

Reliving Eden while relaxing with family

Laxman says it's a different feeling to watch the innings now as the kids have grown up

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

The genius is at work, but in a different sport. Cricketing great V.V.S. Laxman, who is trying his hand at table tennis, is hosting the 'VVS Cup' at home, featuring his family members.

"It is good to be with the kids in what is obviously the longest break of my career, though for an unfortunate reason as the whole world is battling COVID-19," said the 45-year-old Laxman in a chat with *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Being active

Asked how he was spending time during the lockdown, he said: "we are playing table tennis, carrom and chess. It is important to be active, especially when you are confined indoors."

"I am making the most of this break by reading books, watching films and some cricketing moments, including my own. The whole family saw the Kolkata Test innings - 281 against Australia



Game on! V.V.S Laxman battles with son Sarvajit for the 'VVS Cup'.
•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in 2001 - again. It is a different feeling to watch it now as the kids have grown up," said the stylish batsman.

"We also enjoyed watching my ODI hundred in Lahore (2004) and the 2007 Johannesburg Test victory (where he scored a crucial 73 in the second innings)."

Cricket runs in the family

as Laxman's son Sarvajit has shown talent, scoring two half-centuries in the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) league recently.

A Warner fan

"My son is a left-hander and a fan of David Warner. He seems to be enjoying his game. I am trying to teach

him a few things on the art of batting," said Laxman. "Obviously, he cannot have a better mentor than his father!"

About bringing up his children, he said: "We are trying to inculcate values, teaching them not to take things for granted and also be good human beings."

"This is the most enjoya-



Bookworms: Laxman and Achintha are avid readers.

ble phase. When I was in town earlier, I was either busy with my commitments, or my wife Sailaja was busy with her schedule at the 1st Innings Play School started by us."

Laxman is also involved in various awareness campaigns, appealing to the citizens to stay indoors.

Don't push Dhoni into retirement: Hussain

Says he still has a lot to offer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Doubting Thomases should be careful about what they wish for as there will be no second coming for a once-in-a-generation player like M.S. Dhoni if people "push him into retirement", former England captain Nasser Hussain said on Saturday.

Hussain, one of the most respected voices in world cricket, feels the soon-to-be 39 former captain still has a lot to offer to Indian cricket.

"Once Dhoni is gone, there is no getting him back. There are some legends of the game, they are once-in-a-generation cricketers, don't push him into retirement."

"Only Dhoni knows his mental state and in the end selectors select and players turn up when asked to," Hussain told Star Sports on its new show 'Cricket Connected'.

Dhoni last played for India in the 2019 World Cup



Dhoni. •FILE PHOTO

semifinal against New Zealand in July.

"Is MS Dhoni still good enough to get into the Indian side? It's as simple as that."

"That should apply for anyone across the board. What I have seen, I think MS has a huge amount to offer for Indian cricket," said Hussain.

Lockdown blues for Chahal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Yuzvendra Chahal says he can stay away from home for three years once the lockdown is lifted.

"I will get lock-downed from my home, I will not come back to my home. I can't take this anymore, can't stay at home for longer now. These days of staying at home will suffice for the next three years now," Chahal said in a chat with a TV presenter.

"I will live in a nearby hotel but will not stay at home, that's it for me now, can't bear anymore lockdown days."



Chahal. •FILE PHOTO

India served wake-up call: Langer

Home series loss was defining moment, says Aussie coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

Australia's unprecedented home Test series defeat to India in 2018-19 served as a "wake-up call" for Justin Langer, who reckons the series will prove as the defining moment of his coaching career.

Langer was appointed Australia coach in May 2018, following the infamous ball-tampering scandal that saw skipper Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner slapped with year-long bans. Without their star batsmen, the Australians struggled.

And, Australia tasted its first Test series loss to India



Justin Langer. •GETTY IMAGES

on home turf. Virat Kohli's men handed Australia a 2-1 defeat.

"That was a massive wake-up call and a really tough time in my life," Lan-

ger was quoted as saying by the Australian Associated Press on a podcast.

"In 10 years' time, I will look back on that period and it will be the making of my coaching career," he said.

Langer compared it to another difficult phase of his life, when he was dropped as player at the start of 2001 Ashes.

"In 2001 when I was dropped from the Australian team at 31 years of age, I thought that was the end. That was the making of me as a cricketer and a person. It was amazing what lessons you can learn in adversity," he said.

Foreign Olympic tourists face a predicament

Uncertainty looms over flight and hotel booking refunds if they stay away from 2021 Games

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LAUSANNE

Thousands of fans planning to travel to the postponed Olympics face uncertainty over flight refunds and reimbursements from hotels and fear they may become victims of greed.

The International Olympic Committee has said that tickets for sporting events will be refunded if people cannot attend in 2021, but admitted that it could "not comment on hotel or flight bookings which were done through third parties".

Lisa Delpy Neirotti, a professor of sport management at the University of Washing-



Impasse: Tourist boats in Tokyo may not find takers if foreign fans don't make it because of travel and lodging issues. •AFP

ton had reserved 31 rooms for her students for 26 days at a cost of \$90,000. She says that if she does not ask for

the ticket reimbursement, hoping that her students can make the new dates from July 23 to August 8 next year,

there is "no guarantee" that the hotel and plane reservations will be postponed accordingly.

"We are still waiting on both the hotel and the airline. They said it would take a while to let us know."

Need to step in

"I truly believe that if hoteliers and airlines start to be greedy and not work with Olympic fans or organisations, the government will need to step in, as it will not look good for Japan tourism, but for Japan as a country," said Lisa.

In 2018, the Japanese ministry of tourism said that it

was counting on 600,000 foreign spectators attending the Games, providing a significant economic windfall.

But many of those prospective visitors remain at an impasse, three weeks after the postponement was announced.

Hoteliers affected

The delay will also affect the Japanese hotel industry, which had already seen hotel bookings fall in March compared to last year.

An official with the Tokyo organising committee said the issue surrounding hotel reservations was "under consideration".

Gallant Narayanan falls in semifinals

His conqueror Firouzja will meet Carlsen in summit clash

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

After an incredible run, S.L. Narayanan fell on the threshold of a title-clash against Magnus Carlsen in the Banter Blitz Cup late on Friday night.

Narayanan, who gate-crashed into the semifinals with wins over some better-known names, lost to Iranian Alireza Firouzja 9-6, while Carlsen reached the final beating Russia's Sanan Sjugirov 9-0.

'Horrible' blunder

"I think it (the margin) should have been much closer," said Narayanan, who saw the checkmate coming in the final game, even before his rival could make the rook-move. "Horrible," was how the country's 10th-ranked player described his blunder in the final game where he was clearly better.



Classy show: S.L. Narayanan gained the respect of the chess world by pulling off some sensational victories.
•FILE PHOTO: RAKESH RAO

Even after the painful finish, the soft-spoken GM from Thiruvananthapuram remained gracious. "This is my favourite time-control (three minutes for a player, for a game, with no increment) and I'm thankful to Chess24.com for giving me the opportunity to play

against some of the best."

Indeed, Narayanan gained the respect of the chess world by pulling off some sensational victories in the 128-player \$50,000 knockout tournament, that offers \$14,000 to the winner.

In ensuring \$4,000 by performing beyond his rat-

ing of 2618, Narayanan defeated Spain's Ivan Salgado Lopez (2584) 8.5-0.5, Egypt's Bassem Amin (2686) 8.5-4.5, Carlsen's 'second' Norway's Jon Ludvig Hammer (2608) 8.5-2.5 and Germany's Alexander Donchenko (2646) 8.5-6.5 to reach the quarterfinals.

He beat Venezuela's Eduardo Hurrzaga Bonelli (2607) 8.5-6.5 in a tough quarterfinal before facing the formidable Firouzja, rated 2728.

The online event began on September 25 with no fixed schedule as matches were played at times convenient for both players.

The other Indians in the fray were Nihal Sarin (lost in the third round), Vaibhav Suri, R. Praggnanandhaa (second round), S.P. Sethuraman, Abhijit Gupta and Surya Shekhar Ganguly (first round).

Will consider leading AIFF, says Bhutia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia has said he will consider contesting for the post of All India Football Federation (AIFF) president in future. Bhutia retired in 2011, after being Indian football's posterboy for more than a decade.

"That is definitely something to be considered in future," he said when asked if he wants to become AIFF president one day, while answering questions on Facebook.

"At the moment I am focusing on grassroots football with the Bhaichung Bhutia Football School and United Sikkim Club and also at district level (in Sikkim)," said Bhutia.

Current AIFF president Praful Patel has effectively



Bhaichung Bhutia.
•FILE PHOTO

been at the helm of affairs since 2008, when then chief Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi fell ill. He was elected president in 2012 and again in 2016, and is unlikely to be eligible this year under the Sports Code.

Liverpool legend Dalglish tests positive

IAN S
LONDON

Liverpool legend Sir Kenny Dalglish has tested positive for COVID-19 but is asymptomatic, his family has announced. The Dalglish family released a statement on Friday saying the 69-year-old was admitted to hospital on Wednesday for treatment of an infection and received a routine test for coronavirus.

"Unexpectedly, the test result was positive but he remains asymptomatic," the statement read.

Saqlain live!

Catch Pakistan spin legend Saqlain Mushtaq in a live chat on Sportstar's Instagram handle (@Sportstarweb) on April 12 (Sunday) at 2.30 p.m. IST.

IN BRIEF



Kipchoge's 'warning' to fellow athletes

World marathon record-holder Eliud Kipchoge has warned fellow athletes not to switch off training during these times, saying if they push their bodies too much whenever the situation around the world improves, they will be prone to injuries. IANS

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