of children by the state police, Rawat said after inaugurating the Bal Mitra police station in Dalanwala area here.

Innocent children who deviate from the right path unknowingly can be helped by such police stations, he said. DGP Ashok Kumar said Bal Mitra police stations will help children overcome unnecessary fear of police stations. “Our effort is to make all police stations in the state children and women friendly,” he said. Such police stations are to be set up in all 13 districts of the state, president of Uttarakhand Commission for Protection of Child Rights Usha Negi who was also present said.

Punjab tableau to depict Sikh guru’s sacrifice

CHANDIGARH

THE supreme sacrifice of ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur will be the theme of the official tableau of Punjab for the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on January 26, an official spokesperson said on Friday.

The tableau delineates the 400th Parkash Purb of the Sikh guru, said the spokesperson. The tractor portion of the tableau starts with the holy Palki Sahib (palanquin) while the trailer portion depicts a “prabhat Pheri” with devotees reciting “kirtan”.

The end of the trailer portion shows Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib which marks the site where Lakh Shah Vanjara and his son Bhai Naghaiya burnt their own house to cremate the



headless body of Guru Sahib, according to the spokesperson. Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was popularly known as “Hind Di Chadar”, was born in Amritsar on April 1, 1621.

He travelled far and wide preaching Guru Nanak Dev’s

eternal message of love, peace, equality and brotherhood. Guru Tegh Bahadur took up the cause of Kashmiri pandits who were facing religious persecution due to the orthodox religious policy of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. He was martyred

on November 11, 1675 at Chandni Chowk in Delhi on the orders of the Mughal emperor for refusing to convert to Islam. The tableau of Punjab has been selected for the Republic Day parade for the fifth consecutive year.

15-year-old girl, nephew killed in Chitrakoot; rape suspected

CHITRAKOOT

A 15-year-old girl was hacked to death with an axe allegedly after being raped and her four-year-old nephew killed in a village here, police said on Friday.

A 30-year-old man from the girl’s village has been arrested in connection with the crime which took place

on Thursday, they said.

“The body of the girl was found in a village on Thursday. She was hacked to death with an axe,” Superintendent of Police Ankit Mittal said. Her nephew was also attacked. He was rushed to the hospital where he died during treatment, he said. Circle Officer Subodh Gautam said the

girl was attacked when she was returning home after giving food to her father in the field.

“Accused Chilua has been arrested by the police. The motive behind the crime is being probed,” the officer said. Gautam said the teenager’s family has alleged that she was raped before being murdered. It

will be confirmed after the post-mortem examination.

“The post-mortem report is awaited,” he said. Meanwhile, an official spokesperson in Lucknow said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has taken note of the incident and announced a financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh to the victim’s family.

Samples of dead cranes in Delhi zoo test negative for bird flu

NEW DELHI

All 12 samples of dead cranes in the Delhi zoo have tested negative for bird flu, authorities said on Friday, a week after the first case of avian influenza was detected in its premises.

“Four cranes were found dead in the Delhi zoo a few days ago. Twelve samples were collected on Monday and sent to National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSD) of Indian Council of Agricultural Research for testing, Bhopal,” Dr. Rakesh Singh, the director of the animal husbandry unit of the Delhi government, said.

All the 12 samples have tested negative, he said. Last week, samples from a dead owl in the Delhi zoo had tested positive for avian influenza. Zoo Direc-



tor Ramesh Pandey said they were following all protocols and monitoring the situation strictly. “We have been using the ebird mobile application to keep track of the birds in the premises of the zoo,” he said.

This is the first time the application is being used for bird monitoring and record keeping during the outbreak of avian influenza. The application allows the user to enter sightings from anywhere in the world, even in areas with no cell service, or Internet access. Singh said that 1,338 bird deaths have been reported in Delhi between January 6 and January 21 amid the bird flu situation.

Of the 207 samples collected from various places in the national capital, 24 have tested positive for avian influenza so far, he said. On Tuesday, authorities restricted the entry of public into the Red Fort till Friday after a sample of a dead crow tested positive for bird flu. Around 15 crows were found dead in the premises of the Red Fort on January 10.

India in third position in scientific publications after China, US: DST

NEW DELHI

INDIA has seen an exponential increase in the number of scientific publications over the last 10 years and is in the third position globally after China and the US, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) said on Friday.

Of the 13,045 patents in 2017-18, as many as 1,937 were by Indians.

Out of 15,550 patents filed by Indians at Indian Patent Office during the period, 65 per cent were filed from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Delhi, the DST said. India’s national investment in research and development (R&D) has increased from Rs 1,13,825 crore in 2017-18 to Rs 1,23,847 crore in 2018-19. At the same time, various initiatives of the DST such as the National Initiative For Developing And Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI) have played a crucial role to reach this position, the DST said. The implemen-



tation of initiatives like NIDHI have nurtured 3,681 start-ups through the network of around 150 incubators created by the DST and generated 1992 intellectual property. Further, in the last five years, jobs generated in the form of direct employment were 65,864 and Rs 27,262 crore of economic wealth, it added. “The number of publications has increased exponentially over the last 10 years. “According to data from the US agency, the National Science Foundation (NSF), India is currently in third place, only behind China and the United States, with 1,35,788 scientific articles in the year 2018,” the DST said.

Replica of Ram Temple to be showcased in UP’s R-Day tableau

NEW DELHI

ANCIENT city Ayodhya’s heritage, replica of a Ram temple, glimpse of ‘Deepotsav’ and various stories from Ramayana epic have been depicted in the tableau of Uttar Pradesh which will be showcased in the Republic Day parade on January 26.

The bedecked tableau is fronted by a sitting model of Maharishi Valmiki and the temple model is on the rear side, officials said on Friday. “Ayodhya is our holy place and the Ram temple issue has been an emotive one for the faithful. Our tableau will showcase the ancient heritage of the town, revered by countless people across the country,” an official of the Uttar Pradesh government, accompanying the state team, said.

A group of artistes, including two women dancers will be part of the

tableau and one person will be dressed up as Lord Ram. A media preview of the various tableaux, including a total of 18 states and union territories, was held at the Republic Day’s cultural camp at Delhi Cantonment on Friday.

Ajay Kumar, who wore a yellow silk dhoti and rudraksh garland around his neck and held a bow in his hand, said, “I am very excited and happy that Ayodhya and its heritage will be showcased in our tableau and I have been chosen to play our beloved Lord Ram”.

“We have been waiting to see Ayodhya’s heritage being showcased on Rajpath,” said Kumar, a resident of Laxmangarh in Chandauli district, as he posed for photographers. Ayodhya’s Deepotsav celebrations with earthen lamps is depicted on one side of the tableau, while other murals show embracing of

Nishadraj by Lord Ram and eating of Shabri’s berry by him, salvation of Ahilya, bringing of Sanjeevani by Lord Hanuman, Jatayu-Ram samvad, Ashok Vatika and other scenes.

On November 9, 2019, the Supreme Court had settled the fractious Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue going back more than a century and backed the construction of a Ram temple by a trust at the disputed site. It also ruled that an alternative five-acre plot must be found for a mosque in the Hindu holy town. Prime Minister Narendra Modi last August had performed the ‘bhoomi puja’ of a Supreme Court-mandated Ram temple in Ayodhya, bringing to fruition the BJP’s mandir movement that defined its politics for three decades and took it to the heights of power. The Ram temple is scheduled for completion in 2023.



Uttar Pradesh tableau artists perform at the Republic Day rehearsals, at Ravindra Rangshala in New Delhi on Friday

Pakistan's continuing miseries

'NAYA Pakistan' is nothing new as far as its economic crisis is concerned. Prime Minister, Imran Khan, promised to deliver a new Pakistan to the people once in power and if there is anything new in it, it is in the increased misery of the country. In fact, people have stopped even thinking about or exploring reasons for Pakistan's economy being in doldrums. Imran Khan can blame Covid-19 in addition to his predecessors now and would never dare enough to point a finger at his own administration or at the Army that is looting the country uninterruptedly in the last few decades.

Being a puppet of the Army, Imran cannot defy his puppeteers and can only seek alibis for his failures. Mounting debt crisis, falling exports, un-

checked and spiralling government expenditure, absence of effective price mechanism to control everyday food items are not only ringing alarm bells but have put the country on a rough and bumpy road.

The country's media constantly points out that the malice is far deeper. Yet, no one bothers to care for the common man, in the country. However, it seems Pakistan is beyond repair. All the energies of the country go into pushing terrorists into the neighbouring countries to disturb the peace there. This is the primary reason the Opposition is getting stronger by the day. What is most irritating for the people of Pakistan is the consistent claim of Khan that the economy has made a turnaround.

Yes, agreed that the pandemic did play a key role in slamming the country's economy that contracted "for the first time in seven decades". Economists recall that the downward trend has begun in 2018 itself. The next year the economy grew by only 1.9 per cent from 5.8 per cent in the year the Khan came to power. Opinion pieces in the Pakistan's national media suggest that "whenever you hear the government proclaim triumph about rising exports, keep in mind that the trade deficit has grown even faster than exports in the same July to December period." No one seems to be ready to buy Khan's argument.

Besides, Pakistan is also struggling to contain inflation that shot up to 10.7% in 2020, up from 6.8% in 2019 and 4.7% in 2018 when the Imran Khan govern-

ment came to power. A recent spike in food prices indicates that the rising trend is likely to continue. The food situation in the country is so bad that Karachi Port was recently jammed with imports, foreign media reports pointed out. Rising debt stocks are playing havoc with the economy.

By the end of September 2020, Pakistan's total debt and liabilities stood at Pakistani Rupee 44,801 billion (\$280 billion), an increase of PKR 245 billion over a three-month period. There is a twist to the debt story of Pakistan. Around 30 per cent of it is sourced through external borrowings and the country needs to pay PKR 1,200 billion rupees towards debt servicing and liabilities. One could easily understand the predicament of Imran Khan. After all he is living under the shadow of the Army. That only means that he is having a Damocles' sword hanging over his head!

No maturity in Indian politics

IN MY OPINION

V RAMU SARMA

WHAT'S happening in Andhra Pradesh? Well that was the discussion on a pleasant sunny morning when the entire family had met after a decade to celebrate Sankranti festival in a village in one of the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. Since there was no family politics to be discussed and not one was interested in cock fights, all senior citizens sipping hot coffee started wondering, what's happening in Andhra Pradesh?

It was an intense but interesting discussion straight from the heart. I broke the ice saying why this sudden doubt? In my opinion all seems to be going well in the residuary state, The Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is young, has clear line of thinking and is implementing his agenda perfectly, I said.

There was some silence for a minute. What is being implemented perfectly, one of them asked? Well the nine jewels, Navaratnalu is being implemented which includes, Amma Vodi, YSR Asara, ban on Alcohol, Jalayagnam, Fee Reimbursement, Arogyasri, YSR Rythu Bharosa, Pedhalandarikil Illu, Pensionla Pempu. Pension is being delivered at the doorstep, for students Amma Vodi programme has been launched wherein government gives Rs 15,000 per year. Door delivery of ration to begin from February 1, what else do you expect from a government that is less than two years in office? I asked.

There was smile and the next question was but what about employment generation? Welfare schemes may or may not continue depending upon which government comes to power. If employment generation is there, people will have better economic security.

Well, official records say that government has created 2.60 lakh village volunteers' posts paying a salary of Rs 5000 per month, 1.24 lakh village secretariat employees with salary of Rs 10,000 per month, civil supplies vehicles 9260 with a salary of Rs 12000 per month. Now tell me how many industries will be required to create so many jobs in such short time? One should understand the difference between unemployment and getting a gainful employment. No State in the world can ever provide jobs for all its unemployed in the government sector, I said.

Sounds interesting and impressive but, what about revenue generation, a tax practitioner posed the question. If I don't generate any revenue and go on disbursing salaries or pensions and other welfare benefits, expenditure would be more than income and state would go bankrupt, he quipped. There was big laughter among those who were participating in the discussion. See how a tax practitioner is calculating, one of them commented.

Well there is an element of truth in it. Revenue generation is must and it is a fact that this aspect needs to be focused more in the residuary state. I have some friends in industries. They have been expressing concern over the slowing down of the industrial sector. No new industry is keen to come to the state. Even HSBC, I am told is going to move out of Visakhapatnam. Real estate and IT sector is preferring neighbouring Telangana. The kind of proactiveness that is seen between the industry and government in Telangana is not visible here. This is what causes worry, he averred.

But then who is to be blamed for this? I asked. Is it not a fact that the opposition parties are creating hurdles and going to court for everything? Pat came the reply from a retired army officer, where is the Opposition here? It is badly fragmented. It has been decimated. We are witnessing a new kind of administration which does not allow any dissent or protests. Even freedom of expression is not there



if one goes by the reports in newspapers. It is said that those who criticise the government are trolled and even threatened. "I don't think the common man is affected by it. All that we see is more in political circles, said a retired government officer.

The host said 'Well, we had supported YSRCP candidate. He is doing good job within his limitations but he cannot even take a delegation from here to meet the Chief Minister to submit a memorandum on some long-pending issues. Secondly, of late we have seen that religious intolerance is growing. Recently a meeting of some seers was held to get support for construction of Ram mandir at ayodhya and collect funds. Even local YSRCP MLA was there in the programme. Suddenly some stones landed near the stage. Fortunately, no one was injured'.

'By the time we could realize what was happening, there was a big thud and some chaos. When I went towards my car to pick up a packet of silk robes to be presented to a Swamiji, I found the rear windshield of my car smashed. I immediately drew the attention of the organisers. The reply I got from my MLA was shocking. Please let us not make an issue of it. We will handle it, he pleaded and there was nothing I could do except get it replaced at my own cost. But then the issue here is not of my car windshield but growing religious intolerance. Never in the past such things had happened', he bemoaned.

I intervened saying that it must be some local dissent may be some group which was opposed to the organisers or the legislator or some hooligans opposed to ruling party. My host said whoever it may be, the fact is that many such incidents have been happening and the police has failed to prevent them. Ok, I said but then how can you blame the government for it. It is a secular government. We have seen how the Chief Minister has been wearing silk robes, how he has been performing Gau puja with namam etc.

Yes, but what about desecration of idols? He shot back. That's an act of some hooligans. Such things did happen in the past as well. During previous regime some temples were removed and the promise of relocating them was never fulfilled. This government proposes to reconstruct them. The Minister for endowments himself stated this I said.

Again there was some silence. One of them asked why do you think the government is not holding local body elections. Why is there a clash between the State Election Commissioner and the government? A retired teacher who had in the past performed poll duties said, this is a funny situation we are seeing. The TDP government also had issue with the Chief Electoral Officer during last general elections but never did such a situation arise.

Employees have no voice or role in it. Once given a duty they

must perform their duty. One thing is certain, thanks to the welfare measures of the government it is sure to win the local body elections. But somehow, somewhere some kind of rupture has taken place. This kind of clash between the political executive and the SEC was never there in the past. It is unfortunate development. We had seen how the government had removed the SEC and brought a new person and how the court had to intervene in the issue.

But the government says that pandemic is the cause for its opposition to hold elections and people are more important not elections, I said. Some of them reacted saying, "What are you talking?" Was there no pandemic in Telangana, did not the state hold Dubbaka by poll and GHMC elections and gearing up for MLC and Nagarajuna Sagar by election? Is vaccination not being given there? Did not Kerala hold elections? Is the situation here worse than those states? Majority of the people here are not even using masks how do you say the pandemic is more severe here? Even US held elections though situation there is still not normal, he said. Well I had no answer.

US elections too have shown that politicians like Trump are no different from politicians in India or some other country. He even announced that he had won though he was losing, I said. Yes, but there is one difference. Here whichever party comes to power keeps accusing the previous government and holds them responsible for omissions and commissions. But there once the results were out, Biden is not using any harsh language against Trump. His only slogan is "We Americans are one, we are united."

Hope that kind of political maturity would be seen in India as well, a septuagenarian remarked. But the latest developments indicate that the State is heading towards constitutional crisis as the government seems to be determined not to cooperate with the SEC and the SEC is bent upon going ahead with the process of local body elections armed with the direction from the High Court.

These measures are welcome departures from the notorious Trump-era policies.

N J Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Enter the Kamalam?

I got to read the letter "BJP and Kamalam" (The Hans India 22 January). My name, like thousands of other south Indians is Kamalam, which my parents gave me much before the farmers in Gujarat started farming me what was earlier known as "Dragon Fruit". After reading reports on the name change, the Chief Minister of Gujarat has claimed that the fruit looks like "Lotus" and it is not proper due to its name one thinks of China.

The CM should understand that this is no way to deal with China which has strained our relationship with us, its better the government of India deal with them diplomatically or otherwise. Thanks to Google, on further research it has been found that apart from Gujarat, apparently this fruit is grown in my state, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. So it would have been better if it had been given a Indian name instead of the name that resembles his party's symbol.

One hopes others who have similar name lime mine would join me and urge not to give our name instead find a pan India name. Thanks to Bard, what is in name as long as fruit remains as tasty, healthy as it was then called "Dragon Fruit". But what happens, if party supporters demand to rename the Bruce Lee film "Enter the Kamalam"!

S Kamalam, Chennai

Why Netaji has become important for BJP in Bengal?

NAVNEET MISHRA

MARKING the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the BJP is engaged in connecting with the sentiments of the people of West Bengal. The programme will continue for the whole



year. This comes ahead of the high-voltage West Bengal Assembly polls later this year.

The Modi government has set up a high-level committee to outline the programmes that will run throughout the year from January 23. The ruling Trinamool Congress plans to attack its arch-rival BJP in the Bengal electoral battle.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee says that the BJP has only become a 'devotee of Netaji' as the election draws near. The political battle in Bengal between the two parties has not left Bose's legacy untouched.

But the BJP dismisses the talk of linking Bose's birth anniversary with the election. West Bengal BJP state vice-president Ritesh Tiwari told IANS that people who questioned the BJP's intention to celebrate Bose's 125th birth anniversary were politically motivated.

So what is the BJP's strategy behind celebrating Bose's birth anniversary for the first time? Political analysts consider the West Bengal election to be the reason behind this. The popularity of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Bengal is not hidden from anyone. He is considered as the pride of Bengal. It is believed that through his birth anniversary, the BJP is trying to tell the people of Bengal that it is the protector of Bengali identity.

Ever since Mamata Banerjee started calling BJP leaders as outsiders, the saffron party has intensified its programmes eulogising Bengali icons. In December, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had praised Rabindranath Tagore at Vishwa Bharati University.

The BJP says that Bose fought the freedom struggle from India right up to Europe, but he did not get the respect and recognition he deserved.

Tiwari told IANS, "Who says the BJP is showing love for Netaji for the first time? It was the BJP's Vajpayee government which revealed the secrets of Netaji's disappearance. The Mukherjee Commission was set up. When the BJP government came to power at the Centre again in 2014, Prime Minister Modi took the initiative to make public the files related to Netaji. He was honoured by hoisting the flag at the Red Fort with Netaji's family."

He described Bose as India's first international leader and said that he succeeded in persuading other countries to help India. The BJP is special as it carries forward the legacy and principles and gives due respect to the great men of the country.

Tiwari said that the Modi government took the initiative to celebrate not only Bose's but also the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi from last year. Even Sardar Patel's birth anniversary party is celebrated with great enthusiasm. Great men do not belong to one party, he said.

The BJP and Trinamool Congress are trying to capitalise on the sentiments of the people through 'Netaji Jayanti'. Preparations are on to organize large-scale programs from both the parties. While the central government has constituted a high-level committee under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Modi to decide the programmes for the 125th birth anniversary, the Mamata Banerjee government also set up a similar committee under the leadership of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen.

The BJP will celebrate Bose's birth anniversary on January 23 as 'Parakram Divas'. In Bengal, BJP will hold meetings from village to cities while the Trinamool has announced to celebrate Bose's birth anniversary as 'Desh Nayak Divas'.

India Inc on recovery path

53 pc companies to raise headcount in 2021

EVEN as India's hiring activities declined last year due to the coronavirus pandemic, there is a sudden increase in demand with about 53 per cent of companies saying they are planning to increase their headcounts in 2021, according to a survey.

The pandemic adversely impacted economies across Asia-Pacific, including India, which had entered 2020 with robust hiring activities, according to professional recruitment services firm Michael Page India's 'Talent Trends 2021 Report'. It added that the pandemic led to a dip in hiring activities by 18 per cent in 2020. The survey-based report, however, added that optimism is already starting to show, with about 53 per cent of companies in India looking to increase their headcounts in 2021. Michael Page India Managing Director Nicolas Dumoulin said, "Technology and healthcare sectors witnessed significant activity even during the lockdown phase given the sudden increase in demand for relevant talent across functions." He added that hiring activities among internet-based businesses such as e-commerce and education technology remained relatively robust across India and is expected to maintain the momentum in 2021 as well.

According to the report, India projects an optimistic outlook for 2021, with 60 per cent of the employers surveyed intending to increase salaries, while 55 per cent of the companies planning to give out bonus payments and 43 per cent of them looking to give out more than one month's worth of bonus. The results for the report was drawn from a survey across 12 Asia-Pacific markets, including in India, among over 5,500 businesses and 21,000 employees, of which 3,500-plus are directors or CXOs.

The report further showed that the healthcare sector is expected to see the largest percentage rise in salary at an average increase of 8 per cent, followed by fast-moving consumer goods (7.6 per cent) and e-commerce/internet services (7.5 per cent). The technology boom in India has only further accelerated especially in the software-as-a-service (SaaS), health-tech, edutech and gaming industries with rising demand for professionals in the artificial learning and machine learning space, it said.

Many companies have capitalised on the availability of Indian techies looking to return to India as a result of the pandemic, it added. Over 74 per cent of technology companies in India expect a 14 per cent rise in headcount and are open to considering talent remotely available, offering flexibility to the right candidate under the hybrid work model. There has been an increased demand for hiring at the leadership level in private equity, venture capital as well as other asset classes on buy-side like credit or distressed, hedge funds, public markets and impact funds, and this trend is expected to continue in 2021, it stated.

Most of the non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and financial technology companies are likely to focus on skill sets such as analytics-driven risk, digital marketing, strategy-driven portfolio management collections, alliances, and partnerships. Meanwhile, it said that over 68 per cent of e-commerce companies in India expect a 12 per cent increase in headcount in 2021. Growth in e-commerce has also led to a rise in the number of tech-enabled platforms in logistics and warehousing, it added. Industrial warehousing has fuelled demand in real estate as well with 44 per cent of property and construction companies in India expecting headcount to increase by 10 per cent in 2021.

Further, essential delivery start-ups and hyperlocal start-ups grew in 2020, increasing the demand for profit and loss heads and product management professionals. Start-ups in India examined their core businesses and retrained focus on profitability last year, while larger conglomerates took time to increase their reach and influence and establish new lines of business, which is likely to continue this year as well, Dumoulin added. (77)

LETTERS

KTR for KCR: A premature move

PROPOS 'Stop CM campaign, KTR warns leaders'. It is but natural for cadres to be carried away by any announcement in terms of leadership change, as a young, new chief ministerial candidate has been hinted to emerge from the party since the announcement has been made by none other than the chief minister himself. The fire fighting in the aftermath of the news that is being done by KTR, in an effort to tone down the overt enthusiasm that is being evident on part of party MLAs and other senior leaders in the aftermath of KCR's announcement that KTR would be successor to the chief minister's post in the state.

The announcement could have waited as nobody in the right mind would think of any other candidate for CMs post in lieu of KCR. The dynasty connotations that other political parties are being branded in the country could have been avoided as a result. The natural enthusiasm by the MLAs and other supporters in having a young individual like KTR to govern the party is obvious, but as KTR has said it must not cause embarrassment as the announcement has come a tad too early in time - an event that is likely to unfold after two years or more; is what KCR intends to impress the MLAs. The crucial job on hand for

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cadres, about which they must more seriously focus, is on winning local body elections in Telangana.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

II

TELANGANA Dy Speaker, T Padma Rao Goud and other TRS leaders' open appeal to their Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao to handover the reigns to his son KT Rama Rao reminds me of the post-Emergency days. When Congress leaders, prevailed upon the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi to give way for her younger son Sanjay to take mantle; but fate decided otherwise, due to the tragic untimely death of young Sanjay in June 1980. It seems, by floating this idea, TRS Chief made an attempt to test the waters amongst his party MLAs and MPs.

It is not that KTR possesses extraordinary qualities to accept CM post. In fact, Mr E Rajender and Mr T Harish Rao, the second rung leaders, with their long administrative experience and contribution in Telangana movement, deserve the post. Interestingly, by endorsing the views of his other colleagues for KTR, the Health Minister, Mr Rajender also fallen in line, much to the 'solace' of the CM! Hereditary politics has become the practice of the day in almost all the regional parties in the country, including Telangana Rashtra Samiti.

The real threat to TRS is not in the party but in opposition camp viz. BJP, which is fast making inroads in KCR's citadel. If things go in favour of saffron party with increasing anti-incumbency

wave in Telangana and gain power, young KTR's dream may shatter before it blooms. One may not be surprised then, if today's loyalists of ruling party may even make a beeline to BJP in such event!

Govardhan R Jilla, Mumbai

Indiscriminate populism in AP

DOOR delivery of ration to elderly and differently abled ones is welcome but the decision of Jagan Mohan Reddy government to purchase about 9000 vehicles at a cost of Rs 539 crore to supply the ration to all is not justified. Are people of Andhra Pradesh physically weak or have no time to visit ration dealer to get ration? (CM Jagan flags off vehicles for delivery of rations at doorstep, January 22). It is a pity Jagan government spends indiscriminately on freebies and populist schemes to ensure its vote bank is intact. There is urgent need to revive work culture among the people, lest state will become another Venezuela in due course.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

Biden begins well

NEWLY sworn US President Joe Biden has started strongly by signing 17 executive orders, memos and directives on his first day in office, including those on climate change, the pandemic, immigration and equality. Biden began dismantling significant parts of the Trump legacy, including rejoining the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organisation.



Jeevan Reddy terms TRS, BJP secret pals

HYDERABAD

The Congress party MLC T Jeevan Reddy on Friday lashed out at the State government for its negligent attitude towards implementing welfare programmes. He alleged that it was showing keen interest in the implementation of the three controversial farm laws of the central government in Telangana. Citing KCR's postures before Union Ministers, he asked the CM if he was really fighting with the rival BJP leaders. He asked the CM as to why he was bowing before the BJP leaders. Speaking to media persons, he said that both TRS and BJP are secret friends.

Reddy alleged that the CM had not waived off the loans of the farmers even after two years of coming into power. He demanded that the State government extend Rs 10,000 monetary relief to all the farmers who cultivated fine quality rice. Referring to the recent untimely rains, he said "The state government had not yet conducted any survey on the issue so far. KCR is causing huge amount of losses to the farmers."

The MLC said that tribals were given only 6 per cent reservations despite the fact that their population had reached 10 per cent in the State. He claimed that 840 tribal students had lost the opportunity to pursue medicine in the state. He demanded a special session of the Assembly to pass a law to provide additional quota to the tribal people.

Unique initiative of TS govt to boost medicare for poor

- KTR and other Ministers inaugurate the facilities across twin cities
- 57 free diagnostic services being made available to poor people
- Telangana Diagnostics Project is the first of its kind initiative in State

HYDERABAD

RISING health spending with high out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) has become a catastrophic burden on the poor Indians, pushing them into further poverty and impoverishment. With allocations for public health remaining low in central and state budgets, they are hard-pressed to avail of quality hospitalisation. Various studies have stressed on liberal provision of free medicines, surgery and free diagnostic tests at public health centres to reduce the high OOPE and medical poverty in the country. As the poor remain uninsured they become highly vulnerable to perils of high medicare costs in the country.

According to the National Health Accounts (NHA) estimate for 2014-15, the Government Health Expenditure (GHE) per person per year is only Rs 1,108 that comes to Rs 3 per day. This is in contrast to the Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OPE) of Rs 2,394, which comes out to be 63 per cent of the total health expenditure.

Keeping this in view, the Telangana government has come out with a big initiative providing diagnostic services free of cost to the urban poor mainly in Hyderabad. The Telangana Diagnostics Project is first of its kind initiative to provide the public with cost-free quality diagnostic and imaging

Mini diagnostic hubs come up at 8 places in the city, to ease burden high out-of-pocket expenditure



Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao interacting with medical personnel at a mini hub after inaugurating it at Sriram Nagar near Borabanda in Hyderabad on Friday

The diagnostic mini hubs are established at the Urban Community Health Centres (UCHC) at Lalapet, Sriramnagar, Barkas, Panipura, Puranapul, Amberpet, Jangammet and Sitaphalmandi. They offer ultrasonography (USG), radiology services like X-Ray, basic cardiology tests like ECG

services. As part of the initiative, eight diagnostic Mini Hubs, which offer ultrasonography (USG), radiology services like X-Ray, basic cardiology tests like ECG, have been set in the city. The diagnostic mini hubs are established at the Urban Community Health Centres (UCHC) at Lalapet, Sriramnagar, Barkas, Panipura, Puranapul, Amberpet, Jangammet and Sitaphalmandi. Patients visiting the UCHC and Basthi Dawakhana in Hyderabad will have to enroll their

names first and then receive an appointed time and date at the mini-hub to avail the diagnostic services including radiology services.

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao inaugurated a mini hub imaging service center at Sriram Nagar near Borabanda on Friday, expanding yet another initiative to provide better and free diagnostic services to the public. A mini-hub facility at Lalapet was thrown open by

Health Minister Eatala Rajender. Home Minister, Mahamood Ali opened the facility at Barkas, Panipura and Puranapul, and Minister for Animal Husbandry, Talasani Srinivas Yadav inaugurated one at Amberpet. Deputy Speaker T Padma Rao launched the hub at Jangammet and Sitaphalmandi.

Under this initiative, the provision of ECG, Radiology Services as part of the strengthening of diagnostic services in GHMC has identified eight sample pooling points (UCHCs/UPHCs) as Mini Hubs for Diagnostic Services.

Initially, the government launched pathological facilities as a hub and spoken model at IPM in Hyderabad covering the GHMC region in 2018 with 126 spokes and progressively increased catering to almost 319 spokes (Bakshi Dawakhana, PHCs, UPHCs, CHCs, UCHCs, Wellness Centers, Ah, DH and

Similar free services would be extended in the days to all district headquarters. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Medical and Health Department has been providing quality care for the last year. Our government is committed to providing better health care with modern health services — **KT Rama Rao, Minister for IT, MAUD, Industries**

Dispensaries) across the GHMC region, the MAUD Minister said.

KTR, complimenting Health Minister E. Rajender and the Department of Health and Medicine for extending services to the urban poor, said similar services would be extended in the days to come in all districts and district headquarters. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Medical and Health Department has been providing quality care for the last year. People would never forget their efforts and would be grateful to the health and medical workers, he said, adding, "our government is committed to providing better health care with modern health services."

Rajender stated that the government set up the centres in Basti Dawakhana to offer the best free health services. As many as 57 services will now be available through the centres, the Health Minister informed. These facilities are in addition to already existing Basthi Dawakhana, he remarked.

Marked fall in night temperatures

Adilabad records lowest minimum of 12 degree Celcius

- Hyderabad registers 18.5 (1.8 deg C more than previous day); Medak 15.8, Ramagundam 16.4, Dundigal 17.2, Hakimpet 17.7, Nalgonda 18.4, Nizamabad 19.3, Hanamkonda 19.5, Bhadrachalam 20, Mahbubnagar 20.2, Khammam 20.6

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

AS dry weather prevailed over Telangana during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 am on Friday, there was a marked fall in the night temperatures in some parts, the IMD bulletin said. The temperatures were appreciably above normal, ranging from 3.1 to 5 degrees Celsius, in some parts. They were above normal by 1.6 to 3 degrees Celsius in some other areas.

According to the bulletin, the lowest minimum temperature of 12 degrees Celsius was recorded in Adilabad, a fall of 4.6 degrees Celsius during the 24 hours. Hyderabad registered 18.5 (1.8 degrees Celsius more than the previous day).

The other night temperatures elsewhere in the State were: Medak 15.8, Ramagundam 16.4, Dundigal 17.2, Hakimpet 17.7, Nalgonda 18.4, Nizamabad 19.3, Hanamkonda 19.5, Bhadrachalam 20, Mahbubnagar 20.2, Khammam 20.6. The day temperatures were: Bhadrachalam 34, Hanamkonda 33.5, Medak 33.2, Khammam & Mahbubnagar 33 each, Hyderabad 32.6, Dundigal 32.1, Ramagundam 32, Nizamabad 31.6, Hakimpet & Nalgonda 31.5 each, Adilabad 30.8.

Rural areas to get stable internet

AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to prepare an action plan for providing unlimited and uninterrupted internet in villages and setup an internet library at network point to facilitate work-from-home in villages.

During a review meeting on internet connections in villages and providing laptops under Amma Vodi scheme here on Friday, the Chief Minister instructed the officials to aim at providing uninterrupted internet services with affordable tariff in rural areas. He told the officials to focus on developing an internet system with durable cables, which can neither be cut nor disturbed to provide unlimited network services in villages. Through village network points, house to house internet must be provided even in YSR Jagannanna colonies.

The Chief Minister said that the idea is to lay an underground cable connecting the HT line to the substation and from there to the village panchayats for unlimited internet services.



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy holding a review on IT and digital technology at Tadepalli on Friday

- Chief Minister orders officials to ready an action plan for providing uninterrupted, limitless net connections in villages to facilitate work-from-home
- Suggests underground network so that cables can't be destroyed and services won't be disrupted
- Asks officials to consider giving higher configuration laptops to students who opt for them under Amma Vodi to cater the needs of those who are pursuing engineering and other technical studies

He also reviewed the provision of laptops to the beneficiaries of Amma Vodi and Vasati Devana schemes who opt them in lieu of financial assistance. The beneficiaries studying in Class 9 to 12, can choose laptop instead of financial assistance from next year. He directed the

officials to think of giving laptops with higher specifications to fully cater the needs of students pursuing engineering and other technical studies.

Industries, commerce and information technology minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, industries and commerce special

chief secretary R Karikal Valaven, housing department principal secretary Ajay Jain, APTransco chairman and managing director Nagulapalli Srikanth, AP Fiber-net chairman P Gowtham Reddy, AP FiberNet MD M Madhusudan Reddy and other senior officials were present.

Mystery disease strikes WG again

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ELURU
(WEST GODAVARI DISTRICT)

AT least 22 people in Poolla and Gundugolanu villages in West Godavari district fell sick with a mysterious sickness on Friday. It may be recalled that several hundreds of people in Eluru took ill with symptoms of nausea in the first week of December last year.

Deputy Chief Minister Alla Nani, who visited Poolla and enquired about the situation from the victims' families, said that they could not rule out a conspiracy behind the outbreak of the mysterious illness.

Official sources said the 22 persons suddenly fell unconscious with froth at their mouths and they complained of giddiness. "Six of these patients have been discharged after treatment while 15 were admitted to the district hospital in Eluru. Another person was getting treated in the local hospital in Poolla mandal headquarters," an official said. The officials collected water and food samples from the houses of the victims and also nearby hotels and the wholesale vegetable market at Gundugolanu. They are also collecting samples of meat, chicken, milk, rice and fertilisers used in paddy

► 22 persons fall sick at Poolla and Gundugolanu villages

► On CM's directions, Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das, Principal Secretary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal, Health Commissioner Bhaskar rush to Eluru to take stock of the situation

► CS says samples have been sent for testing and further action will be taken on results



Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das and other officials meet the victims in West Godavari district on Friday

cultivation. Chief secretary Aditya Nath Das, principal secretary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal, health commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar rushed to Eluru to take stock of the situation on the instructions of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. Later, speaking to media persons, chief secretary Aditya Nath Das said the state government had been giving top priority to the health of people. He said the samples were sent for testing and necessary measures would be taken after receiving the results of the tests. West Godavari district collector R Mutyala Raju, joint collector Himansu Sukla, Denduluru MLA K Abbaiah Chowdary and

district medical and health officer Sunanda were also present.

After hundreds of people fell sick in Eluru and surrounding areas, experts from various national research institutes established that organochlorine substances were the causative agents of the disease but drinking water was ruled out as a cause. The disease subsided in less than a week and when things appeared to be returning to normal, now some people in Poolla started falling ill again since Thursday. The affected people are being provided medical help in Poolla, Gundugolanu apart from the District Hospital in Eluru.

Shantha Biotechnics chief donates Rs 1 cr to SVBC

TIRUMALA

AN amount of Rs 1 crore has been donated to Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel (SVBC) Trust by Shantha Biotechnics Ltd chairman K I Varaprasad Reddy on Friday at Tirumala.

The donor handed over the demand draft towards the donation to TTD Trust Board chairman Y V Subba Reddy at Ranganayakula Mandapam in Tirumala temple.

TTD additional EO and SVBC managing director A V Dharma Reddy thanking Varaprasad Reddy presented him Theertha Prasads of the Lord.



Shantha Biotechnics Ltd chairman K I Varaprasad Reddy handing over DD for Rs 1 crore to TTD Trust Board chairman Y V Subba Reddy at Tirumala on Friday

RAMATHEERTHAM TEMPLE

TTD sculptors complete new idols in 10 days

► The black granite (Krishna sila) used for the idols was selected in Pattimalai Kuppam quarry near Kanchipuram in TN, the same stone used for the idol that was vandalised

HANS NEW SERVICE
TIRUPATI

THE three idols, Sri Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana, sculpted by the TTD Silpa Kalasala Sthapathis were dispatched, after performing puja to the murthis from here on Friday by road to Ramatheertham in Vizianagaram district for installation in the shrine there. After the vandalism of the

Rama idol in the 500-year-old shrine atop a hillock in Ramatheertham village, one of popular Hindu pilgrim centres, the state endowments department officially requested TTD for the preparation of the three idols for installing them in Ramatheertham.

TTD entrusted the preparation of the idols to a group of expert sculptors (sthapathis) of Silpa Kalasala through its engineering department. A group of five, including four sculptors and a supervisor took up the sculpting of the idols on January 8 and completed it in a record time of just two weeks.

According to TTD S V Institute of Traditional Sculpture and Architecture (SVITSA) (Silpa Kalasala) principal Venkat

Reddy, the Krishna sila (black granite stone) required for the for the idols was selected in Pattimalai Kuppam quarry near Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu, the same granite stone which was used for the idol that was vandalised in Ramatheertham temple.

Senior sculptors in the institute, including Ramesh, Nagaraju and Subramanayam sculpted the idols of Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana respectively while the ornamental Aadhara Peetam (common base for the idols) was by another sculptor Nagaraju while Maruthi Rao did the marking and also supervised the idol preparation which almost went round-the-clock for handing over the idols in short time to

government.

TTD Engineering officials formally handed over the idols to endowments department regional joint director (Vizag) Brahmaramaba after which they were placed in a truck to ferry them to Ramatheertham, here Friday evening. It may be noted here that the stone idol of Sri Rama was beheaded by unidentified miscreants in the famed shrine in Ramatheertham which evoked widespread protests and also condemnation from one and all while the opposition parties launched protests to press the government to find out the culprits behind the vandalism of the idol and also stern measures to stop attacks on Hindu temple in the state.

Heroin worth ₹1,000 crore seized, 2 Lankans held

Earlier, Narcotics Control Bureau and the Indian Coast Guard intercepted the vessel near the Tuticorin Port and a search of it led to the recovery of 95.87 kg of heroin, 18.32 kg of methamphetamine, five pistols and magazines

NEW DELHI

TWO Sri Lankan nationals have been arrested and about 100 kg of heroin worth an estimated Rs 1,000 crore seized as part of a probe involving a trans-border drugs-trafficking racket, the NCB said on Friday. MMM Nawas and Mohamed Afnas were nabbed from Chennai in Tamil Nadu, where they were living by concealing their real identities, and the drugs syndicate that they masterminded has its tentacles spread across Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Australia, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) said in a statement.

The arrests and the subsequent seizure of about 100 kg of heroin in Sri Lanka, valued at about Rs 1,000

crore in the international market, came about after the NCB and its counterparts in the neighbouring country joined hands to probe a November, 2020 heroin seizure from a Sri Lankan fishing vessel, "Shenaya Duwa", in the territorial waters of India.

The NCB and the Indian Coast Guard intercepted the vessel near the Tuticorin Port and a search of it led to the recovery of 95.87 kg of heroin, 18.32 kg of methamphetamine, five pistols and magazines. Six Sri Lankan crew members of the vessel were arrested and they are in judicial custody at present.

"Fully aware of the larger international linkages, especially with those of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, we started probing every available thread in the case and soon it was found that two of the main conspira-



tors in the case have been living in Chennai," NCB Deputy Director (Operations) K P S Malhotra said on the recent arrests. Both Nawas and Afnas held "important positions" in the multi-national heroin syndicate, he said. "They were controlling the mid-sea pick up and delivery of narcotic drugs from Pakistani and Iranian vessels. Both fled Sri Lanka when the authorities of that country closed in on them.

"It is also believed that there is an Interpol global arrest warrant against Nawas," Malhotra said. Officials said heroin produced in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran is loaded in fishing vessels setting sail from the ports of Iran and Pakistan for a mid-sea transfer into similar vessels from Sri Lanka and the Maldives. These transfers happen in or very near the territorial

waters of India, officials said. "There is a big network of foreign entities controlling this lucrative trade. Intelligence developed by the NCB and Indian agencies over a period of time indicates that Pakistani drug traffickers lodged in Sri Lankan prisons for drug offences control this trade and they source and deliver large quantities of heroin from golden crescent countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) to Sri Lankan and Maldivian entities," a senior NCB officer said. He claimed that with an "increased vigil" by security forces along the country's north-western land borders, the traditional route of Afghan-Pakistan heroin is becoming tougher to breach. "This has led to an increased use of the sea route by heroin traffickers to smuggle the drug into India," the officer said.

7TH DAY OF VACCINATION

2.28 lakh get jabs; 1 death, 267 side effects reported

Serum Institute pegs losses due to fire at over ₹1,000 crore
India will be role model on how to vaccinate a billion: Nilekani

CHANDIGARH

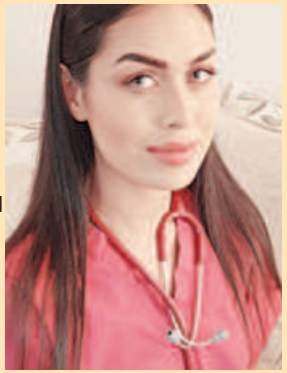
A healthcare worker who had received a coronavirus vaccine six days ago died in Gurgaon on Friday, but an official said there was nothing yet to suggest any link with the inoculation.

The 55-year-old woman, Rajwanti, who used to work at the Bhangrola primary health centre in Gurgaon district of Haryana, died in her home at Krishna Colony, an official said. She had been administered a COVID-19 vaccine last Saturday. Chief Medical Officer Virender Yadav said over phone. "Her family reported her sudden death at her home today, but there is nothing yet to suggest any link with the vaccination."

"However, we have sent her viscera for investigation and details will be known once the report comes," Yadav added.

Miss England Dr Mukherjee vaccinated

LONDON: First Indian-origin Miss England and frontline National Health Service (NHS) doctor Bhasha Mukherjee has received her first of the two COVID-19 jabs and endorsed the safety of the vaccines being rolled out among those most at risk from coronavirus. The 25-year-old beauty queen and a medical professional has been working on the COVID frontlines at Pilgrim Hospital in Lincolnshire and Royal Derby Hospital in eastern England ever since she flew back from a humanitarian tour of India at the peak of the pandemic in April 2020.



India on Friday inoculated as many as 2,28,563 healthcare and frontline workers, taking the toll of total beneficiaries who have been vaccinated to 12,72,097. A total of 267 cases of Adverse Ef-

fect After Vaccination (AEFI) have been reported till 6 pm on the seventh day of the vaccination drive. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday visited the Serum Institute of India (SII) where a

fire at its semi-ready Manjari complex claimed five lives while inflicting an estimated loss of Rs 1,000 cr to the global vaccine giant.

"We have ordered a thorough probe... There cannot be any conclusions till the full investigations are complete and the report is available. Then we will know whether it was an accident or sabotage," he said.

Aadhaar architect Nandan Nilekani said with the ongoing efforts around systematic rollout of COVID-19 vaccine to citizens, India will be a role model on how to vaccinate a billion people at scale and in a trusted manner. The Infosys co-founder also noted that the pandemic has brought changes in consumer behaviour and accelerated adoption of digital services across sectors like healthcare and education that has brought down the cost of customer acquisition for startups.

Third Minister quits Mamata Government

KOLKATA

West Bengal Minister Rajib Banerjee quit the government citing a change of portfolio two years ago and broke down on camera, saying: "I never thought a day would come when I would have to take such a difficult step". He is the third minister to resign.

In December, Mamata Banerjee lost her top aide Suvendu Adhikari, who first quit as minister after an extended period of uncertainty, then immediately joined the BJP. Over 40 more leaders and workers followed him out of the Trinamool. On January 5, Minister of State for Sports Laxmi Ratan Shukla resigned. He, however, has not quit the party. Banerjee did not respond to questions on whether he was headed to the BJP, like dozens of Trinamool Congress leaders before him.

As he emerged from the Governor's house Raj Bhavan after handing over his resignation, he told mediapersons that he was hurt when he learnt from TV, one fine day, that he had lost the Irrigation Ministry and had been moved to Forests. On the belated response to something that happened two years ago, he said he did not take any step as he was stopped by senior leaders.

Congress to elect party chief by June

NEW DELHI

THE Congress party will have an elected president by June 2021, with the party's working committee on Friday approving holding the internal election after the assembly polls.

The committee after a three and a half hour meeting authorised incumbent party chief Sonia Gandhi to schedule the internal election after the conclusion of assembly polls in five states.

Addressing a joint press conference, Congress leaders K C Venugopal and Randeep Surjewala said elections to the CWC will also be held but it remains to be seen whether they can be scheduled before or after the election to the Congress chief's post.

Sources said the Central Election Authority has proposed the holding of polls for electing the party president and AICC session on May 29 and the working committee discussed the dates, but authorised Sonia Gandhi to schedule them after the assembly polls.

The CWC passed three resolutions demanding a repeal of the three agriculture laws, a time-bound JPC probe into the alleged violations of national security and Official Secrets Act and another to ensure that the



K C Venugopal

government ensures free time-bound COVID-19 vaccination for the poor and oppressed sections. "The CWC decided that there will be an elected Congress President by June 2021 at any cost," AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said. He said the little change of schedule depending on the state elections will be decided soon.

"The CWC discussed the schedule of Congress president's elections in May-end, proposed by its election authority. All CWC members unanimously requested Congress president that the internal elections should not interfere with the assembly elections."



Flt Lt Swati to be 1st woman to lead R-Day Parade flypast

JAIPUR

INDIAN Air Force Flight Lieutenant Swati Rathore, who hails from Rajasthan, will script a new chapter in the history of woman empowerment by becoming the first woman to lead the flypast on the main Republic Day parade at Delhi's Rajpath.

Her proud father, Dr Bhavani Singh Rathore said: "My daughter has let me hold my head high. I am overwhelmed as the dream which she saw has turned into reality."

Born in a small village in Rajasthan's Nagaur district, Swati did her schooling from Ajmer. During her childhood, she made a tricolour in a painting competition, making evident her ardent love for her nation. Eventually, her parents pushed her to realise her dream and post schooling, she joined the NCC Air Wing.

Bhajan singer Chanchal passes away

NEW DELHI

POPULAR 'bhajan' singer Narendra Chanchal, best known for his songs 'Chalo bulawa aaya hai' and 'Tune mu-jhe bulaya sherawaliye', died at a private hospital here on Friday following health complications, sources said.

He was 76. Chanchal breathed his last at 12:15 pm at Apollo Hospital here, the sources said. He was admitted to the south Delhi hospital on November 27 and died after suffering from brain complications, they said. Born to a Punjabi family in Namak Mandi, Amritsar in 1940, Chanchal grew up in a religious atmosphere that inspired him to start singing 'bhajans' and 'aartis' (devotional songs) from a very young age.

In Hindi cinema, he found fame when he sang a song "Beshak Mandir Masjid" for the 1973 film "Bobby", the debut movie of Rishi Kapoor and Dimple Kapadia. For the song, Chanchal won the Filmfare Best Male Playback Award in 1974. One of his most popular tracks was "Chalo Bulawa Aaya Hain Mata Ne Bulaya Hain" from Rajesh Khanna's 1983 drama "Avtaar".

Chanchal released his autobiography "Midnight Singer" in 2009, chronicling his life, from his early struggles and hardships to his achievements. Condoling the singer's death, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said Chanchal had carved a unique place for himself in the field of devotional music with his voice. In a tweet, the



PM expressed his condolences to the singer's family and fans. Singer Daler Mehndi, actor Manoj Bajpayee, actor Ranvir Shorey, music composer Vishal Dadlani were among the people who mourned Chanchal's death. "Rest in peace Narendra Chanchal sahab!!! What a singer with such inspiring voice. Singing your songs now in your memory. God bless your soul with peace," Bajpayee tweeted.

"Saddened at the demise of vocalist Sh. Narendra Chanchal, singer of many iconic bhajans & Hindi film songs in history. His unique voice had the ability to pierce straight to a listener's heart, making every listening experience an emotional & spiritual one. #RIP #respect," Shorey tweeted. Mehndi said he was saddened to learn that "iconic and most loved" Chanchal had died.

IRCTC to resume e-catering services

NEW DELHI

IN a big relief to passengers, IRCTC will resume its e-catering services from next month, a statement from the railways' catering arm said on Friday.

Due to onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent unprecedented lockdown, e-catering services were suspended on March 22, 2020. IRCTC, the catering and tourism arm of the Indian Railways, is going to restart its e-catering services for passengers travelling in the special trains that are currently operating.

IRCTC had started this unique service in the year 2014 whereby passengers could order an array of food of their choice from reputed brands as well as popular regional and local delicacies on phone or online while travelling on trains and get the same delivered to their seats at the railway station. During the pre-COVID period, IRCTC had started clocking 20,000 e-catering orders per day.

Now, with the gradual resumption of passenger train services and amidst the new normal, wherein IRCTC is serving only 'Ready To Eat' meals to passengers on trains, there has been an increase demand for resumption of e-catering services.

TESTING BEFORE REHEARSAL



A medic takes a sample from an artiste for Covid-19 test during a Press preview as part of the Republic Day rehearsals, in New Delhi on Friday

Conditional bail to mom held for sexually abusing minor son

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

THE Kerala High Court on Friday granted conditional bail to the 35-year-old woman who was arrested following a complaint by her minor son that she has been sexually assaulting him.

Justice S. Shirsy granted her bail on a Rs 1 lakh security bond and called upon the government to constitute a special investigation team headed by a woman IPS officer.

The court also directed the government to constitute a special medical board drawn from doctors of Thiruvananthapuram Medical College as the prosecution had in its petition appealed that the child was suffering from several physical and mental issues.

The court also directed the child to be separated from the father.

It may be recalled that the defence had argued that the child was forced into this complaint by his father who had remarried without getting divorce from the child's mother against whom the complaint was lodged.

The mother of the arrested woman while speaking to the media said: "This was a fabricated case and my daughter is innocent."

CBI books Cambridge Analytica for illegal data harvesting

The data was sold for commercial gains to Cambridge Analytica which used it for profiling users and influencing elections in India. Although the application had 335 users, it was able to harvest data of 5.62 lakh Facebook members who were in their friends' network

NEW DELHI

AFTER nearly 18 months of preliminary enquiry, the CBI has booked the UK-based Cambridge Analytica and Global Science Research for alleged illegal harvesting of data of 5.62 lakh Indian Facebook users for profiteering and manipulating elections, officials said Friday.

The agency registered case against Cambridge Analytica and Global Science Research represented by Aleksandr Kogan, both based in the UK, under Indian Penal Code section related to criminal conspiracy and Information Technology Act violations related to receiving stolen computer resource and negligence in handling personal data collected by them, they said. Based

on news reports of illegal data harvesting to manipulate elections, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) had sent a complaint to the CBI on July 25, 2018 based on which the agency had registered a preliminary enquiry into the matter, they said.

It is alleged that Kogan of GSR had created an application "Thisisyourdigitallife" having permission from Facebook to collect certain categories of its users' data for "research and academic purposes".

It illegally collected additional data of not only the 335 users of the application but also of their friends' network on Facebook, the social media giant without their consent or knowledge, the FIR alleged.



The data was allegedly sold for commercial gains to Cambridge Analytica which used it for profiling users and influencing elections in India, the complaint alleged. Although the application had 335 users in India, it was able to harvest data of 5.62 lakh Facebook members who were in their friends' network, Facebook had told the MeitY in its response.

Cambridge Analytica in its response had told the ministry that it received data of only US-based users from GSR.

The company did not respond to further queries, the complaint alleged. During the enquiry, the CBI contacted all the 335 Indian users of the GSR's application out of which only six responded. They all unanimously told the agency

that they were not aware that their personal data and that of their friends was collected, the FIR said.

The users told the agency that they would not have used the application if they had known about collection of personal data, it said.

After nearly 18 months, the CBI enquiry has prima facie established that GSR dishonestly and fraudulently accessed and harvested data of Facebook users without their consent or knowledge of including private chats, pages visited, demographic information etc, the FIR alleged.

The agency enquiry also established that GSR illegally gave the right to Cambridge Analytica to use the data for commercial gains, it alleged.

2020 has been one of the most challenging years for the world with an unprecedented pandemic impact on the global economy. We continue to face headwinds across operational, regulatory and commercial functions. However, we expect normalisation by next fiscal

—Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Executive Chairperson, Biocon



INDIGO Paints' Rs 1,170-crore initial share-sale garnered an overwhelming response from investors and was subscribed 117 times on the final day of bidding on Friday. The IPO has received bids for 64.58 crore shares against an offer size of 55.18 lakh shares, translating into a subscription of 117.02 times, data showed.

| FOREX (buy rates in ₹) | | | |
|------------------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| US Dollar | 77.35 | South | |
| Euro | 93.25 | African Rand | 5.55 |
| UAE Dirham | 21.85 | Hong Kong Dollar | 10.82 |
| Thai Baht | 2.8 | Japanese Yen | 0.81 |
| British Pound | 103.68 | New Zealand Dollar | 55.04 |
| Australian Dollar | 59.12 | Saudi Riyal | 21.39 |
| Canadian Dollar | 60.33 | Swedish Krona | 10.12 |
| Swiss Franc | 85.74 | Singapore Dollar | 57.73 |

DELHI SATURDAY 23 JANUARY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

LG donates ₹1 cr to AFFDF

Ahead of the Republic Day, LG Electronics has pledged to support the armed forces by contributing Rs one crore to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF), under Kendriya Sainik Board Secretariat (KSB SECTT), a nodal organisation of the government of India, Ministry of Defence as part of its 'Kar Salaam' initiative. The 'Kar Salaam' initiative, dedicated to the soldiers of India, was started by the company three years ago to salute their spirit of generous contribution and service towards the nation. In the year 2020, the company donated Rs 1 crore to the fund which was utilised for education of girl children of ex-servicemen and martyrs of the defence forces. It has been working on a number of CSR initiatives to help the community in every possible aspect and reaffirm its commitment towards the people, the company said.

Vivo rolls out new offers

To celebrate Republic Day, smartphone brand Vivo came out with exclusive offers for its customers across platforms. These exciting offers, coupled with attractive finance schemes, are available on the recently launched V20, V20 SE, Y51A and Y30 smartphone models. Main line offers are available starting 21st January till 26th January 2021 across retail partners. Online offers will be available till January 25, 2021 on vivo India E-store. Nipun Marya, Director, vivo India said, "As we celebrate the 72nd Republic Day, we are delighted to announce an array of offers on Y series range and recently launched V20 & V20SE. With these offers, we aim to provide customers with an opportunity to grab their favourite vivo smartphone at an attractive price point". Vivo V20 features a segment-first 44MP Eye-Auto focus selfie camera that promises to take one's selfie and vlogging experience to a whole new level.

V-shaped recovery on cards, but vax drive must succeed

Predictions are being made that India will not only bounce back from the trough, but will attain a high growth path in 2021

SUSHMA RAMACHANDRAN

THE green shoots of recovery that are being detected in the economy seem to have enthused global consulting agencies as well as the Reserve Bank of India. Predictions are now being made that India will not only bounce back from the trough into which it had fallen last year but will attain a high growth path in 2021. According to UK-based data analytics and consulting firm, Global Data, India will soon be back to its winning ways in the area of economic growth. It has even projected that it will once again become the fastest growing economy in the world, surpassing China, in 2021. The RBI has been more poetic, saying soon the winter of our discontent will be made glorious summer. The data analytics firm has observed that India is expected to have a growth rate of 9.7 per cent in 2021, exceeding other major economies like China which is expected to grow by 8.65 per cent. It has pegged growth for the US at 3.96 per cent, the UK at 5.46 per cent and France at 6.23 per cent. Giving reasons for its assessment, it says the easing of restrictions along with huge fiscal stimulus from the government led to marginally better performance of the purchasing managers index for manufacturing and services since August last year.

It has to be said that even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) earlier made a similar projection. In its last World Economic Outlook, it predicted that India will make a strong recovery in 2021 with 8.8 per cent growth as against 8.2 per cent for China.

It is no doubt true that all indicators are pointing to a V-shaped recovery for the Indian economy. The latest news that daily power demand during the current month has crossed the



highest level reached in January 2020 is yet another signal of reviving industrial and commercial activities. This is encouraging especially as factory output had fallen marginally in December after growing by 1.8 per cent in November last year.

These are all positive signs but it must be cautioned that growth numbers during the current year will be on the low base of 2020. Hence even a sharp rebound would really mean the economy is simply reverting to its pre-Covid status. And that, it must be recalled, was a situation of slow growth. Overall GDP growth was only 4.2 per cent in 2019-20. Even in the previous fiscal, growth had slowed down to 6.1 per cent, from 7.2 per cent and 8.2 per cent in the preceding two financial years.

So the question must be asked, if all indicators are pointing towards the economy moving back to pre-Covid levels, does this mean a return to the slow growth period of 2019-20. The deceleration of the economy over the past four years has been pushed to the background in the wake of the pandemic and the contraction in growth over the past ten months. Any measures for economic revival must

keep this in perspective. The process of slowing down economic growth began with demonetisation in 2016 and deepened with the launch of the Goods and Services Tax in the following year. The GST was a long-awaited tax reform but was implemented initially with a great deal of associated red tape, making it difficult for small businesses to fulfil all the processes needed to become a part of the GST system. Numerous levels of taxation created further confusion among trade and industry. GST was originally meant to be a single tax system, but the inter-state GST Council could ultimately only agree on a multi-level tax framework. The GST system was gradually streamlined but the time involved in doing so led to commercial operations being affected all over the country especially for small businesses.

As for the current recovery phase, it was given a boost with demand rising sharply in the festive season in November. The index of industrial production finally began to go up from the period from October to December. Power generation and petroleum consumption have also reached higher than pre-Covid levels. To

Right now the drive is slowing down owing to vaccine hesitancy even on the part of frontline healthcare workers. Doubts need to be cleared quickly by the government through a sustained communications campaign

be realistic, however, growth parameters really need to be compared with 2019-20 data rather than the trough year of 2020-21.

One of the major factors cited by the British data analytics firm in support of its prediction of high growth in 2021, is the decline in Covid cases from mid-September onwards. It cited the recovery rate of 96.5 per cent and low fatality rate of 1.4 per cent of cases. The launch of the mass vaccination drive in mid-January was also mentioned as a major factor in support of revival in transportation, hospitality and entertainment sectors which have been in the doldrums.

It has rightly pointed to the crucial role of the vaccination drive in the country's economic recovery. Right now the drive is slowing down owing to vaccine hesitancy even on the part of frontline healthcare workers. Doubts need to be cleared quickly by the government through a sustained communications campaign. A V-shaped recovery looks imminent right now but it will be given a much bigger impetus if the country is able to succeed in the mass vaccination process and achieve herd immunity.



Indian IT firms on hiring spree

Top 4 IT companies made net addition of 36,000 employees in Q3

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA
BENGALURU

INDIAN IT services providers are back on the hiring mode as large deals bagged in the recent quarters push up demand for techies. In the quarter ended December, the top four Indian IT firms - Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies and Wipro - made a net addition of about 36,000 employees, which is more than double that of the recruitment done in the previous quarter. In the preceding quarter, the headcount of these top four IT services firms increased by 17,079.

"As IT firms bagged many numbers of large deals, the demand for human resources has gone up in the recent quarters. That is being reflected in the hiring numbers during the December quarter," said V Balakrishnan, Chairman of Exfinity Venture Partners and former Chief Finan-

cial Officer and board member at Infosys.

Indian IT firms bagged a minimum of nine large deals in the first nine months of the current financial year. Wipro has bagged a \$700-million digital and IT partnership contract with Metro AG as part of which it will take over the IT units of Metro AG - Metro-Nom GMBH in Germany and Metro Systems Romania S.R.L. of the German wholesaler.

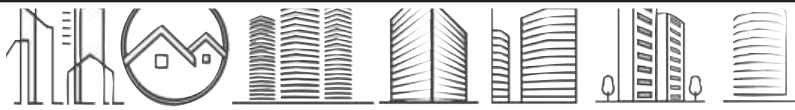
Similarly, Infosys has bagged its largest-ever outsourcing deal worth around \$3.2 billion from German automotive major Daimler this month. Under the contract, Infosys will undertake a massive infrastructure overhaul of the German firm. Market leader Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) acquired certain assets and employees of Pramerica Systems Ireland from insurance firm Prudential Financial Inc in November this year.

RBI moots 4-tier structure for NBFCs

MUMBAI

RESERVE Bank of India has on Friday come out with a discussion paper on revised regulatory framework for Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), which has proposed a four-layered structure - base layer, middle layer, upper layer and top layer. Regulatory framework for NBFCs is required to be re-oriented to keep pace with changing dynamics in the financial sector, RBI said. "The regulatory and supervisory framework of NBFCs shall be based on a four-layered structure - base layer, middle layer, upper layer and a possible top layer. NBFCs in lower layer will be known as NBFC-Base Layer (NBFC-BL). NBFCs in middle layer will be known as NBFC-Middle Layer (NBFC-ML). An NBFC in the Upper Layer will be known as NBFC-Upper Layer (NBFC-UL) and will invite a new regulatory superstructure. There is also a Top Layer, which is ideally supposed to be empty. As such, no separate nomenclature is suggested," RBI said as part of its proposals for NBFCs.

ered structure - base layer, middle layer, upper layer and a possible top layer. NBFCs in lower layer will be known as NBFC-Base Layer (NBFC-BL). NBFCs in middle layer will be known as NBFC-Middle Layer (NBFC-ML). An NBFC in the Upper Layer will be known as NBFC-Upper Layer (NBFC-UL) and will invite a new regulatory superstructure. There is also a Top Layer, which is ideally supposed to be empty. As such, no separate nomenclature is suggested," RBI said as part of its proposals for NBFCs.



REAL CORNER



WFH may boost demand for housing in Tier-II, III cities

Home is just not a place to rest at night, but also a workplace for many and may continue this way in the future

ASHISH GUPTA

IT is very easy to call 2020 one of the worst years in our lifetime; with the global economy expected to shrink by 4.4 per cent, many losing their jobs and over a million (1.8 mn) deaths due to Covid. This pandemic has pushed many countries into recessions and many are reeling under the second and third waves of this pandemic. It has confined our lives within our home, and homes being transformed into offices leaving a thin line between work and personal life. This has also impacted our work and personal life, impacting the physical requirement of the built environment. Few major emerging trends related to work and impacting our physical requirement of home are discussed below.

Work from hometown

What started as work from home (WFH) at the start of this pandemic, with time has transformed into work from hometown. In the initial period, people started working from home with limited domestic help and no physical interaction at the workplace. This forced many bachelors and nuclear families to move back to their hometowns. Many students and bachelors left their rented accommodation in this period and went to their hometowns. Many IT companies have announced long-term plans for work from home for their employees. This has the potential to boost the demand for housing in Tier II & III cities and towns.

Boost in demand for a second home and medium-stay accommodation

This break in the physical office

ecosystem has also highlighted the importance of work from anywhere. This can be manifested in many ways including work from a second home for the upper strata of our society. And for many to work from preferred destinations with options of extended stay through Airbnb, etc. at locations like Goa, hill stations or other lesser explored locations that offer economical options.

Moving from consumerism to consumption-based ownership of physical assets

The mad rush of consumerism and urge to accumulate more seems to have given way to an appreciation of once possessions. For example, the research showed, in the pre-Covid era, the Millennials preferred not committing money to own physical assets and preferred spending on lifestyle. They preferred renting houses, traveling in rental cars and enjoying vacations. The Covid times have shown the importance of owning these physical assets like a house and means of transportation. Ownership of physical assets offer options for customization and personalized use.

Importance of house for end-use, as compared to an investment asset

India has high home ownership, about 69 per cent in the urban areas and 95 per cent in rural (as of 2011), as compared to many developed economies. In absence of social security cover, homeownership has always provided a sense of security and social status in India. With the boom in real estate during 2004-2008 and even afterward in many parts of the country;



residential real estate has become a preferred investment asset, resulting in multiple homeownership for middle, upper-middle and high-income segments.

Due to oversupply in many markets, the last few years have seen stagnation in real estate prices which has limited its attractiveness as an investment asset. This pandemic made people realize that instead of multiple ownership of properties it is better to have a larger multi-family (apartment) or independent house that will better serve the requirements of work from home. This resulted in an emerging trend of consolidation of multiple properties into a larger house. In different parts of the country, this has resulted in people moving to larger multi-family apartments or single-family houses depending on cultural and personal preferences. There have been instances whereby, people have moved into

larger rented houses leaving self-owned smaller houses for suitable work from home environment.

Rebooting Real Estate strategies

With the new normal of change of residential premises into home-office, real estate requirements of people are transforming. Home is just not a place to rest at night, but also a workplace for many and may continue this way in the future. This requires rebooting of the strategy towards this asset class in terms of physical and product design.

Redesigning of Home cum Office

With houses being increasingly used as home-office, this calls for the unit redesign in new projects and modifications in existing ones. One obvious solution is having additional study rooms, but a study room for each member will result

in cost escalation, which might not be a feasible option for middle-class households. Contrary to this idea, the research has shown in the last few years the size of multi-family houses has shrunk to make them more affordable. This problem requires more ingenious solutions like creating a small alcove (say 4 by 5 feet) within a bedroom or a store/powder room cum study room. These spaces can have multiple uses in the case of use as home-office or otherwise. Other options could be innovation in furniture designing and creating pod-studies on the lines of pod-hotels.

Redefining housing complexes

In the late 1990s, the concept of "Walk to Work" evolved in Gurgaon, with DLF creating large residential and office complexes located next to each other. But with the changing times and transformation in the physical workplace, a new concept that I call "Walk to Home Office" will gain significance. Working from home has its own set of challenges. Many of us may have seen in between an important meeting, a child walking into a room with a full-blown expression creating an embarrassing situation. There are challenges in conducting important client meetings from home. In multi-family housing complexes, today shared facilities like a community center/hall are common. On similar lines, a modified version of co-working spaces can be integrated within residential complexes, these facilities can be used by residents on a need basis and shared with outsiders for commercial viability. This will bring more professionalism to working from

home, on a requirement basis. Besides, it will provide a safe working environment for female workers, even at odd working hours, in comparison to traveling to physical offices. Traditionally while looking for a house, one evaluates distance from the workplace, school, etc. This kind of integrated facilities may provide opportunities for creating stand-alone complexes at more affordable locations away from prime office districts with better amenities and lifestyle. Maybe someday these integrated complexes may become feasible in Tier-II towns or at the outskirts of Tier I cities.

A positive side of this pandemic is that it has broken many barriers related to work and work culture. Many of these barriers existed in the human mind and resulted in a waste of time and resources in traveling for meetings within cities and across multiple cities. Today a diverse set of activities are being organized online like board meetings, academic delivery, client meetings and internal team discussions. This requires a change in mental and physical setups having a profound impact on human wellbeing and requiring changes in our physical apparatus. These lifestyle changes will manifest themselves in the physical real estate. Those developers that will read these emerging patterns and embraced them will remain relevant to the changing times.

(The author is Director- Research & Consulting and Associate Professor at RICS School of Built environment, Amity University, Noida. Views here are personal)

Quit Oz obsession, beating India in India more important: Swann to Eng

LONDON

AUSTRALIA are no more the best team in the world and what England should be focusing at is to beat India in India as they have been "virtually unbeatable" at home since 2012, feels former England off-spinner Graeme Swann.

England will be taking on India in a four-Test series beginning February 5, followed by five T20Is and three ODIs. The Virat Kohli-led side would be high on confidence following their recent memorable Test series win over Australia in their own backyard.

According to Swann, beating India in India would now be a higher achievement than winning Ashes series away considering the performances of Team India in recent times.

"England always saying 'well the Ashes are coming up'. B***ocks to that. If you want to be the best team in the world, let's be the best team all over the planet, not just trying to beat Australia away. We have to move away from looking forward to the Ashes series. It's a mentality ingrained in this country. Australia are not the best team in the world anymore. They used to be, by miles, and they were the benchmark to strive for," Swann told The Sun.

"They're not now, but we're obsessed with this. I think beating India in India is a far higher thing to strive for right now. They're virtually unbeatable in India since we beat them in 2012. Why isn't that the whole thing? Why aren't people saying


'right, this is a chance to get this team with good players of spin, use their feet, change the whole way we face spin bowling, and then we can beat India'," he added.

Swann, who was one of the key performers in England's series win in India in 2012, believes the Joe Root-led side needs to have the right setup to overcome the spin challenge.

In 2012, Swann picked up 20 wickets while Monty Panesar bagged 17. Kevin Pietersen and Alastair Cook scored 562 and 338 runs as England registered a 2-1 series win.

"We're not going to beat India unless spinners are taking wickets, and then we've got someone batting like we had with Kevin Pietersen. He changed the way England had ever played against spin. He was ultra-aggressive. Let's face it KP was a brilliant player and he batted unbelievably well there," said Swann.

"We haven't done it since, we haven't learnt from how Key batted on that trip and haven't gone on and used that as the blueprint," he added.



Siraj find of Australia tour, says head coach Shastri

NEW DELHI



INDIA head coach Ravi Shastri on Friday heaped praise on fast bowler Mohammed Siraj who played a crucial role in the team's remarkable win over Australia in the Border-Gavaskar series.

"Find of the tour for shoring up the bowling attack the way he did - Mohd Siraj. He fought through personal loss, racial remarks and channelised them to find home in the team huddle," Shastri said in a tweet.

Siraj picked 13 wickets in the three Tests he played, the first of which was his debut, through the course of the series which India won 2-1. During the tour, Siraj lost his father and even faced racial abuse from a section of a crowd during the third Test in Sydney. However, he didn't let these obstacles affect his performance as played a key role in India's memorable Test series win over the Tim Paine-led side.

On his return to India on Thursday, the 26-year-old fast bowler said he had no time to relax and would like to focus on the game without thinking too much.

"Whenever I performed I missed my father. In fact, I was thinking of calling him after every good performance but later realised that he was no more. I miss him a lot. May Allah grant him place in paradise," Siraj said.

The Hyderabad-based bowler said it was an emotional moment for him when he drove straight from the airport to the graveyard and offered flowers on his father's grave.

On being abused racially by spectators during the third and fourth Tests, in Sydney and Brisbane respectively, Siraj said it made him mentally strong and he did not allow that to impact his game.

"The case (on racial abuse) is going on. Let us see if we get justice or not. I told my captain that some audience is abusing me. The umpire said you can leave the ground but the captain said we will not go as we respect the game of cricket and you may send them



Satwik-Ashwini enter mixed doubles semis

BANGKOK

THAILAND OPEN



Sindhu ousted,

ERROR-prone P V Sindhu suffered a demoralising defeat in the quarterfinals while Sameer Verma's gallant fight too ended in agony at the Toyota Thailand Open here on Friday. However, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy claimed twin wins in mixed and men's doubles quarterfinals along with Ashwini Ponnappa and Chirag Shetty to keep India's flag fluttering at the BWF World Tour Super 1000 tournament here.

Sindhu looked a pale shadow of the player who had won the world championship gold in 2019 as she committed too many unforced errors to go down 13-21 9-21 against home favourite Ratchanok Intanon. "I made a lot of unforced errors and I think that I gave away easy points. I didn't play my best today. It wasn't my day," a crestfallen Sindhu said.

The unseeded pair of Satwik and Ashwini stunned fifth seeds and world no 6 Peng Soon Chan and Liu Ying Goh of Malaysia 18-21 24-22 22-20 after toiling hard for one hour and 15 minutes in a nail-biting quarterfinal duel.

The world no 22 Indian pair next will be up against top seeds Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai of Thailand.

However, Sameer's giant-killing run came to an end after he squandered a match point to go down 13-21 21-19 20-22 to world no 3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark in a men's singles quarterfinal contest.

In the opening game, Antonsen was up 5-0 with Sameer looking tentative and struggling with his length, hitting long and wide. The Danish shuttler continued his good run, managing to keep a six-point advantage at the break.

Sameer couldn't engage his rival in long rallies or put any kind of pressure and also struggled with his shots as Antonsen cantered to eight game points and took the opening game when the Indian went wide again.

After the change of sides, Antonsen opened up a 5-1 lead but Sameer managed to claw back with four straight points. A brilliant cross court net shot helped the Indian to keep it 7-7 before he took the lead as his opponent erred. However, at the interval, it was Antonsen who held a slender one-point lead.

Sameer kept breathing down his neck and grabbed a game point with an onrushing return. He roared back into the contest when Antonsen faltered at the nets. The decider started on a competitive note as the duo were 5-5 at one stage before Sameer

India look to continue dominance in Tests at home vs England

NEW DELHI



WHEN England were pulverised 0-4 on their last tour of India in 2016, Virat Kohli piled up 655 runs at an average of 109.16 in the five-match Test series, and Karun Nair became the second Indian to score a triple century after Virender Sehwag. The one-sided series, played in November and December four years ago, featured two innings victories for India.

Since then, India have lost a Test series in England, 4-1, along with series defeats in South Africa and New Zealand, but have managed consecutive series wins in Australia, the most recent of which came this month.

Now, England will be keen to avenge that thrashing when they play a four-Test series, beginning on February 5 in Chennai in bio-bubble. Presently, England are locked in a two-Test series in Sri Lanka, and will fly in straight from there to Chennai and go into quarantine, along with the Indian team.

England have so far played 14 Test series - discounting the Golden Jubilee Test in 1980 that the -- in India out of which they have won four. India have won seven while three have been drawn. England's fourth and fifth series wins in India were separated by 28 years and four series when they stunned the hosts 2-1 in 2012-13.

That was also the last time that the two teams faced each other in a four-Test series, and after that three rubbers have comprised five matches.

The history of Test series between India and England is intertwined with the history of cricket in India. India's first four international series were against England, consisting of just one match in 1932. India were led by CK Nayudu while Douglas Jardine, who would lead England in the infamous "bodyline" series later in the year, captained the visitors.

IPL auction likely on Feb 18: BCCI official

NEW DELHI: The IPL players auction ahead of the 2021 season is likely to be held on February 18, a BCCI official told PTI on Friday. "The auction will be held on February 18. The venue is yet to be decided," the official said. The BCCI is also yet to decide whether the IPL will happen in India or not even though Board President Sourav Ganguly has repeatedly asserted that everything possible would be done to keep the glitzy event at its home. The 2020 edition was held in the UAE in September-November due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A smooth conduct of India's home series against England from next month should pave the way for the lucrative league to be held at home. The player retention deadline ended on January 20 and the trading window closes on February 4. Top Australian draws like Steve Smith and Glenn Maxwell were released from Rajasthan Royals and Kings XI Punjab respectively on the last day of the retention deadline. (PTI)

2nd Test: Matthews's ton helps Lanka edge ahead

GALLE: Angelo Matthews led the way with an unbeaten 107 as Sri Lanka fought back from losing two early wickets for just seven runs to end the first day of the second Test against England on 229/4 on Friday. James Anderson dismissed opener Kusal Perera and Oshada Fernando in the fourth over of the day. However, Matthews anchored strong partnerships after that to help Sri Lanka edge ahead at the end of the day. Matthews first put up a 69-run stand with Lahiru Thirimanne and then a 117-run partnership with captain Dinesh Chandimal. Brief scores: Sri Lanka 229/4 (Angelo Mathews 107 not out, Dinesh Chandimal 52; James Anderson 3/24) (IANS)

Kerala Blasters face tough FC Goa test

BAMBOLIM

BOLSTERED by two wins in three matches, a resurgent Kerala Blasters would look for another positive result when they face FC Goa in an Indian Super League match here on Saturday.

Kerala Blasters are enjoying a much better phase in the ISL. With their victory against Bengaluru FC, Kibu Vicuna's team grabbed seven points from their last three games compared to six in their first nine matches. However, the Spaniard accepted that the fixture against FC Goa on Saturday would be a much more difficult test.

After struggling for goals initially, Kerala's attack has come together in the last four matches, scoring eight times. In those four games, Kerala attempted 24 shots on target at an average of six shots per match.

"We are competing in every match till the end. In the last three matches, we competed well. We played well and we got the points," Vicuna said. However, they will take on a side that has dominated games with maximum possession, having remained unbeaten in the last five games. (PTI)

RESULTS

SC East Bengal lose to Mumbai City FC 0-1

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