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VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 11, 2019; PAGES 12-13



the pioneer



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 FOR GLOBAL
 CLIMATE CHANGE
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BLOCKING OF DOWRY CALCULATOR | SITE: HC SEEKS CENTRE'S STAND

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought the Centre's response on a plea challenging blocking of a website hosting a "dowry calculator", which according to its owner was created as a satirical comment on the existing dowry demand in society. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar issued a notice to the Ministries of Electronics and Information Technology, Women and Child Development and Communication, seeking their stand on the website owner's petition, which claimed the site was blocked by government in Sep last year without giving him a hearing.



FACES OF SIX STUDENTS 'BLACKENED' OVER POOR MARKS

The faces of six Class 4 students, including two girls, were allegedly blackened and they were paraded in the private school's premises after securing less marks in a test, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place on Friday and one of the girls, a 9-year-old Dalit, informed her parents about it. Her parent told reporters on Tuesday that family members went to the school to lodge a complaint about the treatment meted out to the children, but the authorities failed to take action against the staff responsible.



RS 15 CR RAISED IN FIVE YEARS BY AUCTIONING OFF GIFTS TO PM: MIN

The culture ministry on Tuesday informed parliament that Rs 15.13 crore were raised from the auction of mementos and gifts presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the last five years. In an answer to a query in Rajya Sabha, Culture Minister Prahlad Patel said that the money had been raised during three auctions—February 18-20, 2015, January 27-April 1, 2019 and September 14-October 24, 2019. The proceeds were given to the Namami Gange project of the Union government, he said.



NO NEED TO WORRY: MIN ON REPORTS OF DEMONETISATION OF RS2000 NOTE

Dismissing reports that the government is set to withdraw Rs 2000 denomination note, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur on Tuesday said there was no need to worry about it. "This is the real worry (about demonetisation) which has surfaced now. I think that you should not worry about it," Thakur told Rajya Sabha replying to a question on government's plan to withdraw Rs 2000 note in the future. SP member Vishambhar Prasad Nishad said.



CAPSULE 'GOVT DUTY-BOUND TO SET UP TRUST FOR RAM TEMPLE'

NEW DELHI: The Centre is duty-bound to set up a new trust for the development of Ayodhya and construction of a Ram temple within three months as per the directive of the Supreme Court, Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. In a written reply to a question, he said, the November 9 Supreme Court judgment in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid matter included formulation of a scheme by the Centre with necessary provisions for the setting up of a trust with a board of trustees or any other appropriate body, the functioning of the trust, the powers of the trustees, transfer of land to the trust and all necessary, incidental and supplemental matters.

NANIGAADU FILM UNIT THREATENS SUICIDE

HYDERABAD: Protesting against the pirated version of *Naanigadu* film going viral on YouTube, the unit of the Durga Prasad-starrer on Tuesday staged a dharna in front of the Film Chamber, demanding the video streaming website remove the upload or else they would commit suicide. The film crew expressed concern over the film going viral on YouTube at a time arrangements were being made for its release. The unit said that the film was produced at a cost of Rs 40 lakh and had even received 'U' certificate for the CBFC.

OVER 1,000 SCIENTISTS PROTEST CAB

NEW DELHI: Over 1,000 scientists and scholars have signed a petition demanding that the Citizenship Amendment Bill in its current form be withdrawn. The Lok Sabha passed the bill a little past midnight on Monday after a heated debate that lasted over seven hours. It seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan after facing religious persecution there.

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Margashirsha & Shukla Paksha
Tithi: Chaturdash: 10:59 am
Nakshatram: Rohini: 06:22 am (Next Day)
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 12:09 pm - 01:31 pm
Yamagandam: 08:01 am - 09:24 am
Varjyam: 10:14 pm - 11:52 pm
Gulika: 10:46 am - 12:09 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 03:07 am - 04:45 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 31/19
Humidity: 63%
Sunrise: 06:35
Sunset: 05:42
 Current Weather Conditions Updated December 10, 2019 5:00 PM

FINER POINTS

AP to distribute quality rice through PDS: Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 Making it clear to the Opposition that the YSRCP had never promised to supply 'Sanna Biyyam' (fine rice), Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said that it was mentioned in his party's manifesto that quality rice would be distributed through the Public Distribution System (PDS) in all the districts. Intervening during Question Hour on the second day of the winter session of the Assembly on Tuesday, the Chief Minister said supply of quality rice through PDS, which was launched as a pilot



project in Srikakulam district, would be extended to all districts from April, 2020. An additional amount of Rs 1,400 crore would be allotted for the purpose, he said. "We treat our manifesto as a holy book and along with it

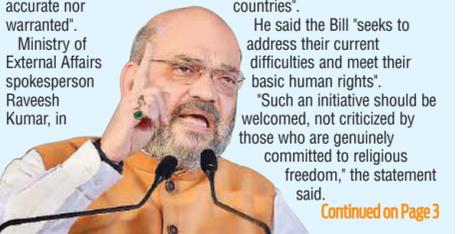
we are implementing schemes which we did not even mention in it. Distribution of quality rice through PDS is one such measure," Jaganmohan Reddy said, adding that the quality of rice being supplied has improved. Minister for Finance and Legislative Affairs Buganna Rajendranath Reddy said the previous TDP government had allocated Rs 3,000 crore for supply of rice in 2018-19, but had spent only Rs 200 crore. On the other hand, the present government had allocated Rs 4,134 crore for the supply of rice which was of high quality. *Continued on Page 3*

US panel pushes for sanctions on Shah over CAB curbing Muslims

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 A panel on religion has advocated sanctions against India's home minister Amit Shah if the Citizenship Amendment Bill that was passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday is cleared by Parliament. The contentious Bill excludes Muslims seeks to amend the Citizenship Act and declares only non-Muslim minorities, specifically Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs, who fled Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before 2015, eligible for citizenships. The Bill has been widely criticized at home and abroad, with Opposition claiming that religion will play a role in granting citizenship. The Bill also goes against India's Constitution that guarantees legal equality to people of all faiths, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom said.

India slams USCIRF comments on CAB as 'unwarranted'

NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON: India on Tuesday termed the comments made by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) as "neither accurate nor warranted". Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar, in a statement said, the Bill that was passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday midnight, "provides expedited consideration for Indian citizenship to persecuted religious minorities already in India from certain contiguous countries". He said the Bill "seeks to address their current difficulties and meet their basic human rights". "Such an initiative should be welcomed, not criticized by those who are genuinely committed to religious freedom," the statement said. *Continued on Page 3*



panel's statement inaccurate, saying the Bill sought to help persecuted religious minorities already in the country. "It seeks to address their current difficulties and meet their basic human rights," said ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar. Hindus in Bangladesh, Christians in Pakistan and Sikhs in Afghanistan, all Muslim-majority nations, have faced violence in recent years, but India's opposition parties, minority groups and academics have said the bill discriminates against Muslims. During Monday's parliament debate, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi ripped up a copy of the Bill, calling it a move by the Modi government to render Muslims "stateless". But the BJP, which promised the measure in an election campaign that swept it to power in May, says the law is needed to help persecuted minority individuals in its neighbours. "If minorities in our neighbouring countries are being persecuted, then India cannot stay a silent spectator," Shah told parliament.

BJP has maximum lawmakers facing cases of crime against women, YSRCP third: ADR

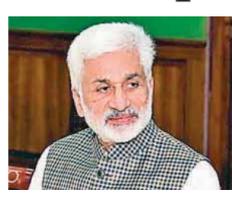
PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has the third highest number of lawmakers facing cases related to crime against women, after the BJP and the Congress. While 21 of the BJP's lawmakers faces such charges, the Congress 16 legislators facing cases related to crime against women. Seven of the YSRCP's legislators faces similar charges, according to election watchdog Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). The number of Lok Sabha MPs with cases related to

crimes against women has increased from two in 2009 to 19 in 2019, it also said. "There are three MPs and six MLAs who have declared cases related to rape... In the last five years, recognised parties have given tickets to 41 candidates who declared cases related to rape," an ADR report said. In the past five years, the BJP gave tickets to 66 candidates facing cases of crime against women to contest elections for the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and state Assemblies. The Congress fielded 46 such candidates and Bahujan Samaj Party 40. The ADR and National Election Watch said it analysed 4,822 out of 4,896 election affidavits of current MPs (759) and MLAs (4063). The number of Lok Sabha election candidates with cases of crimes against women went up from 38 to 126, an increase of 231 percent, during the period, the report said. West Bengal reported the highest number of MPs/MLAs (16) who declared cases of crimes against women, followed by Odisha and Maharashtra with 12 MPs/MLAs each. "In the last five years, a total of 572 such candidates contested in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and assembly elections. None of these candidates have been convicted," the report read.



YSRCP decries delay in GST revenue loss compensation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 The YSR Congress Party on Tuesday voiced concern over the delay by the Centre in paying Andhra Pradesh the guaranteed compensation for its Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue loss for August-September. During a special mention in Rajya Sabha, YSRCP member V. Vijayasai Reddy said Andhra Pradesh has been suffering the GST revenue loss since August this year. Revenue officials have calculated the state's



GST revenue loss at Rs 1,605 crore. "It is mandatory for the Centre to release the GST loss to states once in two months. The Government of India has not paid the compensation for GST revenue loss to Andhra Pradesh for August and September, which was supposed to be paid in October," Vijayasai Reddy said. The October-November period loss has to be paid by December 10, he added. GST was rolled out in July 2017. As per the provision of GST, the Centre would compensate to state governments for any revenue loss in the first five years of its implementation.

Vamsi requests, given separate seat in House

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 Andhra Pradesh Assembly Speaker Thammimani Seetaram on Tuesday allotted a separate seat to suspended TDP member Vallabhaneni Vamsi in the House, triggering protests from Telugu Desam party legislators. The Speaker accepted Vamsi's request and suggested that the latter choose any one of the vacant seats in a row adjacent to the opposition benches. The issue caused a furore in the House with the TDP taking strong exception to the speaker's decision. The TDP recently suspended Vamsi, who was elected from Gannavaram constituency for the third time, after he met Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, triggering speculation that he was set to join the ruling YSR Congress. On Tuesday, Vamsi spoke in the Assembly saying he met the Chief Minister only to discuss certain development issues related to his constituency. "But the TDP suspended me and even made nasty allegations



in the social media. I can't sit with the TDP members and, hence, please allot me a separate seat," the legislator requested the speaker. The speaker, accordingly, conceded the members request. The TDP staged a walkout from the House over the issue. Later, talking to reporters at the Assembly media point, TDP legislators Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary and N China Rajappa asked: "How can the speaker recognize Vamsi as a separate member?" They said Vamsi should resign from the assembly membership if he intended to join another party.

Steps on for hanging of Nirbhaya convicts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 The four men convicted in the gang-rape, torture and killing of a young medical student in Delhi in 2012 will be hanged soon, indicate preparations at Tihar Jail in Delhi. Legal options still available to the convicts, however, may stall the process. Sources in Tihar, Asia's largest prison, say special ropes for the execution are being brought from a jail in Bihar's Buxar, which also sent ropes for the hanging of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru in 2013. A dummy execution has also been carried out to test the gallows. The convicts are all in different cells and will be monitored through CCTV, say sources. Arrangements for the hanging are being made in Jail Number 3, where executions take place. An official in Tihar was quoted as telling news agency ANI that the search is on for a hangman.

Prez southern sojourn from December 26

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 As part of his annual southern sojourn, President Ram Nath Kovind will be reaching Hyderabad on December 26. During his visit to the Telangana State capital, he will be staying at Rashtrapati Nilayam at Bolarum. The Medchal-Malkajgiri district collector on Tuesday held a review meeting with the officers of various departments and directed them to complete the arrangements for the President's stay in the city. Malkajgiri RDO Madhusudhan has been appointed as Nodal Officer to oversee the arrangements. The collector said that the President would land at Hakimpet Airport on December 26. He directed officials to beautify the routes that Kovind will be travelling on and immediately resolve the power issues in the surrounding areas.

'25-yr-old' Naidu says Heritage has been sold

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 Telugu Desam Party president N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday said that he may 70, but mentally, is fitter than a 25-year-old. Offering to resign as an MLA if the ruling YSR Congress Party could prove that the retail chain Heritage Fresh belonged to his family, Naidu said that he could spend the entire day debating the issue in the Assembly. "If I cannot prove the allegation, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy loses the right to continue in his position. I am demanding that Jagan Mohan Reddy accept my challenge," the Leader of the Opposition told the AP Assembly. The issue came up during a short discussion on the price of onions when the Chief Minister and members of the ruling party referred to the commodity price in the open market, particularly in the Heritage Fresh outlets. "I clarified yesterday that Heritage Foods and Heritage Fresh are different entities. Heritage Fresh has been taken over by the Future Group. Still, you are making baseless allegations, Naidu said.



Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath intervened and read out a newspaper report related to the stake sale in Heritage Fresh and claimed that Naidu's family still held a share in it. Civil Supplies Minister Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao and other Members of the Assembly lashed out at the TDP chief for challenging the Chief Minister. "...he (Naidu) is used to politicising everything for petty gains," Srivenkateswara Rao said. On Monday, the Chief Minister had said no other state was offering onions at Rs 25 a kg at a time when the market rate was hovering between Rs 80 to 100 per kg.

CAPSULE



Kotamreddy indisposed, stable

AMARAVATI: Nellore Rural MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy suddenly fell ill due to high blood pressure on the second day of the Assembly session on Tuesday. He went out of the Assembly during the session and he was administered first-aid at the YSRCLP office. Later, he was shifted to a hospital. Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth said the Nellore Rural MLA had experienced a sudden bout of high blood pressure and that his condition is stable after being admitted to the hospital. Earlier in the day, Kotamreddy made a sensational disclosure stating that 13 TDP MLAs were ready to cross over to the YSRCP despite conditions imposed by party president YS Jaganmohan Reddy. He said, "Chandrababu Naidu continues to be the Opposition leader because of Jaganmohan Reddy and he should be thankful to him for not poaching his MLAs throwing principles to the wind." He predicted that in the 2024 Assembly elections the main contest would be between the YSRCP and the BJP and the TDP would be pushed to the third place.

Karthika Parva Deepotsavam today

VIJAYAWADA: The annual Karthika Parva Deepotsavam will be celebrated on a grand note at Tirumala temple on December 11. The TTD is all set to celebrate the festival of lights on Wednesday between 5 pm and 8 pm. The entire temple will be decked up with ghee lit lamps, which would be the cynosure of all eyes. The TTD has cancelled Sahasra Deepalankara Seva and monthly Pournami Garuda Seva in view of the Karthika Deepotsavam.

'Stand up for human rights'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University celebrated the Human Rights Day on Tuesday to mark the 70th year of adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on the university premises.

Chief guest Justice SR Bannurmath, Chairman, Law Commission of Karnataka and Former Chairman of Maharashtra Human Rights Commission, heralded December 10, as one of the greatest days in the history of mankind, since the UDHR was formally recognised on this day in 1948.

He spoke about the difference between human beings and animals; wherein animals indulge in cruel acts for satisfaction of their needs and protection only. But human beings, being the most intelligent and evolved species on the earth cause violence without any reason.

He quoted Dr S Radhakrishnan, former President, "No wild being is more destructive or cruel for a human being than his fellow human being." He also mentioned the fact that the zoo at San Diego proclaims human beings to be the most dangerous and cruel animal on Earth.

The adoption of UDHR was in response to the devastation caused by the two



SR Bannurmath, Chairman, Law Commission of Karnataka and Former Chairman of Maharashtra Human Rights Commission, speaks at Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

world wars where human rights were grossly violated. The United Nations is thus coming up with various themes each year and the theme for 2019 is Stand Up For Human Rights. The Indian Constitution has incorporated the concepts of equality, liberty and justice to protect human rights. Furthermore, the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 has been specifically adopted for the enforcement of UDHR in India. The Act led to the formation of the National Human Rights Commission and the State Human Rights Commissions to protect the

rights of individuals.

Guest of honour Prof Rajeshri N Varhadi, HoD, Department of Law, University of Mumbai, in her speech emphasised the importance of human rights. "The problem is that we don't realise the importance of human rights and it's protection unless we witness them by ourselves. The Indian judgements, which have a human rights angle are DK Basu Vs State of West Bengal, Nilabati Behera Vs State of Orissa, Olga Tellis Vs Bombay Municipal Corporation and Sheela Barse Vs Union of India," she explained.

- Justice SR Bannurmath, Chairman, Law Commission of Karnataka and Former Chairman of Maharashtra Human Rights Commission, quoted Dr S Radhakrishnan, former President, "No wild being is more destructive or cruel for a human being than his fellow human being"
- He also mentioned the fact that the zoo at San Diego proclaims human beings to be the most dangerous and cruel animal on Earth

Dell to enable school teachers to adopt tech in classrooms

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Dell Technologies announced a new partnership with UNESCO MGIEP to enable school teachers to adopt technology in classrooms at TECH-2019 here on Tuesday.

Through this partnership, 'Dell Aarambh', a PC for education programme by Dell and UNESCO MGIEP's 'FramerSpace' platform, will collaborate to train identified teachers. This partnership is a result of meeting the common objective of equipping teachers with the requisite knowledge to implement technology in classrooms.

The proposed engagement between Dell Technologies and UNESCO MGIEP will be spread across three phases.

In the first year of engagement, teachers across Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka will be trained. Dell Aarambh intends to provide a springboard for teachers in ICT and to help them kick start their digital learning journeys; and UNESCO MGIEP FramerSpace helps teachers with rich content creation abilities coupled with analytical insight to elevate the education quality.

FramerSpace is an AI-powered digital platform that helps teachers conceive, implement and monitor personalised learning plans for their students. Commenting on the partner-



ship, P Krishnakumar, Senior Vice-President, Consumer and Small Business, APJ, Dell Technologies, said, "In an increasingly digitised India, emerging technologies will play a pivotal role in what the future of work will look like. Teachers will be in the forefront of this revolution as they educate tomorrow's digital workforce, today."

Anantha Duraippah, Director, UNESCO MGIEP, said "Digital media is the reality of today and tomorrow, hence, there is an urgent need to build our capacities in order to provide a meaningful and relevant education to the younger generation. We need to forge partnerships and collaborate with all stakeholders to achieve our vision of transforming education for humanity by bringing in digital pedagogies, trained teachers and quality content into the classroom."

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This partnership is a resultant of meeting the common objective of equipping teachers with the requisite knowledge to implement technology in classrooms

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Rare knee joint replacement surgery

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The department of orthopaedics at GITAM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (GIMSIR) has been conducting knee and hip replacement surgeries at a very low cost without compromising the quality of the implants or medicines used. The department also achieved very good results from these surgeries. Going a step ahead the department showcased that the doctors are capable by performing even complex knee

joint replacements using advanced implants for grossly deformed knees also.

The GIMSIR medical team demonstrated the same in the form of live surgery as a part of Continuing Medical Education (CME) programme arranged at GIMSIR here on Tuesday.

The surgeries were performed by a team of orthopaedic surgeons of GIMSIR, along with Prof Aare Martson from the University of Tartu, sharing his expertise with all the delegates, who attended the CME.

TTD mulls permanent steps to curb fire mishaps

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The TTD is contemplating for permanent measures to curb any fire mishaps at Potu in Tirumala in future, said TTD additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy.

After a three-hour long review meeting with all the HoDs and senior officers of Tirumala, the additional executive officer speaking to media persons here on Tuesday, said a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is being formulated to create awareness among Potu workers on do's and don'ts to be followed. "Potu workers



TTD additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy addresses a review meeting in Tirumala on Tuesday on 'how to curb fire mishaps at Potu'

will be oriented on the safety and precautionary measures.

We are also purchasing Rose Cans to avoid spilling over of

After a three-hour long review meeting with all the HoDs and senior officers of Tirumala, the additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy said a SOP is being formulated to create awareness among Potu workers on do's and don'ts to be followed

Stoves for safety preparation of boondi. If the new mechanism succeeds, we will implement the same," he added.

The additional executive officer also said the deadline for ban on the usage of plastic is January 31 next. We are going for alternative mechanism to avoid usage of plastic bottles. We are going to keep 1,500 water dispensers at all Rest Houses in Tirumala soon," he added. CE Ramachandra Reddy, SE-II Nageswara Rao, SE (Electrical) Venkateswarulu, deputy executive officer Harindranath, VGO Manohar and other senior officers were also present.

Spandana a big hit with women in Prakasam dist

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Spandana programme has become a big hit among women in Prakasam district, thanks to the district police personnel, who have been following the effective way of communication and solving issues.

Spandana, the pet project of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, has not only won accolades from far and wide but has also gained the 7th G-Files Governance Award-2019 and Skoch Award. It is only because of Spandana that the police have become more accessible to citizens, more so to women, claims the government.

In a press release issued here on Sunday, the government said access to information and connectivity has come in the district by setting up of 84 terminals to enable the



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police stations in the district to interact with the headquarters from SI, CI, DSP to SP level under the Spandana programme through which there can be a three-way video conference as well, said Prakasam district Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kaushal, who bagged the Skoch and G Files national Award, which is given to civil servants for excellence

in their line of duty. Normally, women do not like coming to police stations and keep away as far as possible. With the Spandana coming into being, it has become a preferred service for women to avail help of police. As word spread about the procedure and friendliness, more and more people are coming forward with their grievances,

he said. "We have specially trained women staff at the Spandana reception centres of more than 90% police stations around the State, which is another factor for the good response to the programme.

The response to Spandana from a sample of a few women whose problems were quickly solved, show that they are happy with the programme, as they have direct access to officials concerned through the Spandana programme.

Giving the first person account, a young woman, who complained about marital discord, said the issue was solved through counselling. One Lakshmi Soujanya, an LIC agent, said that there was a theft in her house, as miscreants robbed gold, which bought for her daughter's marriage, was robbed. After giving a reminder in Spandana the

case was solved in three days, she said and thanked Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy for the Spandana initiative.

Jayamma, a housewife, said that the financier, who was charging a high rate of interest, had seized the auto from her husband and when complained, the auto was returned and the matter was settled through Spandana.

District SP Siddharth said that over 52% of the citizens availing the Spandana facility are women and the average time given to each complainant by the officer is 8.5 minutes.

Spandana was started on July 7 is being held on Monday at all government offices in all districts where grievances will be received and acknowledged with a possible date of solving the issue by the department concerned.

Fruit-seller refuses to charge scribes, praised on Twitter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An elderly fruit-seller's refusal to accept money for fruits bought by women journalists stationed outside a Delhi hospital after a fire tragedy has won praise from Twitterati.

A Twitter user posted a picture of the old man, appearing to be in his 60s, and wrote: "This man is Nand Lal, who sells fruits outside Lady Hardinge Hospital. He did not charge anything from women journalists stationed there, saying 'you are like my daughters and have been standing here since morning. I can't charge you anything.'"

People heaped praise on the good Samaritan, though many also opined that the women should have paid him despite his refusal since he must be in need



of money to run his household. Nine persons out of 43, who were burnt in a major fire in Delhi's Anaj Mandi area on Sunday morning, had died at the Lady Hardinge Hospital. The post got 635 retweets and over 5,000 likes.

One user commented: "You should have given a thought to the fact that the fire at this man's hearth will burn only if he earned money by selling fruits. Despite his refusal, he should have been given the money for the fruits bought."

NADU-NEDU PROGRAMME

1,234 govt schools with poor infra identified in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As many as 1,234 government schools with poor infrastructure were identified in Vizag district under Nadu-Nedu programme and would be developed within three years.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had launched the Nadu-Nedu programme, which aims at transforming government schools into vibrant and competitive institutions. The scheme is set to cover all schools in three years with a budget of Rs 12,000 crore.

The Nadu-Nedu scheme will be implemented in 15,715 government schools in the first phase and will cover

The Nadu-Nedu scheme will be implemented in 15,715 government schools in the first phase and will cover all schools in three years' time with a budget of Rs 12,000 crore

all schools in three years' time with a budget of Rs 12,000 crore.

Speaking about the initiatives of the State government for the development of education at TECH-2019, District Collector Vinay Chand mentioned about Nadu-Nedu, Amma Vodi schemes and the decision to make English medium compulsory in government

schools in view of the global competition.

"To fill the infrastructure gap under the Nadu-Nedu programme, we identified 1,234 schools that need infrastructure development. Basic amenities like clean environs, furniture, toilets, running water, compound wall, blackboard, renovation and involve parent committees. We want to create equal level playing field for both the



government and private schools," he added. "We are

happy to host this historic event and open to any good

suggestion from this education conference," he said.

Three killed as jeep overturns

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Three persons were killed on the spot and two others sustained critical injuries when the Bolero jeep in which they were travelling overturned near Kalvapalli in Beluguppa mandal of the district on Tuesday. The seriously injured have been admitted to a hospital.

The movement of traffic has been affected on the road on account of the road mishap. The police took steps to regulate the traffic. The mishap occurred when five persons belonging to the district were returning from Pavagada in neighbouring Karnataka State. Over speeding is stated to be the cause for the mishap.

Encounters bring temporary boost for rulers!

Extra-judicial killings taken up by the police in the name of meting out 'instant justice', basing on emotional outpourings of family members of the deceased and general public, may bring temporary boost to rulers, but they won't ensure permanent political mileage! Be it Uttar Pradesh, Telangana or Andhra Pradesh, the outcomes will be the same, regardless of the rulers.

Culprits in serious cases of rapes and murders should be given stringent punishment as per the prescribed provisions of law of the land, despite inordinate delay. It is not acceptable if the police are allowed to eliminate the accused.

The Government of Telangana had to take the 'extreme step' in view of the prevailing situation as Disha's gang-rape and murder sparked public outrage across the nation. The state government did not want the stigma of inaction, especially after Chief

Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had gone blank when media persons in Delhi asked him pointedly why he was there to attend a marriage, instead of visiting and consoling the family of Disha. So, the 'scene of reconstruction' may have been fixed subsequently. Noticeably, within 24 hours of facing embarrassing moments in Delhi, the 'muhurat' for 'encounter' seems to have been fixed.

This is not the first time that KCR got popularity out of calculated acts. Soon after the formation of Telangana, police killed two terror operatives in Nalgonda district. Despite losing a sub-inspector in that gun battle, the government was hailed for the outcome. Likewise, the 'encounter'

This is not the first time that KCR got popularity out of calculated acts. Soon after the formation of Telangana, police killed two terror operatives in Nalgonda district. Despite losing a sub-inspector in that gun battle, the government was hailed for the outcome



killings of three youths who were responsible for acid attack on two girls at Warangal in 2008 came in handy for the then YS Rajasekhara Reddy government to boost its image as protector of women from harassment. The City of Pearls had suffered a set-back with terror strikes in 2007 --during the same regime. YSR then acted firmly to avoid the political fallout. When then UPA chairperson and Congress

president Sonia Gandhi sought to visit the victims of terror strikes, YSR advised her not to come to Hyderabad as there was possibility of the government's reputation getting damaged and people becoming panicky. Sonia agreed and dropped her plan.

Later, she went to Malegoan of Maharashtra, where another terror strike took place, leaving several people injured. Present Lok Sabha member Sadhvi Prajna Singh



M D RATNA KUMAR Senior Journalist

Thakoor(Bhopal) was charged following the incident. But, Sonia had to face criticism for choosing Malegoan to visit the victims of terror strike, instead of Hyderabad, where dozens of innocent people died in terror strikes. Later in 2008, three youths accused in acid attack on two girls were killed by the

Warangal police during his regime. He reluctantly gave nod to this episode after getting advice from his close unofficial circles.

KCR got credit when the dreaded gangster Nayeem, considered 'Dawood Ibrahim' of Hyderabad, was eliminated. Nayeem had maintained close contacts with top officials of the police department, going by entries in his personal diary. Extortion of a very close associate of KCR proved to be his nemesis. It came in handy for the KCR government to project itself as a government that cracks down anti-social elements with an iron hand.

Upon coming to power, KCR had appreciated the police department. The SHE Teams set up by the department worked well in saving women from incidents of eve-teasing and harassment. With

the purpose of motivating the entire department, KCR had a direct interaction with 1,500 police personnel. Subsequently, incidents of harassment by police personnel increased, denting the image of the government. The killing of the four accused in Disha case has enhanced the reputation of KCR government at the national level.

In the case of Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, too the similar situations played a crucial role in painting him as a popular ruler with real commitment to cracking down on hooligans and anti-social elements to ensure peace in society. The situation took a turn for the worse when the involvement of BJP personnel and supporters surfaced in various crimes, including rapes and murders! In the Unnao case, a young

woman was allegedly raped by none other than BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar. The deadly attack on the rape victim dented the reputation of the Yogi government. BJP took a lot of time to take a call on expulsion of the MLA. Now the party is not in a position to control the damage done to it due to the Unnao incident. Former president of AICC Rahul Gandhi spoke for the legions in the country when he said even foreigners are asking why India is not able to look after her women.

So, the outcome of forceful acts of rulers for public consumption may not always yield fruits. The executions of Ajmal Kasab, lone terrorist caught alive by police in the 26/11 Mumbai strikes and Afzal Guru, mastermind in the terrorist attack on Parliament, did not yield political dividend for the Congress party in the subsequent elections, though it was expected to translate into majority votes to unfold 'UPA3'!

CAPSULE

Two bike lifters involved in 26 cases held

VISAKHAPATNAM: The city police arrested two persons here on Tuesday, who were allegedly involved in over 26 motorcycle thefts. The team led by CCS ACP D Surya Sravan Kumar and PM Circle Inspector B Srinivasa Rao. Based on reliable information and continuous tracking, the team arrested Tamini Mahesh (26) and Gandhi Asha Raju (22), both residents of Madhurwada area. Addressing the media here on Tuesday, Commissioner of Police RK Meena said that both the accused started lifting bikes for easy money. ADCP (Crime) V Suresh Babu, who supervised the operation, said that the duo managed to get the duplicate keys of various bikes and scooters and with the help of them they stole the bikes. They mostly lifted the two-wheelers from parking lots at public places or roadside parkings. The accused were involved in five cases in Visakhapatnam city, three in Vizianagaram and 18 cases in Srikakulam district. They were able to sell three of the stolen bikes, but were able to recover all the 26 two-wheelers, including the ones that were sold, said Sravan Kumar. Both the accused have been sent to remand after cases were booked under the relevant sections.

Cell phone thief arrested

In another case, the police arrested a serial cell phone thief on Tuesday and recovered about 1.5 tolas of gold ornaments and 20 mobile phones. The arrested have been identified as one Bevara Satyanarayana (23), a native of Thondrangri village in Vizianagaram district. According to the CP, the accused was allegedly involved in over 20 theft cases. "We have been receiving a number of complaints of late and to crack the case, the task was entrusted to sub-inspector of Dwaraka police station (crime) B Ludhar Babu, who worked with the CCS team," he said.

French universities show interest to invest in I-Hub

SUMIT ONKA VISAKHAPATNAM

The World's first Science of Learning Research Centre (Intelligent Global Hub for Digital Pedagogy (IGHDP or I-Hub), proposed to be set up in Vizag, has got a shot in the arm as investors, including French universities, have already evinced interest in the project.

It may be noted that the Andhra Pradesh government had earmarked Rs 66 crore for the project in its 2019 budget. It had also promised to allot 50 acres in Vizag.

In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer on the sidelines of TECH-2019, UNESCO MGIEP director Prof Anantha Duraipappah, said: "Investors are really interested in the I-Hub project. French universities are also keen in it. The project was proposed during the previous government. So, we would hold a meeting with the current government and depending on their interest, we can take the project forward."

The Intelligent Global Hub for Digital Pedagogy (IGHDP) or I-Hub, claimed to be first-of-its-kind in the world by UNESCO MGIEP, will house this centre where world's best minds in the field of neuro-



science and psychology will work to understand how students or anyone learn things and what sort of games or education technology could supplement it.

This will be one of the seven major components of the I-Hub proposed in the city by UNESCO's MGIEP. This centre may act as the nucleus of all other projects in the hub.

Former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was very much impressed with the proposal of Learning Research Centre and urged the UNESCO's MGIEP official members to make it reality at the earliest.

In line with its vision of Transforming Education for Humanity, MGIEP will bring

in the best neuroscientists and psychologists to the centre to research how people or students learn. Neuroscience and behaviour may help to develop suitable games and use technologies to create digital learning equipment. Developers could also incorporate the research outputs when the develop games for education.

The Director UNESCO MGIEP "Socio-Emotional Learning in education systems is very much important. The way we learn varies in different stages of our life: Early childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The Centre will help us to know how people learn in different stage of life and frame plans or develop

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education technology accordingly. We will get best neuron scientists and psychologists as I say I-Hub is multi-stakeholder unit i.e. policy makers, knowledge and research partners, educators, learning science specialists, psychologists, technology providers, financial investors, established and start-up companies come together to work towards rolling out digital products for learning that build critical inquiry, cognitive skills, and socio-emotional skills."

4 men in judicial remand for harassing wives

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Vizag city police on Tuesday arrested four men and sent them to judicial remand on charges of harassing their wives. Two were charged for harassing their spouses under influence of alcohol, the other two for dowry and illicit relationship.

In the first instance, Chandrasekhar and Dhanalakshmi were happily married and have been residing in Santinagar area. The husband, however, got into a relationship with a woman he



had fallen in love with before marriage.

After rekindling this relationship, he started harassing his wife. Unable to bear the torture, Dhanalakshmi lodged a complaint with the police, who after inquiring the case, arrested

Chandrasekhar. In Ambedkar Colony, 22-year-old Tejeswani lodged a complaint against her husband Manideep, (33) that he was harassing her for dowry. They tied the knot six months ago.

A doctor by profession, Urmila (26) complained that her husband Santosh (30) also a doctor, got addicted to alcohol and began harassing her physically and emotionally. In a similar case, the police arrested Yerra Sankar Rao (43) for harassing his wife Yerra Uma (30) for harassment under the influence of alcohol.

Ours is a govt biased towards ryots: Jagan

PNS AMARAVATI



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Tuesday said that Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for all crops will be advertised in the media on Thursday. Allaying fears of farmers, he said they wouldn't have to resort to distress sales or dispose of their produce at prices below the MSP.

Intervening in the short discussion on Rythu Bharosa in the Assembly, the Chief Minister said the MSP for paddy, jowar, maize, groundnut, black gram, green gram, red gram and other crops will be announced.

He said farmers could go to procurement centres and dispose their produce there if MSP was not offered. All details would be made available in the advertisement, he said.

"A helpline will be set up for farmers to contact in case of any problem," Jaganmohan Reddy said. Emphasising that his government was farmer-friendly, he said it would always reach

ready to extend any help to farmers.

He said the Agriculture Mission had already been launched with the Chief Minister as its chairman. As part of the initiative, the government had been conducting monthly review meetings to ensure that farmers' were not neglected.

The Price Stabilisation Fund mooted by the government would not only benefit farmers but also consumers, the Agriculture Minister said. This year, the State had witnessed good rainfall, resulting in increased agricultural production, he said and disclosed that paddy procurement centres had already been set up at various places in the State.

"We have been in touch with officials on a daily basis. It has been found that 88 lakh tonnes of paddy has been produced in the State and 60 lakh tonnes of the produce will come into the market. So far, 1,283 paddy procurement centres have been set up," Kanna Babu said.

AP to distribute quality rice through PDS: Jagan

Continued from Page1

He said TDP had pushed the Civil Supplies Corporation into losses that accumulated to Rs 20,000 crore. The previous government had taken a loan of Rs 13,500 crore on behalf of the Civil Supplies Corporation in the past five years which was diverted for other purposes by the TDP, he said.

The finance minister said the present government had to shell out Rs 10,500 crore to the corporation. The previous TDP government had incurred a debt of Rs 1,050 crore for its well-publicised schemes of Chandranna Sankranti Kanuka and Ramzan Tohfa for the commodities supplied. That is how the previous government had destroyed the Civil Supplies Corporation, Buggana said. It had also utilised the funds granted by the Central government. The loan of Rs 7,500 crore taken through the corporation by the previous government during last year was diverted for its schemes, he said.

India slams USCIRF comments on CAB as 'unwarranted'

Continued from Page1

He said the CAB "does not affect the existing avenues available to all communities interested in seeking citizenship from doing so. The recent record of granting such citizenship would bear out the Government of India's objectivity in that regard".

He clarified that neither the CAB nor the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process seeks to strip citizenship from any Indian citizen of any faith, and added that suggestions to that effect are "motivated and unjustified". "Every nation, including the United States, has the right to enumerate and validate its citizenry, and to exercise this prerogative through various policies."

"The position articulated by USCIRF is not surprising given its past record. It is, however, regrettable that the body has chosen to be guided only by its prejudices and biases on a matter on which it clearly has little knowledge and no locus standi," the statement added.

The USCIRF on Monday said it is "deeply troubled" by the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) "given the religion criterion in the bill". It said if the CAB passes in both houses of Parliament, the US government "should consider sanctions against the Home Minister and other principal leadership". It said that the CAB "enshrines a pathway to citizenship for immigrants that specifically excludes Muslims, setting a legal criterion for citizenship based on religion".

Govt, Oppn trade barbs over onion prices

PNS AMARAVATI

Onion prices rocked the Assembly for the second day on Tuesday with Opposition and Treasury benches trading barbs over the issue.

Minister for Marketing Mopidevi Venkataramana, Minister for Agriculture Kanna Babu and Minister for Civil Supplies Kodali Nani alleged that the Opposition is politicising the death of an elderly man at Gudivada in Krishna district, while the government is making all efforts to provide relief to consumers by supplying onions at a subsidised price. They charged the government with carrying out a false propaganda over onion prices.

Intervening during the short discussion on onion shortage here on Tuesday, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy once again said Heritage, which is a company owned by the Naidu's family members, was selling onions at Rs 200 per kg. Replying to this, Naidu said he would quit the MLA post if Jaganmohan Reddy proved that the Heritage belonged to his family.

The Chief Minister reiterated that Andhra Pradesh was the only State that was supplying onions at a subsidised rate of Rs 25 per kg and would continue the aggressive intervention to supply the scarce commodity through all the Rythu Bazaar outlets in the State.

The Chief Minister said that there was intervention from the government side in 10 phases since September and it ensured that the price is maintained at Rs 25 till the onion market price is stabilised.

The Andhra Pradesh government is the only State, which is supplying onions at a subsidised price of Rs 25, while the price is much higher even in other States. In the neighbouring Telangana, subsidised onion is available only in one Rythu Bazaar and the rate is Rs 45 per kg, while in other States the price is much higher. Onions are being sold in Bihar at Rs 35 per kg, in West Bengal at Rs 59 per kg, in Tamil Nadu at Rs 49 per kg and in Madhya Pradesh at Rs 50 per kg.



"No State has procured onions from open market to supply the same at a subsidised price and we are doing it at 101 Rythu Bazaar outlets. We shall continue to supply subsidised onions till the market stabilises. Till now, the State has supplied 38,496 quintals of onions. From Friday onwards, onions would be supplied from market yards as well," he said.

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'Do not politicise Sambhi Reddy's death'

PNS AMARAVATI

Contrary to media reports that 65-year-old Sambhi Reddy had died of a heart attack while waiting in the queue for purchase of onions at the Rythu Bazaar in Gudivada on Monday, his family members on Tuesday said that a false propaganda was being made against the Andhra Pradesh government on spiralling prices of onions. "It is unfortunate that certain vested interests are trying to draw political mileage out of our personal grief," they said.

They said the vested interests had tried their best to distort the facts and cook up a story that Reddy had died while he was standing in a queue to buy onions at subsidised rates at Gudivada Rythu Bazaar, in Krishna district, which was patently false.

According to his relatives, Sambhi Reddy earlier had a cardiac stroke 10 years back after

which he had taken VRS and had since been running a small business. He owned 15 acres of land and his two sons were software engineers and were well-settled. "There is no need for us to buy onions standing in a queue and it has been a routine for Sambhi Reddy to go to the temple in the morning and then visit the Rythu Bazaar to buy fresh vegetables as and when available," they said.

Even on Monday, he followed the same routine and unfortunately had suffered a cardiac stroke and was rushed to hospital. It had nothing to do with the onion shortage and long queues, they said. "Please understand the position we are in and the personal loss we had undergone. A section of the media has approached us and asked us into issue a statement that he had died while standing in queue for buying onions so that they would get ex gratia from the government," they said.

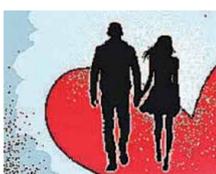
Parents attempt suicide as son elopes with girlfriend

PNS AMARAVATI

An RMP and his wife on Tuesday consumed pesticide unable to withstand criminal cases filed against them for the act of their son. While the RMP died, while his wife has been admitted to KIMS hospital in Amalapuram in a serious condition.

The deceased was identified as Dhanwantari, an RMP belonging to Kamaragripatnam village of Allavaram mandal in East Godavari district. According to police, their son Vijaya Kumar works in a Singaporean company. The youth recently had an engagement with a girl belonging to Tanuku in West Godavari district.

But Vijaya Kumar is in a relationship with a Facebook friend belonging to a very high family of Daksharamam in East Godavari district. He did not reveal his love affair with the parents and



eloped with his girlfriend.

Parents of Tanuku girl lodged a complaint with the Town police against the parents for breaking the engagement, while parents of the girl with whom their son eloped lodged a complaint with the local police about kidnap of their daughter.

Both the police registered cases against Vijaya Kumar and his parents. Parents felt insulted at police repeatedly asking them to visit the police station for an enquiry. Unable to bear with the mounting pressure from the families of the two girls, Dhanwantari and his wife Subbalakshmi consumed pesticide on Tuesday at their home.

Twitter users have funny tips on saving money

PNS NEW DELHI

As high onion prices continue to make consumers teary-eyed, a Twitter user's post to seek tips on saving money got funny responses from other users. She wrote: "Can someone please teach me how to save money? I'll pay you."

In reply, a user posted: "Avoid discount sales firstly". Another posted: "Invest on onions". One user had this advice to give: "Open a new bank account where branch is too far from your home and don't get Internet banking, ATM, cheque book. Transfer some money in that account on the salary day". One post read: "Transfer all your money into my account...I'll do the savings for you". One said: "Stop spending... simple."

Waning faith in system dangerous for nation: Hazare

PNS ■ AHMEDNAGAR

Expressing concerns over delays in punishment in rape cases, veteran social crusader Kisan Baburao alias Anna Hazare here on Monday said no rapist had been hanged since August 14, 2005 in West Bengal and 426 convicts were awaiting the hangman's noose. "Since then (2005), not a single death penalty has been executed for any such (rape) convict, awarded the death. There are 426 convicts awaiting execution," Hazare said in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 82-year-old social leader asked who was accountable when - despite conviction - the punishment was not being

Despite strengthening of laws after the Nirbhaya episode in New Delhi, we had failed to ensure justice to her, and such cases against even minor girls were on the rise, Hazare said

implemented. He demanded a probe into this and stringent action against those responsible for such delays. "People have started feeling that the delays, obstacles and difficulties in getting justice through the system is itself an injustice. This is the reason for the mass support to the recent Hyderabad encounters. People now want such criminals should be eliminated in such

encounters," Hazare said. Citing his own experiences over legal delays, the Ralegan-Siddhi village-based social activist said he had raised corruption issue with adequate evidences against former Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party Minister Babanrao Gholap in 1998. He was convicted in 2014. Same was the case with another former Minister Suresh Jain against whom he had



complained with proof in 2003. But only after 14-long years he (Jain) recently received a 7-year jail-term. "Gholap filed a defamation case against me and I was sentenced to 3-month jail, but released after 15 days. Jain also filed such cases against me and I have been attending

hearings since so many years," Hazare said. Also, after taking so long to get the verdict from the lower courts, it's not known how much more time would be taken for appeals (filed by the two ex-Ministers) in these cases to be disposed, he pointed out. Despite strengthening of laws after the Nirbhaya episode in New Delhi, we had failed to ensure justice to her, and such cases against even minor girls were on the rise, he said. "I am told over 700,000 cases are pending for 7-10 years in fast-track courts, the 1091 helpline for women in distress doesn't function efficiently, Nirbhaya Fund remains unused. What's the meaning of

all this," Hazare remarked. He lamented that instead of sympathising with the women victims', the ordeal would begin right from the stage of lodging a complaint with the police, as was proved in the recent Hyderabad rape-cum-murder case of a veterinary doctor. Reiterating that 'justice delayed is justice denied', the social worker said despite having an exemplary Constitution drafted by B.R. Ambedkar, apprehensions were building up and people were losing faith in the justice system. "If this is not checked, it could lead to mass public unrest, which will not augur well for our democracy," Hazare remarked.

Nirbhaya case convict moves SC seeking review of death penalty

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One of the four convicts, Akshya Kumar Singh, moved the Supreme Court Tuesday seeking review of its 2017 judgement handing down death penalty to all of them in the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case. The apex court, on July 9, 2018, had dismissed the review pleas filed by three other convicts in the case. Akshya, 31, who had not filed the review plea earlier with other three convicts, has now moved the apex court with the petition, his lawyer A P Singh said. The 23-year-old paramedic student was brutally gang raped on the intervening night of December 16-17, 2012 inside a running bus in South Delhi by six persons and severely assaulted before being thrown out on the road. She succumbed to injuries on December 29, 2012 at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore. The top court had earlier



dismissed the review pleas by Mukesh (30), Pawan Gupta (23) and Vinay Sharma (24), saying no grounds have been made out by them for review of the verdict. The apex court in its 2017 verdict had upheld the capital punishment awarded to them by the Delhi High Court and the trial court in the case of gangrape and murder of the woman here. One of the accused in the case, Ram Singh, had allegedly committed suicide in the Tihar Jail here. A juvenile, who was among the accused, was convicted by a juvenile justice board. He was released from a reformation home after serving a three-year term.

HC nixes PIL for judicial inquiry, CBI probe into Anaj Mandi fire

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday declined to entertain a PIL seeking a judicial inquiry and a probe by the CBI or any other independent agency into the Anaj Mandi fire near Filmistan here which claimed 43 lives. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar said the fire occurred on December 8 and it was too early for the court to interfere as the authorities were dealing with it and also deliberating on preventing such incidents in future. Dismissing the petition by



lawyer Avadh Kaushik, the court said if there is inaction on part of the authorities with regard to the incident, after a reasonable period of time, then he can move a fresh plea. According to news reports, 43

people had died and several others were injured when the fire swept through a factory in a four-storey building located in Anaj Mandi area, the petition had said. It had alleged that not only was the building illegally constructed, the factory was manufacturing plastic packing material without any license, registration or fire safety systems. Besides seeking a judicial inquiry by a retired judge and an investigation by an independent agency into the incident, the petition had sought compensation for the victims and framing of guidelines to prevent such incidents in future.

Trinamool MPs stage walkout in RS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Protesting against a West Bengal issue, Trinamool Congress MPs on Tuesday staged a walkout in Rajya Sabha during the Question Hour. As soon as Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu announced Question Hour, Trinamool Congress members barged into the well demanding raising of an issue related to the West Bengal Governor. Party MP Derek O'Brien tried to raise the issue but Chairman Naidu did not allow. Following this, members of TMC trooped into the well raising slogans. Later, they staged a walkout. The members were

heard sloganeering "SC/ST Bill Me Deprivation Nahi Chalega" to which the Chair said "Members should respect the House" and "Maintain Decency." Naidu appealed to them to follow rules for the conduct of the House and said members had right to oppose any issue but they should follow rules. He said he cannot allow members to raise the issue here and appealed for maintaining peace and order to which Naidu said "what is this happening?" However, they were unrelenting and continued to protest. The Bill is concerning the formation of SC & ST commission in the State.

Yechury slams Centre over Citizenship Bill

PNS ■ KOCHI

CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury on Tuesday slammed the Centre over the passage of Citizenship Amendment Bill, alleging the BJP-led government brought in the legislation to "sharpen communal polarisation" and

"convert" India a "Hindutva rashtira". He said the citizenship of a person cannot be determined by religious affiliation. "By doing this, they want to sharpen communal polarisation. They want to divide the people of India and convert our secular democratic

republic into a Hindutva rashtira," Yechury told reporters here. The Lok Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill a little past midnight on Monday after a heated debate that lasted over seven hours. According to the proposed legislation, members of the

Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, who came to India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan by December 31, 2014 and faced religious persecution in those countries, will not be treated as illegal immigrants and given Indian citizenship.



Govt brushes aside concerns on rising female foeticide in Gujarat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday sought to dismiss concerns over reports of high incidence of female foeticide in Gujarat. Asking a supplementary in Rajya Sabha, Congress Member Ameer Yajnik said, "The record shows that in 2017, the highest number of female foeticides were in Gujarat. Has the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme failed in Gujarat, which is a so called model and developed state?" she asked. In reply, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said, "As far as Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme is concerned, we are implementing it in 600 districts very effectively. Data does not speak about implementation of the scheme that way and it does not speak about efficiency of the state government of Gujarat. I think that it is on record that Gujarat has created record in almost every field." About a member's concern



"Unfortunately, I will agree with the member that the rate of conviction in which results are delivered by the Court (are low). We look at the data that how many FIRs have been filed. That number is far higher," Harsh Vardhan said

that there is a new technology whereby gender of a child can be chosen before conceiving through IVF technique, he told the House, "Inspection teams are trained regularly. There is training upgradation. It is done through inspection." About poor conviction rate in cases of female foeticide and decline in child sex ratio, he said, "I have given you the latest data. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao is being implemented in 600 districts. Implementation is done by

the state and we regularly take it up with states." "Unfortunately, I will agree with the member that the rate of conviction in which results are delivered by the Court (are low). We look at the data that how many FIRs have been filed. That number is far higher," he said. Asking a supplementary, Naresh Gujral (SAD) said, "In the minister's reply figures for state-wise cases of female foeticide from 2015 to 2017 were given. It is amazing, Bihar, Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal,

zero cases have been reported. Are we serious about it in this country. Would the minister take it up with chief ministers of these states?" In response, Vardhan said, "We keep following the matter with states regularly. There is a mechanism where there is central supervisory board, states advisory board and authorities at district level. Unfortunately, this problem is little tricky. It is not that we don't take it up with states regularly. We can again write to chief ministers."

Dance, music festi to celebrate traditional Indian art forms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Young artistes from Sahitya Kala Parishad will showcase their talents at the upcoming 'Sopan festival' with performances of Kathak, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Mohiniyattam and classical music among other traditional Indian art forms. Organised by the Art, Culture & Language Department of the Delhi government, the cultural festival will be held at the Central Park from December 13 here. The six-day event will feature performances by 24 young and upcoming artistes who have received scholarship from Sahitya Kala Parishad. "It is a matter of pride and celebration when today's young talents come together and invest their time and energy to promote our traditional Indian art forms like dance, music and instruments. "We are proud of these young upcoming stars and are glad that Sahitya Kala Parishad is setting



platforms like Sopan to provide them with an audience base," deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said in a statement. Opening with a violin recital by G Raghavendra Prasad, the first evening will witness Kathak performances by Garima Arya Chaturdal and Jaya Pathak, and Bharatanatyam by Anika Kaushik. The following days of the fes-

tival will showcase musical vocal by Riya Banerjee, Pakhawaj presentation by Bhanu Sisodia, Mohiniyattam by Reshma Suresh, Odissi by Yamini Dikshit, Sitar recital by Anika Dhingra, Bharatnatyam by Tanya Gambhir, and Carnatic vocal by S Avinash among several other performances. The classical dance, music festival will come to an end on December 18.

Women have to keep demanding a better world: author Sadia Abbas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Women have to keep pressing for a better world even though the hardest part sometimes is to keep the demand alive, says author Sadia Abbas whose debut novel "The Empty Room" revolves around a woman stuck in an unhappy marriage in 1970s Karachi. Abbas, who is based in the US but grew up in Pakistan, has centred her story around a young Pakistani woman dealing with a cheating husband, inconsiderate in-laws and a regressive society that makes it near impossible for her to leave. "The Empty Room" is shortlisted for this year's DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. That it is set half a century in the past should be a relief except that women's struggle with patriarchy is a sad reality today as it was then. "We haven't made nearly

enough progress and, given the authoritarian turn in global politics, we seem to be squandering the gains that have been made, but I don't think progress is a linear thing and we most certainly can't give up the fight for equality and justice," Abbas told PTI in an email interview. "We (women) have to keep demanding a better world. Sometimes keeping the demand alive is the hardest part," the US-based author said. Abbas, a professor of English at Rutgers University in New Jersey, said she was admittedly "raised with misogynistic values". Although not autobiographical, the novel draws heavily from the author's personal experiences, and the milieu of her growing up years in Karachi. "I used to meet these astonishing women — talented, educated, super thoughtful



"I used to meet these astonishing women — talented, educated, super thoughtful — and wonder how they managed to make it with these men with their completely unselfconscious and unearned sense of superiority and unthinking everyday cruelty. So I wanted to understand that

— and wonder how they managed to make it with these men with their completely unselfconscious and unearned sense of superiority and unthinking everyday cruelty. So I wanted to understand that. "Also, I was raised with these misogynist values and broke with them quite dramatically, but I wanted to try

to understand how somebody might live them," the author, who in her late 60s, said. Abbas has set her story, about Tahira who struggles to adapt to a world of stifling conformity, in the volatile times of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's "authoritarian" regime when student and left politics were on the rise in the country. The story captures the lives

of those inhabiting a corner of Karachi where displaced people from Uttar Pradesh, like Abbas' own father, congregated after Partition. "Tahira's story is part of that historical moment and is very much inflected by it — especially as it's at the end of the sixties which is a moment of possibility and potential transition for women.

"That not enough has changed is our tragedy, but the feminist fight continues even if the historical inflections and particularities have changed," she said. Abbas' novel, among other things, is also an exploration of what choice means for women. According to the author, desires, social norms and ideologies can't be completely disentangled. For instance, Tahira's mother Mariam knows of the ill-treatment meted out to her daughter by her husband and his family but chooses to let her suffer, fearing that divorce might come in the way of the marriage of her two other daughters. Tahira herself chooses to continue in the loveless relationship because of "propriety". At a certain point in the book, Abbas shows her heroine murmuring to herself, "...I will understand the triviality of my pain." Tahira thus teach-

es herself to come to terms with her oppressive life, first for the future of her sisters, and then for her children. But Abbas' novel is not all dark and bleak. In the face of a hostile life, her protagonist finds comfort in art, a passion that is shared by the author. For the book, Abbas said she read up on painting, on colour, and more. "It was an opportunity to learn more about things that already interested me but I hadn't had a chance to concentrate on," she said. Abbas' research to bring alive the narrative and the Karachi of the 70s entailed a thorough exploration of "Behishti Zevar" (Heavenly Ornaments), a conduct book for brides, which is also incidentally the book Tahira's husband gives her to read soon after their marriage. It also involved reading up Deputy Nazir Ahmad, who wrote what is considered the

SHORT READS



Cold wave in Raj, Pilani night temp 6.8 degrees Celsius

JAIPUR: As cold wave conditions continued in Rajasthan, Pilani was the coldest place in the state on Monday night with a minimum temperature of 6.8 degrees Celsius, the meteorological department said. Sikar, Ganganagar, Churu, Alwar, Dabok and Chittorgarh registered minimum temperatures of 7, 7.1, 7.2, 8.8, 9.2 and 9.5 degrees Celsius respectively. In Jaipur and Ajmer, the mercury settled at 10.2 and 10.4 degrees Celsius respectively, the MeT department said on Tuesday. Other districts were marginally warmer with night temperatures above 11 degrees Celsius. According to the MeT department, the weather conditions will remain the same for the next 24 hours.

Excise officer held for graft

JAIPUR: An excise officer was arrested on Tuesday for accepting a bribe of Rs 3,000 in Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu district, an Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officer said. The accused patrolling officer-Prithvi Singh Rajput was posted in the district's Nawalgarh town and had demanded the bribe as a monthly payment from the complainant, Rajkumar Jat, for letting him operate in his area. ACB Inspector Shabbir Khan said. A case has been registered against the accused under sections of Prevention of Corruption Act.

J-K HC quashes detention of 2 people under PSA

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has quashed the detention of two people under the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA), officials said on Tuesday. Justice Ali Mohammad Magray passed orders, quashing the detention under the PSA of Mohammad Ashraf Ganaie of Sopore and Imtiyaz Pahloo of Srinagar, on Monday, the officials said. While Ganaie was detained under the PSA for his alleged involvement in timber smuggling, Pahloo was detained under the controversial law for his alleged involvement in stone-pelling incidents, they said. The PSA was enacted by the government headed by National Conference founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1978 as a deterrent to curb felling of green trees in the forests of Jammu and Kashmir but the law was later used to detain separatist leaders and their sympathisers following the onset of militancy in the state in 1990. Three-time chief minister Farooq Abdullah, son of the National Conference founder, was detained under the PSA by the administration following the abrogation of Article 370 provisions.

SHORT READS

Student bodies to hold nationwide protest on Jan 8 against govt

NEW DELHI: Various student bodies have given a call for a collective protest against the "anti-student" policies of the government. The students' bodies will hold the strike across India on January 8. Some of the bodies that are part of the call are the Students' Federation of India, the JNU Students' Union and the Samajwadi Chatra Sabha.

Solar panels installed on rooftops of 27 govt buildings in Shimla

DHARAMSHALA: Solar panels have been installed on the rooftops of 27 government buildings in the state capital of Shimla, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur informed the state Assembly on Tuesday. In a written reply to a question by Congress MLA Anirudh Singh on the second day of the ongoing winter session here, Thakur said the 1310.8 kilowatt (kW) capacity panels were set up in the last two years. Of them, the highest capacity of 500 kW panels were set up on the rooftop of Himachal Pradesh University (HPU), said Thakur, who also holds the additional charge of the state power department. To promote solar energy, the work to install 1209.04 kW panels on 34 other government buildings in Shimla is on, he said.

MP: Man's burnt body found in govt school

BHOPAL: The charred remains of a man were found inside a government school in Pansheel Nagar locality of Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal city on Tuesday, police said. The police suspect that unidentified persons may have killed the victim and disposed of his body by burning it, an official said. "We have found the badly burnt body of a 25-year-old man inside the school premises," deputy inspector general (DIG) Irshad Wali said. The body has been burnt beyond recognition and a chain was found entangled around the victim's neck, he added. A man in his 20s has been reported missing from the area since the last four to five days, the senior official said, adding that the link to the missing person cannot be established as the body is badly burnt. A DNA test would be conducted to ascertain the victim's identity, Wali said.

SMS service messages resume in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: SMS service messages, including 'one time passwords' (OTPs), resumed on Tuesday for 40 lakh subscribers in Kashmir following several requests from the public, particularly the business community, officials here said. Though the Jammu and Kashmir administration allowed service providers to resume machine-based messages, subscribers will not be allowed to send any messages from their mobiles, the officials said. The resumption of service messages will help the general public, especially businesspersons, receive service messages from banks, they said. Phones fell silent on August 5, when the Centre revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status and reorganised the state into two union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Crimes against women force us to think of society's vision

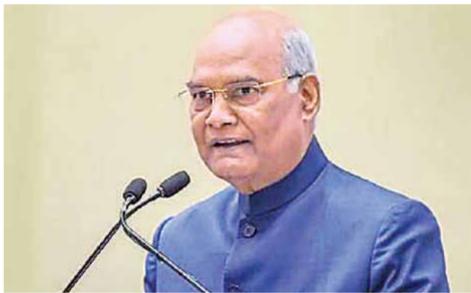
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday flagged the recent incidents of violence against women in the country, saying such heinous crimes force people to think whether the society has lived up to the cherished universal vision of equal rights for all.

In his address at an NHRC function at Vigyan Bhawan here to mark Human Rights Day, he said the ideal way to commemorate the occasion will be for the whole world to "introspect" what more needs to be done to live up in letter and spirit to the "sacred text" of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Human Rights Day is celebrated on December 10 to commemorate the UDHR, which was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 as the shared standard yardstick to protect human rights across the globe.

In his address, Kovind alluded to recent cases of violence



against women in various parts of the country, which have triggered shock and protests from citizens, demanding that authorities ensure safety of women in public places.

The president also recalled the contribution of Indian reformer and educator Hansa Jivraj Mehta in shaping the landmark document on UDHR and ensuring it contains a more gender sensitive language.

She is widely credited with making a significant change in the wording of Article 1 of the

UDHR, by replacing the phrase "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal."

"In the draft of the UDHR, it mentioned, 'all men...,' and Hansa Mehta insisted that it be changed to 'all humans...,' making it universal. Today, we owe it to her," Kovind said, asserting that the country also celebrated 70th anniversary of the adoption of Indian Constitution in November.

The president said more needed to be done to commemorate visionary leaders

"We can make a beginning by asking ourselves if we have lived up to her vision of equal rights and equal dignity. Unfortunately, a series of events in the recent past force us to think again, and incidents of heinous crimes against women are reported from many reports of the country," he said

like Mehta who championed human rights and gender equality.

"We can make a beginning by asking ourselves if we have lived up to her vision of equal rights and equal dignity. Unfortunately, a series of events in the recent past force us to think again, and incidents of heinous crimes against women are reported from many reports of the country," he said.

He said such incidents are happening "not just limited to one place or one nation".

"In various parts of the world. The human rights of people who are vulnerable are

being flagrantly violated," the president said, adding, the whole world needs to "introspect" to mark this day.

Along with such introspection, the society also needs to reinterpret the document and expand the notion of human rights, he said, adding, "All we need is our empathy and imagination."

"I have children and forced labourers, for example, in my mind. Or consider the plights of those lodged in jail, on trial for petty crimes. These issues deserve urgent attention to make a harmonious society in compliance with human rights," he said.

Won't support Bill till we get clarity: Sena

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday said the Shiv Sena won't back the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the Rajya Sabha till there is clarity on the party's queries posed in the Lok Sabha.

The Lok Sabha passed the Bill, which seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan after facing religious persecution there, a little past midnight on Monday after a heated debate that lasted over seven hours.

The Sena supported the Bill in the Lower House.

Thackeray told reporters here that a detailed discussion and debate on the Bill was necessary.

The Modi government needs to worry about the economy, job crisis and rising cost of living, especially the onions price rise, more than the implementation of the Bill, he said.

"We need to change this notion that one who supports the Bill and the BJP is a patriot and one who opposes it is anti-national. The government should answer all the issues raised on the Bill," he said.



The Modi government needs to worry about the economy, job crisis and rising cost of living, especially the onions price rise, more than the implementation of the Bill, he said.

Taking a dig at the BJP, Thackeray wondered if people who have sought refuge in India and who will come under the Bill's ambit will now get more onions.

"The BJP feels that any one who disagrees (with it) is a 'deshdrohi' (traitor), Thackeray said.

Assam CM welcomes passage of Citizenship (Amendment) Bill

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Amid widespread protest over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Assam, state Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday welcomed the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, in Lok Sabha describing it as a "historic moment".

The Bill was passed in the Lower House of Parliament on Monday night as the ruling BJP enjoys a majority there.

"The passage of the Bill in Lok Sabha is a historic moment for us all. It will not only give relief to six persecuted minority communities from three neighbouring countries but will also pave the way for constitutional safeguards to the indigenous people of Assam," Sonowal tweeted.

The Bill seeks to give Indian citizenship to members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, till December 31, 2014, facing religious persecution there.

He also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah "for fulfilling a long-standing commitment of India and for taking everyone along and ensuring protection for all indigenous people".

Assam Finance, Health and PWD Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also tweeted that the Bill will go down in "history as a glorious historical correction of a blunder committed by the Nehru-Liaquat Pact".

The then Indian Prime



Sarbananda Sonowal

Assam Finance, Health and PWD Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also tweeted that the Bill will go down in "history as a glorious historical correction of a blunder committed by the Nehru-Liaquat Pact"

Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his Pakistani counterpart Liaquat Ali Khan signed an agreement, known as the Nehru-Liaquat Pact, in 1950 to protect the minority communities in their respective countries.

Sarma thanked the Union home minister for tearing "into the opposition as he made an inspired speech while replying on the CAB in the Lok Sabha".

Protests against the Bill have erupted across Assam - barring the three districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi in Barak Valley where the majority of the people are Hindu Bengalis hailing from Bangladesh and are expected to benefit from the CAB.

The North East Students' Organisation (NESO), backed by various other bodies and political parties, has called an 11-hour bandh from 5 am against the Bill on Tuesday.

Indigenous people of the Northeastern states are scared that the entry of these people will endanger their identity and livelihood.

Trying to allay apprehensions of these people, Shah on Monday said in the Lok Sabha that the Narendra Modi government was committed to protect the customs and culture of the people of the region.

Uddhav should 'stay' rising crime: BJP

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The BJP on Tuesday hit out at Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray over his "stay orders" on various projects, and said he should also try to put a 'stay' on the rise in incidents of crime in the state.

Since coming to power, Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena, ordered review of several big ticket infrastructure projects, including the multi-billion dollar Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project, and stayed work on the Metro Line III crashed in the Aarey Colony, a

green lung in Mumbai. "He has been issuing stay orders one after the other, so a similar step should also be taken for incidents of crime," BJP leader Ashish Shelar said in a statement.

"The chief minister should try to put a 'stay' on the increasing crime incidents in the state," the former minister said, while criticising the Thackeray-led Sena-NCP-Congress government over no portfolio allocation to his ministers even after over 10 days of coming to power in the state. Shelar said there have been



"He has been issuing stay orders one after the other, so a similar step should also be taken for incidents of crime," BJP leader Ashish Shelar said in a statement

some gruesome incidents of crime in the state, including sexual assault and killing of a five-year-old girl in Nagpur, kidnappings in Thane and recovery of a chopped body near

Kalyan railway station. A 32-year-old man was on Sunday arrested for allegedly raping and killing a five-year-old tribal girl by smashing her head with a stone in Nagpur.

Besides, the dismembered body of a woman was found in a suitcase on Sunday at Kalyan in Thane district.

"The sexual assault and killing of a disabled girl in Jalgaon makes people wonder whether the state is paying little attention to internal security," Shelar said.

BJP's Rajya Sabha member Narayan Rane on Sunday termed the Thackeray-led government as a "temporary" one only issuing "stay orders".

Pak Hindu migrants in Jodhpur celebrate passage of Citizenship Bill

PNS ■ JODHPUR

The passage of the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha brought cheers to the Hindu migrants from Pakistan who are living in the city and they are now looking forward to the bill getting a nod from the Rajya Sabha.

Premchand, who had shifted here from Pakistan in 2005 and applied for citizenship later, expressed happiness over this development.

"The government has given a new life to us. We express our gratitude to Union Home



CITIZENSHIP BILL

Cong slams govt, Rahul says 'attack on Constitution'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress slammed the government on Tuesday after the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha, with former party chief Rahul Gandhi saying the proposed legislation is an attack on the Constitution and anyone who supports it is attempting to destroy the foundation of the country.

The sharp criticism of the opposition party came after the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on Monday with 311 members favouring it and 80 voting against it. The bill will now be tabled in the Rajya Sabha for its nod on Wednesday.

In a stinging attack on the government, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said "India's trust with bigotry and narrow-minded exclusion" was confirmed as the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha at midnight on Monday. "Last night at midnight, India's trust with bigotry and narrow minded exclusion was confirmed as the CAB was passed in the Lok Sabha. Our forefathers gave their

In a stinging attack on the government, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said "India's trust with bigotry and narrow-minded exclusion" was confirmed as the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha at midnight on Monday

lifeblood for our freedom," she said in a tweet, recalling her great-grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at the midnight of August 14-15, 1947, when India rang in its Independence.

"Long years ago, we made a trust with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom," Nehru had said in the opening lines of a speech believed to be among the greatest in the 20th century.

For 4th day, flight ops suspended at Srinagar

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Flight operations at the Srinagar airport remained suspended for the fourth straight day on Tuesday as all flights to and fro the Kashmir Valley were cancelled due to poor visibility caused by heavy fog, officials said.

"All flights at the Srinagar airport were cancelled on Tuesday and no flight operations took place for the fourth straight day," an official of the Airport Authority of India (AAI) said.

He said the visibility at the airport was very poor due to heavy fog and the conditions were not suitable for flight operations.

"The visibility at the airport has been hovering around 100 to 500 metres only while as the required visibility is 1000 to 1200 metres. So, all flights for the day were cancelled," the official said.

The flight operations have been severely affected at the airport for the past five days. On Friday, several flights were cancelled, while no flight operations took place on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

JK and Ladakh employees to get allowances of 7th Pay Commission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An amount of Rs 4,800 crore has been approved for 4.5 lakh employees of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir for certain allowances under the 7th Pay Commission, Lok Sabha was informed today.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said the Centre has been fully committed to the overall development of the erstwhile state which includes giving certain 7th Pay Commission allowances like Children Education Allowance, Hostel Allowance, Transport Allowance, LTC,



Fixed Medical Allowance to the employees.

These employees were not getting these allowances earlier.

The Centre has now approved an estimated cost of Rs 4,800 crore, for all such employees, who are now work-

ing in Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, since October 31, the day these two UTs came into existence.

Reddy also stated that after the creation of the two UTs, a total of Rs 14,559.25 crore as the balance share of 14th Finance Commission grants, share of taxes that were being given to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir has been apportioned among the two new UTs.

Out of this, Rs 2,977.31 crore has already been released to Jammu and Kashmir and Rs 1,275.99 crore has already been released to Ladakh till date.

Same view as Sena not always possible: NCP on CAB

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With its Maharashtra alliance partner Shiv Sena backing the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha, the NCP on Tuesday said the two are different parties and it is not possible always for them to hold the same view on all issues.

NCP chief spokesperson Nawab Malik, however, said the parties are committed to ensure that no injustice is meted to anyone on the grounds of religion, caste, language and region in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra Congress general secretary Sachin Sawant also said that though the Shiv Sena has backed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill



(CAB) in the Lok Sabha, it was hopeful the Uddhav Thackeray-led party will stick to the common minimum programme (CMP) while governing the state.

The Sharad Pawar-led party

earlier said the CAB is "anti-constitutional" and the BJP-led Union government is pushing it only for political benefits.

The Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress formed government

The Sharad Pawar-led party earlier said the CAB is "anti-constitutional" and the BJP-led Union government is pushing it only for political benefits

in Maharashtra last month after the Thackeray-led party severed its ties with the BJP.

In the CMP formulated before government formation, the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress mentioned that issues regarding constitutional provisions and having a bearing on

the state and national secular fabric will have to be discussed among them, and only then any of the three parties can decide on its position.

According to the CAB, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, till December 31, 2014 facing religious persecution there, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

"We are two different parties. We reached an agreement on certain issues when it comes to governance in the state. Two allies from Bihar too have taken a different stance on some issues," Malik said.

Anxiety in the N-E

The sub-nationalism of ethnic groups and the fear of influx may just deflate Hindu-dominant nationalism



The problem with identity politics is that it thrives on resentment and insecurities of social groups, fragmenting them further instead of galvanising them into a cohesive social structure. The manipulative politics of extremism feeds off mutual anxieties, creating an entirely different context of relevance that does not depend on governance. So the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), 2019, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on the strength of the numbers of the ruling dispensation, is a deeply unsettling piece of legislation as it pits all kinds of otherness versus each other. This is the reason why there's a huge unrest in the North-east with indigenous groups fearing the influx of Hindu refugees from neighbouring Islamic countries that the Bill enables would swamp their culture and economy as it has historically. There have been torchlight vigils, students have taken to the streets in massive numbers and the 12-hour bandh has stalled all North-eastern States. This despite assurances that the Bill would not be applicable to Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram where the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system exists and those tribal regions of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura which are governed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Bill proposes to grant Indian citizenship to fleeing Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Christians and Parsis, who are residents of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh and are persecuted there. It does not reference other neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar or China from where refugees could come in but predicates it solely on the championship of the post-Partition Hindus, namely those left in Pakistan and Bangladesh. So it excludes persecuted Muslim sects from the same countries, the Shias and Ahmadiyas. In other words, non-Muslim immigrants would not face deportation and Muslims would, making religion a key criterion for asylum. It also proposes to reduce the mandated 11 years of residence in India for eligibility to six years, thereby hastening the cooption of Hindu refugees into the mainstream. The BJP wants to neutralise the Muslim infiltration in border States, encouraged by votebank politics of past years, with a Hindu influx and effect a demographic change. But this nationalist spiel, in turn, threatens locals, particularly in Assam.

Ethnic Assamese groups have consistently raised concerns about the Bill being contradictory to the spirit of the Assam Accord and the just-released National Register of Citizens (NRC) list. They argue that the Bill granting citizenship to Hindu refugees from across the border till the cutoff year of 2014 would swamp Ahom identity and the right of indigenous people over their land, opportunities and resources. Truth be told, the BJP has been pushing the citizenship Bill so that lakhs of Hindu families left out of the NRC would automatically be rehabilitated here. For the Assamese, any facilitation of Bengali Hindu immigrants is a remnant of the colonial legacy that saw Bengali civil servants and businesses take over the socio-economic matrix. For a long time, till 1876, Bengali was the operable language in the State. By virtue of territorial contiguity, the Bengali-domination meant a continuous infusion of Bengalis, exacerbated by the Partition and then the 1971 Bangladesh war. So even if their tribal pockets are protected, the Assamese fear that if Bengali-speaking illegal immigrants, especially those in the Barak Valley, are granted citizenship, they would outnumber the locals, as it has happened in Tripura where Hindu Bengalis have edged out indigenous people from even claiming the political space. The royal scion of Tripura, Pradyot Manikya Debbarma, has been spearheading the cause of the tribals. In fact, the BJP may be playing down the dissent in Assam but language and cultural pride of the Assamese have led to emotion-driven mass movements. Let not anyone forget the *Bongal Kheda* or the organised ethnic cleansing of Bengali Hindus that originated in the late 1940s and continued into the 1960s. The turbulence saw significant property damage, ethnic policing, street violence, conversion of Bengali-medium schools into Assamese and attacks on Bengali students in educational institutions. Similarly, the Mizos, who have struggled to establish their supremacy in power structures, are fearing a massive influx by Buddhist Chakmas. In turn, the Chakmas fear they could be denied citizenship under NRC and with Mizoram exempted from the CAB, protectionist permits would mean that they would be displaced despite being settlers for decades and have to move to other States. With discriminatory attacks, there will be large-scale internal displacement of people for which nobody has any answers. The sub-nationalism of ethnic groups may just take the wind off the sails of Hindu-dominant nationalism.

Shut out Russia

Is the World Anti-Doping Agency's decision to ban its athletes from international competition justified?



Vladimir Putin is not a happy man. In fact, the Russian President is extremely angry. This because the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has decided to ban all athletes competing under the Russian flag for four years. This is an unprecedented punishment as the ban will cover all major competitions, including the Olympics and the football World Cup. In the case of the latter, even if Russia qualifies for the 2022 World Cup, the athletes will not be allowed to represent their nation. And while Russian athletes, who can

prove that they did not submit to what WADA called a systematic State-sponsored doping regime, can represent themselves at global competitions, they cannot do so under the Russian tricolour. President Putin described this as proof of a global anti-Russian campaign. But was WADA justified? Yes, thanks to Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of the Moscow anti-doping laboratory, who called out how Russian spies were tampering with results and even managing to break open and reseal apparently "untamperable" urine sample bottles. So the case was strong. This systematic tampering has been going on for years and was apparently part of an attempt by the Russian authorities to paint the nation as a sporting superpower, much like it was done in the days of the Soviet Union. Some Western analysts say that the ban doesn't go far enough with some athletes, who apparently gained from the doping regime but were never caught and were still able to compete, albeit under the Olympic flag. If the Russian team qualifies for the World Cup in Qatar, a workaround will be found. Incidentally, this ban does not apply to tournaments not classified as "major" like the Euro 2020 football championship, where the Russian city of St Petersburg will host some matches and the team has qualified.

All said and done, the sports world has to continue to crack down on drug cheats. The drugs that some athletes use are getting more and more advanced and is easy to hide. Moreover, in a technological arms race between drugs and detection, the latter is losing. Was Russia just a bit stupid that it got caught? Would such a punishment ever be imposed on a Western nation? These are questions that need some answering. But for now, this is not final as Russia has said that it will appeal against this decision at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Unfulfilled goals

The best tribute to Gujral, who appreciated the need for India to blend development efforts with environmental protection, will be to revisit the findings of the GREEN India 2047 project



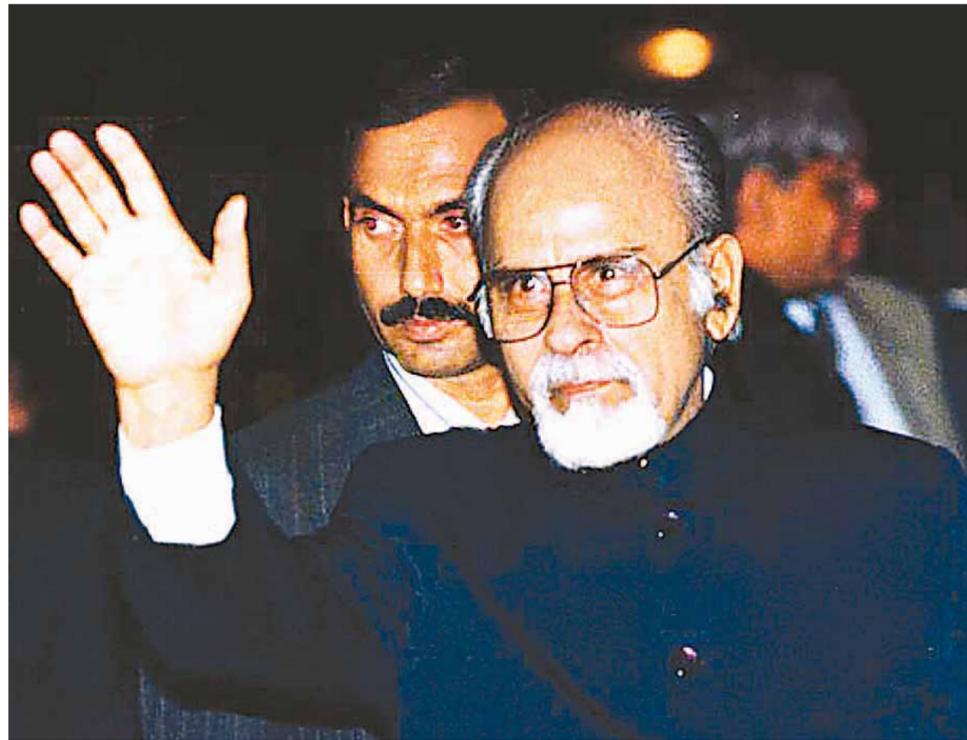
RK PACHAURI

It was last week that some events and television programmes were organised to mark the 100th birth anniversary of IK Gujral, who served as the 12th Prime Minister of India from April 1997 to March 1998. Those who have voiced their tributes and eulogies for this humane and gentlemanly leader have highlighted not only Gujral's vision in the field of international affairs but also his qualities as a steadfast friend to those who got to know him. Gujral was not only an intellectual who knew a great deal about subjects that political leaders generally do not read about, but he was also a person who expressed his opinions without fear or favour. It is not well-known that Gujral *saheb* was a person who held environmental issues close to his heart and fully appreciated the need for this country to blend development efforts with environmental protection.

It was in 1995 that The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) launched a major project called GREEN India 2047 in preparation for the celebration of 50 years of India's independence in 1997. This project, which was the effort of almost three dozen researchers working for almost two years, estimated and documented the damage that Indian society had imposed on the country's natural resources and its environmental quality. It further projected what could happen with business as usual 50 years into the future, that is when India reaches 100 years of independence in 2047. A brief presentation on this project was made before Gujral early in August 1997 at Vigyan Bhavan, during which he also assembled a number of members of his Council of Ministers. At the end of the presentation, which provided startling facts and figures, Gujral *saheb* stated that this presentation "should jolt us into action."

At that stage, the media, too, reported on the stark facts and the disturbing trends which had been in evidence during the first 50 years of India's independence. One particular editorial in a leading newspaper carried the title as "Filthy at Fifty." Much of the media coverage, which undoubtedly supported efforts to inform the Indian public, was clearly the result of the attention provided by the then Prime Minister to the analysis and realities presented to him.

Today it would be useful to revisit some of the findings of the GREEN India 2047 project, perhaps as a salute to Gujral's appreciation of the fact that India cannot develop without due attention to its natural resources and ecosystems, which not only support human life but a range of biodiversity that this country is blessed with. The truth is that in a range of vital resources, there has been rapid degradation as a result of so-called development. Some important facts need reflection even as 1997 is now 22 years



behind us. Even today, almost two-third of India's population lives in rural areas and while several leaders have highlighted the growth of India's population as one factor which imposes a larger and larger footprint on the country's natural resources, we have really not come to grips with what would constitute a sustainable level of population growth and consumption. India's population, which was 336 million in 1947, was estimated as 953 million in 1997. And today, we are 1.3 billion mindlessly pursuing Western consumption patterns, which impose a heavy burden on the country's natural resources.

In this respect, the provision of infrastructure and wherewithal for universal literacy and education have been lacking. So, too, the provision of adequate healthcare facilities in several parts of the country, which would have promoted different fertility decisions. At the same time, the consumerist culture, which Gandhiji was totally against, has not only afflicted the growing urban population but has also percolated to our rural areas.

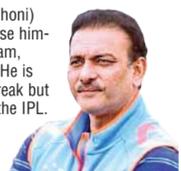
Besides, as it happens, historically, industrial development has been centered around chemicals and fertilisers, paper, cement, power generation and aluminium, which are resource-

intensive and polluting. If we look at specific elements of natural resources, water, as is universally accepted, would be heavily stressed in several parts of the country because of the impacts of climate change. It is now clear that with increased warming of temperatures, we would not only see persistent and more serious droughts but also the effects of extreme precipitation events in different parts of the country. In several cases even those areas, which are drought-prone during most of the year, would see heavy precipitation events in some seasons. These would lead to recurrent floods with loss of lives and property. During Gujral's intervention, after the presentation that was made before him, he stated, "Thus, we have come to a stage when there are two lifestyles. The elite in the country can drink water out of a bottle; the common man can drink municipal water; and the worst, the slum dwellers can drink untreated river water. This is the picture that is emerging. Therefore, when we look at the coming 50 years — we are now at the golden jubilee of our independence — we must ask: Is this the lifestyle we are thinking of? Is this the life that we are offering to our people? Is this the future of our

children? And when I say children, I do not mean children only of the elite. The child living in the slum, the child who is walking and sleeping on the street, what future are we offering him?" Sadly, many of the projections that were made in this project and presented to the then Prime Minister have only become more threatening. Whether it is the air quality, chemical and toxic pollution of our groundwater, dumping of waste in our rivers, thinning of forests and the huge mountains of solid waste being generated not only by our cities but by our rural areas as well, the outlook for 2047 looks grim and frightening. While we have widespread opportunities, the inertia in our system is pushing us in the direction of business as usual. There is, therefore, a dire need for Indian society to shift gears and move towards a path of sustainable development. That would not only be a fitting tribute to Gujral but a reassurance for our children living a secure existence devoid of the growing risks from human-induced climate change and the catastrophic destruction of our natural resources. (The writer is former chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2002-15)

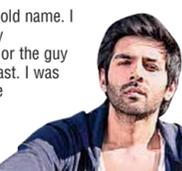
SOUND BITE

The last thing he (Dhoni) will want is to impose himself on an Indian team, having known him. He is wanting to take a break but he is going to play the IPL.



India coach — Ravi Shastri

I wasn't a household name. I was known by my character's name or the guy who spoke very fast. I was also known as the 'monologue guy.'



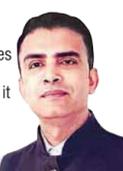
Actor — Kartik Aaryan

Citizenship Bill is a part of the RSS's Hindu Rashtira design of expansionism propagated by the fascist Modi Government.



Pakistan Prime Minister — Imran Khan

It is regrettable that the USCIRF has chosen to be guided only by its prejudices on a matter (Citizenship Amendment Bill) on which it has no *locus standi*.



MEA Spokesperson — Raveesh Kumar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Task cut out

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Yediyurappa again" (December 10). With the BJP winning 12 of the 15 seats in the Karnataka Assembly bypolls, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa has not only ensured stability to its Government but has dealt a heavy blow to the Opposition, particularly the Congress and Janata Dal (Secular), who were hoping to stage a comeback. However, Yediyurappa has his task cut out. He must focus on delivering a corruption-free Government and work towards inclusive development in the State.

Gajendra
Via email

Address the root issue

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "No more tears please" (December 9). Although the common man has been heavily hit by the high prices of onions and everyone has been groaning about the Government's inability to get the bulk back within their reach, it would be wrong to

put the entire blame on the Government.

Much of the crop was destroyed due to unseasonal rains in key onion-growing regions in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan that left the year's kharif crop damaged. But it is also true that the Government failed to take stock of the situation at the right

CAB: A violation of the Constitution

This refers to the report, "LS clears CAB amid pitched battle" (December 10). It is sad that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is working on an amendment that could worsen the religious divide in the country. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) and the National Register of Citizens both will have serious Constitutional and social implications, eroding the secular fabric of the country. In effect, the amendment to the CAB, when it is adopted by both Houses, will grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians while shutting the doors for Muslims.

There is no doubt that the population of Hindus has seen a drastic decline over the past several decades in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh due to the discriminatory measures adopted against them. It is also true of the North-eastern States, especially Assam, where the influx from across the border has been very high. It goes without saying that in nature and spirit, Indian secularism and its treatment of Islam have been far more liberal than in the neighbouring coun-

tries. That said, one sincerely hopes the Bill, when it is passed, would undergo changes that are not inimical to the basic goals of the framers of the Constitution. Of course, we have the right to frame strict laws in regard to immigrants.

JS Acharya
Hyderabad



Business as usual

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Murder most foul" (December 10). The fire in New Delhi's Sadar Bazar, that claimed the lives of 43 labourers, was an accident waiting to happen. Most industrial activities in the country are not regulated and function in utter violation of labour, safety and environment laws. That such a cavalier set-up was functioning uninterrupted speaks volumes about how lethargic our system has become.

If the proceedings in the Uphar case are anything to go by, one can very well imagine the time the courts will take to decide on this case. Moreover, one does not even know if the punishment will be exemplary. The fund relief announced by the Government for the victims in the Azad Mandi fire does not matter. The owner of the factory and its manager have also been arrested. The real test, however, will be if we can amend safety laws.

Sahil Agrawal
Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

EVs are the next big thing

Improved battery technology and concerns over climate change are set to make electric vehicles the dominant force in the automobile space



PANKAJ M. MUNJAL

The increased use of Electric Vehicles (EVs) is the first major game-changing revolution sweeping the automobile industry ever since the internal combustion engine changed the sector's dynamics. Powered by improved battery technology and made extremely relevant by growing concerns over climate change, EVs are slowly but steadily moving towards becoming the dominant force in the automobile space. In 2018, the global sale of plug-in vehicles reached 2.1 million units, which constituted a 64 per cent increase over the previous year. Of this, 69 per cent were all-electric models while 31 per cent were plug-in hybrids, indicating that the consumer is increasingly preferring pure EVs. Electric bicycles (e-cycles) are another category that is fast catching the public's imagination globally. According to a recent report by a leading market research organisation, the global e-cycle market is expected to touch \$21 billion by 2024, growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12.5 per cent between 2019 and 2024.

Interestingly, a bulk of this growth in the EV category is coming from China, which accounted for more than 50 per cent of global sales. It is the Scandinavian countries, however, that lead the way when it comes to adoption of EVs. In Norway, a whopping 40 per cent of new car sales in 2018 comprised EVs while in Iceland it stood at 17.5 per cent and in Sweden 7.2 per cent. In India, the Government has already provided a major boost to the EV sector by announcing major investment goals for realising the objective of creating requisite charging infrastructure for them. The last Budget also announced significant income tax breaks for people buying EVs. As the transport sector globally tilts towards them, a great amount of churning is expected to take place in the automobile industry, which is currently dominated by internal combustion engine-powered vehicles.

An increasing shift to alternative energy is transforming different aspects of the automotive industry. With EVs clearly emerging as the future of the industry, automobile sector players are already expected to invest billions of dollars in this emerging technology. With EVs becoming a reality sooner than it was expected, investing in this technology will be key for all major players to stay relevant. Currently, the EV divisions of most automobile manufacturers form a minuscule part of their overall businesses. Most manufacturers have just one or two variants of EVs in place. However, as this is likely to change in the near future, the next 10 years will be very critical for conventional automobile manufacturers. It is not that the automobile technology has not witnessed any transformation in a century. However, the transformation was ushered by continuing development of existing technology. A shift to EVs, however, marks a complete change in automobile technology as well as major disruption in the automobile ecosystem. For example, automotive parts manufacturers are likely to be hit since EVs use fewer parts than other vehicles.

The coming years will witness a huge boost in Research & Development (R&D) in the EV sector as an increasing number of conventional car manufacturers work overtime to improve their EV technology. The battery supply issues, need for fast-charging batteries as well as long distance charging concerns need to be addressed now. Most R&D efforts in the automobile sector are, therefore, expected to focus on improving battery performance and reducing battery costs to make EVs more affordable. The e-cycle space is also likely to witness a greater churning and growth. The bulkier lead-acid batteries have already made way for much lighter nickel-cadmium and lithium-ion batteries that have made newer models much more viable and acceptable to the end consumer. Newer emerging trends in the e-cycle space include luxury folding e-bikes and high-tech bikes with smartphone integration.

With much-improved battery lives, e-cycles offer a highly sustainable and effective solution to the air pollution-cum-traffic congestion woes of countries like India. E-cycles launched in the country are already offering a viable, versatile and eco-friendly alternative to motorised bikes. These e-cycles come with substantial battery life and can easily be pedalled back manually in case of loss of battery. Interestingly, most path-breaking innovation in battery technology is coming from startups and not from established automobile players which also indicates that the latter might have to fight harder for survival.

Another interesting shift might be observed in the global centres of automobile manufacturing. With countries like China and India giving a major policy push to EVs, a lot of automobile manufacturing is likely to shift to these countries over the next 20 years. The next Detroit might as well emerge in one of these countries.

The emergence of EVs in a big way also gives a shot in the arm to the alternative fuel sector in general. An increasing yearning for a carbon-neutral world has prompted greater work in the direction of making a basket of clean fuels workable. An ethanol-powered bike has already been launched in India. The decline of fossil fuels in general and a shift towards a greener economy will, therefore, provide a boost to biofuels as well as solar energy.

(The writer is Chairman & MD of a major motor company)

WHEN WILL FAROOQ ABDULLAH AND TWO OTHER FORMER CHIEF MINISTERS AND POLITICIANS OF KASHMIR BE RELEASED FROM PRISON?

—SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER
ADHIR RANJAN CHAUDHARY



SHEIKH ABDULLAH WAS KEPT IN JAIL FOR 11 YEARS BY CONGRESS, WE WON'T FOLLOW THEM. ONCE THE ADMINISTRATION DECIDES, THEY WILL BE RELEASED.

—UNION HOME MINISTER
AMIT SHAH

Take it into account

While standard accounting norms like IFRS are about creating a level global playing field, the freedom to differentiate each economy through reporting is also vital



HIMA BINDU KOTA

The world is witnessing an integration of economies like never before. At the same time, political and economic volatility has also increased manifold and no country is immune to the resultant turmoil. Another consequence of this global economic integration is the rise of multinationals with transnational operations and subsidiaries in numerous countries and access to financial markets worldwide.

More than one-third of all financial transactions occur across borders and that number is expected to grow as the search for diversification and better investment opportunities expands. Different accounting standards mean different models. For example, a company may recognise profits under one set of national accounting norms and losses under another, which could ultimately have an impact on its reported financial performance and position. Without common accounting standards, cross-border activities were complicated in the past that resulted in adding cost, complexity and risk for both companies and investors using those financial statements to make economic decisions. In such an integrated but impulsive world economy, it is important to have a common business language that can help understand and compare businesses. Financial reporting is an important way through which companies communicate with external stakeholders and standardisation of such reporting processes worldwide to bring about uniformity is more valuable today than ever before.

With a view to improve corporate governance and increase free flow of capital across the globe, in 2001, the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) developed the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), a set of high-quality common accounting rules established to bring about consistency, transparency, reliability and comparability in the financial statements worldwide. They define the types of transactions with financial impact, their maintenance and reporting. This goal of a single set of high-quality global accounting standards is being supported by several nations, including G20 countries, several professional accounting organisations and investors worldwide.

IFRS norms support the three pillars of transparency, accountability and efficiency. Transparency in financial statements is brought about by improving the comparability and the quality of financial information internationally, thereby improving the decision-making capability of investors and other external stakeholders. As a source of globally-comparable information, IFRS norms are also of vital importance to regulators around the world. By reducing the information asymmetry between the providers and users of capital, they boost accountability. Improving capital allocation by helping investors to identify opportunities and risks across the world, these standards contribute towards better economic efficiency. The usage of IFRS has become quite widespread with approximately 120 nations partially requiring these standards for their domestic listed companies. However, as many as 90 countries have fully conformed with IFRS as promulgated by the IASB and include a statement, acknowledging such conformity in their audit reports. Even those countries that don't apply the standards directly, like China, closely follow the rules that the IASB has established over the decades. According to a 2018 IFRS Foundation report, 27,000 domestically-listed companies on 88 major stock exchanges in the world use the standards. India's convergence with

“ WITH A VIEW TO IMPROVE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND INCREASE FREE FLOW OF CAPITAL ACROSS THE GLOBE, IN 2001, THE INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS BOARD DEVELOPED THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING STANDARDS, A SET OF HIGH-QUALITY COMMON ACCOUNTING RULES ESTABLISHED TO BRING ABOUT CONSISTENCY, TRANSPARENCY, RELIABILITY AND COMPARABILITY IN THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS WORLDWIDE. THEY DEFINE THE TYPES OF TRANSACTIONS WITH FINANCIAL IMPACT, THEIR MAINTENANCE AND REPORTING ”



IFRS started with its commitment to the momentum of growth in the G-20 summit held in 2009, following which the Ministry of Corporate Affairs formulated an action plan to implement the convergence of Indian Accounting Standards with International Financial Reporting Standards from April 2011.

However, after initial glitches, from 2016, India has implemented a new framework of the Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) that are based on and seek to substantially converge with IFRS, although not fully adopt them. Leasing, revenue recognition, foreign currency convertible bonds, current vs non-current liabilities, bargain purchases are among the areas where India has deviated from IFRS.

According to the Ind AS, from April 1, 2016, adoption of these standards has been compulsory for companies with a net worth upward of ₹500 crore, which later expanded to every listed company from accounting period beginning on or after April 1, 2017. Even unlisted companies with a net worth greater than or equal to ₹250 crore but less than ₹500 crore came under its purview. Once any company starts following Ind AS, either voluntarily or on mandate, it cannot revert to its old accounting method. As on date, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has notified 41 standards. Fair value and accurate reporting are given more importance, while computing financial statements in the new accounting standards and substance are recognised to reflect the most current picture of financials. It has also changed how the key financials such as revenue, net profit, book value, operating profit, goodwill and return on equity are computed. For instance, under the old rules, excise duty was deducted from sales. Conversely, as per the Ind AS, excise duty is now treated as a tax on manufacturing activity. Therefore, it is assumed to be a part of revenue, which thereby, increases the revenue of companies but depresses oper-

ating margin, without, however, affecting Earnings per share (EPS).

Several studies have been conducted worldwide to examine the usefulness of IFRS in realising the three pillars of transparency, accountability and efficiency and to help economic decision-makers and stakeholders alike to make informed decisions. In Germany, the impact of IFRS adoption was studied during 1998 to 2002 by Hung and Subramanyam where they concluded that the value of total assets and equity and variability of net earnings are significantly higher under IFRS compared to the German Accounting Standards. However, changes in financial ratios were not supported by their study.

Agca and Aktas conducted a pre and post-adoption study on impacts on financial ratios of 147 listed firms on the Istanbul stock exchange during 2004-2005 and found out that ratios that were majorly affected were the current and net asset turnover ratios. In contrast to other individual surveys by country, analysts Callao and Jarne, conducted two studies comparing results in Spain and the United Kingdom (UK).

The results revealed that the quantitative impact on financial ratios is significant in both countries and that it is higher in the UK. Blanchette, Racicot and Girard, in their research, examined various financial ratios of liquidity, leverage, coverage and profitability and their impact on the adoption of IFRS in companies operating in Canada and did not find any difference. Although survey results showed differences in means, medians and volatility in most financial ratios of companies but statistical significance could not be established in many cases. When they specifically evaluated their results by groups of companies who adopted IFRS at different dates, no significant variations were found in their results.

Arouri researched the IFRS impacts on return on equity (ROE) and value rel-

evancy over 40 French listed firms in 2004 utilising the longitudinal analysis and found that ROE and net income are increased by decrease inequity value due to the concept of fair valuation. Also, they did not observe any evidence of improvement in transparency and value relevance. In India, Achalpathi and Bhanu Sireesha studied several firms and showed that IFRS adoption has led to an increase in most of the liquidity, profitability and valuation ratios, which were statistically significant and were able to conclude that an opportunity for capital maintenance and protection against failure risk may have been provided to companies due to the transition to IFRS. Although standardisation and harmonisation of financial reporting is important in this globalised world, complete integration may not be possible as there is an increasing focus among different stakeholders on the future. Therefore, in an environment that is highly volatile and ever-changing, it is rather difficult for companies to make accurate predictions. Thus, more flexibility is needed in this area and the possibilities of standardisation become limited. Besides, non-financial aspects, like Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development Goals, have started to play a major role in company reporting, the informative value of which may vary greatly from one industry to another and one country to another. The individual characteristics of each firm and their complex value chains must be taken into account here, as well as the industry, sector and country-specific requirements. Adequate flexibility is vital for coherent, stringent and appropriately-structured reporting. While standard accounting norms are all about creating a level global playing field, adequate freedom to differentiate each economy through our reporting is also vital.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, Amity University)

Time for collective introspection

Society should strongly support the victims of rape and not blame or shame them. The moral fabric of the country is tearing up slowly and this needs to stop. Boys must be taught to respect women by their parents at an early stage



KALYANI SHANKAR

In William Shakespeare's famous drama *Julius Caesar*, Cassius, a nobleman, speaking with his friend, Brutus confides in the latter that in the best interests of the public, Julius Caesar must be stopped from becoming the monarch of Rome. Cassius tells him, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." How apt is this quotation today! The solution to the increasing number of rapes and atrocities on women lies with us not elsewhere. This was my intro while writing about the Nirbhaya rape case.

Unfortunately, since then, despite public outrage, rape and molestation cases have been on the rise and they have become more violent. The recent Telangana rape-murder case and the burning of the Unnao rape victim and her subsequent death in a hospital, show that nothing has changed. Delhi is now considered the rape capital of the world. Foreign countries like the US and the UK have sent advisories to tourists travelling to India. In these countries too, there are crimes and rapes but by and large, the public is aware that the "big brother" is watching and the perpetrators will be caught sooner or later.

Sadly, this is not the case in India as criminals seem to have no fear of the authorities.

The public outrage following these unfortunate incidents is huge, as it should be. Asha Devi, mother of Nirbhaya, went on record and vented her frustration over the fact that her

daughter's rapists had still not been given capital punishment after all these years. In the meantime, there have been many high-profile rape cases allegedly involving some politicians and gurus.

However, the way some parliamentarians clapped their hands in support of the police encounter of the four alleged rapists in Telangana and the public support for the extrajudicial killings reveals the frustration of the people with the country's criminal justice system which takes years to mete out punishment.

But many apprehend that police encounters often end up thwarting justice and are often misused as a quick fix by the security establishment under public pressure.

After the Nirbhaya incident, The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 was amended and is held as one of the most concrete steps taken by the Government to curb violence against

women. After the Telangana and Unnao incidents there has been clamour for even more stringent punishments. The question is, do we need more laws?

In reality, what is needed is stringent implementation of the existing laws by the police, Government, law enforcement agencies and awareness campaigns by women's organisations. The cases drag on for years. In the meanwhile, the perpetrators get emboldened and attack infants, children, girls, women and even grandmothers, to satiate their lust. Many women still do not go to the police to report these incidents for lack of faith in the criminal justice system.

The spate of atrocities against girls/women is indeed a wake up call for the judiciary. The State Governments and the High Courts (HCs) must support the Centre's proposal to set up 1,000 special courts to fast-track nearly 1.67 lakh rape cases,

of which the maximum crimes were those involving hapless children. It is also important to note that the conviction rate is a dismal 32 per cent and the other perpetrators are roaming free.

Poor investigation and shoddy case build-up by agencies result in culprits getting away scot-free. In short, there are failings in the entire criminal justice system. The police are not prompt in dealing with rape cases, the prosecution fails to get the perpetrators convicted and the courts do not have enough judges to take up cases.

The Centre and States need to address the issue of women's safety on a war footing as the public has lost confidence in the system. It is a sad commentary that despite the Supreme Court's observations that judicial reforms were needed urgently, the Government is dragging its feet on it.

Archaic laws need to be amended. It is appalling that when a toddler

is raped and is unable to give evidence, the culprits go scot-free because the mother's evidence is considered secondary. How can a two-year-old child give evidence of rape? The onus of proof should not lie with the victim. It is this kind of incongruity within the legal system which needs to be addressed.

Last, but not the least, there is need to change the mindset of the public. Society should strongly support the victims of rape and not blame or shame them. The moral fabric of the country is tearing up slowly and this needs to stop. Boys should be taught to respect women in a country where the *Shakti* (divine feminine creative power) cult is still relevant.

We should introspect in the aftermath of Hyderabad and Unnao incidents and put the fear of God in the minds of perpetrators and provide justice to the victims.

(The writer is a senior journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



BRING YOUTH TO THE FOREFRONT

Sri Lanka, while dealing effectively with any nation trying to interfere in its internal affairs, needs to change its goals on Universal Declaration of Human Rights issues, and as the 2019 theme says bring our creative, enterprising, imaginative youth to the front and centre of key human rights issues, including decision-making and poverty alleviation.

(Courtesy: Daily Mirror)

CAPSULE



Now, BoB lowers MCLR lending rates by 20 bps

MUMBAI: Following its peers like SBI, HDFC Bank and Bank of India, state-run Bank of Baroda also has lowered its marginal cost of funds-based lending rates (MCLR) by up to 20 bps across various tenors, effective December 12. The rate reduction comes even as the RBI in a surprise move had left the key policy rates unchanged at the last meeting on December 5. But the city-based lender has reduced its one-year MCLR rates, to which all retail loans are linked to, only marginally by 5 bps to 8.25 percent, the bank said in statement on Tuesday. On Monday, while SBI cut its one-year MCLR by 10 bps to 7.90 percent, HDFC Bank did a 15 bps cut to 8.15 percent, and Bank of India reduced the same by 20 bps to 8.20 percent.



Chinese inflation hits 8-year high as pork prices double

BEIJING: Consumer prices in China accelerated at their fastest pace for almost eight years in November as the African swine fever epidemic caused pork prices to more than double, data showed Tuesday. The consumer price index (CPI) — a key gauge of retail inflation — came in at 4.5 percent for November, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said, up from 3.8 percent in October and the highest rate since January 2012. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg News had forecast an increase of 4.3 percent on-year. The widespread outbreak of swine fever since August 2018 has disrupted the pork supply in China, sending the prices of the staple meat up 110.2 percent last month November. With China's pig herd down by about 40 percent, authorities last week launched a plan to restore pork production to pre-swine fever levels by 2021.



Aditya Birla Fashion gets board nod for hiring Himanshu

NEW DELHI: Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd on Tuesday said that its board has approved the appointment of Himanshu Kapania as vice chairman of the company with effect from January 1. "The board of directors vide their resolution dated December 10, 2019, has approved the appointment of Himanshu Kapania as an additional (non-executive) director and vice-chairman of the company wef January 1, 2020, liable to retire by rotation," the company said in a regulatory filing. The development is subject to the approval of the shareholders at the ensuing thirteenth annual general meeting of the company, the filing said.

Fitch revises outlook on Cairn India to negative

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings has revised its outlook on Cairn India Holdings Ltd (CIHL) to negative from stable saying in its assessment the consolidated credit profile of the company's owner, Vedanta is expected to weaken on lower metal prices.

Vedanta owns half of its 70 per cent in the prolific Rajasthan oil block through Cairn India Holdings Ltd (CIHL). In a statement, Fitch Ratings said it has revised its outlook on CIHL to negative from stable and affirmed the Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of 'BB-'. "The Outlook revision reflects Fitch's assessment that the consolidated credit profile of CIHL's owner, Vedanta Ltd (VLT), is expected to weaken in the financial year ending March 2020 (FY2020) and FY22, after we recently lowered our long-term mid-cycle metals and mining price assumptions, including aluminium and copper price assumptions, due to falling demand," it said.

This has reduced CIHL's headroom at the current rating level. CIHL's rating is aligned with the consolidated credit profile of Vedanta, which owns 100 per cent of CIHL, reflecting their strong linkages. "Our assessment reflects the group's complex shareholding structure and the risk of cash leakages other than dividend distributions to parties outside of ultimate parent Vedanta Resources," Fitch said. In January 2019, CIHL invested in a structured product of Volcan Investments Ltd, a shareholder of Vedanta Resources, although the invest-



In a statement, Fitch Ratings said it has revised its outlook on CIHL to negative from stable and affirmed the Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of 'BB-'

ment was subsequently unwound profitably in August 2019. "The transaction raised concerns from investors, including Vedanta Ltd's minority stakeholders, and led to declines in its share and bond prices.

Vedanta Resources has since committed to abstain from similar transactions; Fitch will monitor Vedanta Resources to see if any group entities provide further support to Volcan that could weaken their liquidity and

hence VLT's credit profile. The current assessment does not factor any cash outflow aside from dividends to Vedanta Resources," it said. CIHL has participatory interest in an oil and gas block in Rajasthan where all fields are producing. CIHL's production scale, based on its 35 per cent share of the block, is small at about 66,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) and comparable to that of oil and gas producers in the 'B' category.

CIHL, however, benefits from the low-cost structure of the Rajasthan block with operating costs of around USD 7.5 per barrel (bbl) and finding and development costs of about USD 5-6/bbl. "The cost position is significantly lower than that of peers and supports its strong operating cash flow. This underpins CIHL's positive free cash flow - despite its planned investments of around USD 1 billion over the next four years - and its continuing strong financial profile with a net cash position," it said. Fitch said CIHL's investments at the Rajasthan block are expected to increase their proven (1P) and probable (2P) reserves.

SBI reports loan divergence of Rs 11,932 crore for FY19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) on Tuesday reported about Rs 12,000 crore divergence in their bad loans for the last fiscal.

As per the assessment done by the RBI, the gross NPA of the SBI was 11,932 crore more at Rs 1,84,682 as against Rs 1,72,750 reported by the bank for 2018-19, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

Similarly, the net NPA was 77,827 crore as compared to disclosed figure of Rs 65,895 crore, reflecting divergence of Rs 11,932 crore, it said.

As a result the bank has to make additional provisioning of Rs 12,036 crore in the balance sheet and the notional loss would have been at Rs 6,968 crore.

SBI had posted a profit of Rs 862 crore for 2018-19 in May this year.

It further said after subsequent slippage or upgradation during the current financial year, the remaining impact



on the gross NPAs during the third quarter of current fiscal is Rs 3,143 crore.

The impact on provisioning during the third quarter stood at Rs 4,654 crore, it added.

In recent months, there have been several instances of under-reporting of bad loans by lenders, prompting regulatory action by the Reserve Bank of India.

Last month, SBI in a circular noted that disclosures in respect of divergence and provisioning are in the nature of material events and hence necessitate immediate disclosure. Further, this information is also price sensitive, requiring prompt disclosure by a listed entity.

Accordingly, the regulator has decided that "listed banks shall make disclosures of divergences and provisioning beyond specified threshold, as mentioned in aforesaid RBI notifications, as soon as reasonably possible and not later than 24 hours upon receipt of the Reserve Bank's Final Risk Assessment Report (RAR), rather than waiting to publish them as part of annual financial statements".

Loan defaulters blame it on delayed salaries, downturn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Borrowers defaulting on making EMI payments are claiming that the delays are caused due to delay in receiving salaries from their employers, while those in business blame it on the poor business for their default. These observations have come out from a survey conducted by CreditMate, a fintech company belonging to the Paytm Group. According to a Hindu Business Line report, CreditMate surveyed over 2 lakh defaulters from across the country and has published the findings titled 'The India Delinquency Report 2019'. The period covered for this survey is May to November 2019. The broad finding is that 54% defaulters on EMI payments, though they miss the pay by date, are still non-performing assets (NPA), while the



remaining 46% have not paid for over 90 days and therefore are categorized as NPAs.

The ratio of salaried defaulters to business owners is 36% to 29%. Some of the other reasons being attributed by those surveyed include medical emergencies (13%), loss of job (12%) and being out of the city or out of the country (10%).

CreditMate said in a statement regarding the findings that the economic slowdown being witnessed currently is the major reason for this extent of default among borrowers. The survey also showed that men were responsible for more defaults than women. 82% of the defaulters were men, while only 18% were women.

Passenger vehicle sales slip again into negative territory in Nov

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic passenger vehicle sales slipped into negative territory once again in November after registering a slight recovery in the preceding month, as muted demand conditions forced companies to reduce their dispatches to dealers.

According to data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), passenger vehicle (PV) sales declined 0.84 per cent to 2,63,773 units in November from 2,66,000 units in the year-ago period.

The PV sales figure would have been much lower during the period under consideration, if it had not been aided by the utility vehicle segment, which saw dispatches grow by 32.7 per cent to 92,739 units in November as compared with 69,884 units a year-ago.

Domestic car sales were down 10.83 per cent to 1,60,306 units as against 1,79,783 units in the year-ago period while van sales were down 34.32 per cent to 10,728 units as compared to 16,333 in November 2018.

"Challenges continue in the passenger vehicle segment. We have to remember that the current numbers are on a comparatively low base of last November," SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon told reporters here. New launches in the utility vehicle segment has helped prop up sales in October and November, he added. PV sales had risen marginally in October aided by positive festive season sentiment and introduction of new models in utility vehicle space, just about managing to snap 11 continuous months of decline in sales.



Hyundai to increase vehicle prices from January

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India on Tuesday said it will increase prices of its entire product range from next month to primarily offset impact of rising input costs. "The extent of price increase may vary for different models and fuel types," Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) said in a statement.

However, did not share details of model wise price change. The increase has been necessitated on account of rise in input and material costs, it added. The company is working out on details and would share the details of the model wise price hike later this month. Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors have already announced to hike prices from January.

Grofers expands operations to 27 cities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SoftBank-backed Grofers on Tuesday said it has expanded its services to 27 cities in the country, including Vadodara, Meerut, Rohtak, Panipat, Agra and Durgapur. Grofers, which was launched in 2014 by Albinder Dhindsa and Saurabh Kumar, previously had presence in 14 Indian cities.

"With this expansion, we plan to reach out to consumers in non-metro cities and introduce them to the world of value-for-money groceries. Increased smartphone pene-

tration has already set the path for digital adoption and we are hopeful that we would be able to dominate this space, just like we have done in our existing markets," Grofers co-founder and CEO Dhindsa said. Over the last two years, Grofers has seen its annualised gross merchandise value (GMV) grow to USD 700 million (about Rs 4,900 crore), the statement said. "Focussed on the price sensitive Indian consumers who are primarily driven by savings, the company believes this expansion will help Grofers to deepen the penetration of its wide portfolio of own brands," it added.

Airtel launches Voice over Wi-Fi service for better indoor voice call

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom company Bharti Airtel on Tuesday launched voice over Wi-Fi service, and said the industry-first offering will "significantly enhance" indoor voice calling experience for smartphone customers at no extra charge. "Airtel Wi-Fi Calling" enables Airtel smartphone customers to switch seamlessly from LTE (Long-Term Evolution) to Wi-Fi based calling when they are inside their homes/offices, the company said in a statement, adding that there will be no extra charge for voice calls made with the service.



The offering currently available in Delhi/NCR, and it will be rolled out across the country in coming days. "With 'Airtel Wi-Fi Calling', customers with Wi-Fi at home or office will get excellent signal quality

indoors. There will be no extra charge for calls made over 'Airtel Wi-Fi Calling' and the application consumes minimal data," the statement said.

Commenting on the development, Randeep Sekhon, Chief Technology Officer of Bharti Airtel said, "Seamless indoor coverage has been a key ask from mobile customers for site installations has always been a big challenge for mobile operators, particularly in top metros. 'Airtel Wi-Fi Calling'...will go a long way in making the voice calling experience more seamless".

PhonePe receives Rs 585.6-cr infusion from parent firm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flipkart-owned digital payments company PhonePe has received a fund infusion of about Rs 585.66 crore from its parent firm in another round, according to regulatory filings.

PhonePe Pvt Ltd, Singapore, (formerly Flipkart Payments Pvt Ltd) was allotted 13,81,278 shares and the total amount paid was Rs 585,66,18,720, according to documents sourced by business intelli-

gence platform Tofler. The company declined to comment on the fund infusion.

In July this year, PhonePe had received a fund infusion of about Rs 698 crore from its parent firm.

The latest fund infusion is expected to provide PhonePe more muscle to compete in the burgeoning payments segment in India. It competes against the likes of Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and others in this space.



Honda launches BS-VI-compliant City

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) on Tuesday introduced BS-VI compliant version of its premium sedan Honda City priced between Rs 9.91 lakh and Rs 14.31 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). Petrol version of the BS-VI compliant Honda City is available in both manual and automatic transmissions, while diesel version will be introduced subsequently. HCIL said in a statement. The company said it has

introduced Digipad 2.0 — an advanced infotainment system, in V, VX and ZX variants of the car, which now comes with 17.7 cm advanced touchscreen audio, video and navigation system with smartphone connectivity through Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Commenting on the introduction, HCIL Senior Vice President & Director, Marketing and Sales Rajesh Goel said, "The launch of BS-6 Honda City will be followed by sequential introduction of BS-VI versions of other models in our line-up".

Rajan's 'diagnosis' of economy absolutely correct: Sena

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena today said that centralisation of power in the Prime Minister's Office or PMO was one of the main reasons for the "poor" economic health of the country. The central government wants the finance minister and RBI governor under its control, an editorial in Shiv Sena's mouthpiece 'Saamana' claimed, adding that the present BJP-led dispensation in the Centre is not ready to listen to economists as it considers the economy as a "share market gamble".

It supported concerns raised by former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan, who recently said India is in the midst of a "growth recession" with signs of



deep malaise in the economy that is being run through extreme centralisation of power in the PMO and powerless ministers. India's economic growth slowed to a six-year low of 4.5 per cent in the July-September

The government wants the finance minister, RBI governor, finance secretary and NITI Aayog chairman under its control, it claimed, adding that this is the main reason for the country's 'poor' economic health

quarter. With inflation rising, fears of stagflation - a fall in aggregate demand accompanied by rising inflation - have resurfaced. The Shiv Sena said former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi cannot be held responsible for the country's present economic situation.

"Centralisation of power in PMO and powerless ministers -

expressed concern over the rising onion prices," it noted. The Sena claimed that when PM Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, he had said onion is an essential commodity and it has become so costly that it will have to be 'kept in lockers'. "The situation has changed and Modi is now the Prime Minister and the economy is in a 'crisis'. An unconscious person is brought back to senses by being made to smell onion, but this is not possible now since onions have disappeared from markets," it said in sarcastic comments.

The Sena also blamed decisions like demonetisation and "unnecessary focus" on projects such as the bullet train for the current economic situation.

"When he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, he had

NaMo, Bigil, Virat winners of the TWITTER RACE

Time does fly doesn't it? As we come to the end of another year, we look back at what made us laugh, go aww, cry or feel outraged about 2019. From the much anticipated Chandrayaan-II to the Lok Sabha elections, there was entertainment galore for people of all age groups. Adding to this are trolls on Twitter who act like the beacon of joy amidst the otherwise boring, mundane lives we lead, writes K RAMYA SREE

Running a fleeting glance through Twitter, we notice that the Golden Tweet of the year was Modi's. The tweet by Modi, which was the most liked and most retweeted, was right after BJP's Lok Sabha victory wherein he thanked the people for voting for development. After politics, if there is something all Indians actively participate in, it is cricket. And

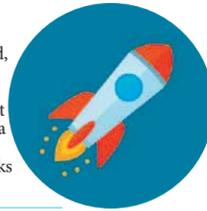
the year cannot end without a tweet or mention by a sports person. The most retweeted sports tweet of the year was of Virat Kohli, when he wished former Indian cricket captain MS Dhoni on his birthday. Indians are also known for their love of cinema, and rightfully so. Tamil actor Vijay's tweet showcasing his movie poster *Bigil* was the most retweeted when it came to entertainment.

COMING TO THE 10 TOPICS THAT GOT INDIA TAKING TO TWITTER THIS YEAR WERE

#LOKSABHA ELECTIONS 2019
 This does need an introduction. As mentioned earlier, this is something that Indians are really passionate about. This election had a lot riding on the shoulders of the two national political parties and anything and everything they said was made into a tweet for or against each other.



#CHANDRAYAAN2
 India's ambitious, though failed, mission to land on the moon was a moment of pride and honour for all Indians. The fact that the investment made was a fraction of the cost of other nations is something that speaks volumes of our space agency.



#CWC19
 Well here comes cricket again. The gaming extravaganza ruled the roost for months and all televisions at homes were tuned in to watch it.

#PULWAMA
 The attack on CRPF men in the Pulwama region of Kashmir in February and the consequent blame game between us and our neighbouring nation was much talked about not just by Indians, but by netizens the world over.



#ARTICLE 370
 Kashmir was in the news again after the Centre revoked the special status the state enjoyed under Article 370 and split the state into two Union Territories.

#BIGIL
 As mentioned earlier, actor Vijay has consistently been topping the charts when it comes the buzz that movies generate for the last three years. This year was no less as his movie *Bigil* was the most talked about in entertainment.



#DIWALI
 The festival of lights, as it is popularly known, is always a reason to meet one's extended family and gorge on sweets. This year was no less as people took to Twitter to share how they celebrated and spent time with family.



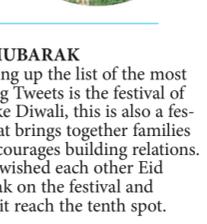
#AVENGERS ENDGAME
 The Marvel Cinematic Universe, which makes the Avengers franchise of movies, had a good run both in theatres and on Twitter. Along with fan theories, Twitter was flooded with a healthy dose of disappointment over how the movie ended and the situation the lead characters were in by the end.

#AYODHYA VERDICT
 The catchphrase "Mandir Yahin Banega" started out as a way for political parties to gather votes. But with the Ayodhya verdict taking eons (literally) to reach closure, the phrase ended up becoming a satire on the aforementioned parties and the verdict ended up trending for most of the year, despite being delivered only in November.



#EID MUBARAK
 Rounding up the list of the most trending Tweets is the festival of Eid. Like Diwali, this is also a festival that brings together families and encourages building relations. People wished each other Eid Mubarak on the festival and helped it reach the tenth spot.

When it comes to people trending on the social media website, veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan took the top spot among males and Sonakshi Sinha grabbed the numero uno spot among females. Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli, badminton champ PV Sindhu were also trending for the most of the year. When it came to politicians Smriti Irani stood first among her adversaries while Modi remained the most trending politician on Twitter in India this year.



In conclusion it is safe to say that the year 2019 was a momentous one for Twitteratis, who now look forward to continuing the trolls, tirades and hashtags and keep us all enthralled.

Is the need to cheat on one's partner a natural symptom of an unhappy wedlock? Or is it just a desire that goes beyond the physical needs. A survey reveals that the definition of an affair has evolved beyond physical and now includes emotional and social media engagement too. By PNS



Why cheat?

Can you decode the evolution of married relationships in India and the importance of trust and loyalty between partners? Well, Hotstar in partnership with Mindshare and Unomer recently released an independent research that seeks to understand India's view on infidelity. Soon on the heels of its latest show *Out of Love* that deals with the aftermath of infidelity and the myriad choices that people are faced with, the study tried to decipher the mindset of Indian married individuals across age groups and cities. Almost 50 per cent of Indians are insecure in marriage, revealed the research. As per the survey, insecurity in marriage looms over as half of all respondents feel the need to pry, with 45 per cent of people wanting to check their partner's phone without their knowledge and 55 per cent people who have already done it.

Interestingly, almost 62 per cent people in love marriages feel the need to check their partners' phones. The survey further reported that suspicion of infidelity is higher in the North and East with 32 per cent and 31 per cent respectively, whereas West and South reported a 22 per cent to 20 per cent suspicion rate. Around 52 per cent respondents from Mumbai and 56 per cent from Delhi claimed to have checked their partner's phone without their knowledge. Dr Ramon Llamba, life coach, therapist and quantum medicine doctor, said, "We as human beings are naturally driven by behavioural mechanisms called emotional drivers. People who have security and control as their primary driver have this innate desire to feed their emotions, be in control of their environment and feel secure by finding out information. This mechanism at a subconscious level drives them to spy on their partner's phone or

email." For 50 per cent of Indians, infidelity is not just about a physical relationship. Over the past few years, the definition of 'an affair' has evolved beyond the physical aspect of a relationship which now includes emotional and social media engagement as well. While 47 per cent of people claim that physical intimacy is the worst form of cheating, 37 per cent feel the same way about emotional infidelity. As social media dominates personal time, 16 per cent respondents are bothered by social media infidelity. Dr Llamba said, "There are various types of infidelity, some that happen out of purely physical needs and some where emotions have a stronger meaning. Cheating is not planned. It happens because humans have no control over their feelings or emotions. Often they realise there is a void that they are trying to fill which could be either psychological, emotional or physical."

When faced with infidelity, will Indians forgive, forget or fight? As per the survey, 78 per cent will be bold about confronting infidelity. Having said that, almost 50 per cent are willing to forgive their partners whereas 20 per cent are willing to forget and the rest 30 per cent claim they will fight it out. Reasons to forgive range from acceptance citing it as a 'one-time thing', to kids and future holding prime importance or even feeling societal or family shame. Delhi has one of the higher rates of people who will choose to fight with 38 per cent, while 48 per cent from Mumbai will choose to forgive. The survey was carried out with 1,088 married respondents in the age-group of 18-64 years from across metros and tier 1 towns with a 50:50 male: female ratio.



AR RAHMAN to compose anthem for global climate change initiative

India's Oscar-winning music maestro AR Rahman is pitching in with a creative contribution for Hollywood music veteran and humanitarian Ken Kragen's climate change effort. Rahman, along with a team of international composers, will create a track titled *Hand in hand* for the initiative.

Kragen, who was honoured with United Nations Peace Medal in 1985 for producing the historic charity anthem *We are the World*, has joined hands with entertainment entrepreneur Neil Morgan to set up an augmented reality (AR) project named *Hands Around The World*. The project aims at raising money and awareness for the cause of climate change. The initiative will be launched on April 22 next year, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. The AR app will also be launched the same day, reports *variety.com*.

While details about Rahman's composition are awaited, it has come to light that the number will thematically be reminiscent of *We are the world*. "The mind of the human race is hard wired to seek higher ideals and wisdom. For that, the very first step is to protect

that which holds us — planet earth," Rahman said.

Kragen added, "It is easier to accomplish the impossible than the ordinary."

The AR app will allow people to download 3D volumetric-captured celebrity holograms and take photographs standing beside them, holding their hands. They will then combine users' photographs with hundreds of millions of others to form a virtual selfie chain that will become the digital "Hands Around the World". Users will be prompted to spread the word and encouraged to donate towards ending climate change.

"There are people that will deny climate change but they can't deny pollution. Our project intends to galvanise and unite people like never before, in a positive and fun way to help save the planet," said Morgan.





Jonathan Groff boards *The Matrix 4*

Actor Jonathan Groff is the latest name to join the much-awaited fourth installment in *The Matrix* franchise. According to *Entertainment Weekly*, details about the character to be played by Groff, best known for *Frozen 2* and *Mindhunter*, are under wraps.

The film, which is yet to be officially titled, will see series stars Keanu Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss,

reprise their roles as Neo and Trinity. Jada Pinkett Smith is also set to return as Niobe. Lana Wachowski, one half of the Wachowskis who directed all the three films in the sci-fi action franchise with sister Lilly, will write and helm the new project. Aleksandar Hemon and David Mitchell have co-written the script with Lana Wachowski, who is also attached to produce with Grant Hill. Previously announced

cast members also include *Aquaman* star Yahya Abdul-Mateen, Jessica Henwick and Neil Patrick Harris. Warner Bros Pictures and Village Roadshow Pictures will back the film. The first, *Matrix*, released in 1999 followed by *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*, depicted a dystopian future where artificial beings have taken over humanity, which is unknowingly trapped inside a simulated reality, called the Matrix.

PETA awards Dino Morea, Ketan Kadam for e-carriage initiative

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India has presented entrepreneur Ketan Kadam and actor Dino Morea with its Innovative Business Award for bringing e-carriages to Mumbai through their electronic, battery-driven carriages business, UBO Ridez.

At a special event over the weekend, the group also gave Compassionate Business Awards to Cleartrip for announcing a new animal welfare policy that ends the promotion of animal rides, and to Tata Power for introducing teachers from 250 schools to PETA India's humane education programme, Compassionate Citizen.

Compassionate Citizen is a humane education programme which is designed to help students aged 8 to 12 better understand and appreciate animals. "Our award winners are blazing a better trail for animals and have won a special place in the hearts of their fans or customers and PETA India," PETA India Director of Celebrity and Public Relations, Sachin Bangera, said in a statement. "Animals have found compassionate allies in UBO Ridez, Cleartrip and Tata Power," Bangera said. PETA India said its investigations of Mumbai's horse-drawn carriage industry found that horses were often injured, fell sick and were severely malnourished; forced to stand amidst their

own waste in filthy and decrepit stables; and frequently denied adequate rest, water and veterinary care. In June 2015, the Bombay High Court ruled that using horse-drawn carriages, or Victorias, in Mumbai for so-called 'joyrides' is 'completely illegal'. PETA India said more than 50 travel agencies, including global operators such as TripAdvisor, The Travel Corporation, Intrepid Travel, smarTours, STA Travel and TUI Group, have committed to not offering activities that exploit elephants. Elephants used for rides are typically chained when not in use, beaten during trainings, and live under the threat of violence.



Gal Gadot suffers spine injuries filming *Wonder Woman 1984*

Actress Gal Gadot walked away from the set of the upcoming *Wonder Woman* sequel with a few 'spine injuries' after struggling to say no to performing her own stunts for director Patty Jenkins. Gadot reprises her role as Amazonian warrior princess Diana Prince and her titular alter ego in *Wonder Woman 1984*, which features the star pulling off a number of high-octane action sequences, reports *aceshowbiz.com*. "We shut down Penn Ave. in Washington DC., which was just (by) itself incredible. And then we had wires, rigs, for kilometers, for miles, so I can run in the same speed that Usain Bolt ran in the Olympics." Although Gadot is proud of her work, she says she really suffered for her art to help

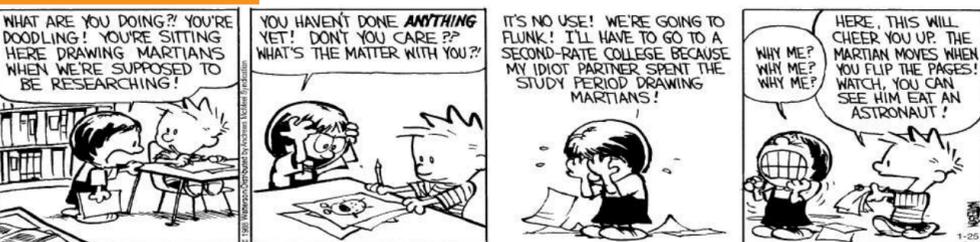
bring Jenkins' vision to life. Gadot said: "She's one of my very best, closest friends and it's hard for me to say no to her. Also, she has a great will. I'll find myself trying to negotiate my stance with Patty and she'd be like, 'Yeah, yeah yeah, I see what you're saying, I know, but don't you think it's going to be so much better if...?' Those were the moments where I was like, 'Argh...!'" "(Those were) the physical moments, because it is hard, and I have found myself with many different spine injuries because (we've been) shooting this movie, for real. But at the same time, it's worth it. And watching the movie now a few times, it's totally, totally worth it," she added. *Wonder Woman 1984*, will open in theatres in June, 2020.

FUN TIME

ARCHIE



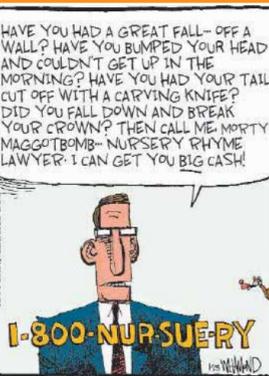
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



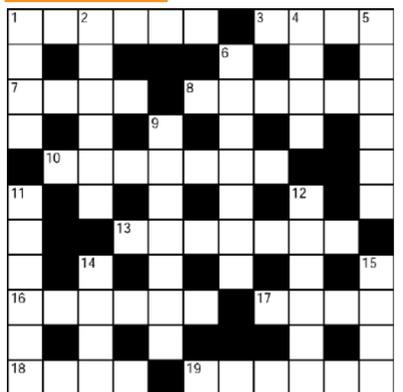
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

2	1			7				
		3		2	1	4	5	6
			8					
3				8			5	
	2						9	
5			6					8
				4				
8	7	1	5	6		9		
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Yesterday's solution

4	2	7	3	8	6	1	5	9
6	8	5	9	4	1	7	3	2
1	9	3	2	5	7	8	4	6
9	1	2	5	6	3	4	8	7
3	7	6	4	9	8	5	2	1
5	4	8	1	7	2	9	6	3
2	3	4	7	1	5	6	9	8
7	6	9	8	3	4	2	1	5
8	5	1	6	2	9	3	7	4

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- The one who comes first in a race
 - Twirl around
 - Very impolite
 - A fire-breathing monster
 - A repairer of teeth
 - The head of an empire
 - Look very carefully for something
 - Jealousy
 - Moist
 - Centre
 - Two times forty-five
 - A painter uses these
 - A body organ
 - Touched lips with someone
 - Connected together
 - Peaceful and still
 - A rubber cover for a wheel
- SOLUTION
- | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P | A | R | A | C | H | U | T | E |
| S | O | U | T | H | N | I | G | H |
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| R | O | T | S | W | A | L | R | S |
| E | T | R | S | | | | | |
| T | A | S | T | E | P | E | R | |
| C | A | A | T | R | E | | | |
| H | O | M | E | S | | | | |
| O | F | I | O | | | | | |
| G | A | R | D | E | N | E | R | S |
- DOWN
- A grigly creature living in soil
 - Said "yes" with the head
 - These hold clothes on a line

RRR MOVES TO SCENIC PADERU

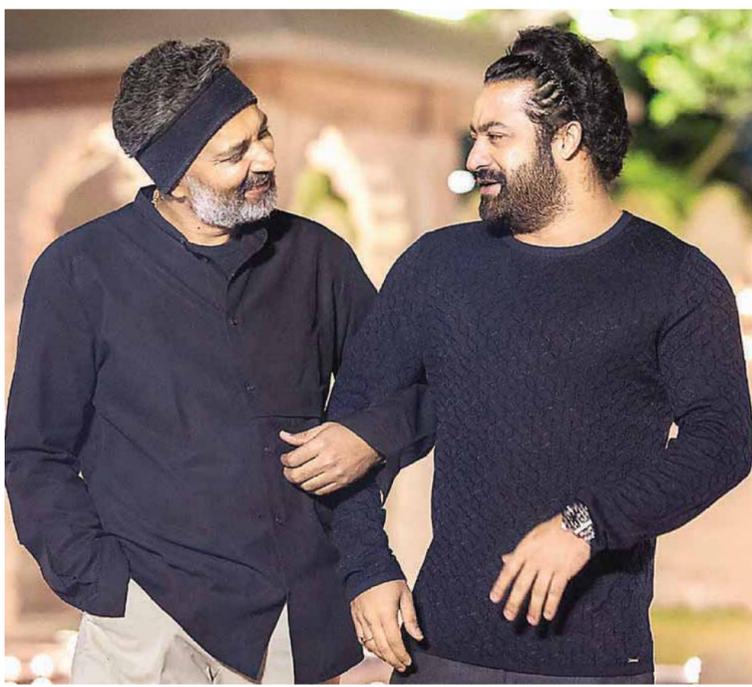
Rajamouli has always been secretive about his shoots, be it locations or dates. But now, NAGARAJ GOUD finds out the next destination for this epic RRR team

For a major part of last year, S.S. Rajamouli's period action-drama RRR, starring Jr NTR and Ram Charan, was shot predominantly in specially erected sets in Hyderabad and some parts in Bulgaria. Although the makers have been discreet about the shooting locations, fearing that fans might visit the places and disturb the shoots, *The Pioneer* has learnt that the shooting has now shifted to Visakhapatnam. "Beginning Tuesday, the

new schedule will last for a week. Sequences involving NTR will be shot during this outing. Paderu and its neighboring coffee plantations will be hosting the shoot. The unit reached Vizag on Monday, while Tarak joined the location on Tuesday morning. In fact, the current season serves as a perfect setting for crucial climax portions of the film. Rajamouli discovered the location when he visited the sets of his son Karthikeya's maiden production venture, *Aakashvani*, earlier this year and decided to use it for RRR.

The next schedule will see Ajay Devgn and Alia Bhatt joining the team for the first time," said a source close to the film's unit. Being made on a budget of Rs 400 crore, RRR, set in early 1920s, is a fictional story based on two real-life heroes and freedom fighters — Alluri Seetharama Raju and Komaram Bheem. Tarak will be playing the younger Bheem, with English actress Olivia Morris paired alongside him, while Charan will be seen as the younger Ramaraju, with Alia Bhatt as his leading

lady. The likes of Ajay Devgn, P. Samuthirankani and Irish actors Alison Doody and Ray Stevenson are essaying significant roles. The film, one of the most anticipated ventures across the country, has a July 30, 2020, release date. But, with the shooting set to continue till the onset of summer next year, the date might be postponed. But there is no official confirmation from the makers about this. Besides Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi, the makers are planning to release it in six other languages simultaneously.



tollywood

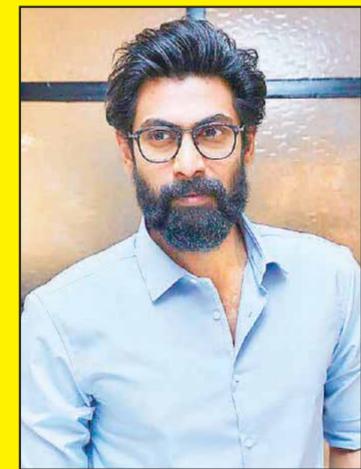
Dharma push for Puri's *Fighter*

The *Pioneer* was the first to report (on December 5) that Vijay Deverakonda's next, *Fighter*, with Puri Jagannadh will be made in Hindi as well, marking the actor's Bollywood debut. Impressed by the story,

Bollywood heavy hitter Karan Johar has come forward to associate with it in Hindi and a deal to this end is also on the verge of being signed. The latest is that Puri has shifted base to Mumbai. Also, some dynamics of the film too have been changed after Dharma Productions agreed to come on board.

A source says, "Along with a couple of his assistants, Puri left to Mumbai on Tuesday. The director initially planned to shoot some portions of the film in Europe but that is going to change now. With Dharma being a partner, he decided to go big and instead will be filming the same portions in the US. A massive Mumbai schedule too is on the cards."

In *Fighter*, an emotional action-drama, Deverakonda will be seen as a youth with a stammer. Professionally, he will be seen as a martial arts exponent. With the film being made in Hindi now, Puri has plans to rope in Hindi actors as well for crucial supporting roles. The casting will be dealt by a professional Mumbai casting agency. The film will begin shooting next month. Puri had plans to release it in summer next year but the release might get deferred. — NG



Haathi Mere Saathi a 'big action spectacle' with 12 elephants

Actor Rana Daggubati is excited about his upcoming action-spectacle *Haathi Mere Saathi* as the film focuses on environmental issues and deforestation crisis. Directed by Prabhu Solomon, the lavishly-mounted movie will release across three languages — Hindi, Tamil and Telugu — in the summer of 2020. "*Haathi Mere Saathi* is a story of a man living in the

jungle for 25 years. The crux is a problem which is evident today — the issue of deforestation, and a wall which is being made in the middle of the jungle which breaks nature and the elephant corridor. "It's a story of a man who fought for the jungle, the animals, against the society. It has lots of action. It's a big spectacle film, with me and 12 elephants," Rana told PTI in an interview. The movie is a tribute of sorts to the late legendary

actor Rajesh Khanna, who starred in the 1971 film of the same name, but will have a fresh storyline. The *Baahubali* star said the film is one of the many such stories that he would like to present to the audiences today, especially in the time of OTT platforms. "The stories I want to tell are very specific. Whether it's *Baahubali*, *Ghazi* or *Haathi Mere Saathi*. These aren't the films you'll find in market somewhere. It's not like I'm

running in any competition. I can make a Telugu film, a Hindi film... it doesn't matter, as long as it's an interesting story. "I am doing a love story in Telugu, then *Haathi Mere Saathi*, a tri-lingual film that's out next summer. I'm able to do unique things, because today the entertainment business has also become so big, with films and OTT platforms, the excitement is to find newer stories to tell," Daggubati, added.

KEERTHY on cloud nine



She might not have had a major release this year but it has been an extremely productive year for Keerthy Suresh. From heading a couple of female-centric Telugu films — *Miss India* and *Good Luck Sakhi* to her Hindi debut with Ajay Devgn, she had her plate full for the year. She has also signed Nithiin-starrer *Rang De!* which goes to floors next year. Rounding off the year on a high, she has announced that she will be featuring opposite superstar Rajinikanth in his 168th endeavour with Siruthai Siva. Although names like Jyothika and Manju Warrier were banded for the coveted heroine's role, the *Mahanati* girl pipped them. "Extremely happy to announce this magical milestone in my journey. From being awe struck of @rajinikanth sir to sharing screen space with him will be my most cherished memory in my life. Thank you @directorsiva sir @sunpictures (sic)," an excited Keerthy tweeted.

The likes of Meena, Prakash Raj and Soori are on board for supporting roles in the film, a Sun Pictures production. Known for popcorn Tamil entertainers like *Veeram*, *Vedalam* and *Viswasam* among others, Siva has penned a signature rural drama that will be high on entertainment and action for Rajini. The shoot will begin later this month and the makers, it is understood, are keen on releasing it for Diwali next year. D. Imman is the music composer.



SHWETA ends marriage with Rohit

Actress Shweta Basu Prasad, who is known for her roles in films like *Kotha Bangaru Lokam* and *Ride*, has announced separation from her husband Rohit Mittal. The two had tied the knot as per Bengali rituals- at Pune in an intimate affair on December 13 last year. Before tying the knot, they've dated for four years. Sharing the news on Instagram on Monday evening, Shweta said that they came to the decision after months of contemplation, stating that it was in their 'best interests'. "Hi everyone, Rohit Mittal and I have mutually decided to part our ways and end our

marriage. After months of contemplation, we arrived at this decision a few months ago in each other's best interests, as individuals. Not every book is supposed to be read cover to cover, that doesn't mean the book is bad, or one can't read, some things are just best unfinished. Thank you Rohit for the irreplaceable memories and always inspiring me. Have a great life ahead, forever your Cheerleader (sic)," her post read. A popular child artist with two national awards to her name, Shweta met Rohit, a director at Phantom films and the two had an instant connection. It is believed acclaimed filmmaker Anurag Kashyap played cupid between them.

RAM is a dubbing king

After achieving a rare distinction of being the first south star to have the Hindi-dubbed versions of three of his films — *Nenu Sailaja*, *Vunnadi Okate Zindagi* and *Hello Guru Premakosame* — cross more than 100 million views on YouTube, actor Ram Pothineni has added another feather to his cap. His *Hello Guru Premakosame* (dubbed *Dumdaar Khiladi*), directed by Trinadha Rao from a script of Prasanna Kumar Bezawada, has garnered more than a million likes, making him the first south Indian actor to achieve such a feat. The romantic-drama set in a family backdrop has clocked more than 140 million views and counting. "The fact that it's a neat love story with romantic moments aplenty worked in its favour, attracting many repeat viewings," said an industry observer. Chuffed to bits with the development, the actor, in a video, thanked all the people who have watched it. "Thank you for all the mad love. And I hope to keep you all entertained," he added. The actor is now shooting for action-thriller *Red*; a remake of Tamil hit *Thadam*. Produced by Sravanthi Movies, it is being directed by Kishore Tirumala.



PTI ■ MUMBAI

India will have to address the many inadequacies laid bare by a resolute West Indies in the second T20 International when the two teams made up of power-hitters square off in what promises to be an enthralling series-finale here today.

The rubber is locked 1-1 after two-time world champions West Indies turned on the style in the second T20 International in Thiruvananthapuram following a Virat Kohli special in the lung-opener in Hyderabad.

For India, the focus will once again be on young guns like off-spinner Washington Sundar and under-fire wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant.

The spotlight on Pant, especially, has been obsessive and it is expected to be no different when the team takes the field at the Wankhede Stadium.

As for Sundar, it would be interesting to see whether the team management persists with him or gives chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav a game.

Sundar has taken only three wickets in the last five T20s that he has played (two against West Indies and three against Bangladesh) and leaked 144 runs in 23 overs that he bowled.

He also ended up wicket-less in the two T20 Internationals against South Africa.

Sundar's fielding is another aspect about which skipper Virat Kohli would be worried. In the last game, he dropped a sitter of Lendl Simmons, whose 45-ball 67 laid the foundation of the West Indies' eight-wicket triumph.

Kuldeep last played a T20 against New Zealand in Hamilton back in February. He warmed the benches in the first two games.

For Pant also things are only getting tougher. The focus on him has been unrelenting and it won't be easy for him to regain the early form that made him seem like Mahendra Singh Dhoni's heir apparent.

Coming in at No.4, Pant made scores of 33 not out, 18, 6, 27, 19, 4 in the last seven T20s that he featured in.

His last T20 fifty came against West Indies in August, in Providence. With the likes of Sanju Samson wait-

SERIES DECIDER

India face Windies in winner takes it all contest at Wankhede



Rohit Sharma, top left, Kuldeep Yadav, right, Ravindra Jadeja, front left, Deepak Chahar, right, warmup during a training session AP/File Picture

ing in the wings, Pant will have to come good sooner than later.

But in overall analysis, India's batting has never been a problem. Opener Rohit Sharma, who had a rare-twin failure, would be raring to go before his home crowd.

K L Rahul and skipper Kohli are also among the runs. Shivam Dube, who slammed his maiden T20 fifty, showed he can hit towering sixes and he would want to perform before his home crowd and so Shreyas Iyer.

However, bowling is a slight concern. A profligate pace duo of Deepak Chahar and Bhuvneshwar Kumar leaked runs in the first two matches.

Chahar had a memorable series

against Bangladesh but has not managed to repeat the show this time around. With Mohammed Shami around, Chahar will have to step up.

Also, India's fielding was way below par. The dropped catches and several mis-fields prompted Kohli to say if the performance does not improve, no score would be enough.

The hosts are also good chase-masters but will need to learn how to defend targets.

On the other hand, West Indies will also fancy their chances to clinch the series after the terrific comeback.

Their top-order batsmen, particularly Simmons, are in splendid form. Also the likes of Evin Lewis, Nicholas

Pooran and Shimron Hetmyer are among the runs and they will look to continue the form.

Add to it, the firepower of Brandon King, Jason Holder and skipper Kieron Pollard, the West Indies can look unbeatable on their day.

Even their bowlers, including pacer Sheldon Cottrell, are among the wickets. Along with Cottrell, Kesrick Williams, leg-spinner Hayden Walsh Jr and Holder, will have to bowl in the right areas to stem the flow of runs.

The West Indies also have fond memories of playing T20s at the Wankhede as in the 2016 ICC World Cup semi-final, they defeated India and went on to win the title.

SQUADS

India: Virat Kohli (c), Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Manish Pandey, Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Deepak Chahar, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Shami, Sanju Samson.

West Indies: Kieron Pollard (captain), Fabian Allen, Brandon King, Denesh Ramdin, Sheldon Cottrell, Evin Lewis, Sherfane Rutherford, Shimron Hetmyer, Khary Pierre, Lendl Simmons, Jason Holder, Hayden Walsh Jr, Keemo Paul, Kesrick Williams.

'WC is long way away, let's focus on present'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian team might be treating every bilateral T20 assignment as an audition for next year's World Cup but vice-captain Rohit Sharma prefers to focus on the present instead of losing sleep over a marquee event, which is still 10 months away.

India will lock horns with two-time world T20 champions in the series-deciding third match here even as the efforts to find the right combination for the marquee event continue.

"See, I don't want to keep saying that we are trying to build a squad for the (T20) World Cup. It is still a long, long way ahead. We just need to focus on winning the series and that will keep us in good state, moving forward," Rohit said on Tuesday ahead of the series-finale.

"If we keep winning games, keeping doing the right things on the field, the composition of the team will take care (of itself)," Rohit added.

The stylish batsman then gave his rationale for why he wants to take one series at a time.

"We are playing against a quality team and hereafter Sri Lanka is coming, then we go to New Zealand and thereafter there are a lot of T20s to focus on. If we focus on the present, that will help us more than anything else.

"Right now, we need to see what are the mistakes we are making so that when we come out and play every fresh game, we look like a different side."

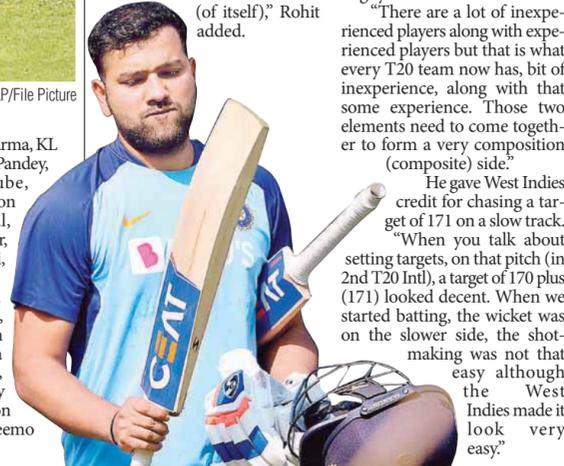
Talk about chasing, Rohit agreed that India have been better while batting second compared to defending totals as one found out in the first two games in Hyderabad (won while chasing) and Thiruvananthapuram (lost while defending).

"Yes, of late our chasing has been good compared to posting targets. It was a good target that we posted but again it's a new set of guys.

"There are a lot of inexperienced players along with experienced players but that is what every T20 team now has, bit of inexperience, along with that some experience. Those two elements need to come together to form a very composition (composite) side."

He gave West Indies credit for chasing a target of 171 on a slow track.

"When you talk about setting targets, on that pitch (in 2nd T20 Intl), a target of 170 plus (171) looked decent. When we started batting, the wicket was on the slower side, the shot-making was not that easy although the West Indies made it look very easy."



Pollard's IPL experience will benefit WI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

West Indies coach Phil Simmons on Tuesday said the team would be banking heavily on skipper Kieron Pollard in the series-deciding third T20 International against India as his understanding of the pitch due to IPL exposure will be "invaluable" for the bowlers.

Pollard has played a lot at the Wankhede Stadium as he has been part of the Mumbai Indians IPL squad and Simmons said his experience will help the visiting bowlers.

"(Kieron) Pollard has played a lot at this venue, the others have not played that much. I think the experience which they have got from here is invaluable and especially the captain (Pollard), as he has been here for 10 years," Simmons said in the pre-match press conference here.

"He knows things inside out and that will definitely help our bowlers mainly, there are a few youngsters in this format. It will definitely help," he added.

There have been lot of dropped catches from both the sides and Simmons said there should be no excuses for fielding lapses.

"You will not win games if you drop them. The players will have to tell you if it is the lights or whether it is their execution or their position," he said.

"...I do not like excuses. I think if you drop a catch it is your fault. You can blame the lights but I think we just have to keep working hard so we do not drop any," he added.

Pollard replaced Jason Holder as the captain of the ODI team, while he replaced Carlos Brathwaite to become skipper of the T20 side and Simmons said



Pollard looks on during training AP

he has been doing well in the twin roles.

"I didn't have Jason (Holder) a lot in the ODIs when I was there (as a coach) before. Kieron (Pollard) is proactive with all the

'Pollard is a smart thinker'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma has seen a capable leader in Kieron Pollard from close quarters and believes that his longtime Mumbai Indians teammate has been responsible for a transformed West Indies side in white ball format.

Rohit termed the West Indies captain as a "smart thinker of the game."

"I know Pollard really well and he has a great knowledge about the game. I know as a leader what he would be expecting from the team. Under his leadership, it is a different team that we are seeing now, so yes, we have to be at our best when

players. He lets them know exactly what he wants from them. He's been good in the

we play them," said Rohit.

"He (Pollard) is a very smart player, smart thinker and he has been the captain of the team. When it comes to Mumbai (Indians), he has always been part of the leadership group and last year when I wasn't available for one game, he captained MI. So, he has always been part of the leadership group and I know how he thinks."

Rohit agreed that the Caribbean are unpredictable as a side.

"They are very unpredictable as a team, you never know what they can come up with on a given day, like we saw the other day," said Rohit.

Simmons said. "There is a forecast of rain here on the second and third days of the match."

Don't mess with Mahi



Ravi Shastri and Mahendra Singh Dhoni in a file picture AFP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India coach Ravi Shastri says none can "mess around with" Mahendra Singh Dhoni if he decides to be in contention for next year's T20

World Cup but the enigmatic former captain would "never impose himself" on the team.

In a soon-to-be-telecast interview on 'India Today' channel, Shastri was asked

about the much-speculated future of Dhoni, who has been on a sabbatical ever since India's semifinal exit from the ODI World Cup in England earlier this year.

"That (Dhoni) guy is a legend. The last thing he will want is to impose himself on an Indian team, having known him.

He is wanting to take a break but he is going to play the IPL," Shastri said on the show 'The Inspiration'.

Asked if he isn't ruling out a comeback by the 38-year-old, Shastri answered, "The amount of sport he has played... If he puts himself in contention... If he feels after the IPL that 'I am good enough to play for India', don't mess around with that."

Dhoni, after maintaining a stoic silence on his future plans for months, had recently stated that, "Don't ask anything till January."

It's an emotional moment: Azhar on return of Test cricket to Pak



Pakistan skipper Azhar Ali with his Sri Lankan counterpart Dimuth Karunaratne pose with trophy before start of Test series PCB

PTI ■ RAWALPINDI

The return of Test cricket to Pakistani soil is an emotional occasion, captain Azhar Ali said on Tuesday but that will not come in the way of his team's efforts to make amends for a disastrous tour of Australia.

Pakistani players will play Test cricket at home after a gap

of 10 years when they take on Sri Lanka in a two-Test series starting here today.

"All the players are very emotional about this Test series. It is great to be back to our home grounds and I just hope that Test cricket returns regularly to Pakistan now," Azhar told a media conference.

Azhar also conceded that the series is a make-or-break situation for his team it has not been playing well in Test cricket for some time now. Pakistan lost 0-2 to Australia.

"It is unacceptable the way we lost in Australia. The last two series in South Africa and Australia have been tough for

No more int'l cricket at neutral venues

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan will no longer look for neutral venues to stage home international cricket matches.

"The onus will be on the other teams to tell us why they can't play in Pakistan," Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ehsan Mani told the Associated Press on Tuesday.

"Our default position will remain that Pakistan is safe. We play cricket in Pakistan (and if you want to play against Pakistan you have to come to Pakistan."

"It's only logical that cricket comes home," Mani said. AP

us. We know how important this series is.

"We need to turn to reverse our results and get back on the winning track as there is a lot of pride in Pakistan cricket and we need to win back the confidence of the fans," he said.

The under-pressure Pakistan skipper also made it clear that Sri Lanka would be a tough side to beat even in home conditions.

"Sri Lanka has always been a tough team because they play disciplined cricket. We also have to play disciplined cricket in every department. Test cricket demands disciplined cricket. You can't win a test in one session but you can lose a test in one session. So one has

PCB invite CA for Test series

PTI ■ KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board is trying to convince Cricket Australia to send its national team for a Test series in Pakistan in 2022, according to its CEO Wasim Khan.

"Cricket Australia has agreed in principle to play three Tests in Pakistan's home series. Obviously, we are doing everything to ensure Australia agrees to play in Pakistan in 2022 and it is an ongoing process," Khan told reporters.

He added that under the new Future Tours Program, whenever Pakistan and Australia play a bilateral series it will include three Tests.

Australia has not toured Pakistan since 1998, forcing the 1992 World Cup champions to conduct their home series' at neutral venues, including Sri Lanka, England, and UAE.

to be disciplined to beat Sri Lanka at home or away," he said.

"We have to rely on our bowling attack. Yasir Shah didn't do well in Australia but he has won many matches and I think he will return to his old self in this series. We have confidence in our attack and we are backing them," he added.

There is a forecast of rain here on the second and third days of the match.

The PCB official lamented that whoever from the board had agreed to the existing Future Tours Program schedule has not given enough importance to Test matches.

"It is unfortunate that we are among those countries who play the least number of Test matches in a season. Whereas other leading nations play 8 to 14 Tests in a year we don't even get six to seven," he said.

Khan also confirmed that the PCB has dispatched the proposed itinerary of the ICC Test Championship Tests to the Bangladesh Cricket Board to be played in January.

"We have sent the itinerary and are awaiting a response. After Sri Lanka's arrival to play the two Tests we don't foresee any problems in the Bangladesh board agreeing to send their team in January," he said.

Azhar said one can't say for certain how much time is required to rebuild the team.

"We have never kept patience and we don't give the rebuilding process time. I think these players have a lot of potential and they will soon come out of their comfort zone once they play under different conditions. We have to keep patience instead of calling for changes," he asserted.



Micky Arthur explains some batting techniques to Niroshan Dickwella AP

Mickey's presence is big advantage: Karunaratne

PTI ■ RAWALPINDI

Sri Lankan Test skipper SD Dimuth Karunaratne feels the presence of former Pakistan coach Micky Arthur in their camp will be a "big advantage" when his side take on Azhar Ali's men.

"Mickey is with us and previously he was the coach of the Pakistan team as well so it is a positive thing for us that he knows the Pakistan team very closely and that has given us a lot of confidence for this series," he said on the eve of the match.

However, the skipper said the onus will be on the his players to execute plans properly.

"His presence is a big advantage to us as he knows each and every player very closely. How they think. How they prepare.

But we have to do things right in the middle and implement our plans properly."

"Our bowlers have to bowl in the right areas to every batsman and we have to also apply ourselves in batting and fielding. Pakistan has never been an easy side to beat at home. The good thing is we know their game well having played regularly against them in game or UAE," he said.

He added that playing in Pakistan for the first time serves as a motivation for him to do well in the series.

"I am in Pakistan for the first time and that is also a motivation for me to do well as I have played against them at home and in UAE. But this will be a different experience for me and most our guys who are playing here for the first time," he said.