

ANALYSIS 7

INDIA'S BETI
NOT NIRBHAYA

MONEY 8

FM TO HOLD
PRE-BUDGET TALKS

SPORTS 12

CARIBBEANS TESTE
THE FIRST BLOOD

VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY DECEMBER 16, 2019; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

RULER FULFILLED
MY WISH TO DO A
FILM ON FARMERS:
BALAYYA

Page 11



SHOOTER WANTS CENTRE TO LET HER HANG NIRBHAYA CONVICTS

Shooter Vartika Singh on Sunday wrote a letter in blood requesting the Centre to let her hang the rapists convicted in the Nirbhaya rape and murder case. In the letter, she has sought permission from Union Home Minister Amit Shah to execute the rapists. Speaking to reporters here, Singh said, "I have a letter in my hand that is written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah. I have written it with my blood stating that I should be allowed to execute the convicts in the Nirbhaya case."



AASU HINTS AT LAUNCHING POLITICAL PARTY IN ASSAM

The All Assam Students Union (AASU), which has been protesting the amended Citizenship Act, on Sunday hinted at launching a political party, along with 'Shilpi Samaj' (artists) forum, as an alternative to the ruling BJP and AGP as well as to opposition Congress. When popular singer Zubeen Garg, addressing a protest meet 'Concert for Peace and Harmony' here, said, "we will launch our own party", AASU president Dipanka Nath seconded him saying, "we are now thinking in that direction".



GOVT EXAMINING FOREIGN FUND IN INFRA AT STRATEGIC LOCATIONS

The government has initiated review of foreign fund flows in sensitive like telecom and physical infrastructure at strategic locations of the country, according to sources. A comprehensive review has been undertaken to assess the control over various infrastructures at strategic locations and border areas of the country, the sources said. Given the fact that majority of the industries are now under automatic route for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rather than the approval route, the sources said, it is required to have an idea on the foreign presence in these areas including the northeastern region.



INDIAN-ORIGIN MP IN RACE TO REPLACE LABOUR PARTY'S CORBYN

Lisa Nandy, one of the Indian-origin MPs, who was re-elected in Thursday's general election amid a disastrous performance by her Labour Party, on Sunday confirmed plans to throw her hat in the ring to replace party leader Jeremy Corbyn. The 40-year-old MP won her Wigan seat in the north-west of England, holding on to one of the key bricks in the so-called "red wall" which collapsed as Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party won over traditional Labour Party voters across the region.



PM pays tributes to Sardar Patel

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to Vallabhbhai Patel on his 69th death anniversary, saying the country remains inspired by his exceptional services. India's first home minister died in 1950 in Mumbai. "Tributes to the great Sardar Patel on his punya tithi (death anniversary). We remain eternally inspired by his exceptional service to our nation," Modi wrote on Twitter.

Veteran actor Gita Siddharth passes away

MUMBAI: Veteran actor Gita Siddharth, who featured in films such as Garam Hawa, Parichay, Sholay and Trishul passed away. The news of her demise was confirmed by the Cine and TV Artists' Association (CINTAA) on Twitter. She breathed her last on Saturday morning. "#CINTAA expresses its deepest condolence on the demise of Gita Siddharth (Member Since: May 1970)," read the tweet from the film body.

Bifurcation of power staff creates rift between TS & AP

- SC appointed Dharmadikari Committee makes final allocation of employees
- AP must take back 613 natives working in Telangana power utilities, AP refuses

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Putting an end to the uncertainty over the sharing of employees of power utilities between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the Supreme Court has appointed one-man committee of Justice DM Dharmadhikari on Sunday and gave its final order directing Andhra Pradesh to accommodate 613 out of the 1,157 employees with AP nativity working in four power utility companies of Telangana.

The order came after the final two-day sitting of the One-man Committee in which Telangana Genco Director (HR) S Ashok Kumar and AP Transco JMD KVN Chakradhar Babu took part. The One-man Committee with the two-member sub-com-



mittee in its conclusion statement said that on Sunday a brief written submission was made on behalf of Telangana power utilities. "On behalf of the Telangana power utilities at the end of the proceedings, an offer has been made that out of 1157 allegedly ex parte relieved employees, 613 have opted for Andhra Pradesh," the order read.

Another significant direction was with the regard to the 256 of employees, who have

opted for Telangana from AP. These employees are not out of the 1,156 of the relieved employees. The offer made on behalf of Telangana is that out of the 256 employees, who have opted for Telangana, irrespective of their home district, Telangana is willing to accommodate 50% of the 256 subject to condition that 613 out of the 1,157 should be accommodated by AP.

"The present offer made was

discussed with the sub-committee members of Andhra Pradesh side but has not been accepted. The present committee therefore concludes its proceedings for final report," the statement says. Justice Dharmadhikari made it clear he will be submitting the very order to the apex court.

Reacting to the allocation of 544 employees for Telangana, the Telangana State Power Engineers Association (TSPEA) President P Ratnakar said that it is understood that Telangana has to take 544 of the employees in question, even though there is no mention in the final order.

"AP is not willing to take the employees even though there is no problem of paying salaries or promotions.

Continued on Page 3

Govt to bring Bill for amending AP Edu Act

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government is bringing in a Bill during the ongoing winter session of the Assembly for amending the AP Education Act, 1982, to give a legal shield to the proposal for conversion of all schools in the State to the English medium of instruction.

The government has decided to make English the medium of instruction for Classes I to VI in all schools, replacing the native language Telugu, beginning from 2020-21 academic year, with Telugu or Urdu being a compulsory subject.

While there is a strong opposition to the move from different quarters, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is firm on going ahead with the decision "come what may" and accordingly, wants to give it legislative backing, according to sources.

He discussed the issue with a core team of top officials here

The government has decided to make English the medium of instruction for Classes I to VI in all schools, replacing the native language Telugu, beginning from 2020-21 academic year, with Telugu or Urdu being a compulsory subject



on Saturday and asked the School Education Department to draft the Bill for enactment in the ongoing winter session of the Assembly, the sources revealed.

A Cabinet note on the draft

Bill is being circulated among the ministers for formal approval before introducing it in the Assembly. "The Bill will be taken up either on Monday or Tuesday.

Continued on Page 3



CITIZENSHIP ACT PROTEST

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Protesters agitating against the amended Citizenship Act clashed with police on Sunday and set afire DTC buses and a fire tender in New Friends Colony in southeast Delhi leaving a cop and two fire personnel injured, police said. A Delhi Fire Services official said four fire tenders were rushed to the spot. One fire tender was completely damaged and two personnel were injured in the violence by the protesters.

Saimon Farooqui, the national secretary of Congress-affiliated National Students' Union of India, claimed the protesters were peacefully sitting on Mathura Road when policemen tried to "trouble" a couple of them, who resisted.

A Jamia Millia Islamia students' group said they had nothing to do with the arson and violence. They alleged that "local elements" joined the protest and "disrupted" it. They said they returned to campus as the protest turned violent and were protesting on the campus peacefully.

Some of the protesters claimed that the police baton charged them when they were holding a peaceful agitation. Police lathicharged the protesters and used teargas, Farooqui said.



BJP to create awareness about citizenship law

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid protests against the amended citizenship law, the BJP on Sunday announced a nationwide campaign to spread awareness about the legislation and asserted that it is not discriminatory against Muslims or any other community.

Party spokesperson Sambit Patra told a press conference that BJP workers will fan out across the country to inform people about the law which seeks to provide citizenship to the religious minorities from three neighbouring countries

who arrived in India to escape religious persecution.

"There is no provision in this law that even a single right of our Muslim brothers and sisters will be taken away. Instead rights will be provided to those who are living in India without any rights facing religious persecution in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan," Patra said.

He said party functionaries from 11 states were briefed by the national leadership on the law's provisions here on Sunday before they start a campaign in their respective state.

Immolation bid by youth at PS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A youth made an attempt to immolate himself holding a bottle of petrol in front of the Tadepalli Police Station on Sunday.

According to sources, the youth decided to take the extreme step as he was being harassed by the call money racketeers from whom he had borrowed Rs 6 lakh. The youth had reportedly paid Rs 23 lakh towards interest and were still harassing him to cough the principal amount.

Identified as Venkat, the youth claimed that the moneylenders had threatened him with dire consequences if he reported the matter to the police. He said the moneylen-

The youth, who was identified as Venkatesh, has decided to take the extreme step as he was being harassed by the call money racketeers from whom he had borrowed Rs 6 lakh

ders initially collected Rs 3 monthly interest and later raised the interest rate to Rs 12. With this, he could not cope up with the mounting debts, he said. Later, Venkat lodged a complaint with the Tadepalli police against the moneylenders.

Continued on Page 3

Why Jagan allowed Yanamala's son-in-law, IRS officer Gopinath go scot-free?

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Contrary to claims of zero-tolerance towards corruption, whether the Jaganmohan Reddy has applied one yardstick for Jasti Krishna Kishore, AP Economic Development Council CEO, and another IRS officer and former minister Yanamala Ramakrishnudu's son-in-law Gopinath?

The answer seems to be in the affirmative. Why the Jaganmohan Reddy government did not take action against Gopinath in spite of the IRS officer denting the State exchequer to the tune of Rs 18 crore according to ACB report?

Party MLA Ambati

Why the Jaganmohan Reddy government did not take action against Gopinath in spite of the IRS officer denting the State exchequer to the tune of Rs 18 crore?

AP Economic Development Council CEO Jasti Krishna Kishore has been placed under suspension as there was evidence for his omissions and commissions as the CEO of the AP Economic Development Board. The government has justified in doing so

Rambabu termed Jagan as God-send to end corruption in the State. But, why Jagan entertained the request of Gopinath on repatriation to the parent department ending his deputation in AP. It allowed him to go scot-free.

Jasti Krishna Kishore has been placed under suspension as there was evidence for his omissions and commissions

as the CEO of the AP Economic Development Board. The government has justified in doing so.

Is the government justified in allowing Gopinath go scot-free? In fact, the Anti-Corruption Bureau has submitted a report to the government stating that Gopinath caused loss of Rs 18 crore to government during his stint as

the Managing Director of AP Medical Infrastructure Development Corporation. Poonam Malakondaiah was the Special Principal Secretary to the department of medical and health. The CID had sent a memo to the then Chief Secretary LV Subrahmanyam on October 28, 2018 seeking permission from the then TDP government to file a case against Gopinath.

But the Jagan government, which boasted itself about that it would not tolerate corruption, has issued the GO No. 2825 cancelling deputation and repatriation of Gopinath to his parent department.

Continued on Page 3

CM to host dinner for Collectors, SPs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a move to strike a friendly chord with bureaucrats, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is hosting a dinner for all Collectors and Superintendents of Police (SPs) in the State on Tuesday. Police Commissioners and Commissioners of various departments have also been invited to the dinner. Thirteen tables representing districts in the State would be laid. What's on the menu? The dinner will go to be a pan-Indian spread with all South and North Indian cuisine apart from Andhra delicacies.

Continued on Page 3

Dec 31 deadline to link PAN-Aadhaar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It is mandatory to link your PAN with Aadhaar by the end of this year, the Income Tax Department said in a public message on Sunday.

"Building a better tomorrow! To reap seamless benefits of income tax services, complete the vital link before 31st December, 2019," the department said.

It is mandatory to link your PAN with Aadhaar, according to the public message issued a fortnight before the deadline ends.

The deadline to link the permanent account number



(PAN) with Aadhaar was extended till December 31 by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) through an order issued in September this year.

Earlier, the deadline for this linkage was September 30. The CBDT frames policy for the Income Tax Department.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Margashirsha & Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Panchami: 03:39 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Ashlesha: 02:48 am (Next Day)

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 08:04 am - 09:27 am

Yamagandam: 10:49 am - 12:11 pm

Varjyam: 04:10 pm - 05:41 pm

Gulika: 01:33 pm - 02:56 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 01:16 am - 02:48 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:49 am - 12:33 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 31/20

Humidity: 77%

Sunrise: 06:38

Sunset: 05:44

Current Weather Conditions
Updated December 15, 2019 5:00 PM

CAPSULE

TURMOIL IN NORTH EAST OVER CAA

SCR takes special measures for stranded commuters

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The South Central Railway, Vijayawada division, has taken special measures in view of ongoing agitation in Northeast for stranded passengers. Vijayawada division has set up helpline numbers and special assistance booth to guide the passengers. Special booking and refund counters have been provided at all the major stations like Anakapalle, Rajahmundry and Vijayawada for the convenience of passengers.

Frequent announcements regarding cancellation and termination of trains and catering arrangements were made for stranded passengers with the assistance of catering inspectors in Ongole, Vijayawada, Rajahmundry and Tuni stations of Vijayawada division.

Helpline Numbers

- 1 Vijayawada - 0866-2578618
- 2 Rajahmundry - 0883-2420541, 0883-2420543
- 3 Anakapalle - 08924-221698

Train No 18646 (Hyderabad-Howrah) East Coast Express, which has been terminated at



■ P Srinivas, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada, appealed to the passengers to make use of helpline numbers and special assistance booth arranged specially and sought their cooperation for providing better services during the unrest

■ Officers, Inspectors, RPF, Squad TTEs and staff were deployed at all important stations of the north section of Vijayawada division to guide the stranded passengers

■ Branch officers are monitoring the situation, crowd control measures were adopted at various stations from Vijayawada Control Room for providing hassle-free services to passengers

■ Frequent announcements are being made and special bulletins and information regarding cancelled trains being displayed at stations and on all social media platforms regularly

Anakapalle, about 986 reserved passengers of different classes were shifted to Train No 17016 (Hyderabad-Bhubaneswar) Visakha Express with the assistance of squad TTEs, RPF staff and luggage porters of Anakapalle helped the passengers in shifting of the luggage.

Speaking on the occasion, P Srinivas, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada, appealed

to the passengers to make use of helpline numbers and special assistance booth arranged specially and sought their cooperation for providing better services during the current situation. Frequent announcements are being made and special bulletins and information regarding cancelled trains being displayed at stations and on all social media platforms regularly.

THIS MAN INVOKES GODS TO SAVE TREES

VIVEK TRIPATHI
■ GONDA

Over the years, activists have sparked various movements for conservation of trees from 'Chipko' movement to sapling plantation. But environment activist in Uttar Pradesh's Gonda, Paragdutt Mishra, is directly taking help from God to save the forest. He has saved more than a thousand trees so far.

The chief of Wazirganj development block's Nagwa Panchayat, Mishra said: "Forest are drastically being damaged in the name of development and road extension. Villagers have no knowledge about climate change and ecological balance. But pictures of Gods and Goddesses on trees are successfully deterring people, who believe in God, from cutting them."

"I have made deities the patron of trees," said Mishra. He used to carve pictures of Gods and Goddesses on the trunks of trees and paints them with vermilion. Thereafter, villagers start worshipping the trees."

Mishra said that he always keeps paint, brush, tools and vermilion with him. He used to paint trees standing at the sides of roads and then carves 'gada', trident and Lord Hanuman on them following by final "make-up" with vermilion.

He said the cost for painting and carving on a single



tree is around Rs 200 that he pays from his pocket. "The forest was towards the end of our panchayat following the blind cutting of trees. But my trick worked and now we are blessed with the nature," Mishra said.

"Almost all trees have been cut down that we planted after I became 'Pradhan' last time. It was a heavy loss, now taking help from almighty is proving beneficial," he added.

Worried over shrinking forest area, Mishra said: "We have a population of 8,000 in our panchayat while the number of trees has been reached around 10,000. But people are desperate to cut them, hence, we have started this campaign."

● The chief of Wazirganj development block's Nagwa Panchayat, Mishra said: "Forest are drastically being damaged in the name of development and road extension. Villagers have no knowledge about climate change and ecological balance. But pictures of Gods and Goddesses on trees are successfully deterring people, who believe in God, from cutting them"

● Mishra said that he always keeps paint, brush, tools and vermilion with him. He used to paint trees standing at the sides of roads and then carves 'gada', trident and Lord Hanuman on them following by final "make-up" with vermilion

Fire breaks out in Rayalaseema Express

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Passengers travelling in Rayalaseema Express had a narrow escape when a fire broke out in the engine at Thadipatri Railway Station in Anantapur district on Sunday. The fire mishap was averted due to timely intervention of loco pilot. He reportedly stopped the train immediately on witnessing the fire. Later, he alerted the passengers, in turn, they alighted from the train and tried to extinguish the fire by pouring water. In the meantime, the railway crew also joined the commuters to put off the fire. According to railway officials, the train was halted for three hours. Authorities concerned are investigating the incident.

Rayalaseema Express travels through four districts of Rayalaseema- Chittoor, Kadapa, Anantapur, Kurnool- and connects Hyderabad, Nizamabad and Tirupati.



Yellow metal softens marginally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As was expected, the US and China are now inching towards inking of the first phase of new trade agreement. US President Donald Trump himself has given this indication.

Following this, the US administration has reduced the import duty on Chinese goods by 50 per cent with effect from December 15. In sequence, the yellow metal softened marginally so also the white. The New York gold ruled firm and closed at US dollars 1,478.12 (per ounce). Silver followed suit and closed at 17.01 dollars (per ounce).

Other economic parameters remained moderate. The US dollar and British Pound closed at Rs. 70.69 and Rs.94.19, while the Euro closed at Rs.78.61, Australian Dollar stood at Rs.48.64 and the Canadian Dollar closed at Rs.53.68. Similarly, Omani Riyal and Saudi Arabian Riyal closed at Rs. 183.61 and Rs. 18.85, while Kuwaiti Dinar and Swiss Franc were offered for Rs. 233.08 and Rs. 71.83 respectively. Singapore dollar closed at Rs.52.23.

Belying the gossips of economic meltdown, Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at the higher levels of 41,009.71 and 12,086.70 points respectively. Brent recorded a thin appreciation of about 0.30 dollars and silver closed at 64.34 dollars (per barrel). Crude oil closed at Rs.4,241 (per barrel) while Copper stood at Rs.440 (per kg). At home, the precious metals remained divergent. Gold MCX and Silver MCX closed at Rs.37,773 (per 10gms) and Rs. 43, 880 (per kg) respectively. Platinum and palladium moved up and closed at \$ 931.15 (per ounce) and \$ 1,954.06 (per ounce).

In Hyderabad, standard gold (24 carats) declined by

Rs.500 and closed at Rs.37,740 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too moved in tandem and was quoted in the range of Rs. 35,820-35,920 (per 10 gms). Silver (0.999) on the other hand, appreciated by Rs.600 and closed at Rs.44,100 (per kg).

COMMODITIES

The sentiment in the principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities, at Osman gunj, Risala Abdullah, Kishan gunj, Maharaj gunj, Mehboob gunj, Mir Alam Mandi, Begum Bazar, Dilukhnagar, Saroornagar, Kukatpally, General Bazar, Bowpally and Monda Market continued to swing from moderate to strong.

While red chilli of Guntur origin and mustard remained steady due to the beginning of new arrivals in the market, turmeric and coriander recorded a marginal decline.

According to the Union Minister for Agriculture, the onion crop has been lower by 23 per cent in the current year due to heavy rains and floods, which inundated the crop and washed away the soil in onion-growing areas. However, the sky-rocketing prices are expected to come to the realistic normal level shortly as the imported onions have already made their way into the markets. Among perishables, common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower and other leafy vegetables sharply moved up in sympathy with onions. Other common vegetables also recorded appreciation in the range of 30-47 per cent. The NECC wholesale egg price all over the country remained above Rs.420 (per 100). In Hyderabad, an appreciation of Rs.5 was recorded at the closing price of Rs.430. Ranchi recorded the highest price of Rs.514 while Hospet closed at Rs.420 -- the lowest in the country.

Job mela for persons with disabilities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Persons with visual, hearing and orthopaedic challenges participated in a job mela organised at Andhra Loyola College here on Sunday. In all, 14 companies, including Accenture, Kallam Textiles, Expert Solutions, Flipkart, Aegis and First Source participated.

They selected persons with disabilities for the jobs like data entry operator, barcode scanner, office assistants, billing assistants, accountant and nursing assistants.

Hundred students participated and 70 per cent of them were selected by different companies. Nagesh from Kallam Textiles has chosen 14 persons with hearing challenges.

He said that Kallam Textiles is giving preference to hearing challenged persons as they were happily able to communicate themselves and work in the industry.

The firm also provide apartments, hence, persons with hearing challenges and their



family members together are working for the company.

Prakash of Flipkart said that the company wanted to appoint barcode readers in Hyderabad office. They preferred orthopaedic challenged persons. But, many from Vijayawada are not ready to migrate to Hyderabad.

Trisha HR of First Source felt that communication skills and social skills needed to be improved among persons with disabilities and the companies are also training them after the recruitment.

Ramesh project manager of youth4jobs, Sara and Sohail, Andhra Loyola

■ In all, 14 companies, including Accenture, Kallam Textiles, Expert Solutions, Flipkart, Aegis and First Source participated

HEPSN coordinator Dr Sahaya Baskaran and assistant director of Differently-abled Welfare Department Narayana Rao made the arrangements.

Ramesh hospitals provided ambulance and first aid facilities. APSSDC and Differently-abled Welfare Department collaborated in this initiative.



Rashi Khanna lauds Disha Act

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tollywood actress Raashi Khanna lauded the Disha Act, which was introduced by the government. She said that those who resort to such heinous crimes on women will be scared, thanks to the Andhra Pradesh government. "Other States should learn from the Andhra Pradesh government in this regard," Raashi opined.

The Andhra Pradesh assembly has approved the AP Disha Act- 2019, which was introduced by the YSRCP government to curb crimes against women and children. Under the Act, an accused is sentenced to death if found guilty of rape within 21 days. The investigation will be completed within 14 days.

TTD staff told to provide quality amenities to devotees



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy directed officials to provide quality and extended facilities to devotees at all rest houses in Tirumala.

Speaking to the media after an inspection of rest houses, along with Reception, Vigilance, Engineering and FMS officials, the additional executive officer said devotees were happy over the maintenance and facilities provided by the TTD.

He directed officials to

repair the tiles and flooring in toilets of rest houses. At Narayanagiri rest house, a devotee Hanumantu from Hyderabad sought 24 hour hot water with geyser facility in all rooms. Another devotee Somesh from Singli in Maharashtra lauded the facilities provided by the TTD.

Earlier, he visited Narayanagiri -1,2,3, 4 rest houses, Vishnupadam, Vikas rest houses and instructed VGO Manohar to keep a vigil to ensure that middlemen menace is completely avoided in rest houses.

CAA targets fanatical and secessionist elements

HC UPADHYAY
■ HYDERABAD

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) has been passed by both Houses of Parliament and it has also received the President's assent. Now, it has become the law of the land, though not much to the liking of fanatical Muslims and some non-Muslim leaders whose game plan to garner electoral support of the illegal Muslim migrants from the neighbouring countries has fallen flat.

The new Act offers the much-needed help to persecuted Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis by fanatical Muslims of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who officially follow Islam as state religion. It is, indeed, strange that some misguided fanatical Muslims in India, knowing it fully well that their interests would not be affected by the new Act, still foment trouble in some pockets of the country like Assam, Meghalaya and other illegal migrants-dominated north-eastern states. With their eyes on the vote bank, some political parties add fuel to the fire, as a result of which violence has erupted in these pockets.

Now there comes the news that

the state governments of West Bengal, Punjab and Kerala have openly announced they would not obey the new law. This is really a serious matter. Not following the law of land, duly passed by parliament, is a criminal offence and is tantamount to treason. Nobody is above law, be it just a citizen or a political master. The rule of the law should prevail. Hope, the central government would ensure peace and safety of the people at any cost and take stringent action against those who defy law and incite mob violence.

The feeling of defiance of the law has its deep roots in the unerasable historical prejudice against the Hindu population. The anti-majority elements have been living in a fool's paradise that they can brow-beat the vast majority of Hindus and continue the decades-old practice of arm-twisting, particularly in the changed circumstances. Now that the times have changed, it is high time to correct the historical errors committed by our yesterday leaders. After this landmark legislation, other game-changing legal measures, such as the National Register of Citizens, Uniform Civil Code, scrapping of

The feeling of defiance of the law has its deep roots in the unerasable historical prejudice against the Hindu population. The anti-majority elements have been living in a fool's paradise that they can brow-beat the vast majority of Hindus and continue the decades-old practice of arm-twisting, particularly in the changed circumstances

the Minorities Commissions at the central and state levels and banning noise pollution through high volume loud speakers in places of worship in blatant violation of the Apex court judgment delivered by the bench headed by the then Chief Justice of India, R.C Lahoti, should be initiated without losing time.

In this process, obviously, many vested interests will have to be tackled and the arrogant, fanatical and secessionist anti-national elements will have to be shown their rightful place.

SC forms probe panel

The Supreme Court of India

appointed a three-member probe committee, headed by a retired judge of the same court, Justice V.S Sirpurkar, to investigate into the 'encounter' deaths of four accused in the Disha gang-rape and murder case. The other members of the probe committee are: Justice Rekha Baldotra, former Judge of the Bombay High Court, and former

Director of the CBI Karthikeyan. The court granted six months' time to complete the probe, while making it clear that no other probe will be carried out in the subject matter.

The 'encounter' had generated instant public applause through-

out the country, though feeble voices from some well-informed quarters, including legal fraternity, were raised against the way in which the police handled the entire issue.

Ayodhya verdict: near finality

The apex court has dismissed 18 review petitions filed against the historic Ayodhya Ram Mandir verdict delivered by it on November 9. But this doesn't mean that the judgment has attained finality. The aggrieved parties, at least some of them, would certainly explore the last legal remedy, called the curative petition. Of course, there are very thin chances of success in such a petition.

After crossing this final hurdle, all doors of judiciary would be closed for the aggrieved parties. Whatever the outcome of the legal process, by dragging the matter up to its last stage, the petitioners have certainly lost goodwill of Hindus. Legality apart, had the warring Muslim litigants stuck to their pre-verdict public assurance that they would honourably accept the court verdict; the much-needed atmosphere of communal harmony could have been created.

Fined for forgery

The Bombay High Court, in a case of forgery, has imposed the cost of Rs.10,000/- on three petitioners, while rejecting their plea to withdraw the writ petition and also directed registration of a criminal case against them in the magistrate court.

The issue was brought to the notice of the court by the counsel for the respondent, who said that the thumb impression on the Vakalatnama filed by the petitioners was not of the fourth petitioner who is not living in India. The counsel also contended that the fourth petitioner had not given his consent to file the writ petition in question and further that after the fourth petitioner learnt about the forgery, a police complainant was filed by him under his own signature.

AP passes Disha Bill

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly on December 13 passed two Bills, namely, The Andhra Pradesh Disha Bill-Criminal Law (Andhra Pradesh) Amendment Bill, 2019 and the Andhra Pradesh Disha Bill-Andhra Pradesh Special Court for Specified Offences Against Women and Children Bill, 2019.

The Disha gang-rape-cum-murder case and the subsequent Shadnagar 'encounter' deaths of the four accused in the case have no doubt shaken the nation. AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, whose government has enacted a stringent law, named after Disha, for women's security has scored some brownie points. It remains to be seen whether he walks the talk. Jagan has started receiving accolades from almost every quarter in the Telugu states. His emotional speech in the Assembly before the two Bills on women's safety were tabled caught the fancy of people, particularly women.

The moot question is: Will such

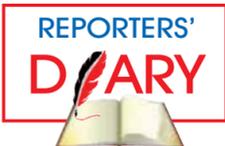
Tough laws on women's security: Walking the talk

stringent laws deter criminals who resort to such heinous crimes? For, in less than 24 hours after the AP Disha Act was passed, two rapes took place - one in Guntur city and the other in Prakasam district.

SC order saves SIT

There was much curiosity over the outcome of the state government order constituting a Special Investigative Team (SIT) to probe the "encounter" deaths of the accused in the Disha case with Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Baghwat, who is also deal-

ing with the rape-murder of three girls in Hazipur village, as its head. People were wondering how it would pan out as the SIT was required to investigate the 'facts' relating to the 'encounter' that took place with the indulgence of another Police Commissioner of Cyberabad VC Sajjanar. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court put a full stop to the speculations by ordering a three-member judicial probe. According to sources, both Mahesh Baghwat and Sajjanar heaved a sigh of relief following the Supreme Court's direction.



Tea Day in cafes

For youths and intellectuals in educationally vibrant centres like Warangal, cafes have provided the much-needed private space for discussions like those of yesteryear English literary giants. On the eve of

International Tea day on Sunday, the same was highlighted, though some of the cafes and tea points in urban and semi urban areas doubled up as smoking areas. Youths in particular are taking the support of these tea points and cafes to overcome public smoking problems. The owners of the cafes and tea points in Tier II cities of Telangana state are taking this aspect lightly. This trend is visible in Warangal, Mancherla, Huzurabad and Siddipet towns. Kohinoor Hotel, Jawahar Cafe and other prominent Cafes of Warangal have fallen in line.

Homework on a regular basis

Legislators and Ministers of the ruling TRS are seriously engaged in homework of a different kind over the past few months, though elections are not round the corner. They are visiting the villages in right earnest. Their efforts seem to be fruitful as the cadre of opposition parties have started defecting to the ruling party. While joining, the turncoats claim that they are attracted to the developmental schemes launched by the ruling party.

In the five Mahabubnagar districts, the MLAs and Ministers are keenly

participating in paddy purchasing programmes, school building inaugurations and wayside market foundation stone laying activities, among others. Minister Srinivas Goud is participating in Ayyappa Deeksha programmes and is conducting prayers. Legislator Rajender Reddy adopted a different task: teaching in a classroom, after laying the foundation stone in Marikal School. MLA Marri Janardhan Reddy took up a mass marriage programme in his segment through his foundation.

(Contributed by Seelam Arozie, Kolihetty Venkateshwarlu, P V Kondal Rao and Avinash Deepak Pulli)

Oppn trying to derail discussion on public issues: Chief Whip

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy has alleged that the Opposition has been trying to thwart discussion on public issues from day one of the winter session of the Assembly.

Addressing a press conference at the YSRCP central office in Tadepalli on Sunday, he said discussion was held on PPAs, Mega DSC, Special Category Status to the State, women's security, call money sex racket on the first day itself. When Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has declared that the government was keen to enact the AP Disha Act on that day, the Opposition members tried their best to divert the issue. When the government took up discussion on onion prices, the Opposition members created a furore by claiming that a farmer had died while standing in a queue for onion sat the Rythu Bazaar in Gudivada.

Later, when Consumer Affairs Minister Kodali Nani enquired about the incident, family members of the deceased



said that he had died of illness and not because of waiting in the queue for onions. "The government is supplying onions at Rs 25 per kg in the Rythu Bazaars. No other State in the country has taken such an initiative in the public interest spending Rs 30 crore," he said.

On the same day, a discussion was held on paddy procurement and fine rice, he said and alleged that the Opposition tried to derail it by saying that the government had gone back on its promise to supply fine rice. "However, Jaganmohan Reddy

clarified by showing the video proof that the government only promised quality rice and not fine," he added.

The Opposition also tried to create a furore over the Rythu Bharosa scheme as it did not know how to counter the government. The TDP members were afraid of taking part in the discussion as they did not have anything to prove that the government was doing wrong in the issue.

They had failed to generate constructive criticism on other issues like 50% reservation in

Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy said discussion was held on PPAs, Mega DSC, Special Category Status to the State, women's security, call money sex racket on the first day itself

When Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has declared that the government was keen to enact the AP Disha Act on that day, the Opposition members tried their best to divert the issue

nominated posts, purchase of APSRTC buses and Rayalaseema irrigation projects on the third of the session.

Even N Chandrababu Naidu and Nandamuri Balakrishna, both members from the Rayalaseema region, could not discuss the issue of irrigation projects properly, Srikanth Reddy said.

The Opposition stand on

English medium and village secretariats were hollow. Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu and other members tried created a ruckus by trying to enter the Assembly premises in a procession holding placards and banners. Though Chandrababu Naidu has a separate entrance, he wanted to enter the Assembly premises only through Gate No. 4 to create trouble, Srikanth Reddy said.

On the fourth day, Naidu claimed in the Assembly that he had not abused the Chief Marshal though there was video proof to say that he did, Srikanth Reddy said. He said the AP Disha Act was passed on the fifth day creating history. The entire country looked towards AP when the revolutionary law was enacted, he added.

"Why are you disturbing the assembly session while the discussions have been going on the issues that you have given and decisions taken in BAC? Chief Whip Srikanth questioned opposition party.

YSRCP rule 'autocratic': Yanamala

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Former minister and TDP leader Yanamala Ramakrishnu has come down heavily on Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy saying that the five-day long Assembly session so far holds mirror to his autocratic attitude.

In a press release here on Sunday, he said unable to withstand the onslaught of the Opposition, Jaganmohan Reddy was resorting to undemocratic actions. Stopping Opposition members at the Assembly, throttling their voices in the Assembly, not following the rules in the Assembly and throwing ethics to the wind in the House were indications of the Chief Minister's highhandedness.

Yanamala claimed that the TDP had been successful in exposing the Jaganmohan Reddy's six-month rule. "We have proved that the government's actions were undemocratic," he said.

Stating that the government had announced that the Navaratnas would be clubbed with the Central government's schemes, he said this showed how hollow were the policies of the govern-



investments, employment generation, doubts over the Capital, Rythu Bharosa scheme, GO No. 2430 on media restrictions, 75% reservations to local youth, 50% reservation to SC, ST, BC, Minority communities were wrong, he alleged.

Yanamala claimed that all plum posts were given to the community to which CM Jaganmohan Reddy belongs, he said and alleged that only unimportant posts were allotted to the people of weaker sections. "Setting aside 75% jobs to locals means allotment of the same to community of Jaganmohan Reddy. The government's claim of allotting 50% nominated posts to weaker sections is nothing but cheating," he said.

Stating that the accused in both the rape incidents that took place after the AP Disha Act was passed were Reddys (Lakshma Reddy and Karunakara Reddy), Yanamala said the Reddy community was zooming ahead in rapes and occupying plum posts in the AP government. "Won't the CM taken action against the persons belonging to his community if they commit rapes?" he asked.

Vellampalli pays tributes to Potti Sriramulu



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Coming down heavily on Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu for not celebrating the State Formation Day during his tenure as the Chief Minister after bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, Minister for Endowments Vellampalli Srinivas criticised him for observing Nava Nirmana Deeksha on the day of division of the State.

Addressing a meeting after garlanding the statue of freedom-fighter Potti Sriramulu at a function organised by the Vasavi Sevadal on the occasion of his 67th death anniversary here

on Sunday, he said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had organised the State Formation Day on November 2 in such a way that the people would remember it throughout their life. The CM had declared his love for Potti Sriramulu, who had fought for the formation of the State, by officially organising the celebrations.

He alleged that the TDP government had never thought of the need to remember the sacrifice of Potti Sriramulu. He recalled that CM Jaganmohan Reddy felicitated the grand-daughter of Potti Sriramulu during the State-level function on the State Formation Day.

Govt to bring Bill for amending AP Edu Act

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister wants to ensure that the English medium proposal has the required legal backing so that nobody could tamper with the ultimate objective," the sources averred. Classes from I to VI in Primary, Upper Primary, High Schools under all managements will first be converted into English medium from the academic year 2020-21.

English medium will be introduced for Classes VII to X in the subsequent four years from 2021-22, as per the government's plan. It is initially wanted to make English the medium of instruction from Classes I to VIII but has now restricted it up to Class VI due to reasons like non-availability of qualified teachers and textbooks.

The mission would be carried forward with all government schools getting the required infrastructure and skill upgrade, he said, adding English labs would be set up in all schools.

'Botsa confusing people over capital'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Botsa Satyanarayana has gone back on his word over Capital Amaravati within 24 hours, alleged TDP leader Anagani Satya Prasad.

Addressing a press conference in Guntur on Sunday, he said Botsa had declared in the Council that there was no question of shifting the capital from Amaravati and now he was saying that a decision on the issue would be taken only after the expert committee submitted its report.

This would only amount to cheating the public, he said and added it was not proper to make conflicting statements on the capital every day.

Satya Prasad said that the Jaganmohan Reddy government was playing with the lives of the youth waiting for employment generation in the capital region and observed that the government was heading to commit a historical



mistake. Wondering whether there was any State without a capital, the TDP leader sought to know if the government knew that there was a link between State's economic system and the capital

"How will industries be established without the capital in place? The government should ponder over this," he said.

Satya Prasad said the capital region would bustle with activity with labourers involved in work day in day out. The YSRCP government was now remaining silent without continuing the works.



Women perform 'Palabhishekam' to CM's photo

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Women, led by YSRCP leader Devineni Avinash, performed 'Palabhishekam' to the photo of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy here on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, Avinash said the CM had enacted the AP Disha Act treating all women as his sisters. Stating that the new law would act as a protective shield for women, he said it was a revolutionary initiative taken by the government, which would act as a role model to other States.

He said the law was framed in such a way that stringent action would be taken against anyone who perpetrated crimes against women.

Why Jagan allowed Yanamala's son-in-law Gopinath go scot-free?

Continued from Page 1

But what happened to the irregularities that had taken place during Gopinath's regime. Why the government remained tight lipped even after the ACB submitting report against Gopinath?

The government, which suspended Jasti Krishna Kumar, soft pedaled on Gopinath. What are the reasons?

Disposing of a PIL filed in the High Court by petitioner Indukuri Venkata Rama Raju, the court had ordered a probe by TBS Telematic and Bio-Medical Services India Limited into the irregularities in the medical and health department in implementation of contracts.

It said that the negligence of Special Chief Secretary Medical and Health Department and Medical Corporation Managing

Director caused Rs 18 crore loss to the government.

The allegations of irregularities against Gopinath during his stint as the MD are numerous. He acted in favour of the some of the contractors and harassed other contractors whom he did not like.

He is working in AP but purchased a costly car in the name of his spouse and got it registered in Nalgonda district in Telangana State. It kicked off enough dust in those days.

He was severely criticised in the award of contracts and sanction of EOTs. In spite of all these factors, the State government allowed him to quit his post and leave the government through the main door taking no disciplinary action at all.

Can the government afford to be selective while dealing with corruption in the government?

ETTC Vijayawada bags National Energy Conservation Award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Electric Traction Training Centre (ETTC) Vijayawada bagged prestigious 'Certificate of Merit' award for saving one lakh units per annum in energy conservation at National Energy Conservation Awards function held at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi under the aegis of Bureau of Energy Efficiency/Ministry of Power.

The South Central Railway bagged a total of four National Energy Conservation awards, including the award for ETTC, Vijayawada, which is highest amongst all the competing organisations.



RK Singh, Minister of State for Power, presenting the certificate of merit to officials of Electric Traction Training Centre, Vijayawada, in New Delhi

The other three awards 'Certificate of Merit' were given to the South Central Railway (Zonal Railway sector), Kacheguda Station (CPWD), PHED & State PWD sector and Electric Traction Training Centre / Vijayawada (institutes/universities sector).

Piyush Goyal, Minister of Railways, Commerce and Industry, complimented the team SCR for their exem-

plary performance in energy conservation sector. He advised the South Central Railway to further the cause of reducing the energy consumption to promote development of the nation. P Srinivas, Divisional

Railway Manager, Vijayawada, stated that ETTC winning prestigious energy conservation merit award at national-level is an achievement by the dedicated workforce of the division. P Srinivas, DRM, congratulated V Venkata Ramana, Sr Divisional Electrical Engineer, Vijayawada, and team on receiving the award for energy conservation.

ETTC, Vijayawada imparts various trainings viz., initial, refresher, promotional, conversational, simulator training on train dynamics and special courses to Running, TRS, EMU & TRD staff of SC Railway and occasionally to staff of other railways on their request.

Bifurcation of power staff creates rift between TS & AP

Continued from Page 1

It seems that they are simply delaying the inevitable," he said. He also said that AP might move Supreme Court against the order but as he understands the phase of presenting facts and discussions has come to an end on Sunday.

During the two-day long proceedings the committee put forth the formula of 613 employees for AP and 544 for Telangana, however, AP side has made it clear that they have no vacancies to accommodate the same. The representatives of Telangana power utilities, however, argued that AP has already accepted in writing to take back 441 of these employees. Out of the remaining, 74 have reached superannuation leaving very few (98) to be absorbed by AP.

It was submitted before the One-man Committee by Telangana that 242 employ-



ees of Telangana nativity have been taken back without any hassles.

The employees unions here stated that injustice is meted out to the Telangana State by the committee but not bifurcating the employees based on nativity. The TSPEA argued that the earlier governments setting aside statutory provisions such as Article 371 (D) and GO 610 have appointed non natives in the Telangana region.

'AP power utilities' attitude towards TS vengeful'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Electrical Engineers Association here on Sunday condemned what it termed as an adamant attitude of the AP power utility companies by retracting from their earlier stand to absorb 613 out of the 1,157 employees with nativity from Andhra Pradesh.

In a statement, association leaders N Sivaji and P Anjaiah said that this showed the vengeful attitude of the Andhra power utility companies towards Telangana. They pointed out that AP had agreed to take back 613 employees and also to submit proposals for the 256 employees who have opted from AP to TS and are not a part of the 1,157 dur-

ing the proceedings of the Justice Dharmadhikari Committee in October last. "Even justice Dharmadhikari has expressed displeasure over the attitude of the AP power utility management," they said.

The association opined that Telangana had accepted the orders of the committee with utmost humility when it said that the State power companies must take 50% of 256 AP employees who have wished to join the Telangana service. "We have all accepted the directive of the committee keeping in view that the undue delay in sharing of the employees has its impact on promotions in the State and also to avert financial burden on the new born State," they said.

CM to host dinner for Collectors, SPs

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister will spend 10 minutes at each table and have a pep talk with the Collector and the SP. He is likely to discuss the problems of each district with the Collector and the SP and seek their suggestions to solve them, according to CMO communiqué.

Immolation bid by youth at PS

Continued from Page 1

He expressed concern over the police not taking any action in this regard. Vexed with this, he went to the police station and threatened to set himself afire if the police did not take action against the moneylenders. However, the police foiled Venkat's attempt to immolate himself. A case was registered. Investigation is on.

MHA puts bill to check violence against doctors on backburner

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A bill drafted by the health ministry to check violence against doctors and other healthcare professionals has been put on the backburner with the Home Ministry stating that there was no need for a separate law in this regard, officials said.

The Health Services Personnel and Clinical Establishments (Prohibition of Violence and Damage to Property) Bill, 2019, sought to punish people who assault on-duty doctors and other healthcare professionals by imposing a jail term of up to 10 years.

The call for a comprehensive central legislation to put a check on violence against healthcare professionals gained momentum against the backdrop of rising instances of such cases and damage to the property of clinical establishments across the country.

The health ministry had intended to introduce the bill during the winter session of Parliament, which ended on December 13.

The Law Ministry had approved the draft Bill, but the Home Ministry, during inter-ministerial consultations over it, stated that there cannot be a separate legislation to protect members of a particular profession, a senior official said.

"The home ministry dismissed the need for a sepa-



The Law Ministry had approved the draft Bill, but the Home Ministry, during inter-ministerial consultations over it, stated that there cannot be a separate legislation to protect members of a particular profession, a senior official said

rate law to check violence against the fraternity members of a specific profession. It had said there should be no specific law for a particular profession, and the IPC and CrPC are sufficient to deal with it.

"Over the time, members of other fraternity like lawyers and police may also demand for an exclusive law to safeguard their interests," the official said.

The draft bill proposed imprisonment between three and 10 years and imposition of fines between Rs 2 lakh to Rs 10 lakh for "grievously hurting" doctors and other healthcare professionals in clinical establishments.

Those commissioning violence or causing damage to the property of a healthcare facility can be imprisoned for six months to five years and fined between Rs 50,000 and

Rs 5 lakh, it had proposed.

The draft bill also had provisions for compensation which could be twice the market value of a property damaged and Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh for being assaulted or hurt, sources said. In case of non-payment of compensation by a convict, the amount may be recovered as arrears of land revenue under the Revenue Recovery Act, 1890.

Healthcare professionals include doctors, para-medical staff and also medical students, diagnostic service providers in a health facility and ambulance drivers.

The Health Ministry had entrusted an eight-member sub-committee, comprising its officials and representatives from the Medical Council of India, Indian Medical Association, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences' Resident Doctors Association and an experienced person from the Bureau of Police Research and Development, with the task of drafting the bill. It was put in public domain for feedback in September.

In June, resident doctors across the country held protests and went on a strike against a brutal attack on their colleagues in Kolkata by relatives of a patient who died during treatment. It was at that time that the demand for a comprehensive central legislation to check violence against doctors and other medical professionals at hospitals gained currency.

Government plans tele-law facility across all CSCs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is planning to roll out the tele-law facility across all common service centres, covering more than half of rural India, in the next financial year, according to top official of CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd.

The service has been recently rolled out across around 30,000 common service centres in 117 aspirational districts after seeing demand for legal advice in Jammu & Kashmir and northeastern states, CSC e-Governance Services India CEO Dinesh Tyagi told PTI.

"We have just completed the rollout of the tele-law facility across all 117 aspirational districts. The service will be gradually expanded across all CSCs (common service centres) in India after impact assessment of the facility in aspirational districts. Nationwide roll out is expected in the next financial year," Tyagi said.

The justice department has partnered NALSA and CSC e-Governance Service India Ltd for mainstreaming legal aid in 2017. The service was rolled out through CSCs that provide government services available online in rural areas, across 1,800 panchayats in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, northeastern states and Jammu & Kashmir.

"We have seen huge traction for the tele-law service in Jammu & Kashmir and northeastern states. It has also helped in generating thousands of jobs with one para-legal volun-



The service was rolled out through CSCs that provide government services available online in rural areas, across 1,800 panchayats in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, northeastern states and Jammu & Kashmir

teer attached to each CSC," Tyagi said.

Till August this year, seven northeastern states witnessed more than 39,000 cases being registered for tele-law and out of them, advice was provided in 37,588 cases. Assam made the most use of the tele-law service followed by Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

On the other hand, J&K saw 30,169 cases being registered with the service till August and advice provided on 20,949 cases. In other states, a total of 18,372 cases were registered as on August this year and advice was given on 17,406 cases. Uttar Pradesh led the tally followed by Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

A tele-law volunteer is selected by the entrepreneur who operates CSCs and the volunteer gets paid up to Rs 1,500 for creating awareness about the facility.

"The rollout of tele-law in aspirational districts has generated around 30,000 jobs in the form of tele-law volunteers. Lakhs of jobs will be created when the service is rolled out across India," Tyagi said.

Legal aid is provided through web-conferencing or over the phone by lawyers empanelled by NALSA at the state level. The service is free for people belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and those below the poverty line. The CSC charges Rs 30 from people in general category.

SHORT READS



Preventive health care need of the hour: Telangana Governor

COIMBATORE: Telangana Governor Dr Tamilsai Soundararajan on Sunday said that preventive healthcare was the need of the hour and urged people to give greater care to their health. "As a Doctor, I appeal to the people to give greater care to their health as preventive healthcare is the need of the hour," she said. Considering the people's health care, the Union government had introduced programmes like Fit India, she said while inaugurating a Touch Free Laser treatment with Schwind Amaris 750 HZ at Lotus Eye Hospital here. An individual could achieve anything if he or she was in good health. One can achieve anything if only he or she was in good health, Tamilsai said and urged people to get their eyes checked, irrespective of whether they were diabetic or not, as eye care was very crucial.

Mayawati accuses Cong of duplicity for continuing alliance with Sena

LUCKNOW: Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Sunday accused the Congress of practising duplicity by keeping its alliance intact with Shiv Sena in Maharashtra despite the Hindutva party support to Citizenship Amendment Bill. Mayawati accused the grand old party of duplicity in a series of tweets. "The Shiv Sena remains committed to its basic agenda, and that is why it supported the Centre on the Citizenship Amendment Bill. And now it is not ready to tolerate the Congress' stand even on Savarkar," Mayawati said in her first tweet. "But, the Congress party is continues its alliance with Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. What is it if not the duplicity of the Congress?" asked the BSP chief in her second tweet. In her third tweet, Mayawati asked Congress to clarify its stand. "The Congress must clear its stand on these issues. Or else, it will just be considered as its pure dramatics to distract people's attention from its weaknesses," said Mayawati.



Rs 382 cr netted as fine for violation of pollution norms

PNS ■ NOIDA (UP)

The government has received Rs 381.97 crore in penalty for violations of environmental norms since 2017, according to an official response to an RTI query.

Rs 31.86 crore were received in 2017-18 and Rs 227.94 crore in 2018-19 as penalties, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) stated in response to the query made under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Rs 122.27 crore have been received in compensation in 2019-20 till October 31, the CPCB stated in response to the query made by Noida-based RTI activist Ranjan Tomar.

The CPCB, which works under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, is responsible for advising the central government on prevention and control of water and air pollution.

Curfew relaxed in Guwahati, parts of Dibrugarh district



PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Curfew imposed on Guwahati and parts of Dibrugarh district in the wake of the violent protests against the amended Citizenship Act was relaxed on Sunday for several hours, police said.

Special trains have been arranged by the Assam tourism department in association with the railways to ferry passengers stranded in various parts of the state. According to an official, curfew has been relaxed from 9 am to 6 pm in Guwahati. In Dibrugarh west, Naharkatia, Tenughat areas, it has been relaxed from 7 am to 4 pm. Six flights, however, had to be cancelled, including one to Paro in Bhutan, in view of the law-and-order situation, an official of Airports Authority of India in Guwahati said.

Long queues were seen outside

grocery shops at several places, including Dispur, Uzan Bazar, Chandmari, Silpukhuri and Zoo Road in Guwahati town. Auto-rickshaws and cycle-rickshaws were plying across the city since morning.

Petrol pumps have also opened with vehicles waiting in lines to refuel. Police were using loudspeakers to inform the public about the relaxation.

Meanwhile, members of the Guwahati unit of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) held demonstrations outside party headquarters in Ambari area, demanding resignation of three ministers, including party president Atul Bora.

AGP members in Parliament had voted in favour of the contentious bill. Students' organisations AASU and AJYCP also took out rallies across the state, seeking revocation of the law.

Verdict in Unnao rape case against Kuldeep Sengar today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court is scheduled to pronounce on Monday its judgement in the case of alleged kidnapping and rape of a woman by expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in Unnao in 2017.

During in-camera proceedings, District Judge Dharmesh Sharma had said he was likely to pronounce the verdict on December 16 after conclusion of hearing of final arguments by the CBI and the accused in the case.

The judge heard the case on a day-to-day basis from August 5 after it was transferred to Delhi from a court in Lucknow on the Supreme Court's direction.

The woman was allegedly



The woman was allegedly kidnapped and raped by Sengar in 2017 when she was a minor. The court has also framed charges against co-accused Shashi Singh in the case

kidnapped and raped by Sengar in 2017 when she was a minor. The court has also framed charges against co-accused Shashi Singh in the case.

Sengar, a four-time BJP MLA from UP's Bangermau,

was expelled from the party in August, 2019.

The court had on August 9 framed charges against the MLA and Singh under Sections 120 b (criminal conspiracy), 363 (kidnapping), 366 (kidnapping or inducing a

Green laws must for railway stations: NGT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Railway stations across the country are required to obtain necessary environmental permissions as several polluting activities take place there, the National Green Tribunal has said. A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said there can be no

dispute about the proposition that the Environment Act, 1986 also applies to major railway stations. Directing the Railways to take into account recommendations of the Central Pollution Control Board on implementing the Air Act, 1981 and Water Act, 1974, the tribunal asked it to implement action plans for making stations clean.

Biryani vendor assaulted, casteist remarks hurled at him in Greater Noida

PNS ■ NOIDA (UP)

A food vendor in Greater Noida was thrashed by three men who also allegedly hurled casteist slurs at him, prompting the police to launch an investigation. A purported video of the incident, which took place on a roadside on Friday, has surfaced on social

media in which a vendor selling vegetarian biryani is seen being slapped by the accused men. "Fold your hands..." one of the accused is heard saying in the short clip, as the vendor is continuously slapped on his face. The SP of Greater Noida, Ramvijay Singh, said an FIR has been registered against the three accused. "FIR has

been registered and we have also spoken to the biryani vendor. An investigation is underway and the accused will be arrested soon," Singh said. Meanwhile, Bhir Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad asked local members of his Dalit emancipation group to reach out to the biryani vendor and "ensure action".

Maha among 6 states that didn't use Nirbhaya fund; UP, Delhi spent less than 5 per cent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Nirbhaya fund, set up by the Centre in 2013 to be used towards ensuring women's safety, has seen a dismal nine per cent utilisation with states such as Maharashtra and Meghalaya not spending a single rupee from it, according to government data.

In total, just Rs 147 crore out of Rs 1,649 crore sanctioned by the Centre has been spent by the state and UTs governments, the Parliament was recently informed by Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani.

Uttar Pradesh and Telangana, the two states which were in the news recently for horrific incidents of rape and murder, were among the highest recipients of the Nirbhaya fund alongside Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Delhi.

While Karnataka used 7 per cent of the fund allocated to it by the Centre (the fund allocated to Karnataka was Rs 191 crore and utilisation Rs 13.62 crore), Tamil Nadu used 3 per



cent of the amount allocated to it under the Nirbhaya fund (the fund allocated was Rs 190.68 crore and utilisation Rs 6 crore).

Six states and UTs - Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura and Daman & Diu - have not spent a single rupee from the fund allocated by the Centre, according to data shared by the minister in Parliament in response to a question. The data also showed that

Delhi, where the brutal incident took place, saw utilisation of less than 5 per cent of the fund allocated to it.

Delhi was allotted Rs 390 crore which was the highest amount among states and UTs but the utilisation certificate of just Rs 19.41 crore has been received from the city-state.

When asked about the same, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the Centre rejected a Delhi government proposal to use Nirbhaya fund to

Six states and UTs - Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura and Daman & Diu - have not spent a single rupee from the fund allocated by the Centre, according to data shared by the minister in Parliament in response to a question

install CCTV cameras and panic buttons in 5,500 DTC and cluster buses. "We have not received Rs 390 crore," the chief minister claimed.

Telangana, where a 26-year-old vet was recently gang raped and murdered, spent only Rs 4 crore out of the Rs 103 crore allocated to it by the Union home ministry, which releases money from the Nirbhaya fund for 13 programmes including the Emergency Response Scheme.

Teacher arrested for molesting girls at school

PNS ■ KORBA

A 56-year-old teacher has been arrested for allegedly molesting some students of Class 8 at a government-run school in Chhattisgarh's Janjgir-Champa district, police said on Sunday.

As many as 15 girl students of the school in Podibhata village, located around 75 km from here, complained to police against the teacher -- Chhedilal Sharma -- following which he was arrested on Saturday, a local police official said.

"The students, all from Class 8, complained that Sharma had molested them some days back after which the girls warned him," he said.

On Saturday, Sharma again allegedly tried to touch some of the girls inappropriately and made obscene comments following which they informed their parents and approached the police, he said. The students also protested in the school premises against the teacher, the official said.

BJP wants judicial probe into Nabarangpur rape-murder

PNS ■ NABARANGPUR (ODISHA)

Senior BJP leader Balabhadra Majhi on Sunday slammed the Odisha government for the alleged gangrape and murder of a girl in Nabarangpur district and demanded a judicial probe into the incident.

The former MP from Nabarangpur constituency also demanded capital punishment for the accused and Rs 15 lakh compensation for the victim's family.

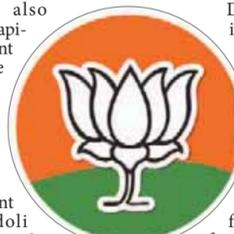
The incident at Gumandoli village under the jurisdiction of Kosagamuda police station on Friday night showed that law and order situation has collapsed in the state with an alarming spurt in cases of rape and murder of women, Majhi told reporters here.

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly kidnapped, gang-raped and subsequently killed in Nabarangpur district on

Friday night. Holding Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who has been holding the charge of Home department for the last two decades, responsible for rise in crimes against women, the former MP said that cases of rape and murder increased in a peaceful district like Nabarangpur.

Due to improper implementation of MGNREGA scheme the father of the girl had gone to a neighbouring state in search of work, Majhi said, adding, the father's absence from home became an opportunity for the accused to kidnap the girl, rape and murder her.

The state government should give Rs 15 lakh compensation and other facilities to the family members of the minor, he added. An investigation has been initiated and the case will be cracked soon, the Superintendent of Police of the district, Nitin Kusalkar, said.



SHORT READS



Hindu Janajagriti Samiti opposes Goa 'Sunburn' festival

PANAJI: A Goa-based right wing organisation on Sunday urged the state government not to allow 'Sunburn Klassique' festival to be held in the coastal state, alleging that drugs were consumed at such events. The electronic dance music (EDM) festival is scheduled to be held at the Vagator beach in North Goa district from December 27 to 29. Hindu Janajagriti Samiti's (HJS) Goa convener Manoj Solanki said the state government should immediately withdraw the permission granted to organisers of the Sunburn Klassique festival. "The culture promoted at the festival is not ours. A wrong culture is promoted during the event, which attracts thousands of youth every year," he said. Solanki alleged that drugs were consumed by people at such events.

Chavan takes dig at Oppn for boycotting gopn's tea party

Nagpur, Dec 15 (PTI) Taking a dig at the BJP, senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan on Sunday said despite it being the International Tea Day, the opposition party refused to have a cup of tea with the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government on the eve of the winter session of the state legislature. Fadnavis on Sunday said the BJP would boycott the customary tea party to be hosted by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in the evening. Commenting on it, Chavan tweeted, "It was expected that the opposition party leaders will attend the high tea and jointly discuss the crucial problems of the state." "Incidentally, today is also the International Tea Day. Unfortunately, the opposition parties boycotted the high tea," the former chief minister said in a tweet in Marathi. Notably, during the BJP-led state government's tenure from 2014 to 2019, the Congress and NCP, which were then in the opposition, used to boycott the high tea invitations from the ruling side.



Rahul should drop his surname as it was stolen by his family

NEW DELHI: Rahul Gandhi should drop his surname as it was "stolen" by his family for political gains, BJP leader Sambit Patra claimed on Sunday, a day after the Congress scion refused to apologise for his "rape in India" remark saying he is not "Rahul Savarkar". Addressing a press conference, Patra said former prime minister Indira Gandhi had called Savarkar "son of soil", while her grandson was referring to him in a derogatory note. "They stole the Gandhi name for political gains. He should give up the name of Gandhi. You (Rahul Gandhi) are a political deserter," Patra alleged.

CITIZENSHIP ACT

AGP to file plea in SC for nixing amended CAA

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), an ally of the ruling BJP, would file a petition in the Supreme Court praying for revocation of the amended Citizenship Act, party leader Kumar Deepak Das said on Sunday.

He asserted that the AGP respected the sentiments of common people, who were wary that the law might threaten their identity and existence.

"We will take the legal route to seek revocation of the amended Act as the indigenous people of Assam are apprehensive that their identity, language might come under threat," Das, a former Rajya Sabha MP said. Sources said a delegation of the AGP, led by Das, would leave for Delhi in the evening to file the plea in the apex court as PILs seeking revocation of the Act were scheduled to be taken up for hearing on December 18.

Former AGP Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who had been vocal about his opposition to the amended Act, claimed the party never adopted any resolution supporting the law.

He urged the AGP leadership to clear its stand on the contentious matter.

Dissidence had been brewing in the AGP after party chief Atul Bora said if the



Exclude Brahmaputra valley from citizenship law: Atul Bora

GUWAHATI: AGP chief Atul Bora said on Sunday that the Brahmaputra valley, where violent protests have been happening over the amended Citizenship Act, should be excluded from its purview. Addressing a press conference here, Bora, also a state minister, said as the legislation has already become an Act, so at least the Brahmaputra valley should be excluded and it may be implemented in the Barak valley. The Barak valley, which has a significant Bengali population, has not seen any major agitation. AGP leader and Assam minister Keshab Mahanta said the party has not left its "old stand" of opposing the contentious Act. "Though we are a part of the NDA, our stand has not changed. We still do not want this Act to be implemented in Assam and North East," he said. The party's lone MP in Rajya Sabha, Birendra Prasad Baishya, opposed the Bill during discussion, but voted in favour of it. After that, the party has been termed a "traitor" and is facing severe criticism across the state, with party leaders urging the top brass to clear their stand on the contentious matter.

Centre "wants to bring the Bill, he cannot do anything about it". AGP member in Rajya Sabha, Birendra Prasad Baishya, had voted in favour of

the legislation. The regional party has seen a spree of resignations, primarily from district-level bodies, over the issue. Mahanta, however, claimed Bora's views were "personal" and had nothing to do with the party.

"Being a regional party, we cannot go against the interests of indigenous people. Views expressed by Bora had nothing to do with the party's stance on the Act," he claimed.

Earlier in the day, AGP workers held demonstrations outside the party headquarters in Ambari area of Guwahati, demanding resignation of Baishya, party president Atul Bora and two other ministers.

Senior AGP leader Brindaban Goswami urged party workers to "ensure that the aspirations and sentiments of the Assamese people are honoured and the law revoked". "What is the point of filing a petition against the amended Act now after the party MP voted in its favour?" Goswami contended.

During the previous tenure of the BJP, Bora, who is also the state agriculture minister, and two AGP ministers had resigned from Sarabananda Sonowal-led government over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which had later lapsed as it could not be taken up for discussion in the Rajya Sabha.



'No need to fear, Indian Muslims neither intruders nor refugees'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a heated debate on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Chairman of National Commission for Minorities Syed Ghayurul Hasan Rizvi has asserted that the legislation is not against minorities and Indian Muslims need not fear as they are neither intruders nor refugees. He also said it is expected from the Union government to ensure that Indian Muslims do not face any problem due to the National Register of Citizens (NRC). "This legislation is not against minorities. Even Parsis, Christians, Sikhs, Jains and

Buddhists are minorities," Rizvi said on Saturday. "Some people are also saying that the Act is anti-Muslim but it is not true as there is no mention of Indian Muslims in it," the NCM chairman said. He said Indian Muslims need not fear the Act as they have nothing to do with the Muslims of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. "There is no danger to Indian Muslims," Rizvi said. "Indian Muslims are neither intruders nor refugees. An Indian Muslim is a respected citizen and the question of sending him out of this country does not arise. The home minister has also said the same," Rizvi said.



JHARKHAND ELECTION

AJSU chief indicates openness to post-poll alliance with any party

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The AJSU Party, an erstwhile ally of the BJP in Jharkhand, indicated on Sunday that it is open to post-poll alliance with any party that fulfils its agenda of better and inclusive governance.

For the AJSU Party, its mission of "abki baar, gaon ki sarkar" to make villages an intrinsic part of the governance delivery system is supreme, it chief Suresh Mahato said.

Hitting out at the BJP and the Congress, he alleged that both the national parties were "same" and ignored the state.

"I don't want to make government of any party or individual. I want the government of the people of Jharkhand which works for overall development of the people.... For me, the Congress and the BJP are same," Mahato said when asked about whom his party would support if the polls throw up a fractured mandate. "For us, our agenda of 'abki baar, gaon ki sarkar' is most important. It focuses on governance, delivery system and making villages an intrinsic



part of it. We want to fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of swaraj," Mahato said over phone. Training his guns on his erstwhile ally BJP, Mahato alleges the party wants to win election without giving importance to local issues.

"Where is the BJP's slogan of 'Ab ki baar 65 paar' (to win over 65 of the 81 seats)? The party has stopped raising it and is talking about Ram temple. It can't win elections by ignoring local issues," he said.

The prime minister had assured that there would not be any politics over the Supreme Court verdict on the Ayodhya

issue, but he was now raising the temple issue during campaign in the state, Mahato alleged. Asked if the amended Citizenship Act will have any effect on the elections, Mahato said these "diverting tactics" won't work now.

This is assembly elections and local issues matter more to the people, he said.

The AJSU Party fought the 2014 assembly elections in alliance with the BJP and won five out of the eight seats it had contested. It was also part of the Raghubar Das-led government for five years in the state.

DCW chief falls unconscious, hospitalised

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

DCW chief Swati Maliwal, who was on a hunger strike to demand capital punishment for rapists within six months of their conviction, was taken to a city hospital after she fell unconscious on Sunday morning.

When Maliwal's condition deteriorated on Saturday night, doctors advised her to go to a hospital, but she refused to budge.

On Sunday morning, she was taken to the LNJP Hospital after she fainted.

According to a DCW member, she was initially taken to the emergency ward of the hospital since she was unconscious. Later when she regained consciousness, she refused to allow doctors to put her on intravenous fluids.

Maliwal was shifted to a special ward, where she was put on intravenous fluids, he said, adding that her condition was stated to be stable.

He said the DCW chief's supporters were stationed outside the hospital.

Maliwal was on a hunger strike for over 10 days at the Santa Sthal near Raj Ghat.

'Advantage for India as work-age population bulge to last till 2055'

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday said the "next 30 years" are crucial for India in terms of the demographic dividend as the "bulge" in the working-age population of the country will last till 2055. He also called upon the need to equip the youth with skills that will enable them to face 21st century challenges.

Naidu was addressing the 62nd convocation ceremony of Sardar Patel University at Vallabh Vidyanagar in central Gujarat.

"More than 65 per cent of our population today is below 35 years of age and that is really a huge advantage. This bulge in working-age population is set to last till 2055. Therefore, next 30 years are very crucial for India. We need to skill and equip our youth for the challenges of the 21st century," he

said. "Today, India is going through a phase which is filled with hope and opportunities. As the vice president, I have visited many foreign countries and one common thing that I have experienced is that everybody has faith in India's capabilities, talent and efforts," he added.

On the occasion, Naidu called upon the graduating students to work for the uplift of those who are not as fortunate as them.

"We should leave the path of caste, creed, cash and criminality and adopt goals set by our heritage like character, calibre, capacity and contact," he advised them.

"We should adopt the mantra of reform, perform and transform given by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he added. Earlier, Naidu paid tributes to Sardar Patel at his statue on the university campus on his 69th death anniversary.



Internet services suspended in 5 districts of Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Internet services were on Sunday suspended in five districts of West Bengal, amid violent protests against the amended Citizenship Act across the state, a senior government official said. According to the official, the government has decided to shutdown Internet services in Malda, Murshidabad, Howrah, North 24 Parganas and parts of South 24 Parganas districts to prevent rumour-mongering and circulation of fake news, especially on social



media. "Despite several requests, a few communal outfits have been carrying out violent protests. In view of the situation, the administration has decided to temporarily suspend Internet services in five districts of the state," the official said.

Choose between power and Savarkar: BJP

PNS ■ MUMBAI

BJP spokesman Shah Nawaz Hussain on Sunday said the country will never forgive Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for insulting Veer Savarkar and asked the Shiv Sena to choose between power and the freedom fighter.

Talking to reporters here, Hussain, in a stinging attack on the Congress leader, said there can be no comparison between Savarkar and Gandhi, who has a "borrowed" surname.

"Just tweeting a protest against Gandhi's insult of

Talking to reporters here, Hussain, in a stinging attack on the Congress leader, said there can be no comparison between Savarkar and Gandhi, who has a 'borrowed' surname

Savarkar will not do. (Shiv Sena president) Uddhav Thackeray has to take a stand on whether he wants to share power with the Congress which has insulted the national icon and freedom fighter," he said.

Addressing the Congress' mega 'Bharat Bachao Rally' in Delhi on Saturday, Rahul Gandhi rejected the BJP's demand for apology over his "rape in India" barb, and added that his name was Rahul Gandhi, not

"Rahul Savarkar", and he will never apologise for speaking the truth. Reacting to Rahul Gandhi's remark mentioning Savarkar, Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut on Saturday in a tweet said there could not be any "compromise" about reverence for the Hindutva ideology.

Accusing the Congress of insulting nationalists and freedom fighters, Hussain said the people taught a lesson to the Sonia Gandhi-led party twice and it was not even able to claim the leader of opposition's post in the Lok Sabha.

Kashmiri pandit group welcomes CAB

● Says entire nation 'stands with PM'

JAMMU: Panun Kashmir, an organisation of Kashmiri migrant pandits, on Sunday welcomed the passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in both houses of parliament and said that the "entire nation stands wholeheartedly with PM Narendra Modi". "The passing of CAB by parliament is a resolve to ensure complete politico-cultural decolonisation of India. Decolonising Indian mind is a critical necessity for national integration," Convener of Panun Kashmir, Agnishekhar, told reporters here. Agnishekhar, who was flanked by several other leaders of the group including its chairman Ajay Chrungeo, said the decision to grant citizenship to persecuted Hindus of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan is a monumental decision of Modi government to address the mutilations inflicted on Hindus during the colonial enslavement. He alleged that the state of India since independence chose to remain a mute bystander to the genocidal attrition unleashed on Hindus left behind in Pak, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

TMC takes out rallies against citizenship law

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal took out rallies across the state on Sunday, protesting against the amended Citizenship Act.

Several senior party leaders, including ministers, led rallies in various districts and also appealed to the people to maintain peace and refrain from indulging in violence. Carrying posters and placards, TMC members shouted slogans against the Modi government and demanded that the new citizenship law be immediately scrapped.

"We want this divisive Citizenship Act to be immediately scrapped. Our state government has already said that it will not be implemented in Bengal, so we appeal to the people not to take law into their hands, and protest peacefully," senior TMC leader and education minister Partha Chatterjee said. TMC supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will hit the streets from Monday in protest the law.



Fadnavis seeks Rahul's apology over Savarkar remarks

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Leader of the Opposition in Maharashtra Assembly Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday demanded an "unconditional apology" from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his 'My name is not Rahul Savarkar' remark.

Talking to reporters here, Fadnavis also announced that the BJP would boycott the customary tea party to be hosted by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday, on the eve of the winter session of the state Assembly.

"Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should tender an unconditional apology over his remarks on Savarkar. He does not seem to have studied India's history of the Independence movement," Fadnavis said.

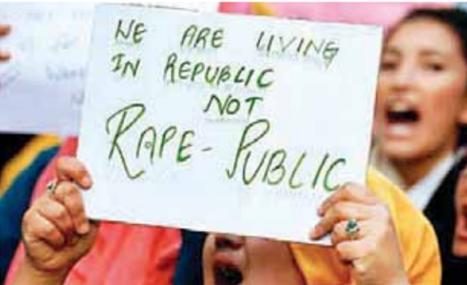
On 7th anniversary of Nirbhaya case, rape conviction rate low at 32%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seven years after the brutal Nirbhaya gang rape that shook the entire nation, the conviction rate in rape cases in the country is as low as 32.2 per cent despite laws dealing with sexual assault being made stringent in the aftermath of the incident.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data available for 2017, the total number of rape cases that went to trial in that year was 1,46,201 but only 5,822 of them resulted in conviction.

What is perhaps more worrisome is that while the conviction rate in rape cases has increased



marginally in recent years, the charge-sheeting rate has gone down -- which means cases are not going to court. The charge-sheeting rate in rape cases dropped to 86.6 per cent in 2017 from 95.4 per cent in 2013, the NCRB statistics show. Shilpi Jain, who was the

defence lawyer in the Alwar rape case wherein a foreign tourist was raped by Bitti Mohanty, son former Odisha director general of police B B Mohanty, said the field-level staff of police dealing with rape investigation need to be made more efficient. "They are mostly ill-equipped, inexperienced, power gets to

their head and in most cases they are extremely corrupt," said Jain. "A sub-inspector is the highest-level officer who files a charge sheet, so one can imagine the quality of the content," said Jain. Similarly, the prosecutors who deal with the cases at the district

level are of low caliber and less driven, she said, adding that all these factors make up badly investigated cases which results in low conviction rate.

A 23-year-old paramedic student, who came to be known as Nirbhaya, was gang raped on the intervening night of December 16-17, 2012, in a running bus in south Delhi by six people. Severely assaulted before being thrown out on the road, she succumbed to injuries on December 29 at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

All the accused, including a juvenile, were arrested and charged with sexual assault and murder. One of the accused, Ram Singh, died in police cus-

tody of possible suicide on March 11, 2013 in the Tihar Jail.

A week after the horrific attack on Nirbhaya, the Justice JS Verma Committee was set up to review the criminal laws to sternly deal with sexual assault cases.

The Committee's report, which was published within a month, formed the basis of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013 to set the maximum punishment for rape as death penalty rather than life imprisonment.

On February 3, 2013, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013 was promulgated by then President Pranab Mukherjee.

Take the lead

The domino effect of protests over fee hikes and citizenship law shows that a mass student movement may be possible

The protests over the new Citizenship Act, which promises religion-based acceptance of refugees and excludes the concerns of minorities and indigenous people, may congeal as a mass student movement that's rearing its head across the country in a manner reminiscent of the anti-reservation stir of the 90s. As the young Assamese stood up for their linguistic and cultural pride, one that has been threatened since colonial times by waves of privileged Bengali-speaking settlers, their marginalisation has found echoes across



the country. Students at various colleges and universities, even in faraway Delhi, are out to challenge not just the autocracy of the ruling regime but occupy the space for balance, humanism and logic that has been vacated by civil society, Opposition leaders and rationalists. This confluence of students, therefore, comes from generational solidarity, from their stakeholderhood in an India that is being created by selfish politics but will leave them suffering the consequences and unlearning what we have raised them to believe, to hold the establishment to account. Perhaps, it is getting endorsement because of the silence from a coopted majority. For the new Citizenship Act is not about reimagining India in a positive way but about reconstructing on ruins and relics of our civilisational foundations. It is not about denying immigration rights to Muslims but the selective culling of whom we want on our land that goes against the grain of the Constitution, one of the best documents that guarantees our citizenry equality. It is about creating a fear psychosis among the majority community that for the first time believes it has been a victim of parasitic minorities, no matter how small their numbers. It is about a One India based on Hindu nationalism that disregards, as in the Northeast, the emotions of locals who have over the years reclaimed their political rights as national parties have merrily played around with demographics, encouraging immigration for votebanks, first Muslim, now Hindus. It is about upending stability that has been hard-earned in a diverse India. In that sense, the BJP has, by fomenting disunity, probably gifted a plank of unity that might just lead to a transformative and revolutionary student movement. If the mass coalescence following the Nirbhaya rape, the Dalit atrocities, the Rohith Verma suicide and fee hikes at institutions is any indication, then the young are getting restive. If the 90s fed the drive for economic empowerment in a globalised world, then millennials are looking at value-creation of a different kind, one that keeps them connected to their identity than be submerged by the homogeneous hold of power. One that is not intellectual fadism of campus politics but can be carried into the real world, one that is not just anger against the system but about claiming it.

Perhaps this is the reason why students in Assam, unlike the anti-outsider movement of the late 1970s and early 80s, are spontaneously coming together as an amorphous force. They have demonstrated peacefully by and large through blockades, gatherings and processions. It is the police clampdown which has been harsh in comparison, both in the State and even in Delhi. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) may be leading the protests like the old times but has been joined by university students and even farmers and tribals. And so far they have decided to stay away from politicisation by national parties, be it the BJP or the Congress. Technology and media outreach have helped mobilise support, scale up the new law as a transnational issue and has even inducted peers in the diaspora. Student movements in India today may begin local but then draw traction in the broader context. This is the reason why the JNU fee hike agitation spread to all other institutions and became a swell of anger against fee hike in the higher education system in general. The *Hok Kolorob* movement in Jadavpur University, against the abrasive arrogance of the VC, had a domino effect with demonstrations being staged across India, including Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. But in recent times, it is the Hong Kong students' protest, with human chains, night vigils and Nelson Mandela songs, whose innovation and energy have even compelled a totalitarian China to take a step back. The good part about this non-violent resistance against the regime was that it could not be demonised by the establishment but weaponised the entire world's sympathy. In the same way, the new wave of home-grown student movements could very well capture the national imagination. Once young people have freed themselves from State fear, then we may yet reap a true democratic dividend.

India calling

A record number of Indian-origin MPs were voted to the UK Parliament but not all might end up being friends of India



Fifteen of the newly-elected Members of Parliament (MPs) in Westminster will have Indian roots. And while 15 out of 650 MPs might not seem like much, this is an assertion of how influential the British Indian community has become. At least two or three MPs of the Conservative Party, which won a stunning victory, are expected to become members of the Cabinet, including Priti Patel and Rishi Sunak, the latter familiar to some Indians as Infosys-founder NR Narayana Murthy's son-in-law.

There were several Indian-origin MPs from the Labour Party as well and their number included Lisa Nandy, who some are pegging as a potential candidate for leading the Labour Party following the planned resignation of the current leader, Jeremy Corbyn. While most Indian-origin MPs of the Conservative Party are generally seen as pro-India — there was a concerted effort within the Indian community to consolidate behind the Conservatives after Corbyn's statements on the Kashmir issue and his previous statements sympathetic to terrorist organisations — it is not as if Labour's Indian origin MPs are anti-India. But given Labour's extreme position on some issues, it is almost certain that its MPs will be critical of the Indian Government's stance on several issues. This is something that the Modi regime must be prepared for as such MPs, while being the biggest advocacy group for Indian interests, could also end up being the biggest critics of policies back home. The Chennai-born US Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been leading attacks in the US Congress against the Modi Government. Several first and second-generation Sikh immigrants in politics, particularly in Canada, have been openly advocating the Khalistani cause. Just because someone holds an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card does not make them a "friend" of India. Our diplomats and policy-makers should never forget this. At the same time, the Modi Government's overt support to certain Indian organisations that are weaponising the Indian diaspora politically is a good move. For example, many of Jayapal's constituents are from the Indian community working in the Greater Seattle area's IT industry, dominated by Amazon and Microsoft. Hundreds of them have written to her criticising her stance on Kashmir, making her realise that she cannot take the community's vote for granted. We should celebrate the success of our diaspora in every field, including politics, but we must not for one second forget that they do not owe their allegiance to India and are not "Indians."

A broken justice system

Increasingly, rape cases have seen an outpouring of public anger where the demand for death has reached a high pitch. Only reforms in the police and judicial systems can help



KUSHAN MITRA

No matter what problems one may have with fairness of social media platforms like Twitter, posts here do make up for an interesting read and allow one to gauge the mood, if not of the country, definitely of the chattering class. Reactions to the rape and murder of a young veterinary doctor in Hyderabad were telling. Several Twitter users advocated not just death penalty but some even argued that the perpetrators be lynched. This kicked in a fevered discussion and even found its way into the Parliament where several MPs, across party lines, argued in favour of lynching of the rapists. Not a State-sanctioned death penalty but public lynching.

The irony, at a time when people are talking about bringing anti-lynching provisions into the law, was not lost on some. People's anger stemmed, in no small part, due to the fact that December 2019 marks seven years of the horrific gang-rape in South Delhi, where a young physiotherapist was brutally assaulted and left for dead. The perpetrators of this horrific crime, despite being convicted and given the death penalty, have successfully eluded the sentence that was handed down to them. This is death of our conscience by using every available aspect of the law to delay their execution.

But isn't this the right of every prisoner? The ability to use every possible means to prove his innocence or mitigate his sentence or even delay it, particularly when it is a matter of death? The only other major democracy that regularly executes prisoners is the US, which has several provisions in its statute books. Even the Governor of a State can issue a last-minute pardon to prisoners if appeals to the US Supreme Court fail. To deny them that would potentially mean convicting an innocent man or woman to death. In college and school debates, we have held discussions on justice delayed is justice denied but it is almost certain that a rushed judicial process is dangerous. It is gratifying that the Chief Justice of India, Sharad Arvind Bobde, realised this. While commenting on the murders of the four undertrials in the Hyderabad rape and murder case, he said, "Justice should not be revenge. I believe justice loses its character as justice if it becomes revenge."

Those — including not just liberal ideologists in the country but also Right-wing thought leaders — against death penalty have a simple argument: Who is a man to judge a crime? But how do you explain this in the Indian context, because at our core, we remain a deeply tribalistic society where the 18th and 21st centuries have had a troubled relationship. Anyone who has been 50 kilometres outside India's major metropolitan areas, particularly the national Capital, will understand this. When



crimes are committed in such a brutal manner and scale, there is an expectation of punishment matching the act. India is not Norway, where a mass murderer can be allowed to live and also fight the State for human rights. No, we are India, where we have a very specific set of criminal issues. We should not pretend to be a socially developed State. Indeed, it can be argued that India's social problems will likely get worse before they get better and the country will have little choice but to execute certain citizens.

We have to, however, take every single possible precautionary measure to prevent the possibility of an innocent man/woman going to the gallows. We cannot accept even one wrongful death sanctioned by the State. That said, when it is proven beyond any iota of doubt that an accused is guilty of those "rarest of rare" cases, where State-sanction is justified, then the executive and the judiciary both should ensure that the punishment is delivered swiftly. To keep a man or a woman on death row for an indefinite time is technically, cruelty. Of course, one may not sympathise with the murderers but constant appeals bouncing

“ WE HAVE TO, HOWEVER, TAKE EVERY SINGLE POSSIBLE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE TO PREVENT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INNOCENT MAN/WOMAN GOING TO THE GALLOWES. WE CANNOT ACCEPT EVEN ONE WRONGFUL DEATH SANCTIONED BY THE STATE ”

around the judiciary and the Union Home Ministry for years is plainly ridiculous. If someone has been sentenced to death for a heinous crime, the death penalty should not be handed out like candy by the lower judiciary. If the sentence has been confirmed by the Supreme Court, the Home Ministry and the President should get on with their jobs.

We have had Presidents who have delayed the signing of death warrants because it went against their conscience. Fair enough, but Presidents should come out and be vocal about it instead of delaying matters until the next head of the State assumes power.

This is a peculiar Indian issue — putting off tough decisions instead of acting on them. It took a century to bring natural justice to the Ayodhya case. On top of that, the fate of the Delhi rapists is still hanging in the air. This is one major reason why there is so much pendency in courts. Forget about the failure of the bureaucracy and the executive to take decisions. Of course, there are other reasons, too, such as delay in filling judicial vacancies, which coupled with the lack of education and knowledge across the board,

including that of the legal profession, has completely broken the criminal justice system in the country.

So when incidents like the Hyderabad rape case happen, there is public anger. The same sentiments run across among the local population when alleged child snatchers or cattle hustlers are lynched. We know how people get worked up over vigilantism.

Our justice system has failed us completely and needs to be revamped with meaningful implementation of processes. Increasingly, people have started taking matters into their own hands. If this isn't a sign of a banana republic, no one really knows what is. It is, therefore, imperative for the executive and the judiciary to work towards fixing this. While policing is a State subject, there needs to be a comprehensive federal re-evaluation of policing and the judiciary, just like the indirect taxation system was overhauled to the Goods and Services Tax system. But we cannot afford to bungle anymore. India needs police and judicial reforms now in sync with the severity of the emerging crime graph.

(The writer is Managing Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

BJP asked me to apologise for telling the truth. I am not Rahul Savarkar. I am Rahul Gandhi. I will not apologise. Nor will anyone from the Congress.



Congress leader —Rahul Gandhi

The big films that I've done and their success gave me the courage to do smaller films and take it all upon my shoulders.



Actor —Sonakshi Sinha

One of India's great strengths is its Constitution. As a fellow democracy, we respect India's institutions, but are concerned about the implications of the CAB Bill.



US diplomat —Sam Brownback

Clearly, this is not an ordinary slowdown. It is India's great slowdown, where the economy seems headed for the intensive care unit.



Former Chief Economic Advisor —Arvind Subramanian

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Assam's anxiety

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Spent force" (December 13). The hard-earned peace in Assam is now on a knife's edge with continuous violent protests in several parts of the State following the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, which seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The passage of the CAA is an act of betrayal by the BJP, which had promised to solve the vexed foreigners' issue once and for all in accordance with the 1985 Assam Accord. The pact stipulates that all foreigners, who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971, shall continue to be detected, deleted from the rolls and expelled in accordance with the law.

Apprehensions and fears of the Assamese were genuine and, hence, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was necessitated by the Supreme Court. A consensus was arrived at where it was decided that the final NRC list would be a piece of legal document for identification, deletion of names from the voters' list and

Russia will be missed on the world stage

This refers to the editorial, "Shut out Russia" (December 11). It is unfortunate that Russia has been banned for four years by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) from participating in the world's major sporting events on grounds of doping non-compliance. The WADA took this decision after concluding that Moscow had planted fake evidence and got rid of files linked to positive doping tests in laboratory, data that could have aided the process of identifying drug cheats.

It must be noted that Russia has been embroiled in performance-enhancement drug scandals since a 2015 report commissioned by the WADA found evidence of mass doping among Russian athletes. Many players were sidelined over the past two Olympics and Russia was stripped of its flag altogether at last year's winter games in Pyeongchang as punishment for State-sponsored doping cover-ups at the Sochi games in 2014. One of the conditions for the reinstatement of the Russian anti-doping agency, RUSADA, had been that Moscow would provide an authentic copy of the laboratory data. However, the punishment does still leave the door open for Russian athletes, who are clean, to compete at big international events without their flag for the coming years, something they did at the Pyeongchang Olympics. There have been



protests claiming that the WADA's decision is part of a broader Western attempt to hold Russia back from progressing in the international arena. How will Russia's absence affect the Tokyo Olympics and the World Cup in Qatar? If Russian athletes do not participate in the Olympics, then a lot of the tournament's sheen will disappear. After all, Russia is a sporting power to be reckoned with. The brilliant performances of its athletes often set new global standards in sports.

TK Nandanani
Kochi

and resources and lead to conflicts between communities.
Himangka Kaushik
New Delhi

Temporary relief

Sir — The trade war between the US and China, which has continued for almost two years now, led to uncertainty in the way global businesses would be conducted going forward.

Investors underwent sleepless nights as they kept navigating through an environment of slowing growth and increasingly volatile markets. While US President Donald Trump slapped punitive tariffs on Chinese imports, China, too, retaliated. As a result, the global economy suffered.

With the US and China now striking a "phase one" deal to de-escalate trade war, the world can genuinely take a breath. While this is just the first step, any sign that the trade war is cooling off needs to be cheered.

Sudhanshu
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Preserve nation's genetic wealth

We need to take our animal resources seriously and utilise them efficiently for economic and social uplift in rural areas



VK **BAHUGUNA**

India is endowed with huge genetic resources and is one of the 17 megadiversity nations of the world. Human-animal interactions date back to early civilisations and are not restricted to economic reasons. They have deeply impacted the cultural, spiritual and religious life of people. These genetic resources have played a critical role in our agrarian economy. In domesticated livestock and birds, the documented breeds are 30 of cattle, 10 of buffalo, 40 of sheep, 20 of goat, 18 of poultry, nine of camel and six of the horse.

World over, scientists have been seeking animal germplasm in their quest to utilise their genome for medicine and food, to feed growing populations and shore up the dwindling genetic base due to deforestation and climate change. There have been cases in India and Nepal when scientists from Western countries on a tourist visa were found trapping beetles.

We need to take our animal resources seriously and utilise them efficiently for economic and social uplift in rural areas. Traditionally, livestock had been the backbone of small farmers for nutrition, farm work as well as other activities. A whopping 21 million people are dependent on livestock for their livelihood and this sector contributes 4.11 per cent to the country's GDP. The share of animal products in agriculture is more than 25 per cent. Though the country is the largest producer of milk in the world, its production from indigenous cows is minimal. The world is tapping the genome of Indian cows for the healthy A2 milk as the A1 milk produced by foreign breeds like Holstein Friesian and Jersey is not very healthy because it contains Beta-Casein which causes hypertension, heart ailments and diabetes.

These foreign breeds are also prone to infections and need big investments for better milk output. In our quest to increase cow milk production in the past, we had indiscriminately used foreign breeds and neglected Indian cows. There was not much emphasis on research targeted at improving milk production from local breeds. However, countries like Brazil, Uruguay and New Zealand realised the genetic potential of Indian cows early on and have now emerged as world leaders in the production of A2 milk. The Gir cow and other Indian breeds in Brazil won the prize for the highest milk production in a 2014 contest. This germplasm was supplied by India to Brazil during the early and middle part of the last century.

Though the Indian Government has now taken steps for promotion indigenous cow breeds, the attempts are half-hearted at best and lack focus on integrated planning for the future. The Department of Animal Husbandry must focus on converting hybrid cows into fully domestic breeds in the next 15 years. India should initiate bilateral arrangements with Brazil and other countries to get the superior high-yielding Indian cow gene pool back to improve the productivity of bovines back home. Similarly, we should have a breeding programme with South Asian countries which are home to Indian breeds. For instance, both Pakistan and India have breeding tracks for Red Sindhi, Sahiwal and Tharparkar cows and joint programmes can be launched for enhancing milk production from these breeds and their conservation. This programme should be launched for buffaloes simultaneously as they also produce A2 milk.

Thankfully, now in India, people are working towards making world-class products from cow dung and urine and exporting them. There is also a foundation that is proving that cows can be economically reared for their entire life and is working with more than 75,000 Indian cows in 25 shelters. It offered help to Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand but is yet to get a response from the States.

There should be a plan for economic utilisation of cows when they become unfit to yield milk. At present they are let loose and stray cattle foraging on the streets and blocking traffic are a menace apart from being a big problem for Government agencies. It is well-known that the desi cow's urine and dung have great cultural, economic and medicinal value. This has been proved by several scientific studies. The Animal Welfare Board and the Kamdhenu Commission should be assigned the task of preparing projects for this, so that cows are treated well once their productive years are over. An integrated farmer-centric decentralised programme must be initiated for all other animals like horses, ducks, camels, donkeys, goats, sheep, pigs, quail and so on, with the sole aim to energise the earning potential of farmers. This will require sufficient funds, manpower and technological upgradation through research.

Stray dogs are yet another neglected species in the country. With people preferring foreign breeds, the local dogs are left to roam the streets and scavenge. There should be a complete ban on breeding pedigreed dogs and people should be encouraged to adopt strays. The management of animal wealth should get top priority if we have to bring prosperity in rural and tribal areas.

(The writer is a former civil servant)

MY NAME IS RAHUL GANDHI, NOT RAHUL SAVARKAR. I WILL NEVER APOLOGISE FOR SPEAKING THE TRUTH. BUT MODI MUST APOLOGISE FOR RUINING ECONOMY.

—CONGRESS LEADER

RAHUL GANDHI

POINT COUNTERPOINT



VIR SAVARKAR WAS A REAL PATRIOT. NO ONE BECOMES GANDHI AND A PATRIOT BY MERELY ADOPTING A SURNAME.

—UNION MINISTER

GIRIRAJ SINGH

India's beti not nirbhaya

The overall utilisation of Nirbhaya Funds allocated to States till date is just 11 per cent, which is only ₹252 cr of the ₹2,264 cr sanctioned for ensuring the safety of women



RAKESH **SENGER**

Seven years ago today, the country witnessed an act of monstrosity, when a 23-year-old woman was gang-raped, had a rod inserted in her private parts and was left to die on the roadside in Delhi. Despite battling hard for many days, she couldn't survive, and, to honour her courage, was named *Nirbhaya* (fearless).

Due to the ghastliness of the crime, the citizens of the country came out on the streets demanding justice for *Nirbhaya* and safety for all women. Candle marches and protests were held all over and many PILs were filed. The protests showed results and the then Government introduced the Nirbhaya Fund in the Budget for the Financial Year 2013-14, for the safety and protection of women.

Circa 2019. It has been seven years but the situation remains unchanged and women continue to be unsafe in public spaces. On November 27, a 27-year-old veterinarian was gang-raped and burnt to death, her charred body recovered the next day. This was followed by reports of a nine-year-old girl being raped and strangled to death in Karnataka, the rape and murder of a six-year-old in Rajasthan, a 37-year-old being gang-raped in Odisha, the Unnao rape victim being burnt to death by the accused out on bail and another girl being threatened with the same fate by her tormentors if she testified against them. These are just a few among many more similar heinous crimes against women reported in recent days in the country. These cases led to another outcry in the nation and once again got everyone thinking about the safety of women in their families.

Questions were once again raised in the Parliament on the utilisation of the Nirbhaya Fund, following which, the Minister of Women and Child Development, Smriti Irani, presented data in the Lok Sabha on its use.

The Nirbhaya Fund was created with a corpus of ₹1,000 crore in 2013 and this was increased to ₹3,600 crore in the last six years. Of this, ₹2,264 crore, which is 63 per cent of the corpus, was allocated to various States and Union Territories (UTs), by various departments, including the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Home Affairs, Justice and Road Transport and Highways.

To understand the ways the disbursed money had been used, the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation (KSCF) carried out an analysis of its utilisation by States/UTs. It revealed that despite an increase in crimes against women and children every year, the overall utilisation of Nirbhaya Funds allocated to States/UTs till date was a mere 11 per cent, which is only ₹252 crore of the ₹2,264 crore sanctioned. It was appalling to learn that none of the States/UTs could spend more than 50 per cent of the funds allotted till the financial year 2019. Shockingly, the BJP-ruled Maharashtra had failed to use a single rupee allotted to it, while Tripura and Tamil Nadu had just spent three per cent of the funds. Manipur had spent four per cent and Daman & Diu, West Bengal, Gujarat and Delhi spent five per cent of the total funds allocated to them. Further, out of the 36 States/UTs for which data is available, the utilisation in 18 States/UTs has been less than 15 per cent, which is a testimony of their utter disregard towards women's safe-



“ DESPITE AN INCREASE IN CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN EVERY YEAR, IT WAS APPALLING TO LEARN THAT NONE OF THE STATES/UTS COULD SPEND MORE THAN 50 PER CENT OF THE FUNDS ALLOTTED TILL THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019. SHOCKINGLY, MAHARASHTRA HAD FAILED TO USE A SINGLE RUPEE ALLOTTED TO IT, WHILE TRIPURA AND TAMIL NADU HAD JUST SPENT THREE PER CENT OF THE FUNDS. MANIPUR HAD SPENT FOUR PER CENT AND DAMAN & DIU, WEST BENGAL, GUJARAT AND DELHI SPENT FIVE PER CENT OF THE TOTAL FUNDS ALLOTTED TO THEM ”

ty. The analysis also revealed that States, including Telangana, Karnataka and Odisha, where the recent cases of crimes against women were reported, have spent only six per cent of the funds allocated to them. In Uttar Pradesh, where the Unnao rape victim was burnt to death, 79 per cent of the funds had remained unspent. The highest utilisation of funds, which was 50 per cent, was done by just two States, Mizoram and Uttarakhand, with just three States, Haryana, Nagaland and Chhattisgarh showing spending of more than 30 per cent of the funds allocated.

The report shows that crimes against women and children have been on a constant rise from 2015 to 2017. The total crimes against women reported in 2015 were 329,243 which increased to 338,954 in 2016 and 359,849 in 2017. Similarly, crimes against children went up from 94,172 to 106,958 and 129,032 in 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively. The latest annual *Crime in India, 2017* report issued by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) showed that in 2017, 32,559 cases of rape were reported, of which 17,382, (53 per cent) were those of minors. A review of the report from 2013 onwards shows that every year over 30,000 women and girls fall victim to the heinous crime.

The huge non-utilisation of the fund, especially set up for the protection of women, is a testimony to the complete lack of political will and utter disregard for the importance and seri-

ousness of the issue of women's safety. The Nirbhaya Fund was created for the implementation of projects and schemes exclusively designed for providing safety and security to women in public places. Some major schemes, where the States were supposed to use the funds, included the establishment of an Emergency Response Support System, Central Victim Compensation Fund, Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children, One Stop Centre Scheme, Mahila Police Volunteers, and Universalisation of Women Helpline Scheme.

However, meagre spending of the fund has resulted in the sub-optimal operationalisation of these schemes, with the country failing to achieve, even partially, the objectives for which it has been created. Over the years, there have been demands for setting up special courts, appointing more women police officers, installation of CCTV cameras and street lights in every nook and corner and taking other measures to make the streets safer for the fair sex.

There is a need for strengthening the judiciary through the appointment of more judges, public prosecutors and other officials for time-bound disposal of sexual assault cases. It is imperative to train police officers to ensure timely filing of strong chargesheets against criminals with a diligent investigation to make watertight cases, among other things.

While recently, some policy developments have taken place, including

creation of special courts for speedy disposal of cases related to Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act; further strengthening of the POCSO Act; launch of the fast track special courts (FTSC) scheme for expeditious disposal of cases of rape and the POCSO Act, 2019 (which calls for establishing 1,023 FTSCs), much more needs to be done.

The KSCF has also been working relentlessly for the last several years to raise awareness against these crimes, demanding that India be made a country safer for women and children. A major step taken was the launch of Bharat Yatra, a national march against sexual abuse of children in 2017 and the Rape Free India campaign before the Lok Sabha elections, earlier this year.

The recent incidents of rape and other crimes against women are a wake-up call for State Governments. There is a need for States/UTs to formulate schemes for the safety of women and girls and implement them on a war footing. They need to utilise the Nirbhaya Fund placed at their disposal, and if necessary, allocate a budget from their funds for implementation of these schemes.

The women and children of the country have remained unsafe for long. It is high time that steps are taken to make them feel secure as they go about their daily business, at home and outside.

(The author is Executive Director, Programmes, at Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation)

Unions allow students to let off steam

Clandestine extremist groups have been operating on Pakistani campuses in the vacuum created by the absence of unions



NADEEM **PARACHA**

The 'Students Solidarity March' on November 29 seems to have ruffled some feathers. It was being thought and even hoped by some that the march would draw nothing more than the kind of negligent attention candle vigils attract. But this wasn't the case and thousands of students from assorted universities and colleges poured out in almost every major city of Pakistan, mostly demanding the restoration of student unions.

Campus unions were first banned in 1984 by the General Zia dictatorship and then restored in 1989 by the first Benazir Bhutto regime. However, they were banned again in 1993, this time by the Supreme Court.

The manner in which the current Government has reacted to the recent march suggests that a lot more hap-

pened, or was perceived to have happened, than just a handful of students marching and raising slogans. Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted that he was in favour of restoring the student unions. But by the time the tweet was posted, his own Government was arresting certain prominent student leaders and booking them for sedition. Twitter trends such as #StudentsSolidarityMarch and #StudentsMarchExposed began to compete against each other. Some commentators on TV were hailing the march; some were cynically dismissing it as an "elitist" one-off; while others were warning that the restoration of unions would again prompt violence on campuses.

The latter is the most frequently used reason against the demand for restoring the unions. In fact, Khan, even while supporting restoration, pointed out that the unions, before they got banned in 1984, had become violent. This is the perception that has overshadowed the fact that, till the late 1970s, elected student unions were bastions of well-intentioned democratic activities.

One can claim that Khan, too, was drawing his information in this con-

text from the negative perception associated with student politics. But I would like to share here an incident in which Khan actually faced the violence he was talking about. During the Indian cricket team's tour of Pakistan in 1982-83, the fifth Test match of the series at Karachi's National Stadium was repeatedly invaded by student activists agitating against the growing Government curbs on campus politics in Karachi. Khan was bowling and some students charged towards an Indian batsman on strike. Others ran towards the batsman on the non-striker's end who was standing with Khan. Khan pulled out a stump from the ground and threatened to use it against the charging students. However, before he could do this, cops entered the fray and chased away the students.

Indeed, campus politics, especially in Karachi and Lahore, had become increasingly violent. This was mainly due to the brutalisation of politics and society by the Zia dictatorship and the steady introduction of sophisticated weapons in the hands of the youth. These weapons began to arrive almost immediately after Pakistan agreed to fight the US and Saudi Arabia's proxy battles against the Soviet Union and

Iran. During my research in 2015, findings showed that there were just three incidents of gunfire in the country's student politics between 1951 and 1977. The first was recorded at Karachi University in 1968, in which a student was arrested for possessing a pistol but one that was never actually fired. Then a pistol was used for aerial firing during a student union election at the same university in 1974. There were no casualties. A pistol was also fired during the union elections at Lahore's Punjab University in 1975 in which a student was killed.

However, between 1981 — the year Pakistan fully joined the so-called "Afghan jihad" — and 1984, all hell broke loose and dozens of students lost their lives in gunfights between opposing student outfits — both from the Left and the Right — and between students and the police. It is thus important to comprehend under what circumstances violence became a norm in student politics.

Second, ever since student activism played a major role in the movement against the Ayub regime in the late 1960s, Governments in Pakistan start to worry when students manage to exhibit an impressive show of strength.

What gets missed in this urge to keep a lid on student politics, is the important underlying fact behind student uprisings and violence. For example, most scholars who studied the global rise and fall of student activism between the 1960s and 1970s, point out that student violence and agitation mushroomed in the 1960s when universities and colleges failed to accommodate the large influx of middle-class students in that decade.

The students' anger towards the logistical and administrative problems caused by this influx boiled over and was expressed through political action. Student activism receded when, in the 1970s, colleges and universities (in the West) managed to better accommodate the students.

The same thing happened in Pakistan in the 1960s. Pakistani universities and colleges also began to receive a large-scale influx of students. Then, in the 1990s, when most students began to join private educational institutions, politicised student unions fell out of favour. But as we are now seeing, this was a stopgap arrangement.

No one is talking about the damning 2009 and 2013 reports prepared by the British Council in Pakistan. The

reports speak about a growing youth bulge in the country, with over 60 per cent of the country's population being under the age of 30.

The reports' findings warn that disillusionment among the youth would continue to grow due to political and economic instability, and this might lead many young people to adopt extreme measures.

We have already seen the growth of incidents in which educated young people have been involved in committing crimes or joining extremist organisations. The pouring out on to the streets of students on November 29 can also be explained and seen in this context.

In fact, this should actually encourage the Government to restore the unions. Because unions can once again become conduits for the students to express their aspirations and concerns in a democratic manner, rather than become despondent, cynical and desperate; or worse, join clandestine extremist groups which, ever since the late 1990s, have been surreptitiously operating on campuses in the vacuum created by the absence of student unions.

(Courtesy: Dawn)



FOREIGN EYE



WE SHOULD ALL BE GRETA

Amid protests, clashes and expulsion of activists, the COP25 wound up recently, once again producing more promises and little political will that could save the planet for our children and generations to come. To make measures work, every one of us should be a Greta Thunberg. Every head of State or Government should be a Greta. By avoiding the use of plastic as much as possible, we can start this change from our homes.

(Courtesy: Daily Mirror)

CAPSULE

EaseMyTrip files Rs 510-cr IPO papers with Sebi

NEW DELHI: Online travel company EaseMyTrip has filed draft papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to float a Rs 510 crore initial public offering. Through the IPO, company's founders Nishant Pitti and Rikant Pitti will each sell shares to the tune of Rs 255 crore through offer-for-sale mechanism, according to draft papers filed with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). EaseMyTrip.com is operated by Easy Trip Planners Private Ltd. The city-based company said the object of the public issue is to achieve the benefits of listing the equity shares on stock exchanges. "Our company expects that listing of the equity shares will enhance our visibility and brand and provide liquidity to its existing shareholders," it added. The company's issue is being managed by Axis Capital and JM Financial.

Trade body urges Centre to take steps to revive J-K biz

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Sunday asked the Centre to take steps for revival of businesses in Kashmir, saying the valley's economy has suffered losses to the tune of Rs 15,000 crore due to disturbances in the wake of abrogation of Article 370 in on August 5. KCCI president Sheikh Ashiq Hussain, who was among the several trade bodies' heads who met Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, in Jammu, also urged the government to restore interest services to businesses in Kashmir. "I informed the minister about the estimated losses which are to the tune of Rs 15,000 crore over the last four months," Hussain told PTI after the meeting. He said the KCCI has prepared a report on business and job losses caused by the disturbances after the Centre revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status and divided into two union territories.

PFS gets Rs 145 cr from resolution of stressed account

New Delhi: PTC India Financial Services (PFS) has received Rs 145 crore as part of resolution of its stressed loan account in the thermal power segment. The long-term infrastructure financing company said it has recovered Rs 145 crore from Prayagraj Power Generation Company Ltd (PPGCL). PPGCL owns and operates a 1,980 MW (3X660 MW) coal-based thermal power project in Uttar Pradesh and had become a non-performing asset due to financial and operational stresses. PFS is also expected to receive Rs 7 crore as per agreement, PFS said in a statement on Sunday. This development shall augment the liquidity position of PFS and also result in a reduction of its stressed assets portfolio. "Going forward, it shall also have a positive bearing on the yields and spread of PFS as this account was reflected in the assets but not yielding any income," it said.

INDUSTRY BODIES, FARMER ORGANISATIONS AND ECONOMISTS

FM to hold pre-Budget talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Beginning the customary pre-Budget consultation exercise from Monday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will seek inputs from various stakeholders including industry bodies, farmer organisations and economists for reviving consumption and boosting growth.

Sitharaman is likely to present her second Budget for the Modi 2.0 government in Parliament on February 1.

Sources said the pre-Budget consultations starting Monday will last till December 23.

They said the main focus of the Budget this time will be on boosting economic growth, which slowed to an over six-year low of 4.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2019-20.

As per the finance ministry, Sitharaman will meet stakeholder groups of 'New Economy: Start-ups, Fintech and Digital Sector' on Monday morning, and financial sector and capital market represen-



Industry bodies have demanded that income up to Rs 5 lakh should be exempt from tax for individual taxpayers from the current Rs 2.5 lakh to spur demand for goods and services

tatives later in the day.

Industry sources said the government has sought their views on matters like ease of doing business, regulatory environment impacting private investment, export competitiveness, role of state (delayed payments, contract enforce-

ment), and revival of private investment and growth, among others.

The minister is likely to meet industry chambers on December 19.

With the government already effecting significant cut in corporate taxes, expecta-

tions are high that it would announce some relief for the salaried class by making changes in the personal income tax structure.

Industry bodies have demanded that income up to Rs 5 lakh should be exempt from tax for individual taxpayers from the current Rs 2.5 lakh to spur demand for goods and services.

They are also demanding hiking the overall deduction limit to at least Rs 3 lakh (from the current Rs 1.5 lakh under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act) to boost investments and increase tax savings for individual taxpayers.

The finance ministry has already started the Budget preparation exercise, with different ministries and departments making expenditure projections.

The Budget will be keenly watched by market participants for numbers on key macroeconomic indicators like fiscal deficit.

Air India mulls launching Mumbai-London service

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Disinvestment-bound national carrier Air India is mulling launching a flight service to London Stansted from the country's financial capital, a senior airline official said.

Air India currently operates a flight to Stansted from Amritsar. It also has operations to London Heathrow from Mumbai.

British Airways and Virgin Atlantic are the two other airlines flying to London from Mumbai.

Air passenger traffic on Mumbai-London route has spiked 25 per cent in the last five years. It is expected to go up by 27 per cent this fiscal following the resumption of services on the route by Virgin Atlantic in October, despite the grounding of Jet Airways which used to have three daily flights to London Heathrow from the city.

"There is a need for more traffic to London region. However, due to the slot constraint issues at the London Heathrow, we are not able to add new flights on the Mumbai-London route.



British Airways and Virgin Atlantic are the two other airlines flying to London from Mumbai

"There are options to go to London Stansted from Mumbai. We are evaluating this route," Air India Regional Director Ravi Bodade told reporters on Saturday during a media tour of the airline's various facilities, including its Maintenance, Repair and overhaul (MRO) facility and the iconic Air India Tower.

Air India at present has the right to operate 42 flights per week to London.

Bodade said currently the airline is carrying out the route feasibility study such as the passenger traffic, aircraft type and frequency of operations, among others.

"We will take a decision on this issue very soon," he said, adding the route may commence operations within the winter schedule itself. The winter schedule, which is effective from October 27, will last till March 28, 2020.

He also said Air India may deploy its flagship Boeing 787 Dreamliner to operate the service on the route under consideration.

Air India CMD doubts turnaround possibility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the central government is planning to invite bids for Air India soon, its CMD said on Saturday that expecting a radical improvement in the airline bordering on a turnaround is an impractical thought "in this environment of disinvestment". In a Facebook post, Air India Chairman and Managing Director Ashwani Lohani said, "Air India needs to survive till it is sold."

"I wonder why it is so difficult for this appreciation to sink in and also that in this environment of disinvestment, expecting a radical improvement bordering on a turnaround is an impractical thought. That output can be given sans inputs is a grossly impractical thought," he added.

Air India's net loss in 2018-19 was around Rs 8,556 crore.

Lohani said: "Air Indians are indeed putting in their best even at this critical juncture and that is very very appreciable."

JNTO eyes 16% jump in Indian tourists visiting Japan in 2019

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Japan National Tourism Organisation has pegged the number of tourists visiting Tokyo from India to grow by 16 per cent this year, a top official said.

According to JNTO, Director Aya Hashimoto, Japan witnessed 1,54,029 Indian travellers visiting the country in 2018.

"Japan already witnessed a 14.4 per cent rise in January to October 2019 to 1,49,300 Indian visitors," he told PTI.

To a query, he said the number of visitors were more from major metros like New Delhi, Mumbai.

"This year we are expecting a growth of 16 per cent compared to travellers visited last year", he said.

Asked about those cities in Japan that are being promoted among Indian travellers, he said, the 'Golden Route' is a popular choice among tourists as it covers major cities like



Japan already witnessed a 14.4 per cent rise in January to October 2019 to 1,49,300 Indian visitors," he told PTI

Tokyo, Hakone, Nara, Osaka, Kyoto and Hiroshima. "A traveller must visit these cities while in Japan.

Hence, it is termed as Golden Route", he said, adding

the best time to tour Japan was in April-May or October and November.

He said another destination 'Hokkaido' was getting popular among Indian tourists as it offers powder snow and various snow activities like skiing and snowboarding.

As part of promoting tourism among the Indian travellers, JNTO organised Japan tourism expo in Chennai and have planned to conduct similar events in Bengaluru in February and in New Delhi before March 2020.

Tata Steel BSL bags award for energy conservation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Tata Steel BSL said on Sunday that it has been honoured by the Odisha government for taking effective initiatives to conserve energy in its plant located at Narendrapur in Odisha's Dhenkanal district.

The Odisha State Energy Conservation Award 2019 award was given to the company during the National Energy Conservation Day Celebration 2019 here on Saturday, a company statement said.

The award was in the category of captive power plant above 100 MW, it said.

On behalf of the company, Saroj Kumar Banerjee, Chief of Environment, Tata Steel BSL received the award from Odisha's Energy Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra.

"We are humbled to be recognised with this prestigious award for our initiatives



taken in the direction of conserving energy," Banerjee said while speaking at the function. "While carrying out the existing projects on energy conservation, we are exploring new ways and technologies to raise the bar and push for industry benchmarks in the field," he added.

The company got the recognition for improving energy conservation performance by reducing carbon footprint, fossil fuel consumption, generating more power through waste heat recovery and implementing energy efficiency projects, the company statement said.

China suspends planned tariffs on US goods

PNS ■ BEIJING

Beijing suspended additional tariffs on US products that had been due to kick in on Sunday, after Washington and Beijing announced a major thaw in their trade war Friday. China will suspend the planned addition of 10 percent and 5 percent tariffs on some US imports, and "continue to suspend additional tariffs on US-made autos and spare parts", China's finance ministry announced Sunday.

The move follows US President Trump's cancellation of new tariffs on Chinese products as part of a "phase one" trade deal.

China's commerce ministry said on Friday it had agreed with the US a mini-deal that includes a progressive rollback of tariffs and the protection of intellectual property rights.

Discoms' outstanding dues to power gencons rise 48 pc to Rs 81,010 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power producers' total outstanding dues owed by distribution companies rose around 48 per cent to Rs 81,010 crore in October 2019 over the same month last year, reflecting stress in the sector.

Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total of Rs 54,654 crore to power generation companies in October 2018, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

The portal was launched in



May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions between generators and discoms.

In October this year, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 60 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 67,143

Power producers give 60 days to discoms for paying bills for the supply of electricity

crore as against Rs 39,338 crore in the same month last year.

Power producers give 60 days to discoms for paying bills for the supply of electricity. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

In order to give relief to

power generation companies (gencons), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1. Under this mechanism, discoms are required to open letters of credit for getting power supply.

According to the latest data on the portal, outstanding dues in October has decreased over the preceding month. In September 2019, total outstanding dues on discoms stood at Rs 82,548 crore.

However, the overdue amount in October has increased over preceding month of September. The total overdue amount was Rs 65,155 crore in September.

Housing sales may rise marginally by 4 pc in 2019: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Housing sales are estimated to rise by mere 4 per cent to 2.58 lakh units across seven major cities during this calendar year on subdued demand because of liquidity crunch and overall economic slowdown, according to property brokerage firm Anarock.

"Indian real estate was devoid of any appreciable forward momentum in 2019. Dwindling consumption, lacklustre investment appetite and the global slowdown overshadowed all possibilities for growth," Anarock Property Consultants Chairman Anuj Puri said.

India's GDP growth rate slumped to a six-year low of 4.5 per cent in Q2 FY20.

In its yearly round-up for the real estate sector, Anarock



said that collectively, all four quarters of 2019 are likely to see housing sales of 2,58,410 units (assuming 56,200 units in Q4 2019) as against 2,48,300 units sold in entire 2018.

Sales were better in the first half of this year but demand fell in the third quarter.

Anarock tracks seven major cities - Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), National

Capital Region (NCR), Bengaluru, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai and Kolkata.

"The real estate sector's performance - a reliable barometer of India's overall economic health - painfully reflected the macro-economic state of affairs. The liquidity crisis did not relent and denied any 'real' growth during the year," Puri said.

"Multiple developers fell off the grid while others still struggle to stay viable. However, strong players with healthy balance sheets - in many cases diversified beyond real estate - sailed through 2019 and recorded decent housing sales and revenue growth," he added.

For the housing sector, 2019 was a non-event in terms of sales growth and investor interest.

CG POWER IMBROGLIO

Thapar denies fund misuse cites board approvals

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Citing regular board approvals for various inter-corporate loans, former CG Power Industrial Solutions' non-executive chairman Gautam Thapar has refuted allegations of fund misuse amid alleged governance lapses coming under the regulatory scanner, according to documents submitted by him to the government.

In a 36-page submission to the corporate affairs ministry early November, Thapar, who was sacked in a boardroom coup in the wee hours of August 30, has provided documents on various issues, including inter-corporate loans, minutes of board meetings and loans from lenders like Standard Chartered Singapore and Yes Bank.

CG Power board sacked



Gautam Thapar

Thapar after an audit report by Vaish Associates, which itself is based on as many as 23 disclaimers, claimed that Thapar swindled Rs 3,000 crore from CG Power.

Markets regulator Sebi banned Thapar and entities associated with him for three years, following which he moved the Securities Appellate Tribunal, which has asked the



Markets regulator Sebi banned Thapar and entities associated with him for three years, following which he moved the Securities Appellate Tribunal, which has asked the company to provide relevant documents to him

company to provide relevant documents to him.

The Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) has also started a probe against

CG Power and 15 group entities. The ministry has moved NCLT Mumbai seeking to restate the books of accounts of CG Power from FY16. An

order is expected on Monday.

The documents, seen by PTI, show how Standard Chartered Singapore extended a USD 44-million line to CG Singapore in February 14, 2018. The entire money was then paid to CG International Netherlands through another group entity AIA and Avantha. The same amount was fully transferred back to CG International Netherlands on the very same day.

Later, the company in turn paid back the entire amount to StanC Singapore, thus making the account standard, show the documents.

While a major allegation revolves around funds moving in and out of CG Power and group entities, Thapar has claimed that such a route was taken following suggestions from lenders since CG Power was facing liquidity issues.

TEACHER WHO GOES THE EXTRA MILE

A teacher is at the forefront of education for children from a young age. They play a key role in guiding students to achieve new heights. But a few teachers go out of the way to ensure that their kids are not left behind due to financial or other difficulties. Inspired by late Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, former president of India, Suryapet-based government school

teacher Raghu Pasupuleti is helping poor students pursue higher studies by helping them financially, academically and by improving the infrastructure of various government schools.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Raghu says, "Being a government school teacher, I have seen many students who are so poor that they cannot even afford to buy bags or stationary. I started helping them in 2012 by providing them with the basic necessities needed to pursue their studies. I am also helping students choose their favourite careers by guiding them."

Raghu also conducts special classes for Class X students of government school and provides them with snacks in between. He also talks to the parents to make them understand the importance of education for their children. People have heard of ice bucket and rice bucket challenges. But

Raghu took it to a whole new level by starting the My Books Bucket Challenge.

Explaining the concept of My Books Bucket Challenge, Raghu shares, "I want many people to join my cause. To inspire them, I started My Books Bucket Challenge in 2017, wherein people must buy the basic necessities for a school student and put those in the bucket. Later, they can donate it and challenge their friends by posting it on social media. This initiative received tremendous response and many people accepted my challenge."

Inspired by Raghu's service towards the underprivileged kids, his colleagues too have joined him and contribute towards improving the facilities at various government schools. Raghu shares, "I'm adopting poor students who have completed Class X to help them complete their higher studies. My colleagues also donate some amount

every month towards this. We also explain about hygiene issues to girls and distribute pads in many govt schools."

For his services Raghu was awarded Sarvepalli Radhakrishna award in 2018, Shivaji Seva Ratna award, Karamveer Chakra Award and more. Apart from helping students, Raghu also conducts programmes about the dangers of using plastic, benefits of eco-friendly Ganesh idols and planting trees, through his foundation Aashaya.

Raghu adds, "I also explain about the importance of saving our environment and reducing plastic usage. I tell them to use cloth bags for buying vegetables and boxes to carry meat. I also participate in planting trees to inspire students to do more. My main aim is to make government schools on par with private schools in all segments."

Suryapet-based government school teacher Raghu Pasupuleti is helping poor students by providing for their basic needs, giving them career guidance and conducting social activities, finds V SATEESH REDDY



Art has always been used as a form of expressing one's emotion and/or portraying life in a way not possible using written language. Sireesha Srinivas has done just that

'REMINISCING' paintings for a cause

Rowing their way to Pattaya

Reminiscences (Kashmir on Canvas), an art exhibition is being hosted by Sireesha Srinivas whose cause is to handover the proceeds to the families of martyrs of J&K and Telangana police.

Sireesha, wife of Hyderabad-based IPS officer Dr B. Srinivas, ADG, J&K, has spent over two decades in Kashmir and has witnessed the tumultuous changes in the Valley firsthand. Her husband's postings enabled her to stay in the most beautiful places like Kargil and Kupwara and capture its beauty. She put up her first solo exhibition in the Hungarian International Cultural Centre in New Delhi and there has been no looking back since.

This exhibition has paintings of landscapes, figuratives, still life, drawings and abstract works with Kashmir.

According to Sireesha, these proceeds will be given to families of the martyrs of J&K and Telangana Police by Telangana Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan to Mahender Reddy, IPS, DGP, Telangana and to Dr B. Srinivas, Adtl DG, J&K.

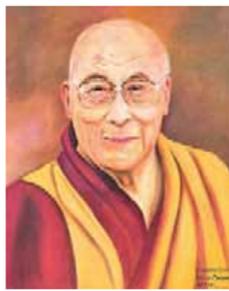
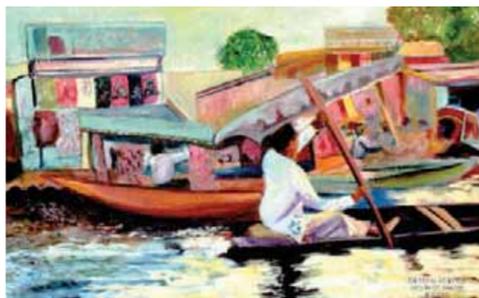
Sireesha made her foray into the art as an amateur self-taught artist as there has been a little premium for formal training in art in Kashmir and the security



concerns for her have only limited the opportunities, if any, to pursue art curriculum. She does not, however, find the lack of a curricular orientation as limiting factor since the passion for her is to portray the picturesque beauty in front of her as she sees it in its original form. It is the reminiscences of the memorable time that is being spent amidst the magical moun-

tains that Sireesha expresses in her art with great zest and finesse.

Capturing nature's landscapes on canvas with impeccable ease and the serious attention to the finer details reflects her signature style. She dabbles with colours in oil and acrylics with poise and the serenity in her paintings is in synchrony and symphony with nature. The



flora, fauna and the people of Kashmir have become a part of her artistic drama that unfolds on the canvass. The Saffron flowers, the Shikaras, the Lambs and the Snow Peaks are the real emotive elements that come together in her paintings in a lyrical quality.

"It was during one of the art exhibitions that Dr Karan Singh, the erstwhile Maharaja



of Jammu and Kashmir, found a great rhythm in my portrait work. Drawing inspiration from a couple of portraits work, a special edition of South Indian Saints have been captured on canvas, thanks to the encouragement from my friends and well-wishers. The proposed Art Exhibition has a collection of 20 portraits including a dozen of Saints from South



The proposed Art Exhibition has a collection of 20 portraits including a dozen of Saints from South India besides men of spiritual benevolence. It will also portray a dozen Sufi Shrines of Kashmir and over 80 landscapes of Kashmir.

India besides men of spiritual benevolence. The art exhibition shall continue till tomorrow. It will also portray a dozen Sufi Shrines of Kashmir and over 80 landscapes of Kashmir. The exhibition would, therefore, be an amalgam of Saints from South, Shrines from Srinagar and nature's delight from Kashmir," she says. — PNS

Hyderabad is not new to rowing as a sport/recreation thanks to the Rowing Club based in the city. The club has been a part of many competitions and has won accolades. The rowing club is however in the news now.

The Hyderabad Rowing Club has been asked to take part in the prestigious Asian Master Rowing Regatta in Pattaya, Thailand.

The event will be held on the Mab-Pa Chan reservoir in Pattaya from December 18 to 22. The competition is expected to attract entries from 52 Asian countries with over 700 elite rowers taking part in the Junior and Masters' categories.

The Hyderabad Rowing Club will be represented by six rowers and the average age of these Masters is 47.

This is the first ever team of Masters who are representing Hyderabad at a global platform. The team trains under chief national coach and Dronacharya Awardee Ismail Baig along with guidance from other

coaches from the Telangana Rowing Association.

Baskaran A Reddy is the leading member of the four-rowers sweep crew and is an entrepreneur who owns an IT Company. He is partnered by Thomas Govathoti, who is a senior investment banker, Gadi Chandrasekhar Reddy, an industrialist and Siva Kishore Kosaraju, owner of an SME company. A separate two-member team represented by Dr S.A. H. Adil, a corporate lawyer and S. Satyakanth, a businessman, will be competing in the Double Scull category. The team will depart to Bangkok on December 16th from Hyderabad with a fighting spirit and a never say die attitude. — PNS

THE HYDERABAD ROWING CLUB WILL BE REPRESENTED BY SIX ROWERS AND THE AVERAGE AGE OF THESE MASTERS IS 47





Jamaica's Toni-Ann Singh crowned Miss World, India's Suman Rao is 2nd runner up

The finale of the 2019 Miss World beauty contest came to an end with Miss Jamaica Toni-Ann Singh claiming the coveted title at a glitzy ceremony in London, where India's Suman Rao bagged the second runner up spot. Singh is a 23-year-old Psychology and Women's Studies graduate from the Florida state university. She was crowned Miss World 2019 on Saturday. While Suman Rao is a 20-year-old from Rajasthan, who is pursuing Chartered Accountancy. She won the Miss India 2019 contest in June. Toni-Ann Singh, who is born to an Indo-

Caribbean father, Bradshaw Singh, and African-Caribbean mother Jahrine Bailey, was presented the crown by Vanessa Ponce, the last year's Miss World winner from Mexico at the event televised live globally. She is the fourth Jamaican contestant to be crowned Miss World. After winning the title, she took to social media to thank everyone. "To that little girl in St. Thomas, Jamaica and all the girls around the world — please believe in yourself. Please know that you are worthy and capable of achieving your dreams. This crown is not mine but yours. You have a PURPOSE," she tweeted.



JUSTIN BIEBER, HAILEY BALDWIN host charity art event

Singer Justin Bieber and his wife Hailey Baldwin hosted a charity event with LIFT Los Angeles and Inner-City Arts to promote art education in underprivileged communities. The event was attended by celebrities like Kylie and Kris Jenner and Jaden Smith. Kylie even took the mic to perform a rendition of her

viral tune *Rise and shine*. Bieber wore a teal coloured blue oversized hoodie from his Drew line. He teamed the look with pyjama looking trousers that had a black and white plaid style print. The singer completed his ensemble with tan coloured platform sneakers and a beanie of the same colour, reports dailymail.co.uk.

Bieber also performed some of his hits a capella style. He sang *Sorry, Love yourself* and let Jaden do their rendition of their 2010 track, *Never say never*. As the son of Will Smith completed his rap, good friend Kylie was seen standing in the front and proudly recording the performance on her phone.



Scarlett jokes about engagement to Colin Jost

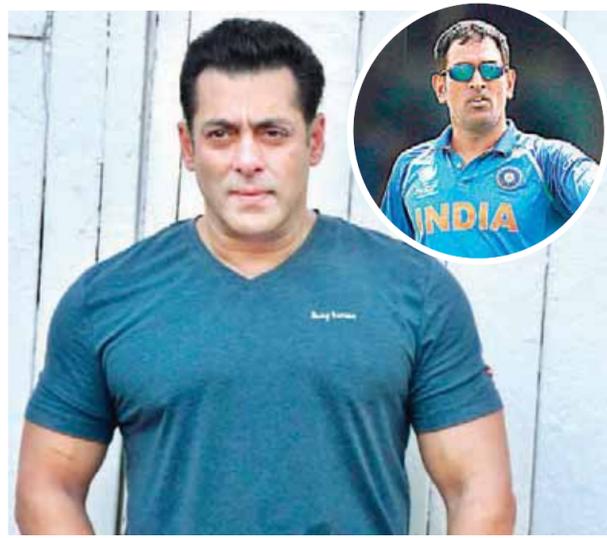
Actress Scarlett Johansson poked fun at her engagement to comedian Colin Jost during a Marvel-themed *Saturday Night Live* monologue. Johansson joked about there not being a lot of pressure being a host, even if the show ends up being bad, reports etonline.com. "What are they going to do? Fire my fiance?" Johansson said. "Oh no, what are we going to do without his paycheck?" The monologue side-tracked into bizarrely dated territory when several cast members are turned to dust with a Thanos-like snap. She later gushed about how, on the SNL stage, is where she met the "love of my life". She has hosted the show six times.



For Salman Dhoni is "Dabangg player"

Superstar Salman Khan's favourite cricketer is none other than Mahendra Singh Dhoni. On Star Sports' pre-show *Nerolac Cricket Live*, Salman spoke about his bond with batsman Kedar Jadhav and how much he admires the "dabangg" style of the former India captain Dhoni. "I personally know Kedar Jadhav...Also, my favourite cricketer is MS Dhoni. He is a Dabangg player," Salman said. Salman was accompanied by his co-star Kiccha Sudeep, who is plying

villain in the third instalment of the *Dabangg* series. "My favourite player is the one who plays well on that day. But what we see as fans is the respect each player has towards each other," Sudeep said. "We can visibly see the players stand and cheer for the achievements of their teammates - with such a positive attitude, we can freely have our favourites. My all time favourite has to be Anil Kumble sir, and I also like Rohit Sharma," Sudeep added. Salman and Sudeep will be seen in *Dabangg 3*, which is scheduled to release on December 20.



FUN TIME

ARCHIE

Panel 1: Archie: "UGH! IF IT'S TUESDAY, IT MUST BE MR. BEAZLY'S REFRIGERATOR!" Betty: "I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE KEEPS MAKING THE STUFF!"
Panel 2: Archie: "NOBODY LIKES IT!" Betty: "I CAN'T EVEN LOOK AT IT!" Archie: "IT'S EVEN WORSE FOR ME!"
Panel 3: Archie: "I HAD SECONDS!" Betty: "HEAVENLY SPOONS LIKE THAT BACKWARD!"

CALVIN AND HOBBS

Panel 1: Calvin: "...AND SO, THE PLANET MERCURY IS A HOT AND BARREN WORLD, THE CLOSEST TO OUR SUN."
Panel 2: Hobbes: "AND TO TELL US ABOUT THE MYTHOLOGY OF MERCURY, HERE'S MY PARTNER, CALVIN."
Panel 3: Calvin: "THANK YOU, THANK YOU! HEY, WHAT A CROWD! YOU LOOK GREAT THIS MORNING... REALLY, I MEAN THAT! GO ON, GIVE YOURSELVES A HAND!"
Panel 4: Calvin: "YOU KNOW, A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE LIBRARY YESTERDAY... THIS ISN'T MY FAULT, MISS NORMWOOD!"

GARFIELD

Panel 1: Garfield: "A TREE JUST FELL ON MY CAR!"
Panel 2: Jon: "WHAT SHOULD I DO?" Garfield: "JON! JON! HERE'S WHAT YOU DO..."
Panel 3: Garfield: "WALK TO THE STORE TO BUY MY FOOD"

REALITY CHECK

Panel 1: Lulu: "LULU SAID THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS IS TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT..."
Panel 2: Alex: "HEY, GIRL, CALL BOO-GIRLSUX."
Panel 3: Alex: "HEY, ALOKA, FIND THE NEAREST STORE TO RETURN AN OUCH."
Panel 4: Alex: "HEY, GIRL, TRANSLATE 'SIRI'S VOICE SOUNDS LIKE A SHIH TZU BARFING' INTO ANY LANGUAGE."
Panel 5: Alex: "HEY, ALOKA, GO DELETE YOURSELF."
Caption: YOUR TECH WHEN YOU'RE NOT AROUND

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	
6			7		8
9			10		
12	13		14	15	
17			16		
19					

NANCY

Panel 1: Nancy: "It's been a long time since I've been up this hill, and sat on Three Rocks by this tree..."
Panel 2: Nancy: "But, this is where I'd like to go to get close to the notices."
Panel 3: Nancy: "I don't ask for nothin'. I just thank Him. Then, I listen, and be still."

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- This type of word describes something
- Circular
- A boat you paddle along
- A throbbing pain
- The USA's coldest state
- Assistant
- A round mark
- Move in time to music
- A pale purple colour
- Smashed into small pieces

DOWN

- Uncooked bread
- Comes to a finish
- Use a feather to make someone laugh
- A planet

SOLUTION

W	H	I	S	K	E	R	S	
A	O	G	I	O	I			
L	E	M	O	N	C	A	B	I
U	E	M	O	K	I	S		
L	I	N	E	R	K	N	O	I
N	O	O	N					
C	L	E	R	E	T			
U	N	C	L	E	M	E	D	A
M	U	A	E	D				
P	R	O	P	E	R	T		

GINGER MEGGS

Panel 1: Meggs: "WHY DO THEY CALL IT BOATING?"
Panel 2: Meggs: "THEY DON'T CALL GETTING IN A CAR 'CAR-ING', OR OPERATING A PLANE 'PLANE-ING'!"
Panel 3: Meggs: "AND YET, THE WORD FOR BEING... BORE..."

JEETHU JOSEPH respects audience intelligence: **KARTHI**

According to Karthi, it took the script of Rensil D'Silva, screenplay writer of *Rang De Basanti* and director of *Kurbaan*, starring Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor, to get him and Jyotika come together for *Donga*, reports **NAGARAJ GOUD**

Karthi has commenced shooting for Mani Ratnam's costume drama *Ponniyin Selvan* last week in Thailand but with his *Donga* set to battle it out with other Telugu biggies like *Ruler* and *Prathiroju Pandage* this Friday at the box-office, he had to take permission from the master filmmaker to promote the film in Hyderabad on Sunday. The expectations surrounding *Donga* are high, courtesy the actor's recent release, *Khaidi*, doing phenomenally well in the Telugu states. The fact that it also marks him teaming up with sister-in-law Jyotika for the first time meant that there's extra zip around it. The actor points out it took the script of Rensil D'Silva, screenplay writer of *Rang De Basanti* and director of *Kurbaan*, starring Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor, to get him and Jyotika come together. "He shared a one-line script. I liked it. He followed it up by giving two-page narration, which was equally good. I liked the sister role in it. *Vadina*

too gave her thumbs-up later. We were given a two-hour narration afterwards. The emotions in it stirred us up," Karthi begins. Next stop for him was to get a right director to steer the project. The film's producers proposed the name of *Drishyam* director Jeethu Joseph as the script was right up in his alley. "He liked the script and with me and *Vadina* attached to star in it, he was keener to direct. My confidence on the film's script got a shot in the arm after he agreed to direct," Karthi maintains, adding that Jeethu and Rensil later worked on the screenplay for seven months. "The project has been in the development for more than two years. It's that we had to wait for Jeethu to get freed from his other commitments." Acting with Jyotika, he says, was more like an extension of conversations at home. "On-sets experience with *Vadina* wasn't different to that of usual dinner table conversations because the film's scenes were casual in nature. In the film, we

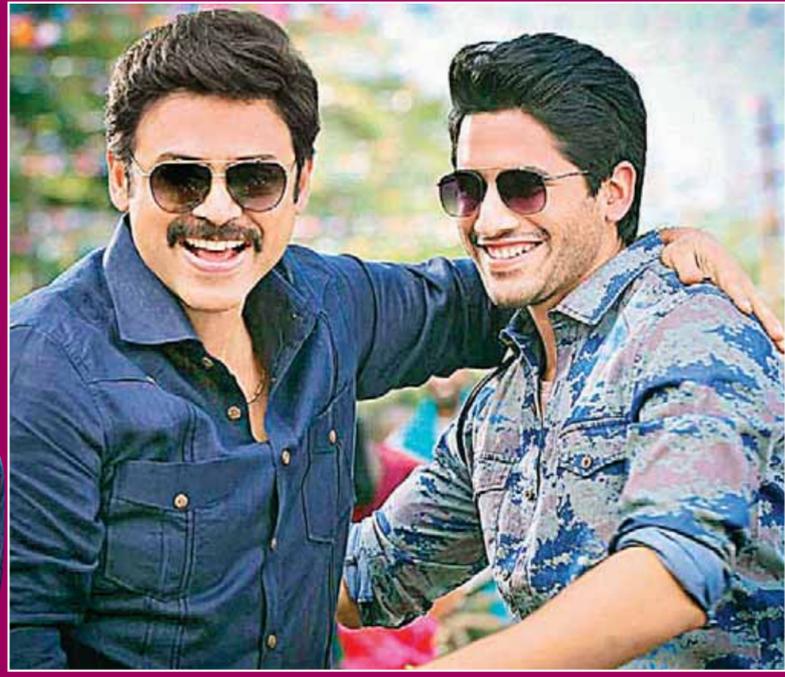
initially don't see eye-to-eye but later become friends. *Vadina* is very good with her Tamil now and she took the dialogues one month prior to the shoot and came thoroughly prepared. She is a single take artiste and when you perform with her and Satyaraj, who plays our father, your acting improves further. In fact, if Satyaraj garu didn't agree to take up the project, I was sure that the film shouldn't be made. But we were glad that he accepted. He is playing a role with multiple shades," he states. He cherishes the experience of being directed by Jeethu. He insists that he had an Alfred Hitchcock image of Jeethu because of the experience the director commands, having directed Mohanlal, Kamal Haasan and Dileep. But it was broken on the first day on sets. "The first sentence that came out from him was, 'A film is a work of a team and we should work together to make a good film'. Our days on sets used to start with us discussing a scene, its pluses and minuses, and how we could improve it, for

one hour. We would shoot the scene in flat two hours. He was super quick with his work. It didn't seem like I was working with a senior director. It looked like I was working with a college mate. Also, as a filmmaker he respects audience intelligence a lot. He believes in justifying the film's twist with a right logic," Karthi explains. Continuing in the same vein, he adds, "It's for the first time I completed a film in a start-to-finish schedule of 65 days. No actors' dates were wasted as the pre-production went on for almost a year. Even if rain threatened to disrupt shoot outdoors, alternate arrangements for an indoor scene were in place. It was a new experience altogether."

MY CONFIDENCE ON THE FILM'S SCRIPT GOT A SHOT IN THE ARM AFTER JEETHU AGREED TO DIRECT, SAYS KARTHI

Venky Mama takes an impressive start

Victory Venkatesh and Naga Chaitanya-starrer *Venky Mama*, directed by Bobby, has got off to a flier at the ticket counters, notwithstanding the reviews. After minting close to Rs 8 crore share on day one from all areas and emerging as Venkatesh's biggest opener, the film managed to keep its momentum going into the second day as well, registering Rs 7 crore share. The total tally is somewhere Rs 15.20 crore share. "The second day hold is nearly 90 per cent of day one. The overall number is excellent bearing in mind the pretty average reviews the film got. The *mama-alludu* combination truly clicked. Sunday numbers will be better than Saturday but Monday will determine where the film will head," says a trade observer. Film's producer Suresh Babu and TG Vishwa Prasad are keen on continuing with the promotions going into the New Year.



Ruler fulfilled my wish to do a film on farmers: **BALAYYA**

Actor Nandamuri Balakrishna, who is awaiting the release of *Ruler* this Friday, said the film highlights about the greatness of farming community. "I wanted to do film on farmers since long. I even met farmers for film *Rythu* (with Krishna Vamsi) but it couldn't go to sets. *Ruler* has a farmer angle to it and it fulfilled my dream. In fact, it wasn't the story that we first decided to make. We wanted to do another script but it couldn't happen. Later, I rang director Paruchuri Murali to know if he has a story. I'm spontaneous with my decisions and when he narrated the story to me, I've

immediately decided that it'd be my next film. Murali has even penned some powerful lines on the importance of farmers," Balayya said. He was speaking at a promotional event of the film in Visakhapatnam over the weekend. He further added that it was he who picked C Kalyan as the producer. This is his second film with the producer after *Jai Simha* (2018), which was a successful venture. "I can't mingle with everyone. I shared a good bond with him on the sets of *Jai Simha* and decided to repeat him for this film. Working in tandem with director KS Ravikummar, he completed the film in four months. I didn't want him to shoot some portions in Bangkok asking him to prefer Hyderabad but he was keen on a foreign backdrop," Balakrishna informed.

"I WANTED TO DO FILM ON FARMERS SINCE LONG. I EVEN MET FARMERS FOR FILM RYTHU (WITH KRISHNA VAMSI) BUT IT COULDN'T GO TO SETS"

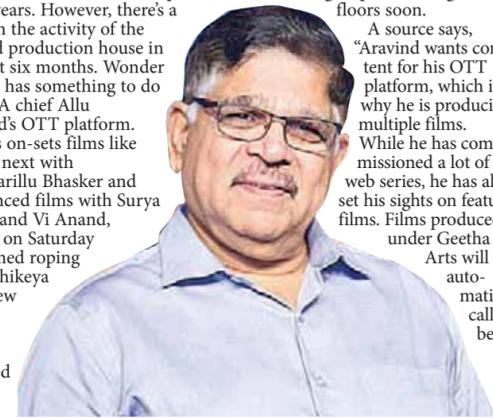


Geetha Arts ramps-up production activities

Production house Geetha Arts and its offshoot GA2 Pictures was associated with doing one film a year or two at the maximum for the past many years. However, there's a surge in the activity of the reputed production house in the past six months. Wonder why? It has something to do with GA chief Allu Aravind's OTT platform. Besides on-sets films like Akhil's next with Bommarillu Bhasker and announced films with Surya Pratap and Vi Anand, they've on Saturday confirmed roping in Karthikeya for a new film, which we've reported earlier

this month. Titled *Chaavu Kaburu Challaga*, it will see Karthikeya, who is reeling under multiple flops, as Basthi Balaraju. To mark the directorial debut of Koushik Pegallapati, it will go to floors soon. A source says, "Aravind wants content for his OTT platform, which is why he is producing multiple films. While he has commissioned a lot of web series, he has also set his sights on feature films. Films produced under Geetha Arts will automatically be

streamed on his OTT platform. He is also in the process of acquiring some other films. He brought *Arjun Suravaram* recently. He has also signed Raj Tarun for a new film which will roll next year. The production activities will only increase next year."



NAG'S NEXT ROLLS IN THE OLD CITY

More than four months after *Manmadhudu 2* hit the screens, superstar Nagarjuna will finally begin his untitled next with writer Solomon (*Oopiri* and *Maharshi* fame) today. As is the case with the actor's films, there is secrecy surrounding it until it goes to floors. A little birdie tells us that the first schedule will last for mere three days. "The shoot will take place in and around Charminar. Nag will be joining the sets today itself," said a source. The source added the plan is to complete the film, a production

venture of Niranjana Reddy under Matinee Entertainments, by mid-April and see if there is a possibility to time it for a summer release. "The film's pre-production has been going on meticulously for the past two months, so there is every possibility for the film to arrive in summer. But Nag would take a call on the release. The summer slot is already crammed up with multiple big-ticket ventures and he would give his consent to the release only if there's a proper window available," informed the source.

— NG



Caribbeans taste the first blood

Hetmyer, Hope score hundred to guide Windies to 8 wicket win in 1st ODI

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Rishabh Pant struck his maiden half-century at M S Dhoni's spiritual home to silence his critics as India shrugged off a poor start to post a challenging 287 for eight in the first ODI against West Indies here on Sunday.

Shreyas Iyer (70 off 88), who is emerging as a solid number four, and Pant (71 off 69) paired up for a 114-run stand for the fourth wicket after India lost opener K L Rahul (6) and skipper Virat Kohli (4) in the seventh over of the innings. It was Iyer's third consecutive half-century.

Rohit Sharma (36 off 56) too struggled on a slow surface before Iyer and Pant resurrected the innings with their gritty partnership.

A quickfire half-century partnership between Kedar Jadhav (40 off 35) and Ravindra Jadeja (21 off 21), who batted ahead of debutant Shivam Dube, provided the thrust in the slog overs.

Left-arm paceman Sheldon Cottrell (2/46 from 10 overs including 3 maidens), Keemo Paul (2/41) and Alzarri Joseph (2/45) were among the wickets for the vis-



West Indies' Shimron Hetmyer, left, celebrates with batting partner Shai Hope after scoring a century during the first one day international cricket match

iting team.

The home team appeared to be in a spot of bother at 80 for three in the 19th over on a sluggish pitch when Iyer and Pant came together. After taking their time to get going, the two played some splendid shots and were not afraid to hit the ball in the air when the opportunity presented itself.

The fact that the first six of the innings came in the 28th over when Pant smashed offie Roston Chase over mid-wicket was an indicator of the slow proceedings.

Iyer displayed his class as he came up with some lovely cuts against the spinners-Chase and leggie Hayden Walsh. Pant, on his part, showed patience and hit some powerful shots after gaining in confidence and assessing the nature of the pitch.

The two handled the spinners well and hit a six each apart from some well-timed drives.

Walsh, who had bowled impressively in the T20s preceding this series, was not allowed to settle into any rhythm as Rohit first, and then the Iyer-Pant duo went after him. He was taken for 31 runs in 5 overs.

Iyer perished for a well-made 70 with his dismissal coming against the run of play, when his flick landed in the safe hands of Pollard off Joseph's bowling, ending a brilliant 114-run fourth wicket partnership with Pant.

Pant fell going for a big hit, caught by Shimron Hetmyer in the deep of Pollard's bowling. It was a much needed knock for an under-fire Pant, who is seen as Dhoni's heir apparent.

Then the duo of Jadeja and Jadhav, who both play for Chennai Super Kings under Dhoni in the IPL, joined hands for a crucial 59-run stand for the sixth wicket during the course of which they batted judiciously and ran well between the wickets.

While Jadhav holed out to Pollard off Paul, Jadeja was run out. Jadeja was beaten by a Roston Chase throw but was initially not given out. An appeal by a West Indian fielder resulted in the on-field umpire going upstairs, following which the Indian southpaw was declared out.

India got off to a slowish start as Sheldon Cottrell bowled two maiden overs to start with and Jason Holder did not give away much as the openers Rohit and Rahul chose to play cautiously.

After Rahul's dismissal, Kohli walked in to a roar from the Chepauk crowd and played an imperious on-drive off the fourth ball he faced. In an anti-climax, he fell the next ball, bowled off the inside edge as he tried to run one from Cottrell down to the third-man area.

Rohit Sharma gained in confidence and scored a couple of boundaries including a superb straight drive off Holder in the 10th over. He appeared set for a big score before he hit Joseph's first ball in the match tamely to Pollard at mid-wicket to be dismissed for 36 (56 balls, 6 fours).

There was a moment of mirth for the spectators as a dog entered the field of play in the 26th over with Pant and Iyer at the crease.

ABID SCORES HUNDRED IN DRAWN TEST

AFP ■ RAWALPINDI

Opener Abid Ali became the first batsman to score hundreds on both Test and one-day debuts as Pakistan's first home match in the long form of the game since the 2009 attack on the visiting Sri Lanka team ended in a tame draw against the same opponents Sunday.

On 95, the 32-year-old hit paceman Vishwa Fernando for a boundary and then drove him through cover for two to complete his hundred, raising his hands in jubilation before kneeling on the ground to offer a prayer of gratitude.

His hundred came in 267 minutes, laced with 11 boundaries, and was the highlight of a Test badly affected by bad weather.

Pakistan finished at 252-2, with stylish batsman Babar Azam knocking his third Test century with a boundary off spinner Dilruwan Perera.

Azam ended with 102 not out, which came in 151 minutes of punishing batting spiced by 14 crisp boundaries.

But the day belonged to Abid, one of 15 batsmen to score a hundred on their one-day international debut - against Australia in Dubai in March his year - since the inception of limited over cricket in January 1971.

None of the others also scored a century on their debut in Test cricket, which started in 1876.

Abid is the 11th Pakistani batsman to score a century on Test debut.

Abid's feat spiced up the historic Test, the first in Pakistan since the 2009 attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus left international cricket suspended in the country.

Only 91.5 overs were possible on the first four days as rain, bad light and overcast conditions affected play. The fourth day was abandoned without a ball being bowled.

But there was bright sunshine on Sunday as Sri Lanka batted for 20 minutes to declare their first innings at 308-6 with middle-order batsman Dhananjaya de Silva scoring an unbeaten 102.

With gates opened to the crowd for free, about 12,000 fans were kept entertained by Dhananjaya and then Abid.

Pakistan lost opener Shan Masood for nought when he drove a full toss from paceman Kasun Rajitha straight into the hands of Dinesh Chandimal at cover Skipper Azhar Ali scored a shaky 36 before he was caught off Lahiru Kumara.

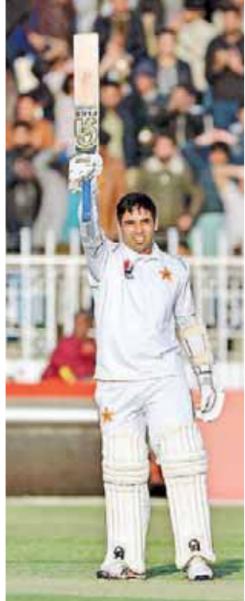
Dhananjaya finally completed his sixth Test century in the morning.

The 28-year-old right-hander drove paceman Mohammad Abbas for his 15th boundary to bring up the hundred in his 28th Test.

De Silva remained unbeaten on 102 after 241 minutes of batting, having come in with the score on 127-4 on Thursday. Dilruwan Perera remained unbeaten on 16.

The pick of the Pakistan bowlers were 16-year-old quickie Naseem Shah, who took 2-92, and Shaheen Shah Afridi with 2-58.

The second Test is in Karachi starting December 19.



Abid Ali raises his bat PCB/Twitter

Lyon, Starc power Aus to massive win

AFP ■ PERTH

Australia recorded one of their biggest wins over New Zealand on the fourth day of the first Test at Perth Stadium on Sunday.

Having trailed by 250 runs on the first innings the Kiwis were set a mammoth 468 to win - which would have been a record chase in Test cricket - on a deteriorating pitch after Australia declared at 217 for nine in their second innings.

The visitors were never in contention after losing their first wicket with just six runs on the board and were unable to push the match into a fifth day after Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins cleaned up the Kiwi tail under lights in Perth's first ever day-night Test.

New Zealand were dismissed for 171 and were beaten by 296 runs, the last five wickets falling in a hurry for just 17 runs.

It was just one run shy of their biggest losing margin to Australia - in runs - in a match where both teams batted twice.

Australia's biggest win, other than innings victories, was 297 runs in Auckland in 1974.

Starc (4-45), who claimed nine wickets for the match, and Cummins (2-31) used the pink ball to good effect under lights to bring the match to a quick conclusion after none of the recognised Kiwi batsmen offered significant resistance.

The chase started poorly, with opener Jeet Raval making just one before being caught at



Mitchell Starc celebrates after taking wicket of New Zealand's Neil Wagner

Cricket.com.au/Twitter

gully by Nathan Lyon (4-63) from the bowling of Starc.

Starc batsman and captain Kane Williamson then made just 14, before falling to Lyon's first ball of the innings.

Williamson got off to a fast start with boundaries from the first two balls he faced, but was caught at short leg fending a ball that bounced and turned sharply off his glove into the hands of Matthew Wade.

Ross Taylor was their last real hope of making a revival but on 22 he tried to pull a Starc delivery and got a bottom edge through to wicketkeeper Tim

Paine to give the left-arm quick his seventh wicket of the match.

Tom Latham showed plenty of application to face 68 balls for his 18, but was given out leg before wicket to Lyon after an Australian DRS review, with umpire Aleem Dar initially giving him not out.

BJ Watling attempted to stem the tide with a gritty 40 and enjoyed a bit of luck as Australia didn't review when he got a faint outside edge through to Paine.

Smith then dropped a tough chance off the bowling of Lyon at first slip. He was given out on review caught down leg side by

Paine off the bowling of Starc after umpire Nigel Llong had turned down the appeal - a dismissal that signalled the end of the Kiwi resistance.

Earlier, Australia's second innings fell away dramatically after being 131 for one at one stage on the third day.

The home team lost seven wickets for 58 runs, as they struggled against a sustained barrage of short-pitched bowling on another hot Perth day.

Tim Southee again impressed with 5-69, after also picking up four wickets in the first innings.

Aussies on the rise again: Paine

AFP ■ PERTH

Skipper Tim Paine believes Australia is climbing back towards the top of Test cricket after a third successive powerhouse victory at Perth Stadium on Sunday.

The home side went into the Perth Test ranked fifth on the International Cricket Council rankings, while New Zealand were second.

"We are getting there, but we can get better," he said.

"We are still improving, but certainly over the last 18 months there has been drastic improvement in this cricket team.

"We've got some players back, which are helping, but we have also seen some real improvement in the guys who got a chance 18 months ago, and the experienced guys have come back and put a bit of icing on top.

"We are moving in the right direction and happy with the way we've played in the last three or four Tests."

Paine said it was also pleasing to see other players stepping up, after Smith almost single-handedly retained the Ashes for Australia with his batting heroics in his first series after suspension.



Tim Paine celebrates after Kane Williamson's wicket Twitter

For the first time in his career Smith has gone three Tests without a half-century, but Paine actually views that as a positive.

"We touched on at the end of the Ashes," he said. "We needed other guys to stand up and can't be reliant on Steve."

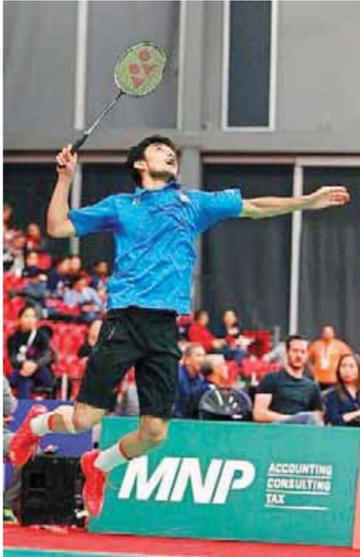
"Obviously Marnus (Labuschagne) has been unbelievably good, and Davey (Warner) and Joe Burns have been scoring runs.

"If we want to be one of the better teams in the world guys have got to stand up and we can't be reliant on too few."

"We are really happy with how our batting has developed."

Lakshya wins Bangladesh international challenge

PTI ■ DHAKA



Lakshya Sen in action during Bangladesh International challenge BA/Twitter

Fast-rising Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen notched up his fifth title of the season, claiming the men's singles crown at the Bangladesh International Challenger with a straight game win over Malaysia's Leong Jun Hao in the final here on Sunday.

The 18-year-old Indian has capped a superb year with a 22-20, 21-18 win over Hao in the summit clash to clinch his fifth title in last seven tournaments.

"Happy to end the year on a winning note with my 5th international title here in Bangladesh!! Hope to continue my good form in the next year 2020. Like to thank all my sponsors @OGQ_India @HerbalifeIndia @YonexIndia @Sports_PDCSE @ppba @bai_media," Lakshya tweeted.

Momota wraps 11th title

AFP ■ SHANGHAI

World number one Kento Momota fought back from a game down to win a record 11th title of the year on Sunday with victory at the BWF World Tour Finals.

The peerless Japanese player defeated Indonesia's Anthony Ginting 17-21, 21-17, 21-14 in 87 high-quality minutes in the final at the season-ending showpiece in Guangzhou.

Momota celebrates a new mark in men's badminton, overtaking Malaysian great Lee Chong Wei's 10 tournament wins in 2010.

"At this World Tour Finals I played carefully from the first match partly with the aim of winning an 11th title," the 25-year-old Momota said.

"Even in tough games I did not give up."

Momota was pushed all the way by the speedy Ginting and the Japanese fell 12-5 down in the deciding third game to the world number eight.

However, the reigning two-time world champion surged back.



Kento Momota poses for a photo

BWF/Twitter

Ginting was trailing 17-14 when he called the doctor on court for treatment on his right foot.

The fading Indonesian continued but Momota rammed home his advantage to seal a stellar season in style.

The 23-year-old Ginting has now tasted defeat in all five of his finals this year.

"He led (in the deciding game) but I was patient," said Momota, who was banned for a year in 2016 for illegal gambling.

"And then I got to know that he was suffering pain so all I needed to do was stay calm."

In the women's final China's Chen Yufei also roared back from a game down to defeat Taiwan's Tai Tzu-ying 12-21, 21-12, 21-17.

Chen, who will replace Tai as world number one in the latest rankings, had lost 14 of her previous 15 clashes.

"I'm very excited," said Chen. "I didn't think much about my 1-14 record against her, I had to focus on the task today."