

**NATION 5**  
MODI-ABE SUMMIT  
CANCELLED OVER PROTESTS

**MONEY 8**  
MOODY'S CUTS INDIA'S GDP  
GROWTH FORECAST TO 5.6%

**SPORTS 12**  
'DUBE WILL GET BETTER  
WITH CONFIDENCE'

VIJAYAWADA, SATURDAY DECEMBER 14, 2019; PAGES 12 ₹3

# the pioneer

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CATHERINE  
MAKES  
THE CUT

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## I-T DEPARTMENT TAX REFUNDS UP AT RS 1.57 L-CR: REVENUE SECY

The Income Tax Department has issued tax refunds of Rs 1.57 lakh crore till December 11, Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey said on Friday. At a press meet held to showcase the report card of the government, Mr Pandey said tax refund cases have gone up by 17 per cent to 2.16 crore. He said the department issued tax refunds of Rs 1.57 lakh crore till December 11. He said "By December 15, the advanced tax for Q3 will come and at that stage we will get an idea of what is going to be the impact of corporate tax reduction announced in September."



## UN CLOSELY ANALYSING POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF INDIA'S CAA

The UN is closely analysing the possible consequences of India's amended Citizenship Act, a spokesperson for UN chief Antonio Guterres has said, insisting that the world body has its basic principles, including those enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and expect those to be upheld. According to the amended Act, members of Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 and facing religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants.



## PRESERVE BODIES OF ACCUSED IN DISHA CASE, ORDERS HIGH COURT

The Telangana High Court on Friday directed the state government to preserve the bodies of the four accused of sensational Disha murder case till further orders. The HC has issued the orders following a directive by the Supreme Court of India to stay the ongoing proceedings in the High Court till further orders. A division bench of the High Court comprising Chief Justice R.S. Chauhan and A. Abhishek Reddy said that the panel constituted by the Supreme Court was likely to inspect the bodies soon.



## 12 YEARS AFTER AYESHA MEERA'S MURDER, FRESH AUTOPSY TODAY

Re-post-mortem would be conducted on Saturday on the body of Ayesha Meera, the pharmacy student who was raped and murdered on December 27, 2007. According to sources, the police are making arrangements for the fresh round of autopsy at the Chenchupet burial ground in Tenali. The murder created a sensation across the country. The 12-year-old case has taken many twists and turns. People's organisations and student bodies had protested against the tardy progress of the investigation into the case.



### CAPSULE

#### NO LOOS AT 3.62 LAKH ANGANWADI CENTRES: IRANI

**NEW DELHI:** As many as 3.62 lakh anganwadi centres across the country have no toilet facility while 1.59 lakh have no drinking water supply, Union Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani said on Friday. Responding to a query in the Lok Sabha, Irani said there are a total of 13,77,595 operational anganwadi centres in the country. "A total number of 3,62,940 AWCs do not have toilets facilities and 1,59,568 AWCs do not have drinking water facilities," she said. Out of a total 1.87 anganwadi centres in Uttar Pradesh, nearly one-third of them (53,089) have no toilet facility, according to the data given by the minister.



#### COLLECTOR TOLD TO EXPLAIN YSRCP COLOURS ON OFFICE

**AMARAVATI:** Taking a serious view of the government's move, the AP High Court on Friday served a notice on Guntur collector I Samuel Anand Kumar, directing him to give an explanation on painting a panchayat office in YSRCP colours. A petition was filed in the High Court opposing the painting of the panchayat office of Pallapadu mandal in Vatticherukuru mandal in YSRCP colours. When the petition came up for hearing on Friday, the High Court took a serious view of the issue and questioned the propriety of the government in painting the state offices in party colours.



#### GIRL RAPED BY STUDENT AT HER SCHOOL IN MP

**JABALPUR:** A 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a student at a private school here, police said on Friday. The incident occurred inside the toilet of the school on December 5, police said. According to police, her parents lodged a complaint on December 12, after she told them about the incident and her medical examination confirmed rape. "The girl was raped by a student, who is yet to be identified, inside the toilet of the school during study hours," police said.



### TODAY

**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Margashirsha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam  
Tithi: Dwitiya: 08:47 am  
Nakshatra: Purnvasu: 05:04 am (Next Day)  
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)  
Rahukalam: 09:25 am - 10:48 am  
Yamagandam: 01:32 am - 02:44 pm  
Varjyam: 05:27 pm - 07:00 pm  
Gulika: 06:41 am - 08:03 am  
Good Time: (to start any important work)  
Amritakalam: 02:44 am - 04:17 am  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:48 am - 12:32 pm

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Clear with periodic clouds  
Temp: 31/21  
Humidity: 78%  
Sunrise: 06:37  
Sunset: 05:43  
Current Weather Conditions Updated December 13, 2019 5:00 PM

### NEW DAWN

## AP passes Bills to try rape, harassment cases faster

Bills in Concurrent List, will attract attention, spur debate: Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Friday passed both the "Disha Bills" that impose death penalty for rape besides taking stringent action for crimes against women by setting up special courts to deal with such offences.

The first Disha Bill — Criminal Law (Andhra Pradesh Amendment) Bill 2019 amending the Penal Code — says that all cases regarding offences against women shall be investigated and tried expeditiously with provisions of death penalty.

The second Bill — Andhra Pradesh Special Court for Specified Offences against Women and Children Bill, 2019 — will enable the State government to set up exclusive special courts for speedy trial of specified offences against women and children.



In his concluding remarks here on Friday, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said that as the Disha Bills are in the concurrent list of State and Centre, it will go for Presidential assent which will attract national attention through debates and discussions, and the two Bills will stand as an answer to the system which needs to expedite cases where there is conclusive evidence.

The Nirbhaya case is an example, where the culprits have not been punished as on date, he said, adding that for family members of the victims seek fast and fair trial.

The CM pointed to the public response and acclaim the recent Disha case received and said that this was consid-

**The Bill prescribes death penalty for rape crimes where there is conclusive evidence, and for this, Section 376 of IPC needs to be amended**

ered before drafting the Bills.

The new Bill prescribes death penalty for rape crimes where there is conclusive evidence, and for this, Section 376 of IPC needs to be amended. This apart, the Bill reduces the judgment period to 21 working days with investigation being completed in seven days and trial winding up in 14 days.

The second Disha Bill prescribes life imprisonment for other sexual offences against children and includes Section 354 F and 354 G in IPC.

Continued on Page 3

## House allows Speaker to act on 'rude Naidu'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Noisy scenes were witnessed in the AP Assembly on Friday over Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu's alleged rude behaviour with marshals on the Assembly premises on Thursday.

While the YSRCP adopted a resolution empowering the Speaker to take necessary action against elected representatives and others who created a ruckus on the Assembly premises, the TDP members complained to Speaker Tammineni Sitaram that YSRCP members had distorted the facts.

Reading out the resolution, Minister for Legislative Affairs Buggana Rajendranath said, "The House resolves to empower Speaker Tammineni Sitaram to take appropriate action against legislators and others responsible for the unruly incident that took place on the Assembly premises on Thursday."

Continued on Page 3

## Botsa says no shifting of AP capital location

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Putting to rest doubts over the shifting of the Capital Amaravati to another location, municipal administration and urban development minister Botsa Satyanarayana on Friday categorically told the AP Legislative Council that there were no such plans.

When TDP members asked the minister if there was a proposal to shift the Capital, he answered with a "No".

They also sought to know how much had been spent on the Capital project so far.

When the TDP members further asked him how much financial burden would fall on the government if the Capital was shifted, he said: "Such a question does not arise."

With this, Botsa appears to have given the much needed clarity over the location of the Capital as the absence of any concrete statement being made by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy generated debate.



YSRCP leaders had given conflicting statements over the project, adding fuel to the fire.

Moreover, the State government too, on its part, contributed to the uncertainty over continuance of Amaravati as the capital, by appointing an expert committee to look into the issue. A host of YSRCP leaders alleged that the previous TDP government had resorted to 'insider trading' while pooling land for the Capital and that it was a huge real estate scam committed by former chief minister N

Chandrababu Naidu. Ironically, it was Botsa who had stoked controversy over the issue by hinting that the Capital might be shifted to another location in the State. He had said the government was discussing the issue and a decision would be taken soon in this regard. He had raked up a controversy stating that the Amaravati was located in flood-prone zone and that the construction cost would be too high due to the nature of the soil in the area.

**Botsa appears to have given the much needed clarity over the location of the Capital in the absence of any concrete statement by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy**

Continued on Page 3

## CAA stir: Protesters vandalise railway stations in West Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Protests over the amended Citizenship Act reached the shores of West Bengal on Friday, with agitators resorting to violence and arson at railway stations and thoroughfares across the state, seeking immediate revocation of the law.

According to police sources, people in the minority-dominated districts of rural Howrah, Murshidabad, Birbhum, parts of Burdwan and North Bengal hit the streets in the morning, raising slogans against the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre.

Some of them even attacked local BJP workers and leaders, prompting the saffron camp to allege that the attacks were masterminded by the ruling TMC. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee appealed to people to maintain peace and calm and urged the protesters to refrain from taking law into own hands.

Similar pleas were also made by Governor Jagdeep Dhakhar, who requested people not to violate law and order.

In Murshidabad district, bordering Bangladesh, protesters set fire to Beldanga railway station complex and thrashed RPF personnel deputed there.

Continued on Page 3



## Telangana not to implement Citizenship Act

L VENKAT RAM REDDY ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is understood to have taken a decision to toe the line of non-BJP ruled states on the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act.

TRS sources said KCR too wants Telangana to join the list of states that have refused to implement CAA, adding that an announcement to this effect is expected shortly.

Continued on Page 3

## 'States can't refuse CAA implementation'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State governments have no powers to reject the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 as the legislation was enacted under the Union List of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution, a top official said on Friday.

The statement came after chief ministers of West Bengal, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh announced that the law is "unconstitutional" and has no place in their respective states.

"The states have no powers to deny implementation of a central law which is in the Union List," the top official from the Home Ministry said.

There are 97 items which are under the Union List of the 7th Schedule that include Defence, External Affairs, Railways, Citizenship and Naturalisation, among others.

On Thursday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had said that "an anti-constitutional law will have no place" in his state.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "In your (BJP) manifesto, instead of development issues, you have put in promise to divide the country. Why will citizenship be on the basis of religion? I will not accept this. We dare you..."

"You can pass laws in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha forcefully because you have the number. But we will not let you divide the country," she said.

Describing the act as a direct assault on India's secular character, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said his government will not let the legislation to be implemented in his state.

**There are 97 items under the Union List of the 7th Schedule that include Defence, External Affairs, Railways, Citizenship and Naturalisation**



Continued on Page 3

## Rahul's rape remark creates uproar in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Speaker Om Birla adjourned the Lok Sabha sine die on Friday amid uproar by BJP members over comments by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on incidents of rape at an election rally.

Speaking at a rally for the Jharkhand Assembly polls at Godda on Thursday, Rahul said, "Narendra Modi had said 'Make in India' but nowadays wherever you look, it is 'Rape in India'." Rahul referred to a rape case in Jharkhand and the case of rape in Unnao in which a BJP MLA is the prime accused. Referring to PM's slogan of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', Rahul declared girls had to be saved from BJP MLAs.

Smriti Irani, who defeated Rahul in his pocketborough of Amethi in the Lok Sabha polls, declared, "It's happened for the first time in history of India that Gandhi family's son is saying 'come and rape women in India'." Asking whether this was Rahul's message to the people of India, Irani demanded that the Congress leader be punished.

Later speaking to mediapersons, Irani asked Congress chief Sonia Gandhi that she should make him understand "that women of this country won't tolerate such condemnable statements".

BJP MP Locket Chatterjee said Rahul had insulted women by making remarks that 'Make in India' had



**Despite the uproar, Rahul Gandhi told mediapersons categorically that he would not apologise for his remarks**

become 'rape in India'. She said all men were not rapists.

Referring to Rahul's comments, Rajnath said people who spoke like this should apologise to the entire country and not just Parliament. Rajnath asked whether such people should be allowed to come to Parliament.

Ms Arjun Ram Meghwal said several BJP members had given notices of adjournment against Gandhi's remarks and they are allowed to speak. Meghwal said Gandhi's remarks in Jharkhand's Godda district on Thursday were condemnable and he should apologise in the House. He said there had been precedents where members have apologised in Parliament for remarks made outside the House.

## Nirmala on Forbes most powerful women list

Roshni Nadar, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw are only other Indian women on the coveted list

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has debuted on Forbes list of the most powerful women, for 2019. Sitharaman, who is only the second female to become a finance minister in India, is ranked 34th, higher than New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (rank 38), Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (rank 40) and Ivanka Trump (rank 42).

Apart from Sitharaman, HCL Enterprise CEO and executive director Roshni Nadar Malhotra (rank 54) and Biocon chief Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (rank 65) also feature on the list.



Nirmala Sitharaman



Roshni Nadar



Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

"True power depends on how women use their influence to make an impact. Money doesn't necessarily mean someone is powerful; otherwise there would be far more than just 13 billionaires on this year's 100 Most Powerful

Women list," said Forbes's Elana Lyn Gross, publishing the list. German Chancellor Angela Merkel yet again topped the list, while European Central bank president and former IMF chief Christine Lagarde

bettered her position to second rank from last year's third rank. Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, who initiated impeachment proceedings against President Donald Trump, is ranked third. Referring to

**Only the second female to become a finance minister in India, Sitharaman is battling one of the worst economic slowdowns the country has faced in recent times**

Nancy Pelosi's recent "Don't mess with me" remark to a reporter, Forbes said that could be the mantra for just about every one of the Forbes 100 Most Powerful Women.

Mazumdar-Shaw is India's richest self-made woman.

CAPSULE

Develop Chittoor dist, NRIs plea to govt

**VIJAYAWADA:** Demanding development of Chittoor district, Non-Residents Indians took up an initiative appealing to the Andhra Pradesh government to sanction university to Chittoor district. They said that Chittoor, which has been a district headquarters for many years, has been neglected for decades with zero development. Raising the demand, the NRI Group started a petition called change.org requesting a university. To support the initiative, people can sign up the petition, they said.

Freak mishap claims driver's life

**VIJAYAWADA:** Freak mishap claimed a life of a driver near the agriculture department check post at Vinukonda in Guntur district on Friday. The accident occurred when the check post staff tried to stop a lorry and the driver applied sudden brakes. With this, another lorry coming from behind collided with the front vehicle. With the impact of the collision, the rear lorry driver died on the spot and the cleaner sustained serious injuries. On receiving the information, police rushed to the spot. Later, they registered a case and took up investigation.



# Suicide at Tirumala is a sin: Agama advisor



(Left) Vaishanasa Agama Advisor AV Ramana Dikshitulu addressing the media in Tirumala on Friday (right) Purification rituals Suddhi and Punyahavachanam being performed on the temple premises in Tirumala



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vaishanasa Agama Advisor AV Ramana Dikshitulu advocated that suicides in Tirumala were an unwelcome feature and in fact a big sin. Speaking to media persons at his residence in Tirumala on Friday, the Agama advisor said it was a wrong thing and a superstition among some devotees that death in Tirumala earns them Vaikunthapraphi-salvation from mortal world. His comments came follow-

ing the death of a pilgrim on Friday, who intentionally fell under a milk van at around 5.30 am nearby the temple.

He once again appealed to devotees not to undertake such irrational acts with false beliefs as it would affect the sentiments of millions of devotees across the world

He said since death occurred on the mada streets surrounding the temple, the purification rituals were performed, which included Suddhi and Punyahavachanam in the temple and the holy water was sprinkled in the incident area and later the daily worship continued. He once again appealed to devotees not to undertake such irrational acts with false beliefs as it would affect the sentiments of millions of devotees across the world.

# Jobs galore for students trained in Blockchain tech

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

EMURGO Academy has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with VR Siddhartha Engineering College here on Friday to offer Blockchain Technology courses at the college. Keeping in mind the rising demand for Blockchain developers in the country, both EMURGO Academy and VR Siddhartha Engineering College joined hands together for this initiative.



AV Ratna Prasad, Principal, VR Siddhartha Engineering College, D Rajeswara Rao, Head of Department, Computer Science Engineering, VR Siddhartha Engineering College, Vijay Balaji Elango, Vice-President, EMURGO Academy, seen while signing the Memorandum of Understanding in Vijayawada on Friday

Commenting on the collaboration with VR Siddhartha Engineering College, E Venkatesan, CEO, EMURGO Academy, said, "Blockchain has helped revolutionise businesses across the world, and India is on its way to becoming more Blockchain-savvy in the days to come. This has prompted students to choose Blockchain as their career option and most of them want to understand and enrol into Blockchain course before they start their professional life. EMURGO Academy will train students in Blockchain technology with an internationally aligned curriculum specially drafted by the SMEs and will pave path for their future."

to provide the best for our students. With Blockchain technology gaining importance in the job sector, we want our students to learn this technology and become industry ready. Getting skilled in new technologies such as Blockchain will enhance their opportunities to get recognised in the job market. This association will bring in new hopes for our students."

Through this association, EMURGO Academy will provide opportunities to students to work on live projects, offer R&D advantage, and access to employers across the globe, exposure to international forums, an internship with EMURGO and other companies and a junior fellowship programme.

- EMURGO Academy signs an MoU with Siddhartha Engineering College
- E Venkatesan, CEO, EMURGO Academy, said, "Blockchain has helped revolutionise businesses across the world. This has prompted students to choose Blockchain as their career option and most of them want to understand and enrol into Blockchain course before they start their professional life
- EMURGO Academy will train students in Blockchain technology with an internationally aligned curriculum specially drafted by the SMEs and will pave path for their future

ANNAPRASADAM SERVICES TO PILGRIMS

# TTD AEO seeks generous contributions from rice millers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Terming the vegetable donors and Rice Millers Association as two eyes and hands of Annaprasadam wing of TTD, the additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy sought the rice millers to come up with more generous contributions to provide more qualitative Annaprasadam services to pilgrims.



Additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy addresses a review meeting in Tirumala on Friday

A review meeting with representatives of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana State Rice Millers Associations was convened at Tirumala at Annamaiah Bhavan on Friday. He complimented the Rice Millers Association for providing Sona Masuri rice to TTD at Rs 37 per kilo when the market rate is Rs 45. He also thanked the association for providing Rs 55 lakhs worth rice free of cost in the last two months upon his request. The Additional EO also asked them to consider contributing more to TTD Annaprasadam wing.

Rice millers also sought Additional EO to consider providing darshan to rice millers to encourage more donations to which Dharma Reddy said he will definitely put forth the same in the upcoming Trust Board meeting. Procurement GM Jagadeeshwar Reddy, deputy executive officer Annaprasadam Nagaraju, deputy executive officer (Marketing) Natesh Babu, catering officer GLN Shastry, AP Rice Millers Association chief G Venkateswara Rao, representatives from Khaammam, Nizamabad and Guntur also participated.

# Man jumps in front of Delhi Metro train, dies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 33-year-old man died on Friday after he jumped in front of a Delhi Metro train at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium metro station, police said. A police officer said the deceased has been identified as Bharat, hailing from Chennai. He was rushed to the RML Hospital where he was declared brought dead. Bharat was employed with a private company and resided with his family in Sector 128, Noida. Police said his family has been informed and a probe is underway.



# SCR supplies FOG PASS devices to loco pilots

HELPS IN RUNNING OF TRAINS DURING FOGGY WEATHER

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

FOG PASS device is a GPS based hand held portable device, which serves as an aid to alert the crew during foggy weather regarding upcoming landmarks through audio and visual indication.

Gajanan Mallya, General Manager, South Central Railway opined that FOG PASS devices are serving as helping hands to loco pilots and are handy to carry. He also advised all the loco pilots to make use of the equipment for smooth and hassle-free train operations. Furthermore, plans are on hand to supply similar equipment to other divisions also, he added.

The South Central Railway has taken the initiative of supplying FOG PASS devices to the loco pilots duly adopting the digital technology for smooth and fool proof train operations. These FOG PASS devices are portable GPS based hand held equipment, which assist the loco pilots in running of trains during the thick



(Left) FOG PASS device (right) Loco pilot running a train with the help of FOG PASS device in a foggy weather

foggy weather. Entire data of a particular section like location of signals, stations, level crossing gates, warning boards, curves and gradients are mapped with GPS and fed into the device.

These devices are incorporated with visual and voice indication for alerting the loco pilot. During the thick foggy weather condition, loco pilots find it difficult to see the surrounding locations and aspect of the approaching signal. Due to this loco pilots are forced to restrict the speed of the train resulting in loss of punctuality. To enhance safety

and also to improve the punctuality in train operations, the SCR has introduced FOG PASS devices, which helps the loco pilots by alerting through audio and visual indication well before the approaching signals, level crossings and stations.

The FOG PASS device displays details of upcoming three land marks, along with distance from current location. Audio alert will be given around 500 metres before any approaching land mark.

In the initial phase, the SCR has supplied around 250 FOG

PASS devices each to Secunderabad and Vijayawada divisions. These FOG PASS devices are kept at the crew booking points in both the divisions and are issued to the loco pilot, while signing on for the duty. The same will be returned by the loco pilot, while signing off from the duty. FOG PASS devices are extensively used during foggy weather condition by both loco pilots and assistant loco pilots working in Secunderabad and Vijayawada divisions and the feedback from them is good.



# Indo-Russian navies joint exercise to strengthen ties

PNS ■ PANAJI

Indra-2019, a tri-services exercise being conducted jointly by the Indian and Russian navies off Goa, will further strengthen relations between the two armed forces and enable them to undertake joint operations in a cohesive manner to address common challenges, a press statement issued by the two

navies said on Friday. Russian Federation Navy ships Yaroslav Mudny, Viktor Konetsky and Elyna along with Indian Navy vessels INS Aditya, INS Tarkash, MiG29K fighter aircraft, maritime patrol aircraft and ship-borne helicopters are participating in the 10-day tri-services exercise which kicked off in Goa on December 10.

"Indian Navy and the Russian Navy share strong bonds of military and technical co-operation. The Baltic fleet with its headquarters in Kaliningrad region, has illustrious partnership with the Indian Navy."

"The Western Fleet which is the sword arm of the Indian Navy comprises several cutting edge warships of Russian ori-

gin built at the Baltic shipyard 'Yantar', said the joint statement issued by Vladimir Vorobe, chief-of-staff, Russian Federation Navy and Indian Flag Officer Commanding Goa Naval Area, Rear Admiral Philipose G. Pynumootil.

"Exercise Indra was initiated in 2003, with an aim to enhance interoperability between Indian and Russian

navies. India and Russia have shared long standing co-operation in defence equipment, training of personnel, transfer of defence technology and equipment spares.

"It is only thus natural that this military co-operation between the two nations evolves to the next level. This year's exercise is the second iteration of Exercise Indra,

extended to tri-services and the Indian Armed Forces are looking forward to operating with our Russian counterparts over land, in air and at sea," the statement said, adding that Exercise Indra would further "strengthen relations between the armed forces and enable undertaking joint operations in a cohesive manner to address common challenges".

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES

<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 37,940 (10 gm)	₹ 150
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 44,100 (1kg)	₹ 200

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹165
Without Skin	₹188
Broiler at Farm	₹114

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	436
VIJAYAWADA	452
VISAKHAPATNAM	470
RETAIL PRICE (IN VIJAYAWADA)	₹4.52

PNS ■ NEW YORK

If you want to protect your vision in old age, make sure you eat healthy food. Researchers have found that people eating a diet high in red and processed meat, fried food, refined grains and high-fat dairy products may be three times more likely to develop an eye condition that damages the retina and affects a person's central vision.

The condition is called late stage age-related macular degeneration (AMD), an irreversible condition that affects a person's central vision, taking away their ability to drive, among other common daily activities.

"Treatment for late, neo-vascular AMD is invasive and expensive, and there is no treatment for geographic atrophy, the



other form of late AMD that also causes vision loss. It is in our best interest to catch this condition early and prevent development of late AMD," said Shruti Dighe, who conducted the research at

the University at Buffalo in the US.

The results suggest that a Western dietary pattern may be a risk factor for developing late AMD. However, a Western

diet was not associated with development of early AMD in the study, published in the British Journal of Ophthalmology.

The authors studied the

"Treatment for late, neo-vascular AMD is invasive and expensive, and there is no treatment for geographic atrophy, the other form of late AMD that also causes vision loss. It is in our best interest to catch this condition early and prevent development of late AMD," Shruti Dighe said

occurrence of early and late AMD over approximately 18 years of follow-up among participants of the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) Study which was designed to

investigate the etiology and clinical outcomes of atherosclerosis, a disease in which plaque builds up inside your arteries.

Dighe and her colleagues used data on 66 different foods that participants self-reported consuming between 1987 and 1995 and identified two diet patterns in this cohort -- Western and what researchers commonly refer to as "prudent" (healthy) -- that best explained the greatest variation between diets.

"What we observed in this study was that people who had no AMD or early AMD at the start of our study and reported frequently consuming unhealthy foods were more likely to develop vision-threatening, late stage disease approximately 18 years later," said study senior author Amy Millen, Associate Professor

at the University at Buffalo.

Early AMD is asymptomatic, meaning that people often do not know that they have it. To catch it, a physician would have to review a photo of the person's retina, looking for pigmentary changes and development of drusen, or yellow deposits made up of lipids. With early AMD, there could be either atrophy or a build-up of new blood vessels in the part of the eye known as the macula.

"When people start developing these changes they will begin to notice visual symptoms. Their vision will start diminishing," said Dighe, who is now pursuing her PhD in cancer sciences at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, New York. "This is advanced or late stage AMD," she said.

# Chilli powder made by prisoners to hit market

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Soon, red-chilli and turmeric powder prepared by the prisoners of Central Prison Vizag will hit the markets in the State. The Andhra Pradesh Prisons Department has decided to introduce spice powder making unit at Vizag Central Prison. It made arrangements to set up the unit to help inmates earn income, while serving their sentence in jail.

Superintendent of Vizag Central Prison S Rahul said that they procured the machinery from Gurgaon for the spice making unit on the prison premises. If all goes as per plan, the unit will commence production in the first week of January 2020.

"We decided to produce at least Rs 50 lakh worth chilli and turmeric powder per year. We will procure famed Guntur red-chillies and organic turmeric from parts of Narsipatnam and Chintapalle region for making the best quality of red-chilli and turmeric powder.

Sources said that the chilli powder and turmeric powders being produced by the prisoners will supply to other prisons and also sell in the retail market under the brand name of 'Sudhar'.

A senior officer with the prisons department said that there is a scope for increasing the turnover of jail made products in the State by setting up of some more units.



Superintendent of Vizag Central Prison S Rahul said that they procured the machinery from Gurgaon for the spice making unit on the prison premises. If all goes as per plan, the unit will commence production in the first week of January 2020

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Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy receives a portrait of former Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy during the alumni meet of Andhra University in Visakhapatnam on Friday

## AU has potential to make it to list of top 5 varsities: CM

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Hailing the legacy of the Andhra University, Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy said the varsity had all the potential to make into the top five varsities of the country. He was attending the alumni meet of the Andhra University here at AU Convention Hall on Friday.

Andhra University Vice-Chancellor Prof PVGD Prasad Reddy told that the varsity was ranked 14 by a special committee formed by the HRD Ministry to find out the Institute of Excellence. "But, I feel a pinch in my heart that it is not in the top five. The varsity has a great history and all scopes to jump to the top five positions," he opined.

However, spotting some lacunae behind the varsity not making to the top five, he said the reason could be the huge teaching staff vacancy in Andhra University. Over 400 teaching staff is vacant in the university and this is the truth of the university. "Our government would resolve the issue at the earliest," the chief minister assured.

However, spotting some lacunae behind the varsity not making to the top five, he said the reason could be the huge teaching staff vacancy. Over 400 teaching staff is vacant in the university and this is the truth. "Our government would resolve the issue at the earliest," he said and assured of Rs 50 crore to Rs 100 crore AU Alumni Corpus Fund.

The government would provide Rs 50 crore towards the Rs 100 crore corpus fund planned by the AU Alumni Association. GMR Group Founder Chairman GM Rao had suggested the need

## One-year mandatory apprenticeship in the offing

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A degree in non-technical course may be of four year duration, while B Tech students may have study five years instead of four year from next academic year.

"Stressing the need for making courses job-oriented and students employable, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said all the courses would come up with one-year mandatory apprenticeship so that students get jobs after stepping out of colleges. "Education department is working hard on it to devise the curriculum. Instead of regular B Com, one would get degree with honours. Engineering courses may take five years and the basic graduation courses four years. However, we want the students to be employable at

last," he said at the AU Alumni Meet on Friday. The new system will mandate students, not just from B Tech courses but also non-technical courses to undergo a year-long apprenticeship period when they are still on the campus.

He also expressed concern over the poor Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of India among the BRICS countries. India has lowest GER with 23% and it shows 77% of the students are dropping out after Intermediate.

Rs 12,000 cr to transform 45,000 govt schools. "We have around 45,000 government schools and those are going to be upgraded with the basic infrastructure under Nadu-Nedu programme. In the first phase, Rs 3,600 crore would be allocated and total expenditure may go up to Rs 12,000 crore for all schools," he said.

## ROW OVER MARSHALS' BEHAVIOUR

# TDP moves privilege motion against Jagan

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP members on Friday came in defence of Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu stating that he had not used unparliamentary language against the Chief Marshal.

In the privilege motion moved against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, the TDP said that on December 12, the marshals stopped Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu, along with TDP MLAs and MLCs, when they tried to enter the Assembly premises through Gate No. 4 at 8.55 a.m. An argument ensued between them and the marshals when the latter



refused to open the gate. On the same day, the TDP had mentioned in the Assembly about the impolite behaviour of the mar-

shals and sought appropriate action against them.

On Friday, the YSRCP members claimed in the Assembly that

the Opposition leader had abused the employees. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy during his speech over the issue claimed that the Opposition leader used unparliamentary language against the Chief Marshal.

Later, the video clippings of the controversial incident were played in the Assembly over and over, but it could not be established that Naidu had used any abusive words against the Chief Marshal. He only said 'open the door', 'no question', 'can't we enter the Assembly', 'I'm telling you politely', 'who told you?', 'leave me' and 'you are unfit to be the Chief Marshal'.

"You have not granted permission to the Opposition leader when he offered to give clarification after the video was played in the House," they complained.

By putting words in Naidu's mouth, the ruling YSRCP members tried to attribute use of filthy language by him against the Chief Marshal. "Claiming that Naidu had used an unspeakable word against the Chief Marshal, the YSRCP members are only trying to cause damage to his reputation," they said. Alleging that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had misled the House over the issue, the TDP demanded that the Speaker take action against him.

## AP passes Bills to try rape, harassment cases faster

Continued from Page 1

In cases of harassment of women on social or through digital media, the Bill states two years imprisonment for the first conviction and four years for second and subsequent convictions. For this a new Section 354 E will be added to the IPC, 1860.

To ensure speedy trial, the State will set up exclusive special courts in all the 13 districts to deal with cases of offences against women and children including rape, acid attacks, stalking, voyeurism, social media harassment of women,



sexual harassment and all cases under POCSO Act.

The State will also employ special Public Prosecutors and special police force dedicated for such crimes only.

A Women and Children Offenders Register will be maintained and will be on

public domain and available to law enforcement agencies.

Earlier, tabling the Bills, AP home minister Mekathoti Sucharitha said that there was an imperative need to amend laws to bring speedy justice for all offences against women and children and the recent Disha case on the outskirts of Hyderabad has shaken the conscience of the nation.

Deputy Chief Minister Pushpa Srivani, T Anitha, Reddy Shanti, N Dhanalakshmi, V Sriodevi, V Rajini, KV Ushasri Charan, Adireddy Bhavani were among those who spoke in support of the Bill.

## Botsa says no shifting of AP capital location

Continued from Page 1

With this, the Opposition TDP started exerting pressure on the government to come out with its decision on the issue. Botsa controversial statements drew widespread criticism from even the BJP, whose national spokesman GVL Narasimha Rao said the Centre would take a serious view if the State government decided to shift the Capital.

Even Jana Sena, Left parties and the Congress had opposed the move to shift the Capital. Later, the government constituted to five-member com-

mittee with urban planning experts to suggest ways for the overall development of the State including the Capital project.

This has led to widespread speculation that Capital may be shifted. It was surprising that even at this stage, Jaganmohan Reddy failed to utter a word on the issue.

The State government's initiative came two months after the withdrawal of the World Bank and Asia Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB) from the project.

This triggered an intense debate between the ruling YSRCP and the TDP.

## Telangana not to implement CAA

Continued from Page 1

CMS of non-BJP ruled states such as West Bengal, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have already announced that they would not implement CAA in their respective states. Maharashtra Minister Nitin Raut said on Friday that the Congress would not let CAA to be implemented in the state and expressed his confidence that the coalition government's partner Shiv Sena too would cooperate with the grand old party on the issue. With this, the number of states that have decided not to implement CAA has increased to six.

It may be recalled that TRS was among the few parties that had opposed the Citizenship

Amendment Bill (CAB) in both Houses of Parliament. TRS had voted against CAB in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, when it came up for voting. It happened to be the first time that TRS had voted against any Bill in Parliament introduced by the BJP-led NDA government since 2014. TRS has supported all Bills introduced by the NDA government in Parliament over the last five years.

TRS friendly-party AIMIM has been opposing CAA tooth and nail. Telangana has considerable Muslim population and TRS has solid Muslim vote bank in the state, courtesy AIMIM.

KCR does not want to lose the support of Muslims by supporting CAA and also does not want to distance from AIMIM, at a

time when the municipal elections are round the corner.

Even otherwise, KCR considers new pieces of Central legislation on a case by case basis. He has refused to implement the Centre's new Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, saying that the Act stipulates hefty fines for traffic violations which common people cannot afford. He made a statement in the Legislative Assembly in September that the Telangana government would not implement the new MV Act.

Sources said KCR could make an announcement regarding non-implementation of CAA in TS during the upcoming winter session of the Legislative Assembly. Further, the Assembly may pass a unanimous resolution against the implementation of CAA.

## Assembly empowers Speaker to act on 'rude Naidu'

Continued from Page 1

The resolution was adopted by the House by voice vote.

Earlier, after sensing the mood of the House which was in favour of taking action against the Leader of Opposition for his alleged unparliamentary utterances, and unruly behaviour in the Assembly premises and using foul language against the officials, the Speaker asked him to express regret for the incident failing which he has to go by the collective conscience of the House.

The video clippings of the previous day scuffle were shown repeatedly in the House. The Speaker said that the language used during the incident was derogatory and unparliamentary and when emotions were running high a slip of the tongue could be possible at the spur of the moment and some such words had come out,

which we cannot deny. "As a senior member and three-time Chief Minister it would be better if you express regret over the issue and take the issue to a dignified and logical conclusion," the Speaker said.

When there was no proper reply from the Opposition benches, the resolution was read out and it was adopted, enabling the Speaker to take action against the TDP legislators and others present in Assembly premises when the incident took place on Wednesday.

The Speaker directed the police officials to identify the outsiders present during the incident and take criminal action against them.

Those who spoke in favour of the resolution and demanded action against the TDP leader include, Jakkampudi Raja, Gollapudi Babu Rao, Ambati Rambabu, Appalaraju and Vara Prasad among others.

## Rs 1,400 cr saved though reverse tendering: Minister

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The State government has saved Rs 1,400 crore to the exchequer through judicial preview and reverse tendering, according to Water Resources Minister Anil Kumar Yadav.

Intervening in a short discussion in the Assembly on Friday, he said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan was in a mission mode to cleanse the system of corruption, he said the government was going ahead with measures to bring in transparency in the governance.

Alleging that the previous government did not take steps to award works at fair prices, he pointed out the contractors who had quoted high rates now quoted cheaper prices.

He said Rs 750 was saved on Polavaram project, Rs 105 on housing projects and Rs 67 crore on Veligonda project. Disclosing that the government was going ahead with works only after judicial preview, he said every care was being taken to stop corruption in contracts.

## CITIZENSHIP ACT STIR

# Protesters vandalise railway stations block roads in Bengal

Continued from Page 1

"Several parts of the station, RPF kiosks were set on fire and the tracks vandalised. Services have come to a halt here," a senior RPF official said.

In Raghunathganj area of the district, the agitators set vehicles on fire and tore copies of the amended Act. They blocked National Highway-34 and ransacked vehicles and nearby shops. Several people were injured when their vehicles were pelted with stones.

A huge police contingent was rushed to both Beldanga and Raghunathganj to control the situation.

The police had to resort to lathicharge in Beldanga area to disperse the mob.

Similar incidents were also reported from Uluberia and Diamond Harbour, both minority-dominated areas, as agitators blocked railway tracks and vandalised stations, leaving several passengers stranded during the day.

The affected trains included the 12841 Howrah-Chennai Coromandel Express, 22897 Howrah-Digha Kandari Express



and suburban locals.

The demonstrators, numbering around 250, obstructed the Up and Down lines at Uluberia station and hurled stones at the stranded trains, injuring a driver, South Eastern Railway spokesman Sanjoy Ghosh said.

The railways have sought adequate forces from the state government to protect the station premises in violence-hit areas of the state.

The anti-Citizenship Act demonstrators also blocked NH-6 and burned tyres and tubes at Uluberia.

With national flags in hands, they gathered at the Uluberia checkpoint around 2.30 pm and blocked the highway, one of the arterial roads that connect Kolkata with the rest of the country.

Idris Ali, TMC MLA from Uluberia, said he was visiting

Kolkata for medical reasons and would take stock of the situation on his return.

"We do not want India to be divided; we want to protect the Constitution. We are in favour of a secular West Bengal and against the amended Citizenship Act and NRC," said Maulana Ghulam Mustafa of the local Boro Masjid, who was leading the agitation in the area.

In Kolkata, hundreds of protesters gathered at the Park Circus seven-point crossing, seeking the revocation of the law. They shouted slogans against the BJP-led government and burnt tyres on the thoroughfare, leading to traffic congestions in the southern and the central parts of the city.

In Kharagpur section, too, railway tracks were blocked, affecting long-distance train services. Protesters poured out on the streets in Birbhum and East Midnapore, and shouted slogans against the BJP, demanding that the amended Act be immediately scrapped. West Bengal BJP general secretary Sayantan Basu's car was attacked by the trouble-mongers in Kanthi area of East Midnapore district.

## States have no powers to refuse implementation of Citizenship Act, says MHA

Continued from Page 1

We have a majority in the assembly, and will block the bill," Singh said.

According to the Citizenship Act, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 and facing religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship. The act says the refugees of the six communities will be given Indian citizenship after residing in India for five years, instead of 11 years earlier.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said the act was clearly unconstitutional. "Whatever decision is made at the Congress party forum on

the bill, will be applied in Chhattisgarh," he said.

The act also proposes to give immunity to such refugees facing legal cases after being found as illegal migrants.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath said, "Whatever stand the Congress party has taken on Citizenship Amendment Act, we will follow that. Do we want to be a part of a process that sows seeds of divisiveness?"

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram also said the bill was a "brazen assault" on the fundamental ideas enshrined in the Constitution and the fate of the law will be decided in the Supreme Court.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed by Rajya Sabha on Wednesday and by Lok Sabha on Monday.

DETAILS OF STUDENTS NAMED IN CONTEMPT PETITION

# JNU lack of awareness shocks HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Friday described as "shocking" that the Jawaharlal Nehru University had no idea about the academic details of the students against whom it has filed a contempt petition for protesting within 100 metres of its administrative block.

Justice A K Chawla directed the university to file an affidavit giving details of the students named in the contempt petition, including their courses, its status and duration of stay in the campus.

The court listed the matter for hearing on next Friday. "It is shocking you file a contempt and you don't know anything about the students, one of whom was convicted for contempt last year also."

"You only know the room numbers (of the students)," the court said, after the Registrar of JNU and other officials, present in the hearing, were unable to give details about one of the nine students — Geeta Kumari — who according to the varsity was last



**"How long she has been studying there? Shouldn't the Registrar know? Is that not a basic thing? Do you know which course she or others are studying? No? Why not," the court said**

year held guilty of contempt by the high court for protesting near the administrative block.

"How long she has been studying there? Shouldn't the Registrar know? Is that not a basic thing? Do you know which course she or others are studying? No? Why not," the court said.

It asked about the student's details after central government standing counsel Monika Arora, appearing for JNU, said that Kumari was last year held guilty of contempt by the high

court for being part of an agitating group that blocked access to the admin block.

Arora told the court that in August 2017, the high court had directed that students will not hold protests within 100 metres of the administrative block and will not block access to it.

The high court had also directed the police to intervene and provide assistance if and when protesting students block access to the block, she said and added that since October 28

this year, despite repeated requests by JNU, the police did not come to its aid.

police, saying the petition was an attempt to "browbeat" the agency.

"This is browbeating. Complete browbeating. How can contempt be filed against Commissioner of Delhi Police when JNU has made the requests to the SHO. SHO could have been made a party. In such sensitive matters, some sensitivity should be shown," he said.

The court, however, disagreed with Singh's contentions, saying in service matters often Chief or Principal Secretaries are made a party.

"Where you need to be sensitised, you get sensitive there. Don't get sensitive here," the court further said to the police.

During the hearing, Arora also told the court that protesting students had locked down the admin block, ransacked it and prevented non-agitating students from taking exams.

She said the students were cleared from within 100 metres of the block on December 11 only after the high court directed so on December 10 in another matter.



## Shah pays tributes to Parliament attack victims

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday paid tributes to the security personnel who laid down their lives during the 2001 Parliament attack, saying their sacrifice will always motivate everyone to contribute for the protection, progress and prosperity of the country," Shah said in a tweet in Hindi.

The victims included five Delhi police personnel, a woman Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) trooper, two Parliament watch and ward staff and a gardener. A journalist who was injured died later. All five terrorists were shot dead.

"A tribute to the brave soldiers

SHORT READS



### Amended Citizenship Act attempt to change narrative by design: Kamal Nath

NEW DELHI: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath accused the government on Friday of practising a "politics of distractions" and said the amended Citizenship Act was an attempt to change narrative by "design". Addressing the Indian Women's Press Club, Nath said he was most worried about the future of the Indian youth given the present economic condition of the country. "The worst part is the politics of distraction, changing the orbit of people's imagination. Every time there is economic slowdown, a bill is introduced, a decision is taken to distract people," the Madhya Pradesh chief minister said.

## Citizenship Act: AASU to continue 'non-violent mass movement'

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The influential All Assam Students Union (AASU), which is spearheading the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, on Friday accused Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal of "surrendering before the Delhi leadership" and vowed to continue a "non-violent mass movement" against the contentious legislation.

Chief Adviser of AASU Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharya also claimed that President Ram Nath Kovind has "violated the Constitution" by giving assent to the "communal bill", which was passed by the Parliament on Wednesday.

"Our stand is clear. We will not accept, never accept the new law. The MPs have voted in favour of the bill but people of Assam have rejected it through a mass movement," he told PTI.

Bhattacharya, who is the key person mobilising people across Assam against the controversial legislation, said the only way to fight "this injustice" is through a struggle and fight which has to be non-violent and disciplined.

"Violence has to stop. There is no place for violence in protests. Some people are trying to give a colour of violence. If someone indulges in violence, the government will get the opportunity to end the movement. We appeal to people to stop violence. All protesters should be guarded against violence. Otherwise we will not be successful. It has to be a non-violent movement," he said.

Two persons were killed in police firing after frenzied mobs blocked roads in different parts of Assam, burned discarded tyres and menaced commuters by bludgeoning their vehicles with sticks and stones.

Two railway stations were torched while houses of several legislators, including the private residence of Sonowal, were attacked by mobs.

It was AASU, which led a non-violent agitation against illegal immigrants in 1979-85 and the movement culminated with the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985.

Bhattacharya slammed chief minister Sonowal, his once



comrade-in-arms, for his support to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which got presidential assent on Thursday night.

"Sonowal reached the post of chief minister through this type of movement. He should not forget that. Unfortunately, he

has surrendered before the Delhi leadership. He has forgotten to speak for the people of Assam. Sonowal has gone silent. In fact, he is trying to misguide people. I want to tell him, don't provoke people," he said.

In 1990s, AASU was led by Sonowal and Bhattacharya as president and general secretary respectively.

The AASU chief adviser claimed that President Kovind has "violated the Constitution" by giving assent to the "communal bill in a hurry". "The President gave his assent in a hurry. He has violated the Constitution because a communal bill has been given assent. It is a legislation which violates the Assam Accord. We don't expect such a move from the President. It is very unfortunate, it is unconstitutional," he said.

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

## Guj gov transfers 24 IAS officers

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat government has transferred 24 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, including principal secretary with the ports and transport department, Sunaina Tomar.

The transfers were announced late on Thursday night. Tomar has been shifted to the energy and petrochemicals department, said a notification issued by principal secretary (general administration department) Kamal Dayani.

Dayani would hold the additional charge of ports and transport department till fur-



Haider replaced Sonal Mishra, who has been appointed as secretary in the Narmada and water resources department.

Dilip Rana, collector of Anand District, has been appointed as commissioner of tribal development and will be posted at Gandhinagar, according to the notification. Kutch district collector M Nagarajan will take over as director of higher education in Gandhinagar in his new role, it said.

Other bureaucrats who were transferred included assistant collectors, deputy municipal commissioners and district development officers.

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Kutch district collector M Nagarajan will take over as director of higher education in Gandhinagar in his new role, it said.

Other bureaucrats who were transferred included assistant collectors, deputy municipal commissioners and district development officers.

### Wife thrashes man for marrying another woman

MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP): A 30-year-old groom was allegedly thrashed by his first wife at the venue of his wedding with another woman in Uttar Pradesh's Shamli district, police said on Friday. The incident occurred at Titarsi village under Thana Bhawan block on Thursday, the police said. Manju reached the wedding ceremony with her family and started thrashing Pankaj Kumar for marrying another woman. He was later handed over to the police, an officer said. A case of dowry and family dispute was pending in Meerut against the man, the officer said.

### Western disturbance causes rain in several areas of Rajasthan

JAIPUR: A western disturbance has triggered rain in several areas of Rajasthan where Ganganagar recorded the maximum rainfall of 15.8 mm, the Meteorological department here said on Friday. In the same period, that is since Thursday till Friday morning, Pilani, Sawaimadhopur and Jaipur recorded 12.2 mm, 10 mm and 9.8 mm rain, respectively, while Churu and Bikaner recorded a rainfall of 8.4 mm, the MeT department said. The rainfall was below 7 mm in several other areas, it said. Nagar and nearby areas also received hailstorm on Thursday. Meanwhile, night temperature in the state hovered above 8 degrees Celsius. Sikar recorded the lowest temperature in the state at 8 degrees Celsius.

### Will never apologise: Rahul on rape remarks

NEW DELHI: Under attack for his rape remarks, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said he would never apologise and instead demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should do so over an old video in which he claimed that Delhi had turned into a "rape capital" under the UPA dispensation. "As far as their (BJP's) demand for apologising, I am never going to apologise to them," Gandhi told reporters outside Parliament. The Congress leader also clarified his rape statement that triggered protests by the BJP in both Houses of Parliament.

### People in Nagaland rush to stock up on essential items

PNS ■ KOHIMA

With protests against the amended Citizenship Act raging across the northeast, people of Nagaland, who had been busy all of last week celebrating Hornbill Festival, were seen rushing to goods stores on Friday to hoard essential items, amid tension that curfew in neighbouring Assam might hit supplies.

As Assam happened to be the lifeline of Nagaland when it came to supply of essential commodities, people were skeptical they might have to face food and medicine shortage in the days to come, official sources said.

Long queues were also witnessed at fuel outlets in state capital Kohima and commercial hub Dimapur, with most of the pumps drying up by noon. Allaying fears, Principal Secretary (home) Abhijit Sinha told PTI that the Indian Oil Corporation depot in Dimapur has been stocked up to last a few days.

"Petrol pumps may have dried up in several places due to the rise in demand, but the deposit in IOC Dimapur wouldn't run out of stock in the next few days," he said, adding that fresh supply would reach the state soon through rail route. On essential commodities, Sinha claimed that the state had enough in store for now, and there was no reason for people to panic. The senior official also said that special trains have been arranged to ferry Nagaland-bound passengers stranded in various stations across Assam. He expressed hope that the situation in the neighbouring state would be brought under control soon.

## HC junks Pragma's application on plea challenging her election

PNS ■ JABALPUR

The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Friday dismissed BJP MP Pragma Singh Thakur's application questioning maintainability of a petition challenging her election to the Lok Sabha from Bhopal.

The petition, filed by Bhopal-based journalist Rakesh Dixit, alleged the controversial Hindutva leader, during campaigning, delivered speeches on religious lines, thus violating election norms. The high court has dismissed the application filed by Pragma Thakur over maintainability of election petition filed against her election to the Lok Sabha, said advocate Arvind Shrivastava, who appeared for Dixit.

He said the court rejected the objection raised by Thakur, who had questioned the authenticity of video tapes of her alleged hate speeches submitted by the petitioner as evidence.

These speeches were given by Thakur during campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls in May this year. Justice Vishal Dhagat



delivered the order on the respondent's (Thakur) application on Friday, the counsel said. The HC had on November 30 reserved its order on the BJP lawmaker's application challenging maintainability of the petition, he said. According to the petition, Thakur allegedly delivered speeches on religious lines, thus violating provisions of section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Dixit has filed the petition in his capacity as a voter registered in the Bhopal Lok Sabha constituency. Thakur, an accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, won from Bhopal in May, defeating Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh.

## 'Exempt entire North East from purview of Amended Citizenship Act'

PNS ■ SHILLONG

National Peoples Party (NPP) leader Agatha K Sangma has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to exempt the entire North East from the purview of the Amended Citizenship Act to ensure that peace returns to the region.

The Tura MP had written a letter to the prime minister on Thursday night demanding that the entire North East be exempted from the purview of the Act.

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

"The North East is a complex region that needs a holistic protection, the government must revisit the CAB and exempt the entire region from its purview. This is the only way peace and confidence can be built among our people," Agatha said in a letter to Modi.



She said the CAB has been vehemently opposed by the people of the North East because they fear demographic changes will impact and affect the security and identity of the local tribals of the region.

Agatha, a former Union minister said, "Efforts made through long hours of consultations are going futile and the narrative that is being given out is that the BJP-led government is anti-North East."

The BJP is part of the NPP led coalition government in Meghalaya. The letter was shot off to the prime minister even as her brother and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma and his cabinet colleagues are scheduled to meet Amit Shah on the same. Meanwhile, the curfew imposed in parts of Shillong following violent protests was relaxed on Friday for 12 hours, beginning at 10 am, with no untoward incident being reported from the areas. Curfew was imposed on Thursday night in areas under Sadar and Lumdingjri police station limits, which comprise at least 20 neighbourhoods of North Shillong and Mawprem after several vehicles and building were vandalised in the Meghalaya capital amid protests against the new law.

# SC declines to pass order on safe entry of women in Sabarimala temple

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Friday declined to pass any order on the pleas by two women activists seeking a direction to the Kerala government to ensure safe entry of women in the Sabarimala temple under police protection. The top court said the issue was "very emotive" and it did not want the situation to become "explosive".

A bench, headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, said the "balance of convenience" required that no orders are passed in the matter today as the issue had already been referred to a 7-judge bench. The apex court said it would endeavour to constitute the larger bench at the earliest to hear the matter. The bench, also

comprising Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant, said though there was no stay on the September 28, 2018 judgment allowing entry of women of all ages into the shrine, "it is equally true that it is not final".

The bench said the pleas seeking review of December last year verdict would be listed at the earliest after the 7-judge bench renders its decision on the reference made to it.

It said it would not pass any orders till the decision is given by the larger bench, and there is no problem if women are happily welcomed in the temple to pray.

When the petitioner's counsel insisted that there was no stay on the last year's verdict, the bench said: "We know that the law is in



your favour and if that is not complied and is violated we will send people to jail".

At the outset senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for one of the women activists, told the



bench that the Kerala government was not allowing women to enter the shrine and this is akin to stay of the last year's verdict and will send a very wrong signal to the society. However, the

CJI said: "There is no doubt that there is a judgment. There is equally no doubt that the matter has been referred to a larger bench. I have not yet constituted the larger bench." The balance

of convenience requires that we will not pass the orders today. If the matter will be decided in your favour, we will enforce it."

When Gonsalves said that police protection for women entering the shrine could be ordered, the bench said, it doesn't want the situation to become explosive. "We don't want any kind of violence. When we will hear the matter, we will take a decision. No doubt there is a judgment but it is equally true that it is not final," the bench said.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for another petitioner, a Dalit woman, said that they don't want any kind of violence and this country is based on founding faith of non-violence. The bench said that "going by

the newspaper reports people are very emotive there on the issue".

When Jaising insisted that there was no stay on the last year's judgment, the bench said, "We are saying that you are right. We are exercising our discretion on not passing any orders today... We are saying this after knowing the impact". When Jaising said that the larger bench should hear the matter at the earliest as the shrine is open during the season only, the CJI said, "I will endeavour to constitute the larger bench at the earliest".

Jaising later told the bench that in January this year, the apex court had passed an order directing the Kerala police to provide round-the-clock security to one of the two petitioners. The bench said the January

this year order would continue.

Gonsalves then told the court that the petitioner whom he is representing should also be provided security. "Are you in danger?" the bench asked. When Gonsalves replied in the affirmative, the bench said, "If the petitioner applies for police protection, the threat perception be evaluated and she be given protection if required".

On November 14, a five-judge Constitution bench headed by then CJI Ranjan Gogoi, in a 3:2 majority verdict, had referred the pleas seeking a review of its historic 2018 judgment to a seven-judge bench, along with other contentious issues of alleged discrimination against Muslim and Parsi women.

SHORT READS

ATS nabs seven Bangladeshi men for illegal stay

**PALGHAR:** Seven Bangladeshi immigrants were arrested for illegal stay in Palghar district's Virar town, police said on Friday. Palghar police's anti-terrorism squad nabbed seven Bangladeshi men from a residential colony in Tirupati Nagar in Virar on Wednesday, the Palghar police PRO Hemant Katkar said. The arrested accused did not have any valid documents for their stay in the country, he said. A case under relevant sections of the Indian Passport Act and Foreigners Act has been registered against the accused with the Arnala police station, he added.



Looking forward to working together: Modi to Johnson

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Boris Johnson on Friday for returning to power in the United Kingdom, saying he looks forward to working together for closer ties between the two countries. "Many congratulations to PM @BorisJohnson for his return with a thumping majority. I wish him the best and look forward to working together for closer India-UK ties," Modi tweeted. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Friday secured a thumping victory in the UK's most dramatic general election in decades, ending months of political uncertainty and setting the country on course to leave the European Union.



Citizenship protests: Internet services suspended in Aligarh

**ALIGARH (UP):** Internet services in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh district have been blocked since midnight till 5 pm on Friday in view of the protests planned against the amended Citizenship Act. The administration has denied permission to BSP leader and Mayor Furqaan Ali, who wanted to hold a protest against the passage of the citizenship bill in Parliament, District magistrate Chandra Bhushan Singh said. Elaborate security arrangements have been made in view of the call given by the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) teachers' association and students for taking out a protest march and handing over a memorandum to the district authorities. The AMUTA and students had announced that they would take out a march from the library to the university circle just outside the campus, where they would hand over memorandum. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Parminder Singh told media that no one would be allowed to move out of the campus.

# Modi-Abe summit cancelled in view of widespread protests in Guwahati

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The annual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe scheduled from December 15-17 in Guwahati has been cancelled in the wake of massive protests rocking the Assam capital city over the amended citizenship law.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said both India and Japan sides have decided to "defer" Abe's visit for the summit to a mutually convenient date.

"With reference to the proposed visit of Japanese PM Abe to India, both sides have decided to defer the visit to a mutually convenient date in the near future," he said in response to a query on the summit.

Assam reeled under violent protests over the newly amend-



ed law which provides for granting citizenship to non-Muslim persecuted minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday while the Rajya Sabha cleared

it on Wednesday. It became law after President Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to it on Thursday.

Diplomatic sources said the Japanese government has clearly conveyed to New Delhi that it would not be possible for Abe to travel to Guwahati in view

of large scale protests in the northeastern city.

They said the summit is now expected to take place next year. The MEA last week announced the dates for Abe's visit but did not mention the venue. However, preparations were in full swing in Guwahati for the high-profile summit.

At least two persons died due to bullet injuries on Thursday after police opened fire on protesters in Guwahati. On Wednesday, protesters pulled down hoardings erected in central Guwahati to welcome Abe.

Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and parts of Arunachal Pradesh have been witnessing large-scale protests in the last two days with thousands of people hitting the streets defying prohibitory orders to demand scrapping of the contentious law.

Sources said a Japanese team visited Guwahati on Wednesday to take stock of the preparations following which Tokyo clearly conveyed to the MEA that Abe's visit cannot go ahead under current circumstances.

Last year, Japan hosted the summit in picturesque Yamanashi prefecture during which both sides had resolved to significantly expand bilateral cooperation in a range of areas.

Reflecting growing congruence in bilateral ties, the two countries held their inaugural foreign and defence ministerial dialogue two weeks back which prepared the ground for the Modi-Abe summit.

The Indo-Japan defence and foreign ministerial dialogue took place following a decision taken by Modi and Abe during last year's annual summit.



POUS MELA

## NGT to Visva-Bharati, Birbhum dist: Ensure solid waste mgmt

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has asked the Visva-Bharati University authorities and the Birbhum district administration of West Bengal to ensure solid waste management during the annual fair 'Pous Mela', which will be held in the last week of December.

In a directive dated December 11, the NGT bench comprising Justice S P Wangdi, A K Goel and S Singh Garbyal said, "While the fair has great cultural significance for the people of West Bengal and the country, waste management will only add value to the event and not obstruct the same."

Recalling an earlier order to the varsity asking it to construct solid waste management and sewage treatment plants, NGT said applicant Subhas Dutta has informed the green bench that solid waste is generated in the campus throughout the year as 6,500 students and 520 faculty members reside in it.

The NGT ordered constituting a new committee comprising the chief secretary of West Bengal, vice-chancellor of the university, district magistrate of Birbhum and representatives of the Bolpur Municipality, Shantiniketan Trust and the West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WPPCB).

### The tribunal had earlier formed a three-member committee to oversee and monitor solid waste management arrangements for the 'Pous Mela'

The state pollution control board will be the nodal agency for long-term monitoring of solid waste management in the varsity, the NGT order said.

The tribunal had earlier formed a three-member committee to oversee and monitor solid waste management arrangements for the 'Pous Mela'. Environmentalist Subhas Dutta, WBPCB Chairman Kalyan Rudra and former Advocate General of West Bengal, Jayanta Mitra are members of the panel.

This committee, which was formed to monitor solid waste management during events like Pous Mela, may continue to function and oversee the measures taken towards it and submit reports to the WPPCB, the order said.

The tribunal said 'Pous Mela' may be conducted this year like previous years by taking necessary measures towards environmental conservation.

## Govt to appoint CIC, four ICs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

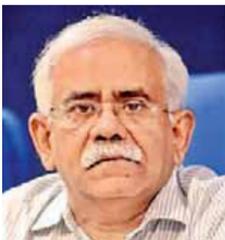
The Centre has invited applications for appointment on the post of Chief Information Commissioner and four Information Commissioners in the transparency watchdog CIC, according to a Personnel Ministry order.

It is proposed to appoint the Chief Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission (CIC) to succeed the incumbent on completion of the tenure likely on January 11, 2020, it said. Sudhir Bhargava is the Chief Information Commissioner. Besides the top post in the CIC, the government has also decided to fill the four vacant posts of Information Commissioners.

Currently, the Commission has six Information Commissioners against a sanctioned strength of 10.

RTI activists have been demanding the government to fill the vacant posts in the transparency watchdog citing large pendency of cases.

As many as 33,487 second appeals/complaints were pending in the CIC as on November 28, 2019, Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh had



Sudhir Bhargava

said recently in a written reply in Lok Sabha. The RTI Act provides that the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be a person of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass-media or administration and governance. They shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory, as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession, the Personnel Ministry said in the order.

## Strong action to be taken against those involved in violence: Sonowal

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Talking tough, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Friday warned of taking strong action against those involved in arson and violence saying vandalism has no place in any democratic process.

Sonowal also asserted that he was committed to protecting the rights of the indigenous people of the state and urged parents of students to persuade their not to join any agitation which turns violent.

"We will not tolerate any violence. Strong action will be taken against anyone who is involved in vandalism," he told PTI.

The chief minister's comments came after two days of continuous violence by a section of protesters in the state against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, which was approved by Parliament on Wednesday and got Presidential assent on Thursday night.

Frenzied mobs blocked roads in different parts of Assam with burning discarded tyres and menaced commuters by bludgeoning their vehicles with sticks and stones.

Two railway stations were torched while houses of



Sarbananda Sonowal

several legislators, including the private residence of Sonowal, were attacked by mobs.

"I am committed to protecting the rights of the indigenous people and want to assure that interests of the indigenous people will not be harmed," he said.

The chief minister said his government has no problem with non-violent democratic process but those indulging in vandalism, taking advantage of the protests, will be dealt with sternly.

"Some people are trying to spread wrong information to mislead people and aggravate the situation. I appeal to everyone not to do anything that

"I am committed to protecting the rights of the indigenous people and want to assure that interests of the indigenous people will not be harmed," he said.

will disturb peace," he said. Sonowal also asked people of the state not to worry about the amended Citizenship Act, saying the traditional culture, language, political and land rights will be protected by implementing Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

He said a committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Justice Biplab Sarmah (ret'd), who has been given the task of preparing recommendations for ensuring the constitutional safeguards to the people of Assam.

The central government has categorically stated that the recommendations of Clause 6 committee will be fully implemented, the chief minister said.

## Long queues at markets amid talk of 'curfew relaxed'

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Goods flew off shelves as locals rushed to stock up essential items after shops and markets in Guwahati opened Friday morning amid reports that curfew has been relaxed, which were later dismissed by the authorities.

Long queues were seen outside shops at the Uzan Bazar, Chandmari, Silpukhuri and Zoo Road areas with people coming out in their cars and two-wheelers after some local channels reported that the prohibitory orders have been relaxed from 6 am to 1 pm.

An Assam Police spokesman later clarified that there was no order about the curfew being relaxed and restrictions will be in force.



The restrictions were imposed at 6.15 pm on Thursday after violent protests against the amended Citizenship Act.

Security forces personnel who are manning each and every corners of the city, however, did not enforce closure of

the markets and restrict movement of vehicles. Major lines were seen outside grocery stores, shops selling poultry items and fish. Many said they were stocking items for at least three-four days in wake of the uncertainties amid the protests.

### Major lines were seen outside grocery stores, shops selling poultry items and fish. Many said they were stocking items for at least three-four days in wake of the uncertainties amid the protests

Several people were heard at the market saying they even got dressed for office after the reports of curfew relaxations. However, schools and offices remained shut.

Flag marches by the Army and personnel of the security forces are being conducted across the city.

Also, civic workers were seen clearing barricades, bricks and stones, burnt tyres and other things that dotted the city roads after the pitched battle

between protestors and police on Thursday that left two persons dead.

Public transport, including buses, were off roads.

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

## Cong doesn't back out from promises: Sachin Pilot

PNS ■ DHANBAD (JHARKHAND)

Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot on Friday said the Congress has never backed out from its principles, promises and announcements.

Addressing a public meeting here, Pilot said the Congress has been delivering the promises made in its election manifesto in Rajasthan. He, however, did not elaborate.

"The Congress government in Rajasthan is completing one year in December this year. We are fulfilling the assurances given in our manifesto."

"The Congress has always fulfilled its promises and announcements," Pilot, also the president of Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee, said.

Loan waiver to farmers, free education to girls and women, unemployment



Sachin Pilot

allowance of up to Rs 3,500 to educated youth and pension to elderly farmers were among the promises made by the Congress in its election manifesto for Rajasthan Assembly polls in 2018.

Asking why people lacked proper drinking water supply and lockout of factories was common in Dhanbad, Pilot said, "Change happens with time and with its rich mineral resources, Jharkhand can become one of the best states in the country."

## Himachal continues to shiver at sub-zero temperatures

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh continued to record shivering temperatures on Friday after snowfall and rains across many places in the state, the meteorological department said.

The state may witness heavy rainfall and snowfall during the day as the MeT centre has already issued a yellow warning for Friday.

Yellow is the least dangerous of the weather warnings that indicates the possibility of severe weather over the next few days.

The tribal dominant districts of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur along with tourist places of Kufri and Manali received snowfall for the second consecutive day, Shimla Meteorological Centre Director Manmohan Singh



### Tourist places Kufri in Shimla district and Manali in Kullu district received 30 cm and 12 cm snowfall, respectively, Singh said

and Chamba (48 mm) received rains. The state capital Shimla received 12.8 mm rain while Nahan (19.2 mm), Una (23 mm), Mandi (12.1 mm) and Bilaspur (12 mm) also saw rainfall.

The minimum temperatures in Kufri, Manali, Dalhousie and Kalpa were minus 2.6, minus 1.6, minus 1.5, minus 1.2 degrees Celsius, respectively.

## Satisfied with HC Juvenile Justice panel report saying no detention of minors in J&K: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Friday said it is satisfied with the report of Juvenile Justice Committee of Jammu and Kashmir High Court which said that no minors were detained in jails in the erstwhile state post the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370.

The apex court, after perusing the Committee's report, said that four high court judges visited all the jails in J&K and they have clearly stated that no minors have been illegally detained there.

A bench, headed by Justice N V Ramana, said that it would not be proper if the court does not believe its own judges.

The bench made this comment when senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, appearing for



petitioner Enakshi Ganguly who has alleged that minors were detained there post abrogation of provisions of Article 370, insisted that he should be given time to respond to the committee's report.

The bench granted liberty to the petitioners to approach the appropriate forum if they have any grievance over alleged detention of minors in Jammu

and Kashmir.

The court on November 5 asked the Committee to examine afresh the allegations of detention of minors by security forces and place its report expeditiously.

It observed that the J&K DGP had filed a report on September 25 in which he categorically refuted the assertions and allegations made in the

### The court on November 5 asked the Committee to examine afresh the allegations of detention of minors by security forces and place its report expeditiously

media and the petition. The Committee's report also contained the findings of the Additional DGP denying allegations of illegal detention of juveniles in Kashmir.

It had told the Supreme Court that 144 juveniles were detained in the state after the Centre abrogated provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution, but 142 minors were released. The remaining two were sent to juvenile homes.

Ahmadi had earlier said in court "This is an Article 32 petition which is itself a funda-

mental right. This Court has heard petitions of other persons on similar issues from Kashmir. So why not this petition which affects fundamental rights of children."

On September 20, the apex court had asked the Committee to undertake an exercise with regard to the facts stated in a petition filed by the two child right activists.

The four-member Juvenile Justice Committee of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court is headed by Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey.

## Web of lies

As internet shutdowns become the new tool of suffocation, the Northeast protests show why they are counter-productive



It's official. India, which would like everybody to believe it is a vibrant democracy, tops the list of internet shutdowns in a supposedly free world, 158 between 2016 and 2018. If the *New York Times* is to be believed then we were responsible for 67 per cent of the world's Internet shutdowns last year. With 134 incidents this year, India has had 89 Internet blackouts, four months in Kashmir alone. This is, of course, separate from mobile network shutdowns, which would make us look like the most hypocritical nation of the world and a

poser of democracy. At least autocratic nations do not hide under pretence. Unofficially, we have been branded the "internet shutdown capital" of the world. Holding up the information highway has become the latest tool for authoritarian governments everywhere to control the political narrative on their terms and carpet-bomb any opinion or emotion against themselves. The internet, by virtue of its unpoliced nature and access, is the first casualty in such times simply because it disrupts all known forms of government control. Besides, the easy interactivity of the worldwide web has brought politics closer to the people and helped them become stakeholders in decisions. The Modi Government may claim that this is being done in the interest of national security and for curbing fake news but this is self-destructive rather than being self-protective. Such propagandist oppression disregards the volcanic fury that becomes visible in the real world when people are not free to express themselves on established communication platforms. The first manifestation is physical violence, the easiest way to challenge the establishment, examples of which are rampant across the North-east, particularly Assam. Shutting down news about Army clampdowns and local anxieties about a new law, which allows religion-based citizenship to refugees and asylum seekers, has left the North-east burning. Having dealt with waves of immigrants as residents of border States, changes in demographic profile and settlers swamping indigenous people, jobs and the local economy, locals are against any kind of influx regardless of religion. The Assamese do not want any more settlers and want their practical fears addressed in a reasonable manner rather than being cloaked by the halo of a larger Hindu nationalism. The heartland plank does not work in the diverse extremities of India. Instead, it is this Central assumption that it can manage the North-east that has stoked latent insecurities and led locals out on the streets. In fact, in the absence of the right information, rumour-mongering is at its highest, like the one about five crore Hindu immigrants being regularised. Besides, technology comes with its solutions, and as the Kashmir experience has shown, many are circumventing shutdowns through virtual private networks (VPNs). The trouble with subterranean traffic in other countries is that the global perception about India can be hopelessly skewed.

While the Government perceives the internet as a threat, it ignores its social consequences. Four months of shutdown have meant that Kashmiris have been automatically disqualified from using Whatsapp, a chat platform that allows not only personal conversations and information storage but lets groups devoted to various non-political causes to organise themselves. It has affected students the most as they have great difficulty filling up online forms for competitive exams like the National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET), professional courses and jobs. Aggregator businesses in the Valley are on the verge of closure as they can hardly process service requests. Local businesses are suffering because no online transaction can go through smoothly, be it about filing tenders, tax compliances or net banking. If reports are anything to go by, over 16,000 traders were blocked on the GSTN portal for failure to pay taxes on time. Nobody even thinks of the cascading impact on telemedicine or distance learning. When you are marooned, higher pursuits seem like a luxury and basics your ticket to freedom. Denial becomes a process of adjustment and rewiring life as you know it than making demands on good governance or even insisting on a modicum of performance. Promises of a digital India or cashless economy seem like a pipedream. Such restrictions on human rights in a modern society are nothing but counter-productive. In July 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution condemning internet shutdowns. Yet such is the brazen trampling of dissent that PM Modi took to the internet to reassure the very people who didn't have access to it that their rights would be protected. Clearly, it was meant for his own loyalist audience than a real concern for the North-east. Right to Information no longer qualifies as a marker of Indian democracy.

## A Brexit mandate

Boris Johnson has won a stunning verdict and should now lead the United Kingdom out of the European Union



The complete and utter shock at the headquarters of the Labour Party as their quasi-Communist leaders led them to a defeat unprecedented in recent times was broadcast to the entire world by the British media. This reconfirms the notion that Left-wing, liberal politicians have got so caught up in their own hyperbole that they forgot their core constituencies. Conservative Party leader Boris Johnson, the Oxford-educated member of British aristocracy who will remain as Prime Minister, had a simple message: That he would

get Brexit done. Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who would rather spend time with hate-spewing anti-India and anti-Israel activists and had a long-winded manifesto promising the moon and more, lost. But it was the scale of Labour's loss in safe seats in England's north, all of which had held their own even during Margaret Thatcher's landslide victories, that became the headline act. There's a lesson for Left-leaning leaders here. They must get out of the television studios and stop meaningless talk, else their slide to irrelevance will continue.

First things first. There needs to be that basic understanding that most voters are naturally slightly conservative. Denying that voters in North England wanted to leave the European Union (EU), just because a group of urbane Londoners felt otherwise, has led to the complete annihilation of the Labour Party's Red Wall. Remember how US Democrat presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's arrogance towards the "deplorables" led to her defeat, too? Do not ignore or belittle the voter who does not subscribe to your views, engage them instead. However, with the UK now leaving the EU almost a done deal, what sort of Brexit will be delivered? Will the provinces of Scotland and Northern Ireland leave? Already the pro-EU Scottish Nationalist Party, which has done well recently, may accelerate its campaign for independence. What the vote also means is that nations are increasingly becoming protectionist and insular. If indeed Britons, as the massive results show, have given in to hyper nationalism, so will the Scots and Irish who want to be with Europe. Johnson now has to strike new international trade deals and keep London valuable and relevant as a financial market. The polls might have been emphatic and ruled out the need for a second referendum but Johnson's big challenge will be in keeping the UK together.

# The Afghan imbroglio

The Taliban attack on a US base in Afghanistan has raised many questions. Kabul, which will be profoundly affected by any peace agreement, must be prepared for the worst



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

On December 7, the US and the Taliban resumed peace talks, which President Donald Trump had pronounced on September 9, 2019, to be "dead." His statement had followed a Taliban attack that had killed 12 people, including an American soldier. On Wednesday, December 11, at least two civilians were killed and 73 others wounded in a car bombing and subsequent assault at Bagram Air Base by the Taliban. Two questions arise here. Why did the Taliban launch Wednesday's attack? What would happen now?

As to the first, two pat answers are likely. First, the Taliban want to spike the talks. Second, they want to test the resolve of the Americans to hold their ground. Third, they are divided and one of the sections opposed to the resumption of the talks has mounted Wednesday's attack in the hope that Washington, DC, will walk out of the talks.

Those opposed to the first assumption would argue that the Taliban could not have wanted to sabotage the talks they were participating in. One can also say that their desire for a settlement is further underlined by the prisoner swap on November 19, under which the Taliban released an American and an Australian scholar as well as 10 members of the Afghan security forces held by them, while the Afghan Government released three Taliban leaders.

All this, however, would overlook the possibility that the Taliban believed that this time the Americans would not abandon the talks despite provocations. Their reasoning may well have been that the very fact that the Trump administration had resumed the talks shows its keenness, bordering on desperation, to work out a peace agreement enabling most, if not all, American troops to be brought home. The desperation, they may have further felt, should be all the greater when Trump is facing impeachment proceedings and the 2020 US presidential elections are drawing closer. A peace agreement, which he can stick to his hat as a feather, and the return of American troops would give a significant thrust to his bid for a second term. It is, thus, quite logical for the Taliban to feel that if they continue to go through the motions of talks, the Trump administration would give them the agreement they want if not soon then as the presidential elections draw near.

The question springs up: What kind of an agreement would they want? First, they have made clear that they would not accept the present Afghan Constitution adopted by a Loya Jirga (a grand tribal council with legislative functions) in 2004. On their part, they issued, in 2005, their Order of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, a document closest to a Constitution they have produced. It is fundamentally different from the Constitution in terms of the political systems they stand for. This will be clear from a brief look at them, which is what one can do here given the paucity of space.



The Afghan Constitution has set up a democratic system of Government in which a popularly-elected President is the head of State and Government. The Taliban order, by contrast, proclaims Afghanistan as an Islamic Emirate under Mullah Mohammad's leadership. The legislative and judicial branches of the two systems differ significantly. The Afghan Constitution has established a bicameral National Assembly in which the lower house is directly elected and the upper house consists of a mix of indirectly elected and presidentially appointed senators. The Taliban order, by contrast, establishes a single chamber Islamic Council as the highest legislative organ, whose members are appointed by the Amir ul-Momineen (Commander of the Faithful) based on their familiarity with the principles of *jihad* and *Shariah*. The order does not mention how the Amir ul-Momineen is to be selected or how long an individual may serve in this role. It does, however, specify that he must be a male Muslim follower of the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence.

It is difficult to imagine how the basic contradictions between the Afghan Constitution and the Order of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which clearly seeks to establish a fundamentalist Islamist theocracy, can be

resolved. This, in turn, gives a sharp edge to the question whether the Trump administration would accept an agreement that makes for the replacement of the Constitution by the Order. One cannot rule out the possibility that it may. It had, in July 2018, started seeking direct talks with the Taliban, abandoning its insistence that the Afghan Government should be a participant in the talks while the Taliban had long been insisting that they would first discuss peace with the Americans. And now it has resumed talking to them even though they had continued being aggressive on the ground.

Wednesday's attacks have to be seen in this context. At one level they might have been aimed at observing the American response for an indication as to whether the US desperation could be pushed to a point where it accepts a peace settlement that enables the Taliban to march into Kabul and take over Afghanistan with the support of Pakistani Army and the Air Force. At another, it might have been a part of their continued effort to undermine the morale of the Afghan Government and security forces and progressively reduce their ability to resist the offensive mentioned above. And, of course, it could have been both. One cannot, of course, rule out the third possibility — that the Taliban are divided and one

of the sections opposed to the resumption of the talks had mounted Wednesday's attack in the hope that Washington, DC, will walk out of the talks. Whether this is so will be clear in a few days when the circumstances of the attacks become better known.

Of course, the Afghan Government, which will be profoundly affected by any peace agreement, has to prepare for the worst — an American withdrawal that leaves it fending for itself. For this, it must first get over the deep fissures that divide it — a fact that is strikingly underlined by the fact the results of the presidential election in the country, held in September, 2019, remain stalled in the midst of a bitter dispute between the incumbent President, Osman Ghani, and the principal challenger, Abdullah Abdullah. Both leaders must remember that a Taliban takeover would mean a return to medieval savagery, which besides reducing women to domestic slavery, would rob life of all gaiety and entertainment.

Meanwhile, India, which has serious stakes in Afghanistan, needs to assess its options. It must be prepared to render any assistance it needs to, including the supply of military hardware, to the Afghan Government to hold its own. (The writer is Consultant Editor, *The Pioneer*, and an author)

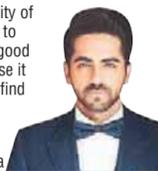
## SOUNDBITE

The footprint of every major act of international terrorism passes through Pakistan where terrorists are trained in safe havens to take innocent lives.



Indian diplomat — Paulomi Tripathi

I do feel the responsibility of delivering good cinema to the audience and it's a good pressure to have because it will keep my hunger to find the best content going.



Actor — Ayushmann Khurrana

The US has seriously damaged the hard-won foundation of mutual trust by criticising Beijing over issues such as Hong Kong and the treatment of Muslim Uighurs.



Senior Chinese diplomat — Wang Yi

My Ministry is working (on economic issues) wherever it is needed. I will continue to address the problem of the industry as and when it is required.



Finance Minister — Nirmala Sitharaman

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Religious divide

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Spent force" (December 13). The Citizens (Amendment) Bill (CAB), 2019, which guarantees Indian citizenship to "persecuted" non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before 2014, is anchored to an ideological mooring. It is a firm step towards ushering in a controlled democracy with the Hindu religion as its centrifuge. Obviously, the inclusion of Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs is a pretence to nullify remonstrance that CAB is a law that will fundamentally benefit Hindu migrants. The Bill reasserts the sectarian view that Hindus have a divine right on the land and Muslims here are just occupants.

Without the National Register of Citizenship (NRC), this Bill could remain a non-starter. Except if the ruling dispensation devises an extraneous mechanism to identify and label. The Bill, therefore, has to be read with the passionate advocacy of a nationwide exercise for a pan-India NRC. With the enactment of CAB, the character of Indian citizenship has undergone a sea change. Hindus, who have inhabited this land since time immemorial or since independence or migrated to this land before 1971/2014, are straightforwardly deemed as citizens. On the contrary, Muslims

### A tale of two citizens

This refers to the editorial, "Spent force" (December 13). The Citizens (Amendment) Bill (CAB), 2019, which guarantees Indian citizenship to "persecuted" non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before 2014, is anchored to an ideological mooring. It is a firm step towards ushering in a controlled democracy with the Hindu religion as its centrifuge. Obviously, the inclusion of Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs is a pretence to nullify remonstrance that CAB is a law that will fundamentally benefit Hindu migrants. The Bill reasserts the sectarian view that Hindus have a divine right on the land and Muslims here are just occupants.



across the country, despite living here for centuries, will have to establish their citizenship afresh with adequate proof. Any Muslim, who fails to produce evidence of his/her citizenship, will face the prospect of being declared an illegal immigrant and be forced into a deportation camp. India has pushed itself into a turbulent future where one could witness blatant Hindutva majoritarianism, unconcealed partisanship and geographical instability.

Haridasan Rajan Kozhikode

### Unconstitutional move

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Spent force" (December 13). The Citizens (Amendment) Bill (CAB) holds the mirror to the face of today's India. It will not be an overstatement to say that the

new Bill is premised on the Orwellian notion that "some people are more equal than others." It goes against the very principle of equality unambiguously affirmed in the Constitution of India and sits ill with Article 14. The Constitution affirms equality for all persons and does not

differentiate between religions and religious communities. Law makers cannot make laws with scant regard to the country's Constitution. Parliamentary majority is no licence to make laws in contravention of the Constitution. Phrases such as "reasonable clas-

to say, the wider society does not oppose the law passionately but leaves it to those who would be directly affected to protest.

G David Milton Maruthancode

### Government's failure

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Spent force" (December 13). It is the very nature of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) that has sent the North-east on the boil. The Bill does not specify what proof the fleeing immigrants from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan will have to furnish to support their claims and prove themselves. Suspicion was all the more heightened after the non-inclusion of many Bengali Hindus in Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC). Perhaps instead of protecting the immigrants, the BJP wants to develop its vote bank. Some communities other than the Hindus have been included in the CAB only to avoid making it look like too arbitrary a move.

Shashi Via email

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

**FIRST COLUMN**

## The CAB is unconstitutional

Ahmadiyya and Shia Muslims are also persecuted in Pakistan and may come to India to avoid oppression. The Bill should allow that



MARKANDEY KATJU

The Citizens Amendment Bill (CAB) has been passed by both Houses of Parliament and has got the assent of the President. Since a lot of controversy has been raised over it, the Bill needs a dispassionate analysis. Assam has seen an influx of a large number of Bangladeshi immigrants who came after the Partition of 1947. Some (Hindus, Buddhists and so on) came due to religious persecution by the Muslim majority. Many poor Muslims also came in search of a "better life." Such "economic refugees", i.e. those who migrate not due to religious persecution but to seek a better life, are not strictly speaking refugees as defined in the UN Refugee Convention, 1951. But the fact is, that worldwide there are a large number of "economic refugees."

For example, the USA has about 11 million illegal immigrants from Mexico who migrated to America for a better life. Many of them have been living there for decades and now have little roots left in Mexico. What is to be done with them? As we all know, US President Donald Trump wants them deported to Mexico. However, that is easier said than done. In India, under the Assam Accord, only those Bangladeshis who came to the State before March 1971 would be granted citizenship under the Citizenship Act. But CAB will make people of six religions, namely Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Buddhists and Jains, who came from three countries, viz Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, Indian citizens, provided they have lived in India for five years. CAB omits the mention of Muslims and this is where the controversy lies.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government justifies this discrimination by saying that Muslims did not come into India due to persecution, whereas people of other religions did. But this is only a pretext. The real reason is that the BJP knows that Muslims will vote against them in elections and so wishes to deny them citizenship (which carries voting rights).

Also, what has been overlooked is that many Muslims in Pakistan, for example Shias, Ahmadiyyas and so on, are also persecuted there, and may come to India to avoid persecution. Whereas by a constitutional amendment, Pakistan has declared Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims, the Kerala High Court has declared them Muslims and Ahmadiyyas regard themselves as such. However they are treated barbarically in Pakistan.

Many Assamese are protesting because they do not want any immigrants in Assam, whether Muslim or non-Muslim and object to citizenship being given to any settler. Others are objecting to CAB for other reasons. The whole of Assam is up in flames and in many places the Army has been called out.

The truth is that many Bangladeshi Muslims have been living in Assam for decades, though they may not have come here legally. Many were even born in Assam. They have no roots now in Bangladesh. Where are they to go if they get deported? Bangladesh has said it will not accept them. So should they be dumped into the Bay of Bengal? It is a humanitarian problem, not just a legal one.

When I was on the Bench of the Supreme Court, a case regarding illegal squatters in shanties in Mumbai was being heard. The senior judge on the Bench shouted that the illegal squatters had no legal right to remain where they were living and must be thrown out, to which I retorted, "But brother, where are they to go? Should they be dumped into the Arabian Sea? It is not just a legal problem, it is also a humanitarian issue."

It may be noted that under the Indian Constitution whereas certain rights, like those mentioned in Article 19, are available only to citizens, others, like the right to equality, mentioned in Article 14, and the right to life and liberty mentioned in Article 21 (which has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to mean the right to live with dignity) are available to all. A non-citizen is certainly a person, and hence is also entitled to those rights.

In the National Human Rights Commission vs State of Arunachal Pradesh, 1996 case, the question was about the Chakma refugees, who were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The apex court observed that the fundamental right of life and liberty guaranteed by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution is also available to Chakmas, though they were not Indian citizens. It is submitted that CAB is unconstitutional as it violates both Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. With inputs by Dhruvi Kapadia, Advocate on Record at the Supreme Court of India and Solicitor, Bombay High Court).



RAHUL KASHYAP

The nation is trying to identify the villain of the piece in the ongoing Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) saga and social media is running amok demonising the premier institution itself. The first question, much before apportioning blame, is to ask ourselves, have we missed the forest for the trees? We indeed have.

My fear is that as a society we are getting consumed by market-driven "everythingness", oversimplified by applying the yardsticks for measuring chalk to cheese as well. In this highly volatile process, we are ending up supporting an ecosystem that kills dialogue and argumentation. Do we even

realise the inherent dangers to nationhood? Please realise this is destructive to the idea of both nationalism and nation-building. There is a huge cacophony and also rancour over the negligible fee paid by a JNU student. Let us never forget that education is every individual's right and even if free, education is not charity. In our attempt to berate JNU, many are ending up giving social credibility to commodification of education. We are playing into the hands of the private education mafia. By doing so, we are committing a crime against future generations. They will blame us for centuries.

If you find the idea odd, it would be relevant to remember how public telecom was bemoaned and ridiculed to tarnish its reputation and make way for private players and how Air India was derided so that it bled and its business share was usurped by private air carriers. So, the assault on the very credibility of JNU is to be seen with concern and obvious suspicion. Withdrawal of the State from health and education is the most undesirable act in a civilisation. Free education

and free health services must be seen as a right rather than charity in a democracy and a welfare State. The more developed a country is and more dedicated a welfare State is, the more essential services are free. Particularly health and education, followed closely by free public transportation.

We applaud social media forwards about how a train in Japan was continued only because one girl boarded it to go to school. But when it comes to our own country, we seamlessly adopt shameless double standards.

The ones studying in JNU are equal citizens of the country and their parents are also paying taxes. And in future, most of these students will perhaps pay much more in income tax than many of those castigating them claim they cost the country right now, by joining the bureaucracy, media, the development sector, academia and politics. Even the current dispensation at the Centre has two former JNU students as Cabinet Ministers. A study also reveals that 40 per cent of the Cabinet Committee on Security comprises JNU alumni.

JNU has been marked an island of excellence and repeatedly awarded for high standards of research and pedagogy by the Government of India. It is nothing but a calamity that JNU's commitment to education in building a brighter India has been compromised. The need is to work on the perception deficit in the mind of the common man.

The deliberate loss of reputation is doing no good to anyone but vested interests. Currently there are nearly 8,000 students at JNU.

However, a minuscule number, belonging to the radical Left, have held hostage the credibility of the university. These are mischief makers, suffering from an identity crisis and lack of political foothold, taking refuge in provocative acts like honouring Mahishasur.

These elements — the Right-wing loves to call them urban Naxals — are like the goons in a locality who create nuisance because the silent majority avoids them. The need is to awaken this silent majority. There are several ideological streams strongly present in the university. It is time they

challenge these elements on the basis of knowledge as well as positive activism. These are the elements that need to be handled. So that the rest, comprising a large number from the socially and economically-deprived strata, are allowed to follow academic pursuits in peace.

The problem is made complex because the official Left ends up supporting these disruptive elements as they see their vice-like grip over academia slowly slipping, prejudiced research getting exposed and challenged, and a summary loss of political relevance across India. JNU seems to be giving them that fig leaf cover and token confidence.

Peaceful protests and demonstrations cannot be ridiculed in any healthy and vibrant democracy. In fact, we need more campuses with students who are curious, questioning, intellectually-aspiring and democratically-engaged. This is where we should create the India of tomorrow.

The media, especially television, has played a rather ignoble role in the issue. Anchors, with strange display of histrionics and overplay, do not

mind showing off their inadequacies in understanding society and politics. The drama that is unleashed from the television studios — led by intellectually-bankrupt and educationally-compromised anchors indulging in shameless acts of exposing their limitations and their rooted prejudice — must force managements of these channels to take note.

There would hardly be any doubt that JNU is the most gender-friendly and also the safest campus for women. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the Nirbhaya protests started nowhere else but here.

People do not understand that demonisation of a public university like JNU will impact all institutions including the IITs and IIMs. We should not be that short-sighted.

There is an exponential hike in the fee of IITs and IIMCs. This must also be opposed. And the students of IITs and IIMCs must learn to protest effectively and fight for their rights. We need many more JNUs all across India. Fight for this cause, each one of you, who cares for India. (The writer is a senior journalist)

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

NOT ALL MEN ARE RAPISTS. THIS IS AN INSULT TO INDIA. HE (RAHUL GANDHI) SHOULD BE PUNISHED (FOR HIS RAPE IN INDIA STATEMENT).  
—UNION MINISTER

SMRITI IRANI



I HAD SAID THE PM KEEPS TALKING ABOUT MAKE IN INDIA. BUT THERE IS NO NEWS ABOUT THAT. BUT WE READ ABOUT SO MANY RAPE CASES IN PAPERS.  
—CONGRESS LEADER

RAHUL GANDHI

# No more labour pains

The Government has decided to develop a cadre of midwives as one of the strategies to reduce maternal and infant mortality



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

Shanti Devi is a household name at Nichla Badho Village in Jagjit Nagar of Solan district, Himachal Pradesh. This is not surprising considering that as a traditional birth attendant or *dai*, she delivered more than half the population of the village, including six of her grandchildren.

Even after she turned 80, Shanti remained the *dai* a pregnant woman in distress turned to or if the fears of a first-time mother-to-be needed to be soothed. Midwives can provide 87 per cent of the essential care for expectant mothers and newborns if they are educated and trained, says the World Health Organisation (WHO). But most importantly, as an integral part of a woman's life, they provide quality care, support and play an important role in reducing preventable maternal deaths.

WHO research has shown that women were less likely to give birth prematurely or lose their babies before 24 weeks of gestation if midwives were the main providers of care during pregnancy. Further, global data indicates that 83 per cent of all maternal deaths and newborn deaths could be averted with the care provided by midwives. Considering four women die giving birth every hour in India, midwives can be the game-changers in this grim scenario.

This is perhaps why the Government finally recognised that midwives could provide quality assistance through the 30 million pregnancies that take place every year and become a cost-effective and efficient model to improve reproductive, maternal and neonatal health services. The decision to develop a cadre of midwives as one of the strategies to reduce maternal and infant mortality was shared by the Indian Government at the recently-concluded International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+25) in Nairobi. India was among the 179 countries that signed the first international agreement recognising the right to sexual and reproductive health and women's empowerment at the ICPD in Cairo in 1994. This announcement was made as a part of its commitments to reduce preventable maternal deaths and provide an enabling environment to facilitate women's autonomy in reproductive decisions.

Although, there has been a decline in the maternal mortality rate (MMR) from 167 to 122 per 100,000 live births (SRS 2016), India has a long way to go to ensure that no woman dies while giving birth. Nearly 32,000 pregnant women still lose their lives during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period every year. Factors like inequalities in access to quality health services, poverty, distance to facilities, lack of information, inadequate and poor quality services and cultural beliefs remain significant barriers to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) to reduce MMR to less than 70 per 100,000 births by 2030.

Besides, disrespect and abuse of women during childbirth at health facilities contribute to maternal mortality and morbidity. While formulating its guidelines on midwifery care, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare accepted that these were some of the reasons that deterred women from opting for institutional delivery. Although the Government's LaQshya programme mandates promoting respectful maternity care, its implementation remains poor. However, midwifery-led care could address

“WHO RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT WOMEN WERE LESS LIKELY TO GIVE BIRTH PREMATURELY OR LOSE THEIR BABIES BEFORE 24 WEEKS OF GESTATION IF MIDWIVES WERE THE MAIN PROVIDERS OF CARE DURING PREGNANCY. FURTHER, GLOBAL DATA INDICATES THAT 83 PER CENT OF ALL MATERNAL DEATHS AND NEWBORN DEATHS COULD BE AVERTED WITH THE CARE PROVIDED BY MIDWIVES. CONSIDERING FOUR WOMEN DIE GIVING BIRTH EVERY HOUR IN INDIA, MIDWIVES CAN BE THE GAME-CHANGERS IN THIS GRIM SCENARIO”



these issues by promoting quality and continuity of assistance through the provision of women-centric care and help expectant mothers have a positive birth experience, according to the Ministry.

While the Government may have come to this conclusion now, women in Himachal Pradesh realised it much earlier. They also understood that women attended by midwives needed fewer epidurals. This is probably why Shanti was a much sought after *dai* as she used traditional knowledge and promoted natural birth. She even induced labour pains by giving hot herbal drinks made by boiling fenugreek and carom seeds with soya. Women have often stated that they prefer to have home deliveries by someone they know, rather than an unknown doctor, especially when respectful maternity care is missing.

With health facilities in rural areas being far, the balance in favour of the midwife is heavily tilted. In Shanti's case, not only was she right there and readily available but her personal touch boosted the confidence of pregnant women. They also knew that she would accompany them to the nearest hospital for delivery if she felt that the pregnancy was complicated and beyond her capabilities.

Shanti's long experience enabled her to predict when a delivery would take place and she also had the skill to deliver a breach baby. Besides, she provided information on immunisation, birth registration and nutrition. Her abilities, skill and knowledge prompted families living in distant villages to seek her help with deliveries. This also

included families belonging to the upper caste, which traditionally shied away from taking the help of a *dai* belonging to a lower caste.

There are over 10 lakh *dais* like Shanti serving rural and urban communities. They can be lifesavers in places where there is an acute shortage of trained medical personnel. At present, there are only 1,859 obstetricians at Community Health Centres in the country as against the requirement of 5,510 (2016 Rural Health Statistics). This lack of specialists can be critical for pregnant women, as one of the major causes of maternal deaths (almost 46 per cent according to a 2014 *Lancet* study) is the poor quality of intrapartum care. This is where trained midwives can make the difference by supporting the overburdened secondary and tertiary care facilities that do not have enough obstetricians.

Severe bleeding after birth can kill a healthy woman within hours if untreated and simply injecting oxytocics effectively reduces this risk. The second major cause of maternal deaths is infection after childbirth.

This can be eliminated if good hygiene is observed and if early signs of infection are recognised and treated promptly. Third, if pre-eclampsia is detected and appropriately managed before the onset of convulsions and other life-threatening complications, maternal deaths can be reduced. In this case, administering drugs such as magnesium sulfate for pre-eclampsia can lower a woman's risk of developing seizures. These risks could be reduced by midwives who are usually from the same communities as the pregnant

women and are familiar with their medical history.

Therefore, investing in harnessing the power of existing midwives across the country by upgrading their skills could mean the difference between life and death for women. What makes the case in favour of trained midwives even stronger is the fact that the financial costs of ending preventable maternal deaths are now known.

A collaborative study between UNFPA, John Hopkins University, Victoria University, University of Washington and Avenir Health shared at the Nairobi ICPD+25, gave a breakdown of the collective costs of ending preventable maternal deaths in 120 countries, including India.

According to Natalia Kanem, Executive Director UNFPA, these figures were a drop in the ocean compared to the dividend expected and the funds available. Speaking at the summit, she said that it would be wrong to even refer to this as a cost as these were smart, affordable investments that would transform the lives of women. What was needed next was the political will and financing to get the job done. The cost of inaction would be much higher, she said.

The decision to build a cadre of trained midwives is a good move to reduce the costs of inaction. But it must not overlook the knowledge and skills that traditional birth attendants have. They must be supported and trained for the sake of the millions of pregnant women they continue to save. After all, even a single preventable maternal death is one too many.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

# Free education is no charity

Peaceful protests and demonstrations cannot be ridiculed in any healthy and vibrant democracy. In fact, we need more campuses like JNU, with students who are curious, questioning, intellectually-aspiring and democratically-engaged



FOREIGN EYE



## HUMANITY ON TRIAL

Criticism of Aung San Suu Kyi's defence of her country must not overshadow the issue at the heart of the case at the ICJ: The ongoing suffering of Rohingya Muslims. Myanmar's generals are largely inured to international condemnation. But the reminder that there may one day be consequences for their actions could offer some deterrent to the worst abuses. It could also increase the pressure on the UNSC to take on the issue. (The Guardian, editorial)

(The writer is a senior journalist)

CAPSULE



**Gold futures rise Rs 56 to Rs 37,600 per 10 gm**

**NEW DELHI:** Gold prices on Friday rose Rs 56 to Rs 37,600 per 10 gram in futures trade as speculators widened their bets on spot demand and a positive trend overseas. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold contracts for February delivery traded higher by Rs 56, or 0.15 per cent, at Rs 37,600 per 10 gram in a business turnover of 16,002 lots. Gold for delivery in April next year also edged up by Rs 59, or 0.16 per cent, to Rs 38,633 per 10 gram in 2,695 lots. Analysts said the rise in gold prices was mostly on the back of fresh positions built up by participants on strong overseas trend. Globally, gold price was quoting 0.22 per cent up at USD 1,475.50 an ounce in New York.



**Crude oil futures gain on spot demand**

**NEW DELHI:** Crude oil prices on Friday gained Rs 5 to Rs 4,205 per barrel as speculators created fresh positions amid positive trend at spot market. Analysts said fresh bets created by participants kept crude prices higher in futures trade. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude for delivery in December traded higher by Rs 5, or 0.12 per cent to Rs 4,205 per barrel in 27,180 lots. Globally, West Texas Intermediate crude oil was trading 0.64 per cent up at USD 59.56 per barrel. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the international benchmark rose 0.87 per cent to USD 64.17 per barrel in New York.



**GIC Housing garners Rs 200 cr**

**NEW DELHI:** GIC Housing Finance on Friday said it has raised Rs 200 crore by issuing commercial papers to ICICI Mutual Fund. The company has allotted commercial papers worth Rs 200 crore on December 12, 2019 at a rate of 5.36 per cent for 56 days to ICICI Mutual Fund, it said in a regulatory filing. GIC Housing stock was trading at Rs 150 on the BSE, up 0.98 per cent from the previous close.



**Volvo Cars launches XC40 T4 R-Design SUV priced at Rs 39.9 lakh**

**NEW DELHI:** Swedish luxury carmaker Volvo Cars on Friday announced launch of SUV XC40 T4 R-Design priced at Rs 39.9 lakh (ex-showroom). The model will be available in BS-VI certified petrol variant powered by 2-litre engine and the vehicle is based on the company's Compact Modular Architecture (CMA). Volvo Cars said in a statement. "The XC40 T4 R-Design is our first petrol offering in the entry-level SUV segment... Our attractive pricing for the R-Design will gain a lot of traction for this variant." Volvo Cars India Managing Director Charles Frump said. He further said, "We are conscious of the customers' preferences in features and made this entry-level variant fully loaded." It is equipped with features such as two zone climate control, wireless charging for smart phones, power tail gate, hands-free power tail gate opening and closing, 12.3 inch instrumentation cluster with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility and rear and front park assist pilot, among others, the company said.

**Moody's cuts India's GDP growth forecast to 5.6 pc for 2019**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Investors Service on Friday said it has lowered its 2019 GDP growth forecast for India to 5.6 per cent as slow employment growth weighs on consumption.

It expects economic growth to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent respectively, but sees the pace of growth remaining lower than past.

"We have lowered our 2019 gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for India to 5.6 per cent, which is lower than 7.4 per cent growth in 2018," Moody's said in a report.

India's economic growth has decelerated since mid-2018, with real GDP growth slipping from nearly 8 per cent to 5 per cent in the second quarter (April-June) of 2019, it noted.

It further slipped to 4.5 per cent in July-September quarter. "Consumption demand has



**"India's economic growth has decelerated since mid-2018, with real GDP growth slipping from nearly 8 per cent to 5 per cent in the second quarter (April-June) of 2019," it noted**

cooled notably, with slow employment growth weighing on consumption," it said. "We expect economic growth to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively, but the pace of growth will remain lower than in the recent past."

Moody's said fiscal measures undertaken by the government - such as corporate tax rate cuts, bank recapitalisation, infrastructure spending plans, support for the auto sector and others - do not directly address widespread weakness in consumption demand, which has been the chief driver of the economy.

In addition, interest rate

cuts by the Reserve Bank of India are not being adequately transmitted to lending rates because of the credit squeeze caused by disruption in the non-bank financial sector, it said.

Commercial vehicle sales in India declined 22.95 per cent in the six months ended September 30 2019 compared with the same period a year earlier.

"Commercial vehicle sales have been hit by the liquidity squeeze in the financial sector and the economic slowdown, despite support from government stimulus measures to boost demand and vehicle purchases ahead of India's migra-

tion to new emission standards," it said.

It expected auto loan delinquencies to increase in the next few quarters as the economic slowdown will constrain demand for freight transportation and put pressure on freight rates.

"However, the slowing economic growth has yet to significantly impact the performance of underlying loans as the decline in commercial vehicle sales over the past quarters has helped ease the surplus capacity situation in the medium and heavy commercial vehicle segments and supported the performance," it added.

**Amazon Studios announces new first look deal**

PNS ■ LOS ANGELES

Amazon Studios on Friday announced a new first look deal with the "Lord of the Rings" star Orlando Bloom.

Under the new partnership, Bloom will work with Amazon Studios to create television and film projects that will premiere exclusively on Amazon Prime Video in more than 200 countries and territories. Bloom, who has played "Legolas" in "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy and Will Turner in "The Pirates of the Caribbean" films, currently stars in Amazon Original hit series Carnival Row, alongside Cara Delevingne.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with Jen Salke and the team at Amazon and I look forward to growing that relationship with this new and exciting production deal," Bloom said in a statement.

Calling Bloom a "fantastic creative talent and collaborative partner", Jennifer Salke, Head of Amazon Studios, said, "We're thrilled to continue working with Orlando not only on Carnival Row, but on the future projects for our Prime Video customers."

**Average onion prices rise five-fold to Rs 101 per kg**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Average onion prices across major cities have jumped five fold in the last one year to Rs 101.35 per kg as domestic production in Kharif and late-kharif seasons (summer-sown) is estimated to have declined by 22 per cent, the government said in Rajya Sabha on Friday.

The prices have risen by 81 per cent in the last one month.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Food and Consumer Affairs Danve Raosaheb Dadarao informed that all-India daily average retail price stood at Rs 101.35 per kg on Tuesday (December 10) as against Rs 55.95 per kg a month-ago and Rs 19.69 per kg a year-ago.

The combined Kharif and late-Kharif production for 2019-20 is estimated at 54.73 lakh tonnes as against 69.91 lakh tonnes in 2018-19," he said. Onion is a seasonal crop with harvesting period of Rabi (March to June), Kharif (October to December) and late Kharif (January to March). In the intervening period (July to October), the market is fed by stored Rabi onions.

As per Agriculture Ministry estimates, the storage of onion in 2017 and 2018 stood at



**The combined Kharif and late-Kharif production for 2019-20 is estimated at 54.73 lakh tonnes as against 69.91 lakh tonnes in 2018-19**

48.73 lakh tonnes and 50.05 Lakh tonnes, respectively.

"During 2019-20, there was a three-four weeks delay in sowing as well as decline in sown area of the Kharif onion because of late arrival of monsoon. Further, untimely prolonged rains in the major growing States of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh during the harvesting period, i.e., Sept/Oct, caused damage to the standing

crop in these regions. "All this adversely impacted production and quality of the Kharif crop. The rains during September/October also affected transportation of the crop from these regions to consuming areas. This led to limited availability of Kharif onion in the market and put pressure on its prices," Dadarao said.

"To boost domestic supply and control prices, the minister said several steps such as creation of onion buffer of about 57,373 tonnes during Rabi 2019, ban on exports since September 29, facilitation of import, imposition of stock limit on traders, approval for import on onion through MMTC and domestic procurement of onions from producing/surplus states by NAFED for supplies in deficit states.

**UK markets rebound on Johnson election landslide**

PNS ■ LONDON

A crushing election victory for Britain's Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson sent delight through UK markets on Friday, with the pound the prime beneficiary.

London's FTSE 100 index rallied 0.9 per cent to 7,335.23 points in early morning deals as investors gave their verdict, reversing initial opening losses.

The capital's second-tier FTSE 250 index meanwhile soared four per cent in value. "The Conservative Party has secured an historic mandate with a thumping victory, providing clarity for investors where there was confusion," said analyst Neil Wilson at trading site Markets.com.

Sterling had jumped overnight to hit \$1.3514 -- its highest level since mid-2018.

The euro had tanked to 82.80 pence, which was a low not seen since just after the Brexit referendum in 2016.

At around 0820 GMT on Friday, sterling changed hands at \$1.3403, while the euro stood at 83.38 pence.

"Boris Johnson's mandate should be easier to push through now, and Brexit hopefully will be delivered," said Accendo Markets analyst Samuel Springett.

"This win will deliver more political certainty for markets,



Boris Johnson

**London's FTSE 100 index rallied 0.9 per cent to 7,335.23 points in early morning deals as investors gave their verdict, reversing initial opening losses**

which is much needed at the moment." Johnson's governing Conservative Party has swept to a big win, securing 362 seats out of the 650-seat parliament with almost all results declared.

That was the biggest Conservative majority since Margaret Thatcher's heyday in the 1980s, and forced main opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn to signal his departure.

Many traders had hoped Johnson would clinch a decisive majority to push through Britain's exit from the European Union next month - and dispel political deadlock and uncertainty that has plagued markets since the divisive 2016 referendum.

Johnson's administration will meanwhile aim to deliver a post-Brexit budget within 100 days.

"For the markets and for business this is the perfect result -- a clear majority for the

Tories, the Corbyn risk nullified entirely, a major reduction in uncertainty around Brexit and even a quick budget to inject the economy with some added impetus," added Wilson.

"The only doubts are around the next phase of Brexit -- the future relationship -- but with a large majority the government will be in a better place to negotiate and do what it needs to do." Carolyn Fairbairn, head of the Confederation of British Industry business lobby, congratulated Johnson on the huge win.

"Business urges PM to use strong mandate to rebuild confidence (and) break cycle of uncertainty, starting with reassurance on Brexit," she said.

The election result was a "historic moment" for a "new contract between business and government to drive new era of inclusive growth", Fairbairn added.

**Brussels to 'rebuild' ties with UK after Johnson win**

PNS ■ PARIS

The EU will have to rebuild its ties with London after Boris Johnson's election victory which is likely to lead to Brexit in January, the EU's Internal Market Commissioner said on Friday.

"We now have to rebuild relations with Great Britain which is an important partner," Thierry Breton told French RTL radio, saying the bloc wanted "balanced" trade relations with the UK.

With almost all results declared for the 650-seat British parliament, Johnson's Conservative party has secured a sweeping victory and he is now expected to deliver on his promise to "Get Brexit Done".

**India exported 37 lakh tonne sugar in 2018-19**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India exported about 37 lakh tonne of sugar in the 2018-19 marketing year ended September to clear the surplus stock, the government told the Rajya Sabha on Friday.

Union minister Danve Raosaheb Dadarao said sugar mills were advised to export sugar as per their MIEQ (Minimum Indicative Export Quota) allocation.

"With a view to evacuate surplus sugar from the country, mill-wise MIEQ of 50 lakh tonne of sugar for export in the 2018-19 sugar season (October 2018 to September 2019) was fixed," the Minister of State for Food and Consumer Affairs said in a written reply.

Against the allocated quantity for 2018-19, about 37 lakh tonne has been exported, he added.

The minister said there was no compulsion on the mills to export sugar and they were free to export the commodity as per their commercial decision.

In view of the huge carry-over stock of sugar and estimates of surplus output in the current sugar season, the government has allocated mill-wise Maximum Admissible Export Quantity (MAEQ) of 60 lakh tonne of the sweetener to the mills for

**The minister said there was no compulsion on the mills to export sugar and they were free to export the commodity as per their commercial decision.**



export in 2019-20, Dadarao said.

Industry body ISMA recently said sugar production fell 54 per cent during October-November to 18.85 lakh tonne due to sharp decline in output in Maharashtra where cane crushing started late.

Last month, ISMA said the sugar output is estimated to fall 21.5 per cent to 26 million tonne in the current 2019-20 marketing year. It reported an opening stock of 14.58 million tonne of sugar as on October 1.

**SpiceJet grounds three B737 freighter planes**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

No-frills carrier SpiceJet on Friday said it has grounded three Boeing 737 freighter aircraft due to a "potential defect".

The move follows an advice from Israeli Aerospace Industries (IAI), which had converted these planes into freighters, according to a regulatory filing.

"During an internal examination of IAI's manufacturing facilities, a potential defect was discovered in the process used to manufacture the 9G rigid barrier installed on these



aircraft.

"These aircraft will return to operations after regulatory clearance," the filing said.

A senior official at DGCA said it would ensure compliance with Israeli civil aviation

authority's directives.

The planes have been grounded and "shall follow the airworthiness directives issued by the Israeli civil aviation authority before they fly again. We will ensure its com-

**The planes have been grounded and "shall follow the airworthiness directives issued by the Israeli civil aviation authority before they fly again. We will ensure its compliance," the official told PTI**

pliance," the official told PTI.

SpiceJet has four freighter planes that operate on domestic as well as international routes. Out of them, only three were converted by IAI while the fourth plane, whose conversion was done by another

entity, is still operational, an airline official said.

A diversified group, IAI is also into designing and manufacturing business jets, primary aero-structures, landing gears, servo controls and actuator systems.

**Vegetable oil imports down marginally to 11.28 lakh tonne in Nov**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vegetable oil imports fell marginally to 11.28 lakh tonne in November due to decline in inward shipments of non-edible oil, according to Solvent Extractors' Association.

Out of the total vegetable oil import, the shipments of edible oil rose to 10,97,424 tonne in November 2019 from 10,73,353 tonne in the same month last year.

Non-edible oils import, however, fell to 30,796 tonne compared to 60,450 tonne in the year-ago period, SEEA said in a statement.

"Import of vegetable oils during November 2019 is reported at 11,28,220 tonne compared to 11,33,893 tonne in November, 2018," the statement said.



Oil year runs from November to October.

Import of refined palm oil drastically reduced following the imposition of 5 per cent safeguard duty on shipments from Malaysia with effect from September 4, 2019.

The import of refined palm oil stood at 2.57 lakh tonne in August and 2.64 lakh tonne in September. However, shipments reduced to 1.18 lakh tonne in October and stood at 1.22 lakh tonne in November.

**'NBFC crisis poses more bad loan risks for banks'**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The continuing liquidity crunch facing non-banking financial companies is likely to result in increasing bad loans risks for banks both from these shadow banks as well as from companies relying on such lenders for funding, warns a report.

The spillover of stress among NBFCs to borrowers, and ultimately to banks, will hinder improvements in banks' asset quality, profitability and capital, which is credit negative, says a report by Moody's on Friday.

NBFCs have been facing liquidity crisis following the bankruptcy of IL&FS in September 2018.

"Tight funding for NBFCs, a consequence of the default by IL&FS in September 2018, is raising asset risks for banks in an economy that has grown increasingly dependent on non-banking lenders for the provision of credit," Moody's



said in the report.

Owing to liquidity crisis, NBFCs are forced to reduce lending, leading to funding constraints for borrowers relying on non-bank lenders.

This increases the risk of loan losses for NBFCs, and as a result, they will continue to have difficulty in obtaining funding, the report said.

"As financial health of NBFCs deteriorates due to loan losses, they will have

greater difficulty obtaining funding, which will exacerbate their funding constraints. It can result in more bad loans from NBFCs for banks, the report said.

Also, as NBFC customers' financials weaken, banks will reduce lending to them, which in turn will further worsen their funding stress and can lead to more bad loans from these companies for banks, it warned. A type of NBFC credit to

**Also, as NBFC customers' financials weaken, banks will reduce lending to them, which in turn will further worsen their funding stress and can lead to more bad loans from these companies for banks, it warned**

controlling shareholders, or promoters, of large listed companies across various industries is also emerging as a source of asset risk for banks.

Corporate promoters use their company shares as collateral to borrow, mostly from NBFCs or mutual funds, typically for the purpose of making investments, including in external businesses.

"The risk for banks is that promoters with weak governance can use company resources to repay their debt, causing financial damage to their businesses, which as a consequence, can default on their own loans from banks, the report said. Refinancing can be difficult

for promoters of companies as investments they make using loans are often illiquid, a problem made worse by tighter availability of credit from NBFCs.

The report further said the non-bank lenders collectively have a large market share in retail and SME loans, a segment that has grown rapidly in recent years and now is susceptible to asset quality deterioration as the economy slows.

"A curtailing of lending by NBFCs will add to risks from retail loans for banks by reducing the availability of credit that individuals can use for refinancing and by contributing to the slowdown," the agency said.

The more interactive a piece of art is, the more it resonates with the audience, conveying the intended message better, believes Harsha Durugadda a Hyderabad-based artist. The extent to which the audience finds a piece of art relatable to their own life is just as important as the art itself, finds ANUSHKA PRADEEP

## A SPINNING ART

Harsha translates the temporary moments of our life by making them tangible through his artwork. Kalakiriti Gallery has organised 'Fragments in Motion', a solo exhibition of recent work by Harsha Durugadda. "Though each piece narrates a different story, the exhibition is themed on motion especially that of 'whirling', taking into account the spinning motion which the entire planetary system is dependent on. The idea for the spinning tops and other installations was ideally inspired by sufi saints who often feel a trance through the whirling motion, which according to them is meant to connect the earth and the sky while the spinning tops that we played with during our childhood will connect this concept to the memories of the audience as well," says Harsha.

Harsha Durugadda, presently working in Hyderabad, has participated in solo and group exhibitions in India, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. His work was exhibited in the 2018 Nord Art Exhibition in Germany where he was awarded Biafarin award. Since his solo show 'Whirling out' at Lalit Kala Akademy New Delhi in early 2016, his work has appeared in Bondi, sculpture by the sea (Sydney, Australia) where he received the Andrew Stretton Memorial fellowship. In 2017 at Cottesloe, Sculpture by the sea (Perth, Australia) he won the Rio Tinto sculpture award 2017, which was a major recognition internationally for an emerging artist. Harsha was the recipient of unbox Fellowship supported by the British Council, India in 2012 and 2014 has published with Courtauld Institute and the British Museum.

The gallery houses several of his notable pieces including an installation titled, Game of Self. When asked to convey the concept behind the art Harsha says, "Game of self is a piece that is built especially keeping the Hyderabad audience in mind, as the letters 'selfish' glow in neon in English, Harsha employs both tra-

Telugu, and Urdu languages which are languages predominantly spoken in Hyderabad. It has actually been created with a mixture of aluminum and granite for the frame work, and glass and neon lights within. All these factors are meant to represent the diversity of language, cuisine, art forms, and culture right here in Hyderabad. But the most important message that the piece conveys is the necessity to be aware of one's own selfishness. And that of mankind as a whole. I believe that as long as we don't bother acknowledging the problem, we can't provide a solution."

Other major pieces of work at the gallery was an exhibit titled Conversation in which the artist has orchestrated an aggregate of a wooden head and bisected automotive road tyre to represent the fleeting sound of a conversation. He uses glass to create an illusion of a waveform. This installation is dedicated to the fibre of getting to know people with conversation.

A arts scholar from JNU, Harsha has been sculpting for about eight years now and he makes art that are tangible. "I have always believed that art is a medium to satisfy the curiosity of the human mind. It should be out there for people to engage in, to participate. I make pieces which are intended towards encouraging people to actively engage, thus completing my artwork in the process. Interaction, I believe, is an important part of art," he says.

ditional and industrial materials in his work such as



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Jujiflora wood pigment and techniques of milling, carving and casting.

Selfish Love, is yet another installation where the audience can interact with it by peeking into it. It was Rabbi

Abraham Twerski's talk about the difference between selfish and true love which must be born of the love of giving and not receiving, that inspired this piece. As he says "the work is like a talisman for me where one part of the work completes the other to make a whole".

When asked about what prospects he was considering in the future, Harsha says, "I am planning to conduct public engagements and dialogues with artists regarding their form of art and the plat-



form they receive. Two of the exhibits, Nimbus and Yyuham are ideally large-scale pieces which shall be exhibited in Sydney. The ones here are just the miniature versions we create in order to understand the structure of the large scale art installation. There's a severe lack of space for artists who want to create art on a large scale as there

are not many venues here in Hyderabad where one can exhibit them. It is not just the artist who will drive the art, but also the feasibility of installation and exhibition which play key roles in enabling the skill on the whole. Thus a dialogue on this aspect is necessary which I'm planning to start in the city in the near future."

## AARAMBHAM: Helping end hunger



Due to the financial crisis in my family, I worked as a child labourer. Later, a social activist helped me join an orphanage. I completed my engineering with the help of various donors and worked as a waiter during my graduation to fulfil my financial needs. I observed that lot of food was being thrown outside hotels. My friends and I decided to collect this extra food and distribute it to the needy.

needly." In 2009, he started his NGO, Aarambham to help people with education, food and nutrition and also conduct blood donation camps. Rao shares, "During graduation, I gave many seminars about all my activities in various engineering colleges and many came forward to join my cause. Now, we have over 4,000 volunteers in Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Dehradun, Amalapuram, Rajahmundry, Chandigarh, Jamshedpur and many other cities." His NGO follows the mantra of making the world a better place for everyone. He said, "Our NGO survives on the collaborative efforts of humanity. Human suffering is endless but we all can do something to solve it. The rich and powerful always have a backing, it's helping

the needy that truly proves the depth of one's heart and emotions. We help kids in slums go to schools by providing them with the basics. We explain school life to them and take tuitions if they find it hard to understand things." Another thing that Rao does regularly is conduct Josh Talks to inspire people to achieve their dreams. He explains, "We share four types of success stories through the talks. For instance in Zero to Hero we tell stories about people who come from very poor backgrounds and manage to reach new heights. Then we offer career guidance and narrate stories of achievers who did not let their financial background come in the way of getting government jobs. We also talk about entrepreneurs' success stories. We cite Asu

machine creator Mallethwar as an example for such talks." Rao has won awards like Indian Young Icon Award for his social services, Food man, Son of the Soil and more. He shares, "I was very happy when people joined my NGO to help the needy. I request people to not waste food and donate it to the needy to reduce starvation deaths in our country. We are planning to expand our activities in more cities soon."



## A GRANDMASTER IN THE MAKING

International Master R. Raja Rithvik of Hyderabad bagged the 1st GM Norm (Grand Master Norm) in the Ellobregat International Open Chess Championship 2019 held at Spain this month.

A Class X student from the city, has become an undefeated player after winning against top players from Georgia, Spain, Argentina, Israel etc and also by defeating the reputed Spain Grand Master Narciso Dublan Marc in geh wefond round itself.

The 15-year-old has clinched his 1st GM Norm in Ellobregat International Open 2019, Spain, which is one of the biggest International Chess Championships. Around 130 players from 28 countries took part in the tournament. Speaking on the occasion, N.V.S. Rama Raju of RACE

**THE 15-YEAR-OLD HAS CLINCHED HIS 1ST GM NORM IN ELLOBREGAT INTERNATIONAL OPEN 2019, SPAIN, WHICH IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST INTERNATIONAL CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

academy, where Rithvik is undergoing training said, "This is an excellent achievement at this age. He will bring many more laurels to the country."

Earlier in July, 2019, Rithvik bagged the Under-15 National title at Erode, Tamilnadu. It is pertinent to note that last year Raja Rithvik had become the youngest International Master from Telangana at the age of 14 years.

In due recognition of his excellent performances at the International-level, the World Chess Federation

(FIDE) had conferred the prestigious title of "International Master" on Raja Rithvik in 2018. The "FIDE Master" title was conferred in 2017 and "Candidate Master" title in the year 2014.

Previously, Raja Rithvik created history by winning five gold medals in Asian Chess Championship-2018 at Thailand. At the age of 13, he achieved a rare feat of winning two National Championships of Under-13 Championship at Jalandhar and Under-17 Championship at Coimbatore in the single year of 2017. He also bagged Silver Medal in the Commonwealth Chess Championship-2012, Gold Medals in Asian Chess Championships conducted at Singapore (2015), Bangkok (2014), Sri Lanka (2013). Nowadays, he is competing in the senior category and achieving commendable results.



## Bhansali, Bhushan Kumar to co-produce film on Balakot strike

**F**ilmmakers Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Bhushan Kumar will collaborate on a film on the Balakot air strike conducted by the Indian Air Force in February this year, the makers announced on Friday.

Billed as a "story that celebrates the accomplishments" of the IAF, the movie will be helmed by *Rock On!* director Abhishek Kapoor. He will be writing the script as well.

The project will also be backed by Mahaveer Jain and Pragma Kapoor.

It will be the second film on the February 26 air strike against terror outfits in Balakot in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province after the Vivek Oberoi starrer *Balakot - The True Story*.

The strike followed the February 14 terror attack targeting the CRPF in



Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district in which 40 jawans were killed.

"Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Bhushan Kumar, Mahaveer Jain and Pragma Kapoor come together, to pay tribute to the sons of India and their never-say-die spirit in the National Award-winning director, Abhishek Kapoor's film based on the 2019 Balakot air-strike. The story celebrates the accomplishments of the Indian Air Force," the



statement, shared by Bhansali Productions on Twitter, read.

Bhansali said the film is his tribute to the heroes "who have made India their priority".

"It is a story of bravery, patriotism and love for the country. We aspire that their story and bravery reaches to everyone in the right way," the *Padmaavat* director said.

There are some stories in the history of India that need to be retold, Kumar said of the

upcoming film. "This will be one of our biggest projects for next year. It's extremely close to all of us at T-Series because of the sentiment it carries. I have always been a patriot and it gives me immense pleasure to present the story of bravado of our IAF officers."

"Wing Commander Abhinandan is a national hero and the Balakot Airstrike 2019 happens to be an event of immense pride for the entire nation," the co-producer added.

Abhishek Kapoor, whose last release was *Kedarnath*, said he is honoured to be entrusted with one of India's bravest stories.

"I remember the emotions that ran through the entire country when the strike was carried out. I am determined to do justice to this story in my endeavour to bring it to the silver screen," the director said.



## Will Poulter exits *Lord of the Rings*

**A**ctor Will Poulter is no longer a part of Amazon's ambitious *Lord of the Rings* series. The actor had to exit the show due to scheduling conflicts, reported Deadline.

Poulter, known for *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* and *Midsommer*, had been in talks for the role, but his casting was never confirmed by the streamer.

In relation to a renewal handed

down to the series for a second season by Amazon, the series will be going on a four-five-month hiatus after filming the first two episodes from the first season to pen the bulk of scripts for the next chapter.

According to the outlet, the change in the schedule made it impossible for Poulter to stick to his other commitments.

JA Bayona of *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* fame will be directing the first two episodes of the

*Lord of the Rings* show. He will also serve as executive producer alongside partner Belen Atienza.

The series will not be a retelling of Peter Jackson's Oscar-winning trilogy. It will explore a story preceding the events of the first LOTR novel, *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

The show's core cast, yet to be confirmed by Amazon, includes Ema Horvath, Markella Kavenagh and Joseph Mawle.

## Johnny Galecki turns producer

**A**ctor Johnny Galecki is returning to the *National Lampoon's Vacation* franchise by developing a new comedy series based on the film family he was once part of.

The *Middle* writer Tim Hobert has created The Griswolds for upcoming US streaming service HBO Max, and Galecki will serve as a producer via his Alcide Bava Productions firm,

reports *aceshowbiz.com*. The Griswolds will feature the members of the family back home in the Chicago, Illinois suburbs as they go about their daily lives.

The *National Lampoon's Vacation* film series featured the Griswolds' misadventures while attempting to enjoy family getaways, and was based on John Hughes' short story, *Vacation '59*, initially published in *National*

*Lampoon* magazine. It was first adapted for the big screen by director Harold Ramis in 1983, with Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo starring as parents Clark and Ellen Griswold. The *Big Bang Theory* star Galecki appeared in the third film, 1989's *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, in which he portrayed the couple's son Rusty Griswold.

### FUN TIME

#### ARCHIE



#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



#### NANCY



#### GINGER MEGGS



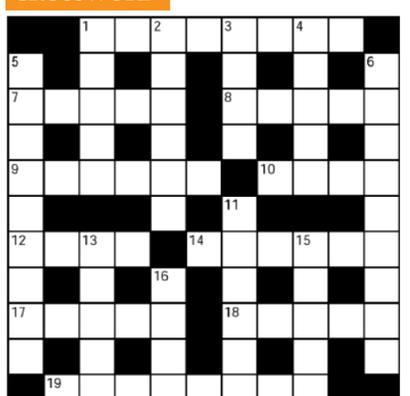
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- 1 Strong hairs sticking out from a cat's face
- 7 A sour citrus fruit
- 8 A room on a ship
- 9 People who get coal or metal ore from underground
- 10 A joint between two ropes
- 12 Midday
- 14 Cardboard box
- 17 The brother of your father or mother
- 18 A soldier's bravery award
- 19 Things that belong to someone

#### DOWN

- 1 Adult females
- 2 Take no notice of
- 3 Strike with the foot
- 4 A red-breasted bird
- 5 A light metal
- 6 Immediately
- 11 Someone who grows crops or raises animals
- 13 Happen
- 15 A soft toy bear
- 16 Jump over



#### SUDOKU

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

#### Yesterday's solution

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

#### 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.

# CATHERINE makes the cut

Boyapati who was on the hunt for a new face alongside Balayya this time around finally settled down with Catherine Tresa. The actress felt the role has its own importance in the narrative and decided to give her consent, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

Picking a heroine for his next with Nandamuri Balakrishna has turned out to be an arduous task for director Boyapati Sreenu. While the female talent pool is in short supply, other top heroines are busy with a slew of projects. Also, top heroines are wary of signing films with an ageing hero, lest they will lose out on films with their age group youngsters. Names like Rachita Ram (from

Kannada) and even Sonakshi Sinha too were bandied about for the heroine's role in Boyapati's film but we hear he has finally settled down with Catherine Tresa. A source says, "Boyapati was on the hunt for a new face alongside Balayya this time around. He considered multiple names but negotiations with them fell through. He later approached Catherine Tresa, who he directed for *Sarrainodu*. She felt the role has its own

importance in the narrative and decided to give her consent. The fact that she enjoyed a good working relationship with Boyapati earlier too played its part in her signing. She has given bulk dates for the film starting from January as per Boyapati's wishes. He is keen on completing the film by early May and release it in late summer." The untitled film is a signature Boyapati action-entertainer that will see Balayya in a brand new lean

avatar. Speaking at the film's *muhurat* held last week, Balayya said that the film will boast of elements that one expects from his film with Sreenu. "The story has come out well and there's novelty in it. There's a spiritual angel to it as well... you'll see once it releases," he had said. Written by M Ratnam, with music by SS Thaman, the film will be made on a budget of Rs 70 crore by producer Miryala Ravinder Reddy.

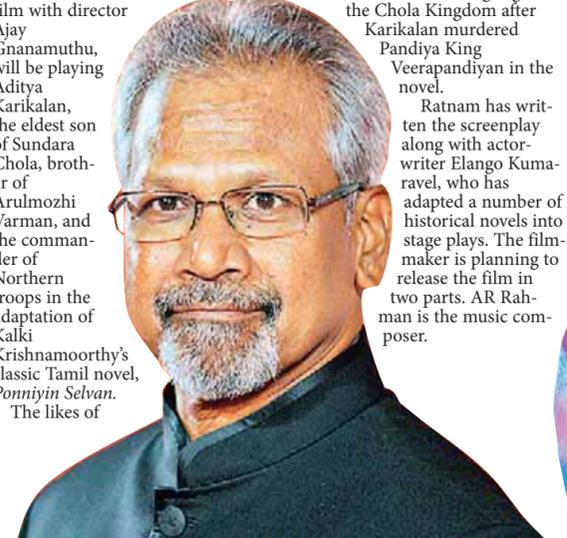


# MANI RATNAM kick-starts his dream project

In the pre-production for over a year, *Ponniyin Selvan*, acclaimed director Mani Ratnam's ambitious project, has gone in front of the cameras in Thailand earlier this week. It's a 40-day schedule and filming commenced with Jayam Ravi and Karthi. While the former will be seen in the titular role of Ponniyin Selvan aka Arulmozhi Varman, who was celebrated as the great Raja Raja Chola I, the great emperor who expanded the Chola Kingdom to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Maldives, the latter is essaying Vallavaraiyan Vandiyadevan, the chieftain of the Arulmozhi Varman. Vikram, who will join the sets after the completion of his on sets film with director

**THE LIKES OF AISHWARYA RAI BACHCHAN, AMALA PAUL, AISHWARYA LEKSHMI, SATHYARAJ AND MOHAN BABU WILL ALSO BE SEEN IN SIGNIFICANT ROLES**

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Amala Paul, Aishwarya Lekshmi, Sathyaraj and Mohan Babu will also be seen in significant roles. Aishwarya, it has been reported, is set to play a dual role - Nandhini and her hearing and speech-impaired mother Mandakini. Nandhini takes revenge against the Chola Kingdom after Karikalal murdered Pandiya King Veerapandiyan in the novel. Ratnam has written the screenplay along with actor-writer Elango Kumaram, who has adapted a number of historical novels into stage plays. The filmmaker is planning to release the film in two parts. AR Rahman is the music composer.



# Wedding bells for NITHIIN?

One of the most eligible bachelors of Telugu cinema, Nithiin, will bid adieu to his bachelorhood status in the summer of 2020. At least, that's what the buzz says. Reports circling around indicate the suave actor, who has maintained a safe distance from being linked up to anyone in his 17-year career, has been in a steady relationship with a Telugu girl for the past three years. She has no connection whatsoever to the industry. The actor is extremely guarded about his personal life, which is why no media house has got a wind of his relationship. He will be announcing the name of his lady love to his fans short-

ly. The wedding, to take place in April next year, will be a destination affair. Dubai has been chosen as the venue. The actor's friends from the industry will be gracing it. A grand reception in Hyderabad will follow soon after. On the work front, the actor is busy with a slew of interesting projects. He is on the brink of finishing Bheeshma with Venky Kudumula right now. He has started shooting for Chandrasekhar Yeleti's film sometime back and will juggle between it and Rang De with Venky Atluri for the next three months. He also signed lyricist-turned-director Krishna Chaitanya's period drama.



# Pink remake gets starry names

In tune with Pawan Kalyan's diktat, the Telugu remake of *Pink* with him in the lead was launched in a hush-hush ceremony at producer Dil Raju's office in Hyderabad on Thursday. After Raju confirmed the film in an interview last month, Pawan asked him to refrain from making official statements furthermore. Which is why, the media too wasn't invited for the *muhurat*. Nor were any stills of the event sent. The fact that Pawan was at a political event in Kakinada on Thursday meant that it wasn't the right time to let any details about the film go public, said a source close to the unit. However, later in the evening, production house Sri Venkateswara Creations did confirm that hotshot composer SS Thaman is on board to render tunes for the project, directed by Venu Sreeram. The music compositions started off with Thaman giving a terrific tune, a tweet on the SVC's Twitter handle read. Another bit of information trickling in about the film indi-



cates that Anjali is on board to play another key role. She is the latest addition to the film days after the makers getting a positive nod from

Nivetha Thomas to essay the part that was played by Taapsee. The untitled film, a joint production venture between

Boney Kapoor and Dil Raju, will go to sets in the second week of January, with Pawan set to join the team in February.



# Now, Sai Tej flaunts SIX-PACK abs

After Allu Arjun and Ram Charan, Sai Tej is the latest actor from the Mega family to have joined the six-packs club. The actor, who has battled weight issues in the past, has gone extremely fit for his next, *Prathiroju Pandage* with Maruthi. He will be baring his upper body for a fight sequence which unfolds over a river side in the film. According to the makers, there are a couple of action sequences in the film and Sai, who is playing an NRI, required

flaunting his well-toned body in one of them. The makers are happy that the sequence has come out well and believe that Sai's intensity has only helped it better. The film is about the final phase in the life of a grandfather (played by Sathyaraj) and how his grandson (Sai Tej) helps him to live life to the fullest. A joint production venture between GA2 Pictures and UV Creations, *Prathiroju Pandage* will be battling it out with Balakrishna-starrer *Ruler* this December 20.

# 'Dube will get better with confidence'

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India bowling coach Bharat Arun strongly feels that Shivam Dube has all the ingredients to become a good all-rounder at the international level as he keeps gaining confidence with every international game that he plays.

Dube came into the limelight with his big-hitting prowess during an innings of 54 in 30 balls during the second T20 International against West Indies in Thiruvananthapuram.

He hit four sixes in that innings apart from a good show with the ball in an earlier series against Bangladesh.

"He is an exciting prospect and I think he is gaining in confidence from every game. Even you if look at the way he came back the way after he bowled the first over (in Mumbai) against West Indies, I think that was creditable. For Virat (Kohli), to show faith in him after the first over and also for him to bowl a good spell after that..."

"And I think he is an exciting talent for us. As he gains in confidence, he will become a good all-rounder," Arun said.

He was all praise for seamer Deepak Chahar, who has done well in the recent T20 games, the Indian bowling coach said he has got everything in him to do well consistently at the international level.

"Deepak has been exceptional even in the IPL. He is someone who can move the ball both ways. He is also a very skillful bowler, bowling

SHIVAM IS AN EXCITING PROSPECT AND I THINK HE IS GAINING IN CONFIDENCE FROM EVERY GAME. AND IF HE CONTINUES TO DO SO HE WILL BECOME A GOOD ALL-ROUNDER —BHARAT ARUN

slow bouncers, yorkers. I think with so much skill on hand... Let me put it this way, he has got everything in him to do well at the international level," he added.

Wrist spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal hasn't featured together in recent games unlike the last two years in the lead up to the World Cup.

"See, we were looking at an ideal combination which lends absolute balance to the team. Also there was an option to use Ravindra Jadeja as an all-rounder. That really helped us. There may be occasions when there may be conducive conditions where both can be used. We have to look at overall balance of the team," he added.

Looking ahead to the first ODI



India allrounder Shivam Dube during net session

BCCI/Twitter

against the West Indies boasting of aggressive batsmen, asked if the India bowlers can tame the rival batsmen, he said their batsmen come after you there is always a chance.

"Definitely, I think yes. The last two out of three games we have won, the bowling also has done pretty well. I am sure we have the bowling to restrict them, but saying that West Indies are an extremely competitive side. But when their batsmen come after you, you also have a chance against them," he added.

Arun said that the team was not overtly worried about the dew factor.

About the fitness status of pacerman Bhuvneshwar Kumar, he said the physios are taking a call and they would be giving a press release later in the evening after the assessment.

About the Indians having a number of quality fast bowlers presently, Arun said it augurs well but it would be horses for courses policy.

"...The more number of bowlers do well, I think it augurs well for us. So it gives you a varied pool of bowlers to choose from. Also we would be seeing the conditions, New Zealand would be different, Australia would be different. So it will be horses for courses..." he added.

On not playing right-arm off-spinners more in the ODIs, he said: "As it is, if you look at Jadeja, you have a readymade all-rounder for us. Jadeja, after the World Cup, he has been exceptional for us. He bowls well, bats well and is the best fielder in the world. He adds a lot of dimension for us."

# Iyer should bat at 4: Kumble



Shreyas Iyer raises his bat BCCI/Twitter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain and spin legend Anil Kumble wants Shreyas Iyer to bat at the crucial no.4 position in

the upcoming ODI series against the West Indies, which according to him, is going to be a tough challenge for the Indian bowlers.

Giving his views on the upcoming three ODIs, starting Sunday, Kumble said India

s bowling attack will have to be at its best to get the better of a powerful West Indies batting line-up.

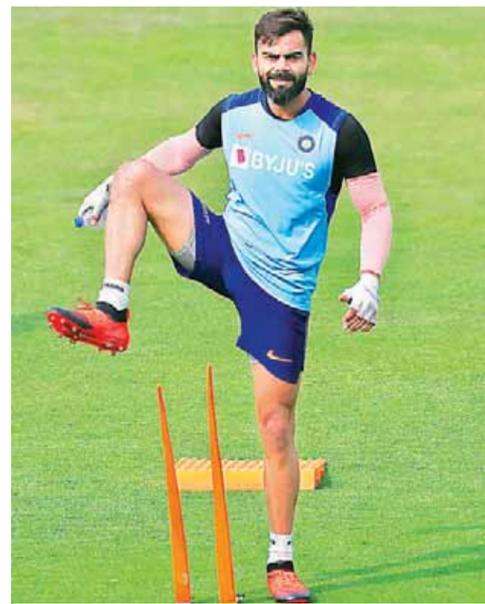
"With Shikhar (Dhawan) not being there it again gives KL Rahul chance to open the batting. We have seen Shreyas Iyer's quality and he has grown in stature, so I would like him to be at number four," he told 'Star Sports'.

West Indies lost T20 leg of the tour, going 1-2 to the hosts. The three-match ODI rubber will start in Chennai.

"I'd like to see the bowling come through because against West Indies it would be a challenge. They're all powerful hitters. The surfaces are going to be good and so, you would want the bowling to come good," added Kumble, who has 619 Test and 337 ODI wickets for India.

The 49-year-old former captain and coach has represented India in 132 Tests and 271 ODIs.

# Kohli is the benchmark for WI youngsters



India's captain Virat Kohli warms up during a training session

AP

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Virat Kohli is the "benchmark" and that is why all West Indies players should work as hard as the Indian captain to achieve their goals, feels their assistant coach Roddy Estwick.

In a media interaction ahead of the ODI series, which begins here on Sunday, said the

team's young cricketers like Shimron Hetmyer and Nicholas Pooran must learn from opposition skipper Kohli.

"It's exciting times for us when you look at guys like Hetmyer, Pooran and Hope. We have got young batsmen who are developing. But the key thing is how you prepare to work hard. You have got a

benchmark in Virat Kohli. He is somebody who will be in the gym and work very hard," he said on Friday.

"A lot of players can learn from him. Then, we have got a chance. Without hard work, there is no success. Hard work is boring but it can give you great success. Once they keep working and dealing with the process, they will have a chance."

He said the players had been brilliant on this tour but cautioned that in cricket one cannot relax.

"They have been brilliant on this tour, we can't fault them. They have worked really hard. They are beginning to see the results. If you look at Hetmyer's play in the T20s, it was exciting. Now, we move to a longer format. People forget the fact that at a very young age, he already has four ODI hundreds. Obviously, there is a lot of talent there. In cricket, you cannot rest and relax," he added.

Estwick also said the West Indies team had done well to bridge the gap with India in the T20s and hoped to do the same in the ODIs too. The visitors lost the T20 series 1-2.

"We are happy with the way we performed in the T20s. When these two teams played three T20s in the Caribbean, the gulf between them was wide. We are happy that we have narrowed that gap (in the T20 matches) and hope to do the same in 50 overs," he added.

# Eng shuffle their aces for SA series

AFF ■ LONDON

England opted to limit the workload of some of their World Cup winners when they announced the squads on Friday for one-day and T20 series in South Africa in February.

Jofra Archer, Jos Buttler, Ben Stokes and Mark Wood will all be rested when England play their first ODIs since beating New Zealand at Lord's on July 14.

Test captain Joe Root is in the ODI squad, led by Eoin Morgan which plays a three-match series from February 4 to February 9 but not in the 16 for the three T20s.

Worcestershire seamer Pat Brown, Somerset batsman Tom Banton and the Lancashire duo of Matthew Parkinson and Saqib Mahmood are included in the ODI squad for the first time.

Banton and Mahmood are among five players who were in the T20 squad for England's 3-2 victory over New Zealand in November but are dropped for the three T20s in South Africa from February 12-16. Sam Billings, Lewis Gregory and James Vince also miss out as World Cup winners Archer, Buttler, Stokes and Wood return to England action.

"These two squads were selected with an eye on the T20 World Cup in Australia in 2020," national selector Ed Smith said in a press release.

"We want to expand the pool of players who can perform successfully for England, while also helping the team to peak for major tournaments."

The T20 World Cup is in Australia in October and November.

England's 16-strong squad for the three-match ODI series in South Africa, starting February 4 in Cape Town:

Eoin Morgan (capt), Moeen Ali, Jonny Bairstow, Tom Banton, Pat Brown, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Joe Denly, Chris Jordan, Saqib Mahmood, Dawid Malan, Matthew Parkinson, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, Chris Woakes.

England's 16-man squad for the three-match T20 series against the Proteas, starting February 12 in East London:

**SQUAD**  
Eoin Morgan, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonathan Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Pat Brown, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Joe Denly, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Matthew Parkinson, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Mark Wood.

# Starc's magic puts Aus in front

IANIS ■ PERTH (AUSTRALIA)

Bowlers dominated Day 2 of the first Test between Australia and New Zealand at the Perth Stadium. Ross Taylor's resilience has given the visitors hopes of not having to follow-on, but Australia are firmly in the driver's seat in the Test having blown away the Kiwi top-order in the final session. New Zealand ended the day on 109/5, trailing Australia by 307 runs.

Australia were all out for 416 earlier in the day and Mitchell Starc started the rampage with the wicket of Tom Latham in the very first over of the innings. Hazlewood then castled Jeet Raval with a searing inswinger that went straight through the gates.

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor then held on in what was treacherous conditions for the batsmen. Hazlewood pulled up short while bowling the third ball of the fourth over and walked off. His participation for the day ended with that incident.

Cummins and Starc steamed in on the two batsmen with Matthew Wade bowling two overs in between before Nathan Lyon was brought into the attack. New Zealand did not lose a wicket until the 23rd over in which Williamson fell to Starc largely thanks to a stunning



Australian players celebrate as Henry Nicholls leaves the field after being dismissed AP

catch at second slip by Steve Smith.

Henry Nicholls replaced his captain and survived for five overs before becoming Starc's third wicket. Neil Wagner, sent in as nightwatchman, was dismissed the very next ball. Starc didn't get his hat-trick and Taylor, who scored a fifty, ended the day with a four towards mid-on.

Earlier, Australia started the day on an overnight total of 248/4 with centurion Marcus Labuschagne and Travis Head at the crease. It was Labuschagne who fell first after adding 33 runs to his total. Neil Wagner bowled

an inswinger from round the wicket that castled him and Labuschagne walked with 143 off 240 balls to his name.

Head went on to score a fifty in the 110th over and fell two overs later to Tim Southee, going for a wide ball outside off with a drive that was caught at cover.

Captain Tim Paine and Pat Cummins then held fort into the next session and it was Jeet Raval who got the latter out after he had absorbed 84 balls. Paine batted on with the tail and was the last man to be dismissed as the Australian innings wrapped up for 416.

# Rain spoil Test return in Pak

AFF ■ RAWALPINDI

Wet weather delayed the start of play between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Rawalpindi on Friday, the first Test in the country since a deadly attack in 2009.

Groundmen were soaking the outfield and wiping water from the covers, with the third day's play unlikely to start until lunch at 11:45 am (0645 GMT).

Rain and bad light halted play for all but 83 minutes on Thursday, during which Sri Lanka added 43 runs in 18.2 overs before stumps were drawn.



# Mushtaq Ahmed is new spin consultant

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan has appointed former Test leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed as spin bowling consultant for a one-year term.

Mushtaq's first job will be to work with experienced leg-spinner Yasir Shah at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore and get him ready for the second Test against Sri Lanka in Karachi.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has confirmed that Yasir had been released from the national

team in Rawalpindi and told to report to the new spin consultant in Lahore.

"He will rejoin the team for the second test in Karachi," a PCB source said.

The PCB said Mushtaq was appointed as a spin bowling consultant last week.

According to his contract, he will work 120 days in a year at the National Cricket Academy with the U-16, U-19 and other domestic bowlers. As and when required, he will work with the national team.



# Bravo ready for int'l return

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo on Friday announced his return to international cricket, little over a year after he called it quits due to a bitter fallout with his country's Board.

Bravo said the decision was prompted by the change of guard in the Cricket West Indies (CWI), where former team manager Ricky Skerritt took over as the new president replacing Dave Cameron earlier this year.

"Today I confirm the announcement of my decision to return to International Cricket to all

my fans and well wishers all around the world," the 36-year-old said in a statement.

"It's no secret that this big announcement has come as a result of the changes made at the administration level. For a while now I have been contemplating my return to international cricket and my decision was solidified by these positive changes," he added.

Bravo had a bitter spat with Cameron and had accused him of destroying careers. This was after a Bravo-led West Indies team abandoned a tour of India in 2014 midway during an ODI series owing to a pay dispute with the WICB.

# 332 players to get under hammer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 332 cricketers will go under the hammer at the IPL auction in Kolkata on December 19 with Australia's Glenn Maxwell and South African Dale Steyn among those opting for the highest base price of Rs 2 crore.

"While 997 players had initially registered for the auction, the final list has been pruned after the eight franchises submitted their shortlist of players," read an official IPL statement.

Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh and Sri Lanka veteran Angelo Mathews too have opted for the Rs 2 crore

base price. Only 73 slots are there to be filled in the eight franchises and only 29 of them can be foreign buys.

Robin Uthappa, who was released by Kolkata Knight Riders last month, is the sole Indian player in the auction list with a base price of Rs 1.5 crore.

Premier Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood, who has never played in the IPL, has put himself in the highest base price bracket alongside bowling partner Pat Cummins. Maxwell, who recently

took a break to deal with mental health, is back in the auction pool after opting out of the last edition alongside Aaron Finch.

Finch is back in the pool at a base price of Rs 1 crore. Fellow Australian Chris Lynn, who was released by KKR, will be expecting to go at a good price at the auction next week.

Besides Uthappa, other Indian names including Piyush Chawla (released by KKR), Yusuf Pathan (Sunrisers Hyderabad) and Jaydev Unadkat (Rajasthan Royals)



have set their base price at Rs 1 crore.

A total of 186 Indian, 143 overseas and three players from Associate Nations will be up for grabs at the auction.

Seven cricketers have placed themselves in the highest base price list of Rs 2 crore, 10 in Rs 1.5 crore bracket and 23 in Rs 1 crore category.

Among the uncapped players, as many as 183 players are in the Rs 20 lakh category, seven in Rs 40 lakh and eight in Rs 30 lakh.