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SAVES INDIA

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY NOVEMBER 15, 2019; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



NEW TELUGU
GIRL ON THE
BLOCK

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Lata showing signs of improvement

MUMBAI: Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, who was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of a hospital earlier this week, is showing "signs of improvement" but will take "time to recover", hospital sources said on Thursday. Mangeshkar, 90, was admitted to the Breach Candy Hospital here after she complained of difficulty in breathing in the early hours of Monday.

"She is showing some signs of improvement but it will take time for her to recover. She has pneumonia and chest infection. Any person suffering from it takes time to recover from it," a hospital insider said.

Musharraf's old video on J&K goes viral

ISLAMABAD: A 2015 video in which former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf admitted that Kashmiris were "trained" in his country as mujahideens to fight the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir went viral after it was circulated online again.

The 1 minute 45 seconds video was posted by Hamid Mandokhail from Quetta on Twitter on Tuesday to depict how Pakistan's state policy of terror destroyed the Pashtuns in Pakistan.

Farhatullah Babar, who was the press secretary of former president Asif Ali Zardari, later re-tweeted the video. After Babar re-tweeted the video, several others shared it and commented on it.

Priyanka not among 'star campaigners'

RANCHI: Congress general secretary, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's name has not figured in the list of the star campaigners for Jharkhand assembly polls, beginning from later this month.

The party on Thursday released a list of 40 star campaigners, including Rahul Gandhi, Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi, for the Jharkhand Assembly polls, but Priyanka's name is missing. Jharkhand will go to polls in five phases from November 30.

TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Kartik & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Tritiya: 07:45 pm
Nakshatram: Mrigashirsha: 11:13 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 10:36 am - 12:00 pm
Yamagandam: 02:48 pm - 04:12 pm
Varjyam: NIL
Gulika: 07:48 am - 09:12 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 02:15 pm - 03:53 pm
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:38 am - 12:22 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 29/20
Humidity: 73%
Sunrise: 06:20
Sunset: 05:40
Current Weather Conditions
Updated November 14, 2019 5:00 PM

ENTRY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Supreme Court refers pleas on Sabarimala to 7-judge bench

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a 3:2 majority verdict, the Supreme Court Thursday referred to a larger 7-judge bench the pleas seeking review of its historic 2018 judgement allowing women and girls of all ages to enter Kerala's Sabarimala temple, set to open on November 17, along with other contentious issues of alleged discrimination against Muslim and Parsi women.

As the majority verdict, penned by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, kept the review pleas pending for a 7-judge bench and did not stay its September 28, 2018 majority judgement, girls and women of all age groups will be entitled to undertake the pilgrimage to the shrine.

The CJ, who wrote on behalf of himself and Justices A M Khanwilkar and Indu Malhotra, said the debate about the constitutional validity of religious practices like bar on entry of women and girls into a place of worship was not limited to the Sabarimala case.

They said such restrictions are there with regard to entry of Muslim women into mosques and 'dargah' and Parsi women, married to non-Parsi men, being barred from the holy fire place of an Agyari.



The CJ, who wrote on behalf of himself and Justices A M Khanwilkar and Indu Malhotra, said the debate about the constitutional validity of religious practices like bar on entry of women and girls into a place of worship was not limited to the Sabarimala case.

It was time the apex court evolves a judicial policy to do "substantial and complete justice", the added.

The majority view, delineated by the CJ in its nine-page verdict, was not agreed to by Justices R F Nariman and D Y Chandrachud.

Justice Nariman, writing for himself and Justice Chandrachud, regretted his "inability to agree with" the view of the CJ and said the scope of the review pleas was limited to the entry of men-

struating women into the hill-top shrine in Kerala and directed the state government to ensure strict compliance of the 2018 verdict.

The majority judgement also said that a decision by a larger bench "would put at rest recurring issues" with regard to the fundamental right to profess and practice any religion.

"In the context of the present strength of judges of the Supreme Court, it may not be inappropriate if matters involving seminal issues including

the interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution touching upon the right to profess, practise and propagate its own religion, are heard by larger bench of commensurate number of judges," it said.

It set out seven questions of law to be examined by the larger bench. They included -- interplay between freedom of religion under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution; need to delineate the expression 'constitutional morality'; the extent to which courts can enquire into particular religious practices; meaning of sections of Hindu under Article 25 and whether 'essential religious practices' of denomination or a section thereof are protected under Article 26.

Another question was the "permissible extent of judicial recognition to PILs in matters calling into question religious practices of a denomination or a section thereof at the instance of persons who do not belong to such religious denomination".

The top court said: "The subject review petitions as well as the writ petitions may, accordingly, remain pending until determination of the questions indicated above by a larger bench as may be constituted by the Chief Justice of India."

TRAVAILS OF RTC STAFF

Resuming duty before deadline in spirit, but not in letter!

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A section of the striking RTC employees who had offered to resume duty in response to the call given by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao are now in a piquant situation as some of their 'willingness letters' have gone 'missing' and others with letters are not being allowed to work.

After a cabinet meeting on November 3 took stock of RTC strike, the Chief Minister, addressing a press conference, had set November 5 midnight as fresh deadline for the striking staff to rejoin duties or lose their jobs per-



manently. The CM said that RTC staff who wanted to withdraw from the strike and rejoin duties could express their willingness through letters at any nearby government office or police stations as there were reports that striking staff were attacking those

- Letters offering to resume duty go missing
- 275 employees not allowed to work even after they submitted letters

who wanted to rejoin duties.

The government had previously asked such employees to submit their willingness letters only in the respective bus depots. However, following incidents of striking employees attacking such employees, the government extended a provision to submit their letters in any nearby government office or police station.

Continued on Page 4

Loco pilot's condition still critical

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Doctors at Care Hospital, Nampally, who are treating Chandrasekhar -- the loco pilot who suffered multiple injuries in Monday's train collision at Kacheguda -- on Thursday amputated his right leg from a point above knee since blood circulation in the region had stopped resulting in loss of sensation in the patient's leg.

The loco pilot was crushed in his cabin as Lingampally-Faluknama MMTS and Kurnool-Secunderabad Intercity (Handri) Express collided here.

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RTC JAC drops 'merger' demand to end stalemate

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant climb-down, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of RTC Employees' Unions on Thursday dropped for the time being its main demand i.e. RTC's merger with the state government.

RTC JAC convener E Ashwathama Reddy said that at least now the state government should conduct talks on the 25 other demands. The state government was misguiding the Courts and people by furnishing false information, he alleged. "The state government has neglected the High Court's suggestion that it will appoint a three-member committee comprising former Supreme Court judges. There is no single statement on suicides of workers. At least the leaders who had participated in Telangana movement have to respond", he observed.

Mentioning that the state government was responsible for the deaths of 23 RTC workers, he urged RTC employees not to lose their confidence. The RTC workers had the support of all trade unions and people, he said. He slammed the police for resorting to arrests of JAC leaders in mult.



E Ashwathama Reddy

- Wants immediate talks on 25 other demands
- Statewide bike rally on Nov.15 with 'Save RTC' slogan
- Ashwathama and four others to fast on Nov.16
- Employees' deekshas at depots on Nov.16 & 17
- Sadak Bandh on Nov.19 from Hyd to Kodad

arrests even during the Telangana movement, he added. He demanded the release of RTC JAC leaders unconditionally.

After a meeting with leaders of various parties, Ashwathama said that they would organize a Bike rally across the state on Friday with the slogan "Save RTC".

Continued on Page 4

Worker dies, another suffers heart attack

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 'depressed' RTC worker succumbed on Thursday while undergoing treatment at Gandhi Hospital here, while another worker suffered heart attack. Both the cases have been attributed to the state government's 'adamant attitude' towards the prolonged RTC strike. The depressed person who died has been identified as Nageswar of Jogipet in Andole mandal of Sangareddy district. The depressed person who suffered heart attack was identified as Sammaiah of Khammampalli village in Peddapalli district.

Nageswar, 42, was reportedly heartbroken because of the state government's attitude towards RTC workers. For the past several days, he had not been mingling with anyone and was visibly depressed.

Continued on Page 4

TS govt strikes down all approvals for uranium mining

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has scrapped approvals granted previously by it to the Atomic Minerals Directorate (AMD) for uranium exploration and mining inside the Nallamala forest reserve zone, saying they would disturb the wildlife in the area.

In its latest clarification, the state forest department said the government won't allow even drilling to ascertain the presence of any radioactive elements. All approvals and agreements made in December 2016 stand cancelled, it said in a letter to AMD, Union Ministry of Forest, and the Wildlife Conservation Trust.

AMD had proposed to dig



4,000 bores to explore uranium reserves in the reserved forest. The new proposal for drilling bores is not acceptable to the state, said a senior official.

A clause in the Forest Act, intended for protecting nature and wildlife in Amrabad Tiger Reserve, came in handy for the Telangana government. Invoking the clause, the forest department said AMD's latest proposal would affect wildlife in the Nallamala forest, said the official.

Sena talks to Cong-NCP

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid the Shiv Sena's efforts to form government in Maharashtra with the support of the NCP and Congress, senior Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday posted a message on Twitter to assert that they would neither get defeated nor be afraid.

"Ab haarna aur darna manaa hai..." the Rajya Sabha member and Sena's spokesman tweeted, a day after he was discharged from the city-based Lilavati Hospital, where he underwent an angioplasty procedure on Monday.

The 57-year-old firebrand Sena leader also tweeted a motivational Hindi couplet, saying, "Haar ho jaati hai jab maan liya jaata hai, jeet tab hoti hai jab thaana liya jaata hai" (defeat happens when one accepts it, victory happens when one is determined).

Raut on Wednesday also posted a message on Twitter to indicate tough path ahead for his party in its efforts to form government in Maharashtra with the Congress and NCP, which were its ideological rivals till recently.



Air pollution claimed over 5 lakh lives

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than five lakh people died prematurely in India in 2016 due to dangerous levels of outdoor air pollution and over 97,000 of the them died after being exposed to pollutants from coal burning, a new report revealed on Thursday.

The Lancet Countdown 2019 on health and climate change also cautioned that the impact of air pollution in India will worsen if the country does not shift from coal-based energy.



It emphasised on rapidly decreasing coal use to zero, saying it was crucial to meeting the commitments of the Paris

Agreement. "Total energy supply from coal increased by 11 per cent in India from 2016 to 2018 and out of over 5.29 lakh

premature deaths in 2016 due to dangerous levels of outdoor fine particulate air pollution (PM2.5), over 97,400 deaths were from coal.

"The energy landscape will have to change drastically, and nothing short of a 7.4 per cent year-on-year cut in fossil carbon dioxide emissions from 2019 to 2050 will limit global warming to the more ambitious goal of 1.5 degree Celsius," the report, authored by 35 institutions worldwide, said.

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Now pill to spill blood and fake virginity

Doctors despise use of the product and say it is not replacement of hymenoplasty

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

Being a virgin is so important in India that women don't mind going under the knife for hymenoplasty. To make the life of women easier, a product i-virgin to fake virginity on the first night of marriage is now available online for people to buy. Netizens are venting their ire over the product with a platform supporting women who want to stay clear of the taboo of virginity.

The product, available online, has already been purchased by people, some of

The product, available online, has already been purchased by people, some of whom have given decent reviews

Amazon is facing backlash for allowing such a product to sell on its site, on the premise that it supports the misogynistic idea of virginity. Hymen is a thin, fleshy tissue that's located at the opening of a



woman's vagina, the rupture of which "on the first night", leads to her bleeding. This is

considered as test of purity. Described as alternative for hymenoplasty, the product description calls it safe and anonymous. The mini pill, with blood, needs to be powdered simply finger deep and about 2-4 hours before the planned night. As per the product description, "The high-quality blood powder contained therein will have then completely dissolved. This is intended for the use of 30 minutes - 2 hours before the scheduled traffic and also reliably confirms your virginity by our mini pill". There are more such products like

'Spento Himen' which claim to replace painful and costly hymenoplasty. These products have no details on what the ingredients are or what kind of side effects it might have upon being introduced inside the body.

Typically on the first night, the white sheets are spread on bed as test for the virginity of the bride. As long as the hymen of the woman's vagina is intact, she is a virgin. However, the layer rupture can happen for many reasons and cannot be considered as conclusive test for virginity.

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'Will procure every grain of paddy'

■ Civil Supplies Corp chief asks officials to ensure there is no delay in payments to farmers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Civil Supplies Corporation chairman Mareddy Srinivas Reddy has said that Telangana is the only state in the country to purchase every paddy grain produced by farmer at the MSP. On account of the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's pro-farmer measures like round-the-clock power supply to farm sector and Rythu Bandhu, the area under paddy crops increased and farmers are going to harvest record paddy during the current kharif.

He told the corporation officials to ensure that the farmers bringing their paddy to procurement centers face no problems at all. He said the CM issued specific orders prior to the onset of kharif that every paddy grain produced by farmers should be lifted at the MSP. Therefore, he asked District Collectors, Joint Collectors, civil supplies officials to ensure that there are no delays in making payments to the farmers in



The CM issued specific orders prior to the onset of kharif that every grain of paddy produced by farmers should be lifted at the MSP MAREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY Civil Supplies Corporation chairman

and 2.51 lakh tonnes of paddy have been procured from 36,862 farmers so far. In all, 2.39 lakh tonnes of paddy was sent to rice mills for milling.

Using the OPMS software, the paddy procurement center authorities have been issuing truck sheet. The rice millers should have to give their approval to it online without any delay. So that the MSP is remitted direct into bank accounts of farmers.

To avoid any problems in procurement, Collectors and Joint Collectors should hold regular meetings with procurement committees to review

loading, unloading and online procurement of paddy and millers' acknowledgement and so on. Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy has been reviewing paddy procurement with the Civil Supplies Minister Gangula Kamalakar to overcome problems in the paddy procurement. In case of any problems cropping up at the field level, the district authorities have been asked to bring it to the notice of the civil supplies corporation.

He said that a toll-free number 1800-425-00333 and a WhatsApp number 733077444 have been activated to facilitate lodging complaints over the problems in procurement. He advised farmers to ensure that the moisture content of paddy should not exceed 17 per cent under any circumstances. He wanted officials to sensitise farmers on the issue. He advised farmers not to bring their paddy at once to the procurement centers but in phases to avoid disappointment.



Union Minister for State of Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy and others at the FTCCI event in Hyderabad on Thursday

Modi has a vision and mission for India: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Kishan Reddy said that the Central government wants to ensure that 1.25 crore new houses are build across the country by 2022

"A strong India is one where the benefits of development reach everyone in the society. This was the concept of 'atodaya' that Deendayal Upadhyay had spoken about. A strong India is also 'Vishwa Guru' - well respected in the world for our cultural, social and economic strength. Today, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are working towards all these areas," said Union Minister for State of Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy.

He was speaking at the FTCCI event held in the city on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister said, "to serve everyone in the society, our government has ensured that basic necessities are brought to people. 100 per cent village and household electrification, more than 8 crore LPG connections and more than 10 crore Ayushman Bharat registrations are a proof

of this commitment. When the society becomes strong, it lays foundation for national economic growth."

"The Modi government is on a mission to provide 'housing for all'. By 2022, the government wants to ensure that 1.25 crore new houses are build across the country so that all Indians can live under a roof they can call their own. The government is now working on piped water for all programme. These are basic human requirements, which for the first time are being addressed by the Modi government," he further said.

"Due to the efforts of the Central government, today several states for the first time have excess power to be sup-

plied to consumers. Setting up of power generation capacities in conventional as well as renewable sectors has been a big agenda of this government. States which complained of power cuts are now enjoying uninterrupted power. Even in Telangana, the power situation is vastly improved," he said.

The government has worked on not just social dignity but also economic dignity for everyone in India. Since 2014, 37.34 crore Jan Dhan accounts have been opened with outstanding deposits of Rs 1.06 lakh crore. The average deposit size has gone up from Rs 1,000 in March 2015 to Rs 2,853 in October 2019. This means people are using their Jan Dhan accounts.



Will develop Warangal Dist library: Errabelli

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Stating that the State government was taking all steps for the development of libraries in the State including in Warangal, Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Thursday said an auditorium at the district library would be constructed with Smart City funds.

He was speaking after launched the 52nd National Library Week celebrations at the district library here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that more computers would be set up with internet connection for the benefit of the readers at the knowledge centre.

"The libraries have made tremendous contribution towards development of the society, especially during the country's freedom struggle. One must inculcate the reading habit like our Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao who is a bookworm. The Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao has been introducing new schemes for the benefit of people only after reading books related to that particular subject," he added.

He urged the students and readers to utilise the facility of knowledge centre by visiting it regularly. Government Chief Whip Vinay Bhaskar said he had donated Rs 25,000 from his pocket to purchase books for those preparing for the competitive exams.

PIL against modified silencers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed in the Telangana High Court by a city-based activist, seeking action against motorists who modify their silencers. The court has issued a notice to the authorities asking them to file their response and has asked them to file a counter by November 19.

Concerned about the increasing noise pollution in the city, which has been constantly above the levels of national standards prescribed for residential, commercial, industrial and sensitive zones, a resident of Secunderabad, Aditya Maheshwari, 40, has filed a PIL with the High Court.

In the PIL, Aditya sought directions from the government authorities to prohibit the use of modified silencers. "There are about 10,000 bikes with modified silencers presently running on the city roads. These



In the PIL, Aditya sought directions from the government authorities to prohibit the use of modified silencers

HC has sent a notice to concerned authorities and has asked them to file a counter by Nov 19



bikes are one of the major contributors to noise pollution," said the PIL, further

asking for a minimum fine of Rs 1,000 to be levied from the motorist using modified silencers and has asked the authorities to set up a toll-free number for citizens to register complaints regarding noise pollution.

In this regard, the HC has sent a notice to the concerned government authorities -- principal secretary, TSPCB and commissioner of police - and has asked them to file a counter by November 19.

Man kills brother-in-law

PNS ■ ADILABAD

A man killed his brother-in-law by slitting his throat in broad daylight following a family dispute at Khurshidnagar. He then surrendered himself before the police after committing crime. Adilabad II town Inspector P Srinivas said the deceased was Takkalappaliwar Manoj (26), an autorickshaw driver from Daheli village in Mahor of neighbouring Maharashtra. The accused was Osawar Santosh (34), a daily wage earner.

Santosh, in a fit of rage, eliminated Manoj after picking an argument even as the latter pleaded with him to leave. He confessed to the crime before the cops. He told policemen that he had killed his brother-in-law to avoid being murdered by the autorickshaw driver. It is learned that Manoj was staying in Adilabad following quarrels between Santosh and his wife for a week.

Space expo from Nov 20, 21

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

A two-day space exhibition-competitions will be held at Sree Chaitanya Engineering College campus on November 20 and 21. To commemorate the birth centenary of Dr Vikram Sarabhai, founder of ISRO, the National Remote Sensing Centre, a sister concern of ISRO, is organising the exhibition to educate students

and general public about space research.

Announcing this to media persons here on Thursday, Chairman of Sree Chaitanya Educational Institutions, Muddasani Ramesh Reddy said that former Director of NRS, CBC Dutt would deliver Vikram Sarabhai Memorial lecture after inauguration of space expo by the district Collector Sarfaraz Ahmed at 10 am.



NTPC-Ramagundam marks Raising Day

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

The 'Raising Day' of National Thermal Power Corporation-Ramagundam was celebrated by its employees on Thursday. Regional Executive Director-South (In-charge) and Head of Projects, Dr PP Kulkarni, and hundreds of employees participated in the walkathon held in the morning from Priyadarshini Park of the township to the administrative building. Later, Kulkarni, who unfurled the NTPC flag, along with other officials of the power station, cut a cake to mark the occasion.

He highlighted the achievements of the plant and said the station was doing a great job for the nation for the past 41 years. Besides briefing on the core area of power generation, he also highlighted the plant's initiative in CSR and environment, and threw light on NTPC-Telangana project's progress and challenges ahead.



Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao with Mudhole MLA G Vittal Reddy at Pragathi Bhavan in Hyderabad on Thursday. The legislator requested the Chief Minister to speed up the pending works in his constituency.

TS get its first 'Child-friendly' PS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To ensure a child-friendly world where all children are free from mistreatment, abuse and exploitation, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA), founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, in collaboration with the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate, on Thursday inaugurated the State's first 'child-friendly' police station at the Rachakonda Medipally station.

The inauguration ceremony that was organised to formally handover the Child-Friendly Police Station to the authorities by BBA, witnessed participation of over 200 students from nearby schools, esteemed dignitaries and personnel of the State's police department, State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), Child Welfare Committee



D Ishan, a seven year-old survivor of a life time disease whose wish was to become the Police Commissioner for a day, after inaugurating the Child-Friendly Police station along with CP Mahesh Bhagwat.

(CWC), District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) and District Legal Service Authority (DLA).

According to NCRB data, the state has witnessed a 43 per cent increase in cases reported under POCSO from 2016 to 2017. Telangana has also seen a decrease in recovery rate of

establishing child-friendly police stations. While highlighting the role of Police in child-related issues, the organisation apprised the stakeholders on the importance of ensuring that no procedural provisions are disregarded while dealing with the distressed children.

IPS officer, Mahesh Bhagwat, Commissioner Rachakonda was the Chief Guest for the programme. D Ishan, a seven year-old survivor of a life time disease whose wish was to become the Police Commissioner for a day, inaugurated the Child-Friendly Police station along with Commissioner Rachakonda. IPS officer, Sudheer Babu; Anjan Rao, Member SCPCR; Uday Kumar, Secretary, DLSA and Dr Vasavi, Psychologist, also attended the inauguration.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES

GOLD	₹ 38,220 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 44,500 (1kg)
	₹ 200

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹170
Without Skin	₹193
Broiler at Farm	₹117

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	402
VIJAYAWADA	413
VISAKHAPATNAM	405
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.02

Music may help reduce cardiac stress while driving

AGANCIES ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Stress while driving is a risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease and sudden cardiac complications such as heart attack, but now researchers have found that listening to music while driving can reduce cardiac stress.

"We found that cardiac stress in the participants in our experiment was reduced by listening to music while they were driving," said study lead author Vitor Engracia Valenti, Professor at Sao Paulo State University in Brazil. For the study, published in the journal Complementary Therapies in Medicine, researchers analysed the effects of music on cardiac stress in five women between the ages of 18 and 23. "We opted to assess women who were not habitual drivers



because people who drive frequently and have had a licence for a long time are better adapted to stressful situations in traffic," Valenti explained.

The volunteers were assessed on two days, in different situations and in a random order. On one day, they drove for 20 minutes at rush hour (5:30-6:30 pm) along a three km route in a busy district of

Marilia, a medium-sized city in the northwest of Sao Paulo, without listening to music. On the other day, the volunteers drove the same route at the same time of day but listened to instrumental music on a CD player coupled to the car radio.

The use of ear buds or headphones while driving is a traffic offense. "To increase the degree of traffic stress, we asked them to

We found that cardiac stress in the participants in our experiment was reduced by listening to music while they were driving

— VITOR ENGRACIA VALENTI, Professor at Sao Paulo State University

drive a car they did not own. Driving their own car might help," Valenti said. The level of cardiac stress was estimated by measuring heart rate variability using a heart rate monitor attached to the participants' chest.

Defined as fluctuations in the intervals between consecutive heart beats, heart rate variability is influenced by the autonomic nervous system. The more active the sympathetic nervous system, the faster the heart beats, while the parasympathetic nervous system tends to slow it down. "Elevated sympathetic nervous system activity

reduces heart rate variability, whereas more intense parasympathetic nervous system activity increases it," Valenti said. Analysis showed a reduction in heart rate variability in the volunteers who drove without music, indicating a lower level of parasympathetic nervous system activation.

Conversely, heart rate variability increased in the drivers who listened to music, indicating a higher level of parasympathetic nervous system activity and a reduction in sympathetic nervous system activity.

PRAYER MEETING

Security tightened in Saidabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The city police have made elaborate security arrangements at the Saidabad Ujale-Shah-Dargah and its surroundings on Thursday following a call made by various Muslim organisations for a prayer meeting of women and girls in view of the Ayodhya verdict.

Policemen drawn from the City Armed Reserve men and

women, civil police and Commissioner's Task Force are deployed in huge numbers to prevent the event, which the police said had no permission.

A senior police official said no organisation had sought any permission from the police nor was any permission accorded to anyone for holding the prayer meeting. The roads were barricaded to prevent any outsider from entering the area.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
O/o Executive Engineer (R&B) Division, Siddipet
E-Procurement Notice
NIT No. EE/R&B/SDPT/03/2019-20/719 Dated: 13.11.2019
 No. of works (15) Name of the Works: AM to Road of Siddipet Section Package-I, AM to Road of Chinmakodur Section Package-I, II, III, AM to (R&B) Koheda Section package-I and other all civil works in undersigned. Total ECV: Rs. 89.47 Lakhs. For details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ www.eprocurement.gov.in Bid submission closing date: 28-11-2019 @ 3.30 PM. Ph No. 9440818096 Sl.No.1, 8 & 13 works are reserved for SC, ST, Waddera Community registered contractors respectively.
 Sd/-
 Executive Engineer (R&B), Siddipet

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CRIME CORNER
Intermediate student commits suicide

A 17-year-old girl committed suicide by hanging herself at her residence in Mirchok on Wednesday night. The deceased was identified as G Jayalakshmi, an intermediate second year student from Sri Chaitanya College in Balapur. Her family members told the police that Jayalakshmi, who was interested in joining the armed forces, was preparing for the exams and practising for the physical tests as well for the last three months. According to the police, a lecturer caught her while using mobile phone in the class on Wednesday. The principal called her father and complained about this asking him to take her back home. Jayalakshmi was then depressed fearing that her chance to join the Indian Army would be lost. "She locked herself in her room and did not open it despite repeated pleas from her parents. When they finally broke open the door, she was found hanging. She left a suicide note for her younger brother asking him to join the Army as she had failed in doing so," the police said. The police registered a case and launched an investigation.

House burgled in Kukatpally

Unidentified persons broke into a house in Kukatpally and fled with valuables worth Rs 15 lakh on Thursday. According to the police, the burglars broke into a house at Vignan Nagar and fled with valuables including 20 tolas of gold, 15 kg of silver and Rs 15 lakh. Based on a complaint lodged by the house owners, the Kukatpally police registered a case. Police have collected CCTV footage from nearby cameras and are investigating.

Man held for cheating bizman of Rs 76 L

The CCS Police of Hyderabad arrested a 45-year-old man from Noida for cheating a businessman to the tune of Rs 76 Lakh. The accused was identified as Palvinder Singh. According to the police, the arrest was made following a complaint from the victim, Y Manindranath, the MD of Billion Light India Pvt. Ltd., Somajiguda. Singh approached the victim claiming that he handles the manufacturing and supplying of LED lights for Govt. Projects. "He promised that he will arrange a project of Nagaland Government of Rs 58 crore and collected an amount of Rs 76 lakh for the expenses of processing the required project documents like ERTL certificates, work order copies and for providing the collateral security. Singh then provided fake and fabricated work orders and certificates in return" said officials, adding that accused is running Balaji Media Pvt., Ltd., to organise beauty contests and other events in and around New Delhi by posing himself as a celebrity in the eyes of society. The CCS Police swung into action and proceeded to Noida to apprehend Singh.

GHMC braces up for 'sweeping' changes

To rely on public for audit of sweeping machines

NAVEENA GHANATE
HYDERABAD

Road-sweeping machines have come under public ire for not cleaning the roads properly. These sweeping machines have been clearing only on the median side and ignoring the import lanes including the footpath side. As per the initial agreement, sweeping machines are supposed to clean the roads from for 10 hours, from 9 pm to 7 am every day. However, the taxpayer money has gone for a toss because the broom of the machine never touches the road and even medians are remaining unclean.

In spite of issuing lane kilometers and incorporating GPS, the sweeping machines have a loophole. Nobody knows if the broom is on the road or not. The civic body has failed to observe the accuracy in working of these machines. Commissioner GHMC Lokesh Kumar agreed that this loophole cannot be rectified with any machine intervention.

Instead, the corporation would now rely on public for social audit on the sweeping machines. Lokesh said, "Night supervision is not there for sweeping machines. To address the issue, Every zone has been given hard instructions to run sweeping machines during day time, so



According to GHMC Commissioner, every zone has been given instructions to run sweeping machines during day time, so that there will be social audit. Public will also observe whether it is being cleaned or not

that there will be social audit. Public will also observe whether it is being cleaned or not".

Officials cite that the vehicles are parked on 80-90 per cent of main roads along the footpath side in the night time. Because of this, majority of sweeping machines even if they are functioning properly are focusing only on median side. Consequently, the civic body will be running sweeping machines in morn-

ing taking adequate precautions daily. However since it is a slow moving vehicle, there could be traffic disturbances and dust pollution.

Meanwhile GHMC has been decided to procure as many as 42 modern sweeping machines for sweeping of main roads. Lokesh said that the corporation has approval for 42 sweeping machines, but based on how many are needed, procurement will happen.

Illegal water connections to be regularised

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

HMWSSB MD Dana Kishore on Thursday said that the illegal water connections will be regularised under Voluntary Disclosure Scheme. During a review meeting, the MD said that the state government had granted permission for VDS to regulate the illegal connections. The scheme would be in effect for 90 days from 22 November to 21 February. Building owners with illegal water connections can submit applications through the HMWSSB website. MD explained that they could regulate their illegal connections by paying regular bill charges plus one month's bill.

So far, 36,547 connections in six divisions have been surveyed, of which HMWSSB identified 1401 Sewerage connections, 633 commercial connections, 880 MSB connections, 721 illegal tap connections, 66 unregistered building and flats. HMWSSB estimates collection of nearly 6.24crores and increase in monthly revenue by 16lakhs with the regularization of these connections. The authorities are issuing notices to illegal connections and allow users to regularize the illegal connection in a week.

After the window is closed,



Dana Kishore
HMWSSB MD said that the govt had granted permission for VDS to regulate the illegal connections

users have to pay double the connection charges to regularise an illegal connection plus the three-year utility charges and Rs 300 service charges. MD advised citizens to take advantage of this opportunity and be exempted from higher fines and legal action. Officials have also been instructed to ensure 100 per cent billing and collection. It is also recommended that the bills for commercial connections be given out by 5th of every month and all other connection bills be issued by 10th of every month. He also said that if the irregularities are identified and the monthly billing is included, the revenue will increase.

Uppal Bhagat plots to be e-auctioned

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) issued a notification on Thursday for e-auctioning of Uppal Bhagat plots. The notification is for Plot No 2515/1 to 2515/132 in the Uppal Bhagyatha layout's Phase 1 and 2. Interested citizens can login to www.hmda.gov.in for further details. Meanwhile HMDA commissioner Arvind Kumar held a review meeting with officials and reviewed full development programmes and their implementation for various sections of HMDA.

GHMC's 'Prajavani' goes for a toss

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The very first instruction from Minister K T Rama Rao after taking over charge of Municipal Administration was for officials to be on field daily for upkeep of sanitation in the city. Are officials neither addressing the grievances of public nor going to the field.

Let alone field inspections, GHMC officials don't have time to hear people's grievances. 'Prajavani' programme has gone for a toss with people venting ire over the lack of availability of officials. 'Prajavani' sessions are held between 10 am and 1 pm every Monday. However, higher officials of the GHMC have not been attending them for the past several days.

KTR goes on inauguration spree

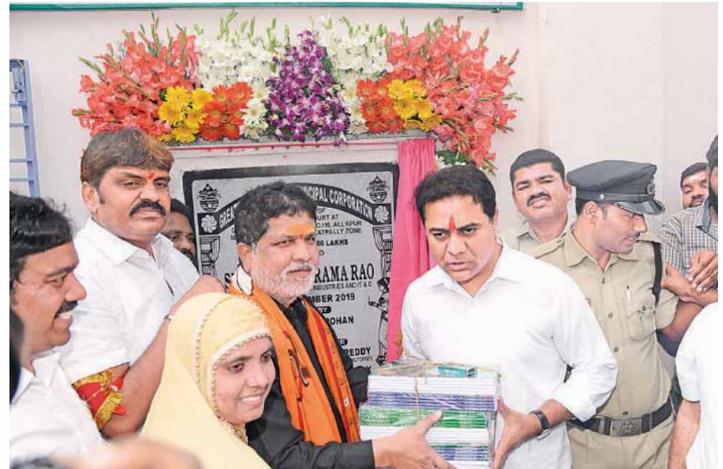
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Double Bedroom houses to the poor, fish market for fishermen community development, sports complex to the youth and laying of foundation stone for ROB for free movement of traffic are the developmental programmes inaugurated by Minister for MA&UD KT Rama Rao here on Thursday in the Kukatpally Constituency.

The Minister along with Minister for Labour & Employment Ch Malla Reddy, HW Mayor, DR Bonthu Rammoohan, MLCs Naveen Kumar, Shambipur Raju, MLA M Krishna Rao, Commissioner GHMC Lokesh Kumar, Dy Mayor Baba Fasiuddin and Collector, Medchal M V Reddy visited Kukatpally Constituency and inaugurated the developmental programmes worth Rs.101.69 crores.

The 2BHKs, constructed with a cost of Rs 9.34 crore at Chittramma Basti were handed over to the beneficiaries. The housing complex constitutes cellar, still with 9 floors, with a carpet area of 560 Sqft each flat. During the inauguration, the beneficiaries welcomed the Minister by organising Bonalu, Bathukamma.

The Minister along with Minister Ch Malla Reddy and others entered the houses along with the beneficiaries during



MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao and others during the inauguration of 2BHK houses in Kukatpally on Thursday

IT Minister KT Rama Rao inaugurates 108 2BHK houses at Chittramma nagar Basti, an indoor stadium built at Kukatpally 6th phase, and a modern fish market

house warming ceremony. The beneficiaries expressed their happiness by saying that from now onwards they can also live dignity with all amenities as others. Later the Minister inaugu-

rated two indoor stadiums built at a cost of Rs 6.51 crore. Wholesale fish market Further the Minister inaugurated wholesale fish market for

the benefit of fishermen. The market was built at a cost of Rs 2.78 crore, where the National Fisheries Development Corporation contributed Rs 2.25 crore and GHMC Rs 53.20 lakhs respectively. Later the Minister laid foundation stone for construction of ROB worth Rs 83.00 crore at Khaithalapur. Once the bridge is completed, it will ease the traffic congestion in JNTU Junction, Malaysia Town Ship, Hi-tech City flyover, Cyber tower junction, etc.

Denied promotion, NIMS nurse attempts suicide

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A staff nurse working at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) hospital attempted suicide by slitting her wrist and throat in the hospital premises at Panjagutta on Thursday. Police said that the nurse alleged discrimination by higher officials based on nativity in giving promotions.

The nurse, identified as Nirmala, has been working at the hospital for over a decade as a staff nurse. According to the police, Nirmala tried to kill herself by slashing her throat and wrist by using a surgical blade. However, her colleagues who noticed her attempt, rushed her to emergency care, where she was treated.

Nirmala alleged that only employees from Andhra Pradesh were being treated better and prioritised for office promotions and better postings. A few employees from the hospital said that even after the

formation of Telangana, discrimination continues at NIMS and the hospital' higher officials favour people from Andhra Pradesh. This discrimination exists despite most of the senior officials hailing from Telangana.

Sources at the hospital said that Nirmala was immediately treated for her injuries and is out of danger. The Panjagutta police said that no case was registered yet as the nurse refused to give a statement.

According to sources, Nirmala wanted to shift to the administration side a few years ago but was denied by the management.

Following her request being denied, she approached the High Court. However, the High Court dismissed her petition and ruled in favour of the hospital after which employees of NIMS protested against the High Court's ruling.

'Prajavani' sessions are held between 10 am and 1 pm every Monday. However, the officials have not been attending them for the past several days

With the official apathy, the programme, which was launched in 2012 with the aim of allowing citizens to meet with the heads of departments and have their grievances addressed on the spot, has lost its motto.

Citizens end up running from pillar to post to have their problems resolved. Some of them are hurling

abuses at the officers and leaving the session due to lack of grievance redressal.

GHMC official cite that the Cabinet sub-committee meeting is impeding them from attending 'Prajavani' grievances. Most of the senior officials are attending the meeting and without them, no official is even hearing grievances' from public.

Commissioner Lokesh Kumar said, "We are requesting the government and that cabinet sub committee meeting won't last for many days, once the crucial decisions are taken". However, Commissioner dismissed the claims of lack of officials on field and said that the field level inspections are going on regular basis.

CHILDREN'S DAY

'Govt firm on implementing more schemes for children'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Woman and Child Welfare Minister Sathyavathi Rathode has made it clear that her department is striving to implement various legislations governing children efficiently and committed to implement government schemes meant for the children. Moreover, the Minister expressed the department's readiness to implement many more efficient services to children of the state.

Participating as chief guest at the Children's Day Celebrations held at Ravindra Bharati here on Thursday, she wished that children should grow up as good citizens. The Government has been implementing many welfare measures to protect children and providing nutritious food to the expectant mothers to ensure healthy growth of the baby in the womb. She said childhood is valuable in a person's life and hence exhorted children to become good citizens making good use of child hood.



Kids perform during the Children's Day celebrations held at Ravindra Bharati on Thursday. (Right) Minister Sathyavathi Rathode addresses the gathering



Govt is striving hard in efficient implementation of laws like Juvenile Justice Act-2015, Child Marriages (Prevention) Act-2006 and others, said Minister Sathyavathi Rathod

government has been taking all measures to ensure children lead a happy life. The Minister released a Childline Poster and those of Shramik Vikas Girls' Alliance and End Child Trafficking on the occasion. She presented prizes to children B Mounika, G

Manideep, B Kaumudi, Devena and Spoorthy for their meritorious performance in various fields of activity.

Earlier, the minister went round various stalls put up at the venue on the occasion. Earlier a rally was taken out from Gun Park to Ravindra Bharati with the participation of children, officials of various government departments and representatives of civil society organisations on the occasion.

Juvenile Welfare Department director Sailaja, TS CPCRP president Srinivas Rao, Unicef representative Mishelle, women and child welfare joint director Anuradha, district welfare officer Jhansi Laxmi, students of various schools, representatives of NGOs and others took part in the celebrations.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA						
Revenue Department						
Office of the District Collector						
Jogulamba Gadwal Dist.						
FOR VIII						
PUBLICATION OF DECLARATION						
(SEE -SUB-RULE (1) OF RULE -25 AND SECTION -19 (1) OF THE Act 2013 (Central Act -30/2013))						
District Collector File No. A2/78/2018	Date: 01.05.2019					
Sub Collector File No. A2/78/2018	Date: 17.04.2019					
Gazette No. 08/19	Date: 01.05.2019					
Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana / Collector Jogulamba Gadwal K.T. Daddi Mandal Eerlagadda Village requires that a total of Ac. 3.07 Cents of Patta lands / Government land are required by the rehabilitation purpose namely Jawahar (Nettempadu) Lift Irrigation Project Package No. 104 D8/1L Main Canal for public purpose.						
Therefore declaration is made that land measuring, Ac. 3.07 Cents of Patta lands/ Government land of standard measurement under acquisition of lands situated at Kondapur village of K.T. Daddi Mandal Jogulamba Gadwal District.						
[SCHEDULE]						
Village: Eerlagadda			Mandal: K.T. Daddi			
District: Jogulamba Gadwal						
Sl. No.	Survey No.	Type of Title (Patta/Govt. Inam etc.)	Type of Land (Dry/Wet etc.)	Area Under Acquisition (Ac.Cents)	Name and Address (Details of those who belongs to the land)	Tree Types/Nos. Constructions Type/land in Sq.Yds
1	226	Patta	Dry	0.12	1.Vadda Rangaappa S/o Yankappa 2.Vadda Pantiah S/o Yankappa 3. Vadda Ramanna S/o Ranganna 4.Chakali Govindamma W/o Anjaneyulu 5.Chakali Jayaramulu S/o Hanmanthu 6.Chakali Gopal S/o Hanmanthu 7.Chakali Swamy S/o Hanmanthu 8.Chakali Narsimulu S/o Hanmanthu 9.Chakali Hanmanthu S/o Sayanna 10.Chakali Govindamma W/o Anjaneyulu 11.Chakali Narsimulu S/o Hanmanthu 12.Chakali Rangaappa Aliyas Rangsawmy S/o Hanmanthu	Nil
2	228	Patta	Dry	0.26	1.Chakali Hanmanthu S/o Sayanna 2.Chakali Rangaappa Aliyas Rangsawmy S/o Hanmanthu 3.Chakali Govindamma W/o Anjaneyulu 4.Chakali Narsimulu S/o Hanmanthu 5.Chakali Jayaramulu S/o Hanmanthu 6.Chakali Gopal S/o Hanmanthu 7.Chakali Swamy S/o Hanmanthu 8.A.Srinivas S/o Pantanna 9.Sanjevelu S/o Janglappa 10.Govindamma W/o Sanjeevelu 11.Ramesh S/o Yallappa 12.Ramchandrabhai S/o Timmahai 13.Govindamma W/o Hanumanthappa	Nil
3	229	Patta	Dry	1.29	1.Kurva Veeresh S/o Hanumantappa 2.K.Srinivasulu S/o Ramreddy 3.K.M.Raviprakash S/o Ramreddy	Nil
4	230	Patta	Dry	1.40	1.Govindamma W/o Hanumantappa 2.Kurva Veeresh S/o Hanumantappa 3.K.Srinivasulu S/o Ramreddy 4.K.M.Raviprakash S/o Ramreddy	Nil
				Total	3.07	

The declaration is issued after verification of objections under section 15 (Central Act 30/2013).
Mines of coal, iron, slate or other minerals lying under the said land or any particular portion of the said land, except such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction of project.
A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the Sub Collector, Jawahar Lift Irrigation Project Gadwal on any working day.

Sd/-
Special Deputy Collector,
Jawahar Lift Irrigation Project,
Gadwal

Sd/-
District Collector,
Jogulamba Gadwal Dist.,
Gadwal

DIPR No. : 1037/LA/PP/Agency/2019-20

'Praja Darbar possible only with Congress'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MLA from Sangareddy Turpu Jaya Prakash Reddy has said that conduct of 'Praja Darbar' is only possible under Congress government. "AICC Chief Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi have the power of removing the Congress' Chief Minister if he behaves like a 'dictator'. The attitude of feeling themselves as heroes will not work in Congress. Every party worker has to work following the directions of Sonia Gandhi, he said.

Jagga Reddy urged the party high command to give TPCC chief position to him if present TPCC chief N U t t a m K u m a r R e d d y tenders resignation. He said that he is seeking TPCC chief position for the sake of 'Loka Kalyanam'. It may be recalled that the then Congress Chief Minister late YS Rajasekhara Reddy conducted 'Praja Darbar' in his Camp Office at Begumpet.

He said that good governance in Telangana is only possible with Congress. He said that he worked with Congress, TRS and BJP and he knows as to how to face TRS and BJP if given an opportunity to work as PCC Chief. "There is no truth in the rumor that the party high command will give TPCC Chief position only to the leaders who have money, he said.

Intense lobbying for TPCC president post

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

The race for the TPCC chief post has escalated in the state. Enthusiastic Telangana Congress leaders are leaving no stone unturned to grab the post. As part of it, party MLA from Sangareddy Turpu Jayaprakash Reddy aka Jagga Reddy has posted his bio-data to AICC leaders urging the party high command to consider his candidature for the TPCC president post, stating that he will bring the lost glory to the party. "I have medicine to bring back the party to power," once he said.

On the other hand, some others like AICC secretary SA Sampath Kumar are also trying to grab the PCC chief on their own way. All the way, lobbying and recommendations for the TPCC chief has been intensified.

The AICC is conducting a meeting on November 16 to discuss several issues. The AICC had already sent the communication in this regard to the state parties' across the nation. AICC general secretaries/AICC Secretaries, PCC Presidents, CLP leaders would attend the meeting. According to sources, the meeting will discuss various issues including the new PCC chiefs issue, where required.

According to Gandhi Bhavan sources, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, A Revanth Reddy are seriously trying to grab the position. However, leaders like Jagga Reddy are also going to test their fate by



A Revanth Reddy Komatireddy Venkat Reddy Jagga Reddy

● Jagga Reddy posts his bio-data to AICC leaders for TPCC chief position

● According to sources, the race is between Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and Revanth Reddy

According to highly placed sources, the competition for the PCC chief position is between Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and A Revanth Reddy. Venkat Reddy has the support of senior leaders, however, Revanth Reddy has the support of young leaders of the party, said the sources.

Both leaders are influencing the high command in their own way. The senior leaders, who are supporting Venkat Reddy, on condition of anonymity, said that Venkat Reddy is a senior leader and will strive hard to bring the party to the power. The seniors were saying that Komatireddy is with the party since from the beginning of his political career.

However, the young leaders, who are with Revanth Reddy, argue that the party needs 'josh' and Revanth Reddy will infuse the much-needed 'josh' in the party. According to party leaders, 'money' factor would also play a key role in selecting the PCC Chief. However, Jagga Reddy said that high command will not consider 'money' factor.

posting their bio-data for the same. It is learnt that K Jana Reddy, D Sridhar Babu and T Jeevan Reddy were not competing for the position, however, they reportedly said that they will take up the position if party high command asks them to takeover.

Senior leader V Hanumantha Rao, who once acted as PCC Chief during united Andhra Pradesh state, is also putting his efforts to take up the assignment. He is reportedly arguing that the party high command has to do justice to the BCs by giving the top position to the community and said that the high command has to give the position to the party loyalists.

HC extends stay on privatisation of RTC routes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High court on Thursday extended the interim stay granted on the issuance of private permits on 5,100 routes of TSRTC till Monday next week.

A division bench of the high court took the decision while hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) plea filed by the Vice President of the Telangana Jana Samithi Dr. PL Visweswar Rao on the issue. Arguing the case before the HC, the Advocate-General of the state BS Prasad submitted in a sealed cover the cabinet decision regarding privatisation of the permits of the RTC in the state.

Surprised at this, the High Court sought to know the reason for the submission of a certified copy of the cabinet decision in a sealed cover in a secret form. It also asked the AG to reveal the contents of the cabinet decision in the open court.

When the AG refused to disclose the contents of the cabinet decision in the court hall, the bench called the AG and heard explanation in person, along with the Transport Commissioner of the state. The AG then told the bench that they could make public the contents of the cabinet decision only after the issuance of a GO on the issue.

The bench later perused the contents of the cabinet decision and directed the counsel for petitioner to amend the prayer and adjourned the case hearing till November 18, 2019.

It may be noted here that, in its interim orders, the division bench of the HC directed the state government and RTC authorities concerned not to take any steps which would

Employees switch to alternate occupations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As the RTC strike turned out to be the longest in the annals of the RTC, 48,000-odd workers of the transport undertaking are going without salary. In fact, the government denied them salary for the month of September. Feeling pinched for money, RTC workers are on one hand taking part in the strike and on the other, have been running errands or practicing their caste-based vocations to support the family.

For the past two months, running families has become difficult for the RTC workers. Whether it is paying house rent or tuition fee or paying EMIs for loans availed or continuing small savings like chits, the striking RTC workers are feeling pinched and looking towards alternate ways of generation of finances to support families.

Conductor Ramesh who hails from toddy tapper's community has been collecting toddy and selling it to support the family. A woman conductor was seen selling custard apples in Yadagirigutta bus stand.

Parvatamma alias Malige Anita, attached to Contonment RTC depot in Hyderabad as conductor, got job in the RTC in 2010, while her husband Balaraju works in a welding shop. The couple has two sons and a daughter. Because of the strike, Parvatamma did not get her salary for the past two months. Pending resolution of the strike, Parvatamma



(Clockwise) Ramesh, a conductor collects toddy; A woman conductor selling custard apples; Parvatamma, a conductor attached to RTC depot in Hyderabad irons clothes

irons clothes in Choutuppal to support the family practicing her caste-based vocation.

In Nalgonda district's Halia, a RTC driver engaged himself as a coolie in sweet lemon garden and earning Rs 300 per day for the past 15 days. He was identified as Khammamapati Narsimha of Anumula village. Prior to joining as driver in Ibrahimpatnam RTC depot in 2006, he used to work as a casual labourer. In Devarakonda, Velijala Srinivasulu, a driver with Devarakonda RTC bus depot for the past 10 years, is working as a barber in his broth-

er's saloon practicing caste-based vocation. He expressed despair that the family is going through a difficult phase as the government withheld the RTC workers' salaries and not able to afford essential commodities as his purchasing power is diminished greatly.

Gosika Kondal Reddy of Vellanki village of Ramannapet mandal was working as conductor with Yadagirigutta RTC bus depot for the past 10 years. Because of the strike, on one hand he takes part in the strike and on the other takes care of harvesting cotton crop in his farm. Similarly, M Suresh of Padmasali colony of Ramannapet is working as conductor in Yadagirigutta RTC depot. Because of the strike, he searched for alternative employment by working as a weaver to support the family.

Govt schools to get facelift in Andhra

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Government schools in Andhra Pradesh are all set to get a facelift with the state government launching a new programme to revamp them by providing better infrastructure and amenities at a cost of Rs 12,000 crore.

Under the scheme 'Mana Badi Nadu Nedu' (our school then and now), 45,000 government-run schools will undergo a complete makeover in the next three years, bringing them on par with or even better than the ones in private and corporate sectors.

The programme, launched by Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy at Ongole on Children's Day, gives a pic-

torial view of schools showing how they look now and how they will look after implementing the scheme, taking nine parameters into consideration - provision of lights, fans, blackboards, furniture and compound wall, construction of toilets, repairs and painting of classrooms, providing safe drinking water and provision for English labs.

The first phase will cover 15,715 government schools for a period of one year, at a cost of Rs 3,500 crore. The YSRCP government claims that school reforms on such a scale and magnitude is perhaps unprecedented in the country. The government has also formed a committee to monitor the functioning of private schools.



AP CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy interacts with a student in Amaravati on Thursday

Now pill to spill blood and fake virginity

Continued from Page 1

Doctors despise the use of products positioned as alternative to hymenoplasty and say that firms are fooling people as they cannot be replacement for hymenoplasty.

Dr. Aparajitha D'souza, Professor and Head of Department OBG/ESI Medical College, said: "This is just like a fake blood powder and almost equivalent to painting the vagina and cannot be replacement of hymenoplasty. If the hymen is ruptured, it is not a sign that the female has lost virginity, because there are so many reasons for hymen rupture. Like accident or injuries, physically exerting sports, gymnastics can go. Hymen is just one membrane-like thing, what if inserting something into vagina gets blocked. We should not be doing anything which we don't know what effect it has and there could be high chances of infection as it might play with pH and disturb natural vaginal bacteria".

Doctor advised young girls to have good sex education and not to indulge in such activities.

Mafia created sand scarcity, says Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday alleged that the sand scarcity in the state was created by sand mafia which was active with the full support of Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief said the sand mafia had spread its activities to neighbouring states as the sand from Andhra Pradesh was being transported illegally to Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The leader of the Opposition was addressing the party workers at 12-hour-long fast undertaken by him here over the sand scarcity. Claiming that the man made scarcity of sand has brought the construction activity in the state to a halt, he said over 35 lakh workers have lost their livelihood.

Naidu alleged that about 50 workers committed suicide as they were not finding the work in the absence of construction activity. He said that despite the suicides, YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government was not responding to the situation. Targeting Jagan Mohan Reddy, the TDP leader alleged that after creating a sand shortage, he entered into a secret deal with certain cement compa-



TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu at a protest in Vijayawada on Thursday

nies. He said YSRCP MLAs and other leaders were given licenses for sand extraction.

Naidu also alleged that they encroached upon the sand reaches and were not allowing farmers to collect the sand from their fields. He demanded immediate steps to stop the illegal transport of sand to cities like Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru. "If the government wants it can stop the illegal transport in one day," he said.

Naidu's Deeksha a big farce: YSRCP MLAs

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders have come down heavily on TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu saying that his 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Deeksha was a big drama. Penamaluru MLA Kolu Parthasaradhi said the TDP leader had looted all the five elements. Naidu had looted thousands of crores of rupees. Admitting that there was some problem in the availability of sand due to floods, Parthasaradhi said now the sand is produced at the rate of 1.5 lakh tonnes per day. Sand would be made available for people freely in about two or three days. He alleged that Naidu was jealous of Jaganmohan Reddy's



welfare schemes for the weaker sections of the society, so he is resorting to dramas in the name of Deekshas. Stating that Naidu was failed to prove his charges against YSRCP leaders, he said, "People are laughing at the TDP Chief." Addressing a press conference at Mylavaram, MLA Vasanta Krishna Prasad said Naidu has no right to observe Deeksha

against sand crisis as TDP leaders attacked the officials who had taken action against the sand mafia during his government. Sand loot had taken place only during the TDP government, he alleged. The Mylavaram MLA alleged that TDP had created artificial scarcity of sand through the Blue Frog company which is under the instructions of Naidu and his son Lokesh. The day is not far off when the people would teach a fitting lesson to Naidu, he said. As per the charge-sheet given by the voters in the last elections, Naidu got 23 seats. In the next elections, he would not get even those seats, he prophesied.

Air pollution claimed over 5 lakh lives

Continued from Page 1

It said coal phase-out is essential, not only as a key measure to mitigate climate change, but also to reduce morbidity and mortality from air pollution.

"Coal continues to be the second largest contributor to global primary energy supply (after oil) and the largest source of electricity generation (at 38 per cent, compared with gas, the next highest at 23 per cent)," the report said, adding that most of the growth in total primary energy supply (TPES) of coal has been in Asia, notably China, India, and Southeast Asia.

Another global study from Switzerland, held earlier this year, revealed that China and the US may be the largest producers of coal power, but power plants in India take the highest toll in the world when it comes to health as coal-fired power plants produce more than just carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming.

RTC JAC drops 'merger' demand to end stalemate

Continued from Page 1

He said that he would sit on hunger strike along with four others on November 16 at Indira Park. On November 17 and 18, RTC workers would stage massive deekshas at RTC depots across the state.

"We will stage Sadak Bandh from Hyderabad to Kodad on November 19", he said. He sought the support of students, trade unions and political parties for the proposed Sadak Bandh program.

Ashwathama said that they had sought an appointment with the Governor to brief her regarding the plight of bereaved families of RTC employees. They also sought the appointment of NHRC in this regard. He pointed out that none of the officials, ministers and MLAs had consoled t h e

Worker dies, another suffers heart attack

Continued from Page 1

His family members took him to Gandhi hospital, where he succumbed on Thursday.

Nageswar got job three years ago as a regular employee of RTC.

Family members protested along with the body of Nageswar at the Narayanakhed RTC depot on Thursday. They refused to move the body

till justice was done to him. However, police thwarted their attempts at the behest of the depot manager.

Sammaiah, who was working as conductor with Mandhatri RTC depot, was devastated as the RTC strike showed no signs of reaching logical conclusion. He suffered a heart attack and was rushed to a private hospital here.



bereaved families. Poor and backward people would lose their employment if the government privatised RTC, he said. Ashwathama thanked Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy for extending his support to the stir launched by RTC JAC.

TS govt strikes down all approvals for uranium mining

Continued from Page 1

The state's Wildlife Board has passed a resolution banning any type of mining for uranium exploration in the tiger reserve.

The Telangana government had passed resolutions against uranium mining in the Legislative Assembly and the Council in September. The forest department will adhere to the resolution passed in the Assembly, said the official. Earlier approvals given to AMD also stand cancelled, he said.

"If uranium exploration is required for science and technology requirements, then AMD should send a new proposal to the state Wildlife Board. The Board will then decide on the methods and techniques used for uranium exploration without disturbing the wildlife and environment in the Nallamala forest zone," he added.



BJP state unit president K Laxman with the party members who joined the saffron party in Hyderabad on Thursday

Rafale verdict a blow to Cong: Laxman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP state president Dr K Laxman said that Supreme Court judgment on Rafale has established that how Modi government is sincere and honest in dealing such important issues.

Speaking to media at state BJP office here, Laxman said the apex court has strike down review petitions on Rafale deal and rejected all allegation leveled by Congress and Rahul Gandhi. "Rahul Gandhi, who contested for PM post had launched a malicious and baseless campaign on Rafale deal which was rejected not only by the people even our

Supreme Court also rejected review petitions. Rahul Gandhi should restrain leveling any allegations against individuals," he said.

The state BJP chief said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken courageous decisions for the country like abrogation of article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, Triple Talak and Ayodhya issues which were solved peacefully. He described Modi and Amit Shah as "Krishna and Arjuna" of Mahabharata. Taking a dig at Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao Laxman alleged that KCR's graph is coming down day by day due to his anti-people policies.

Loco pilot's condition still critical

Continued from Page 1

NDRF personnel extricated the critically injured loco pilot after over eight hours.

Prior to amputating the leg, doctors counseled his family members.

Chandrasekhar's father Joseph, speaking to media over the line of treatment being given to his son, said that blood circulation in the right leg had been affected, considering the patient did not feel any sensation. He said that the health condition of Chandrasekhar, going by vital signs, would improve slowly. He said that Chandrasekhar had regained his consciousness and was in a position to identify all.

Joseph said that the ghastly accident left his son with multiple fractures. Upon improvement in Chandrasekhar's health condition, doctors would conduct surgeries to treat multiple fractures.

Resuming duty before deadline in spirit, but not in letter!

Continued from Page 1

In response to CM's call, 495 employees had submitted letters. Of them, only 220 employees are currently attending duties. The rest of the employees are deemed to be on strike.

The reason, RTC officials claim, is that they have not received the willingness letters that were submitted in government offices or police stations. With this, officials are still considering the employees to be 'on strike'.

Worried employees are running around respective bus depots seeking clarity on their job status. The depot managers concerned are sending them back, saying that they have not received their willingness letters so far. Even if the employees are willing to give fresh letters, the depot managers are not accepting them, saying the deadline has passed and that they have no instructions from the government to accept fresh letters.

CAPSULE

Newly married couple arrested for brandishing firearms at reception

KOHIMA: A newly married couple in Nagaland's Dimapur town were arrested by police after a photo of them brandishing assault rifles on their wedding reception went viral on social media, a police officer said on Thursday. The Dimapur police took suo moto cognizance of the photo of the couple posing with assault rifles on their wedding reception and arrested them on Wednesday for unauthorised display of firearms in contravention to the ceasefire ground rules, the officer said. Bohota Kiba and his newly married wife posed for photographs with the assault rifles on November 9 during their reception, the police said. Bohota Kiba's father Kilo Kilonser is a senior member of the NSCN (NK), the police said. Two other NSCN(NK) militants who gave the couple the weapons to pose with were also arrested by the police, the officer said. The couple were later released on police bail bond, the officer added.



CBI interrogates IPS officer Arnab Ghosh in Saradha case

KOLKATA: IPS officer Arnab Ghosh, one of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) members that initially probed the Saradha scam, was interrogated by the CBI here on Thursday over alleged suppression of evidence. This was the second time that Ghosh was being questioned by the central investigating agency in this connection this year. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) sources said that the officer was questioned at the CBI office in CGO complex in Salt Lake regarding some "missing" articles like a red diary and a pen drive that the central agency had been seeking since the investigation was handed over to it by the SC. The SIT was formed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to probe the Saradha chit fund scam before the CBI began an investigation at the orders of the Supreme Court in 2014.

PM, Sonia pay tributes to Nehru on his birth anniversary

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress President Sonia Gandhi and former President Pranab Mukherjee on Thursday paid homage to India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru on his 130th birth anniversary. Former Vice President Hamid Ansari, former PM Manmohan Singh and a number of Congress MPs, senior leaders and party workers also paid homage and floral tributes at Nehru's memorial at the Shanti Van, the final resting place. "Tributes to our former PM Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his birth anniversary," Modi tweeted. Party leader and Nehru's great grandson Rahul Gandhi remembered Nehru as one of the great architects of India. "On his birth anniversary, we remember our first PM, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Ji, a statesman, visionary, scholar, institution builder & one of the great architects of modern India," Rahul tweeted.

AAP slams Centre over air pollution

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the air quality in Delhi again deteriorated to alarming levels, the AAP on Thursday hit out at the Centre for not taking "concrete steps" to tackle pollution despite a Supreme Court direction to expedite deliberations to find a permanent solution to the problem.

The air quality remained in the severe category on Thursday and the Delhi-NCR region shrouded by a thick layer of toxic smog. It neared the "emergency" level for the second time in a fortnight on Wednesday due to raging farm fires in neighbouring states and unfavourable weather.

Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh alleged that the BJP is trying to "politicise" a sensitive issue like pollution and the Centre is not taking concrete steps to tackle the issue.

"The BJP, on the other hand, is trying to increase the pollution in the national capital. I think it is time that the Centre clarifies why no concrete steps are being taken despite the Supreme Court's direction," Singh told reporters.

He claimed that a meeting on pollution held by Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar was not attended by state environ-



The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to explore the feasibility of a hydrogen-based Japanese technology as a permanent solution to the air pollution in the NCR region and other parts of north India.

ment ministers of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan. "I request these ministers to show some seriousness towards the sensitive issue. Just to portray AAP in bad light, you are putting people at risk not only in Delhi but also in Punjab and Haryana who are suffering due to pollution by stubble burning," he said. The Supreme Court on

Wednesday directed the Centre to explore the feasibility of a hydrogen-based Japanese technology as a permanent solution to the air pollution in the NCR region and other parts of north India. The court directed the Centre to expedite the deliberations on the issue and come before the court with its findings on Dec 3.

2 arrested during encounter for slaughtering calf

PNS ■ NOIDA

Two suspected cattle thieves were held here after an exchange of gunfire with police early on Thursday when the accused and two of their partners were allegedly slaughtering a calf, officials said. Officials at Sector 39 police station during patrolling noticed some suspicious activity being carried out in an open ground near a cemetery in Sector 38A around 3.45 am, they said.

"When the police team inquired about their presence along with a calf, the men opened fire at the officials and tried to escape. Two of the accused got injured in retaliatory firing by the police, while two others managed to escape," Superintendent of Police, Noida, Vineet Jaiswal said. The carcass of the calf was found strewn on the ground, while some equipment, including a butcher's chopper, were also recovered from the spot, police said.

Two illegal firearms were also seized from the injured duo, they said. Those injured have been



identified as Nazim, 35, and Farman, 21, and admitted at the district hospital for treatment, while those absconding are Naushad and Kaamil, Jaiswal said.

The accused hailed from Amroha district in Uttar Pradesh but were staying in Delhi's Jamia Nagar area and had picked up the calf straying on road, he added. An FIR has been registered under relevant provisions of the law against the accused and Noida Police has contacted their counterparts in Amroha and Delhi for details of their criminal history, if any, Jaiswal said.

Slaughtering of cow and its progeny is prohibited in the state under the Uttar Pradesh Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, 1955.

Tripura govt helping farmers with orange cultivation

PNS ■ AGARTHALA

The Tripura government is helping farmers grow orange in new areas of the state, Agriculture minister Pranajit Sinharoy has said.

The state government has given 200 families with Rs 15,000 each to grow orange in Baramura hill range in West Tripura district.

"We are trying to expand orange production in different parts of Tripura because the climatic condition supports orange productions in the state. For the first time, orange was grown in 500 hectare of land in Baramura hill range in West Tripura district," Sinharoy told a press conference here on Wednesday.

He said in one hectare of land 80,000 pieces of oranges are grown. In 500 hectares of land 40,000,000 pieces of oranges were grown this time in Baramura range. Orange is also being grown in Ampa and Killa blocks of Gomati district and Sakhan hills of Dhalai district. Earlier orange cultivation was only done in Jampui hills in North Tripura district.

Noida Litfest to see participation by over 60 speakers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It is raining literature festivals in the country and joining the bandwagon is Noida International Literature Festival that is hosting over 60 literary figures to celebrate the power of the written word. Opening on Saturday, the two-day literary event themed "The World of Dreams and Imagination", will be held at Radisson Blu MBD, Sector-18, Noida, organizers Vibhor Festival Trust said in a statement.

Among the speakers will be writers Narendra Kohli, Anirban Ganguly, Vikram Sampath, Sudeep Sen, Rajat Sethi, politician Varun Gandhi, and classical dancer Arushi Nishank.

"The free for all festival will have 33 events and activities, including book readings, talks, panel discussions, debates, book launches, music and dance and poetry, celebrating literature, art, music, poetry and freedom of expression," they added.

The festival, now in its third edition, will also host panel discussions on pertinent issues ranging from "India's rising soft power", "Women Empowerment" and "LGBTQ" to "Horror fiction writing", "Indian cinema" and "Writing in Dogri".

Baby abandoned on MP street adopted by European couple

PNS ■ NEEMUCH

An infant, abandoned by his parents on a street in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district, has been adopted by a couple from Malta.

A senior official of the city-based orphanage which took care of Kush, who is now one-and-a-half years old, expressed happiness that the boy finally got a family and hoped his fortunes will now change for good.

His adoptive parents - Glenn George Grimon and Katia Grimon - were also overjoyed to have a son after being childless for last 14 years.

Kush was just a day old when the police rescued him from a city street where his parents left him one-and-a-half years back. He was subsequently sent to the government recognised orphanage 'Shishu Grah', its director Usha Gupta said. In the meantime, the Grimons, in their quest to have a baby, got to know about the orphanage through an agency in Europe and then made all efforts to come to Neemuch and adopt the child.

Kush was formally adopted by the Grimons on Wednesday after completion of all legal formalities, Gupta said.

"The boy was just one-day-old when he arrived at our cen-



A senior official of the city-based orphanage which took care of Kush, who is now one-and-a-half years old, expressed happiness that the boy finally got a family and hoped his fortunes will now change for good

tre. But now he has got a good family to take care of him. We are really happy for him," she said. The Grimons were equally thrilled at the prospect of taking Kush home. "We have been married for 14 years, but we could not have a child. So, we chose to adopt a baby and contacted an agency in Europe from where we got in touch with the Shishu Grah," said Glenn Grimon, who works as a finance officer in a shipping company.

Rs 2,904 cr payout for Marathwada farmers mooted

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

A compensation of Rs 2,904.36 crore needs to be paid to farmers in Maharashtra's Marathwada region for the crop loss caused by unseasonal rains, a government report has said.

A report prepared by the Aurangabad divisional commissioner's office said that unseasonal rains affected 44,33,549 farmers, ruining crops over 41,49,175 hectares of land in eight districts.

The report, based on a survey conducted by the revenue department, was submitted to the state administration on Wednesday, deputy divisional commissioner Parag Soman said. The state is currently under President's rule.

The perennially drought-stricken region of Marathwada received poor rainfall this monsoon, but was pounded by heavy showers in October, destroying standing kharif crops.



Objectionable messages on Vivekananda statue at JNU

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Objectionable messages were found written on the pedestal of a yet to be unveiled statue of Swami Vivekananda on the JNU campus on Thursday.

There was no immediate reaction from the varsity's administration over the incident, which came to light after a video went viral.

The statue, which is covered in a saffron-coloured cloth, is located at the varsity's administrative block.

Representatives of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) denied their involvement in the incident and said they will issue a statement soon. On Wednesday, students had painted various messages for vice-chancellor Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar inside the administration block of the university as they barged inside the building to talk to him about the hostel fee hike.

By evening, the fee hike saw a partial rollback and JNU said the clauses in the Draft Hostel Manual pertaining to the dress code and curfew timings were also removed. Hundreds of students, led by



By evening, the fee hike saw a partial rollback and JNU said the clauses in the Draft Hostel Manual pertaining to the dress code and curfew timings were also removed

the JNUSU, had barged inside the administration block to talk to the VC and on not find-

ing him and other officials in the building, painted messages on the walls near his office.

"You are not our VC. Go back to your Sangh," they wrote on one of the doors to the VC's office. Another message written on the floor outside the office read, "Mamidala, Bye, Bye Forever."

The varsity administration, after facing two weeks of protests, rolled back the hostel fee hike partially for BPL students not availing any scholarship. Students dubbed the move an "eyewash".

Mathematician Vashishtha Narayan Singh dies in Patna

PNS ■ PATNA

Renowned mathematician Vashishtha Narayan Singh died at a hospital here on Thursday after prolonged illness, his family members said.

He was 74. Singh, who had been ailing for quite some time, died at the Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH).

Expressing grief over Singh's death, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, it has caused an irreparable loss to the state and the country. The chief minister announced that Singh will be cremated with full state honours, an official release said.

Singh, who was born at Basantpur village in Bhojpur district, did his schooling from Netarhat school in undivided Bihar. He studied at Patna Science College after which he went to University of California in 1965 and completed his Ph.D on cycle vector space theory in 1969.



Cops resume work at Tis Hazari court, lawyers continue strike

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Thursday resumed duty to look after the security at the Tis Hazari court premises after a gap of about two weeks following clashes with lawyers even as advocates continued to boycott work.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Monika Bhardwaj apprised District Judge Girish Kathpalia of the security status and informed him that police personnel have been deployed at the three entrances of the



court premises. apprehensions of a hostile environment, about 20 police

personnel resumed work wearing civil dress instead of the uniform.

being appointed at each of the entrances and the lockup area, where the alleged police firing incident had taken place during the clash, they were asked to apprise the senior officials if alterations take place between them and the lawyers.

In all the six district courts in the national capital continued to boycott work completely on Thursday to protest against the clash at Tis Hazari court in early November, with proxy counsels appearing in courts to

take dates in matters and assist the litigants.

of advocates marched on the streets near the Saket court, raising "We want justice" slogan and holding placards. Traffic was blocked and diverted for half an hour while they marched on the road.

Singh Kasana, general secretary of coordination committee of All District Courts Bar Associations in Delhi, said that advocates of all the district courts here will protest outside the Parliament on November 20.

COAL SCAM

Court awards 3-year jail term to 2 directors of company

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday awarded varying jail terms to three persons in a coal scam case related to irregularities in the allocation of the Jharkhand-based North Dhadhu coal block.

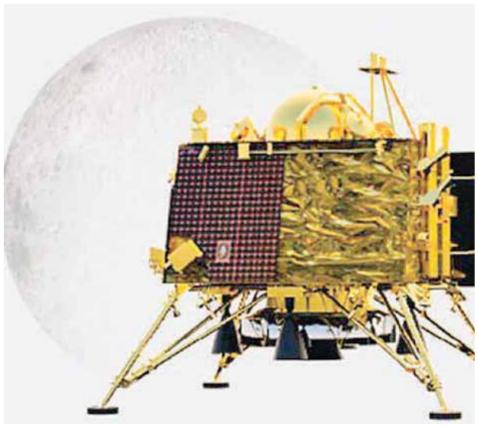
Two directors of Pawanjay Steel and Power Limited (PSPL), Gyanchand Prasad Agarwal (70) and Umesh Prasad Agarwal (58), were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a period of three years each for the offences of criminal conspiracy (120-B of IPC) and cheating (420 of IPC), while 65-year-old S K Kanungo, Chief Manager (Marketing) of Hari Managers Ltd (HML), was jailed for a period of two years for the offence punishable under 120-B of the IPC. Special judge Bharat Parashar also imposed a fine of Rs 75 lakh on the company, while Rs 40 lakh each was imposed on the Agarwals. Besides, the court also directed Kanungo to pay a fine of Rs one lakh.

It said "dishonest misrepresentation" was made by the accused before the Screening Committee and it continued even before then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was also holding the portfolio of Minister of Coal, approved the recommendation of the committee. "Off-late the anti social activities of persons of the upper socioeconomic strata of the society in their occupation and which have come to be known as 'white collar crimes' have attracted attention..." "Such white collar crimes are in fact more dangerous to the society than ordinary crimes, firstly, because the financial losses are much higher, and, secondly because of the damages inflicted on public morale," the court said. The court dismissed the contentions of the advocate P K Dubey, appearing for the convicts, that no loss was caused to anyone as no coal could be extracted, saying that "non-extraction of coal in itself has caused huge loss to the country".



CHANDRAYAAN-3

India may again attempt soft landing on Moon next Nov



PNS ■ BENGALURU

After an unsuccessful bid two months ago, India may attempt another soft landing on the Moon by next year-end, probably in November, sources in ISRO said on Thursday.

The Indian Space Research Organisation had constituted a high-level committee, headed by S Somanath, Director of Thiruvananthapuram-based Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, the lead centre responsible for all launch vehicle programmes of ISRO, to prepare a report on the proposed Chandrayaan-3.

"The panel's report is awaited. The committee has been given a guideline to prepare the

"Rover, lander and landing operations will get more focus this time and whatever deficiencies in the Chandrayaan-2 mission will be corrected," sources in the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said

mission before the end of next year," a senior ISRO official said.

"There is a good launch window in November".

"Rover, lander and landing operations will get more focus this time and whatever deficiencies in the Chandrayaan-2 mission will be corrected,"

sources in the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said.

On September 7, ISRO attempted a soft landing of Chandrayaan-2's 'Vikram' on the uncharted lunar south pole, before losing communication with the lander.

A national level committee

consisting of academics and ISRO experts, headed by V Narayanan, Director of the space agency's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre, has analysed the cause of communication loss with the lander.

The members of the panel included those from VSSC and U R Rao Satellite Centre.

"This committee has pinpointed as to what went wrong. They have prepared a voluminous report and are believed to have submitted it to the Space Commission," an ISRO official said. "It's expected to be put in the public domain after the approval of the PMO," the official said.

Sabarimala takeaways

By referring its order that allows women entry into the shrine to a larger Bench, SC is buying time, not giving in



Faith over women's rights? A regressive over a progressive society? Religion justifying patriarchy or not? The Supreme Court needs more time, investigations and a larger bench to give answers on who can pray at Sabarimala, knowing that its ruling will become a precedent for all time to come and should, therefore, be well-considered. That it will affect 50 per cent of the nation's population, namely women, who could always interpret justice as hostage to a brute majoritarian force. Till then, its earlier order allowing women of reproductive age into the shrine holds. There were assumptions that the Supreme Court's verdict on Ayodhya, which relied heavily on the faith of believers and their continued practice of it, would influence it to review its own order. Simply because the patriarchal servitors of the house of Lord Ayyappa, the celibate God, had codified belief that women of a certain age group would bring temptation to a sacred space, if not the lord himself. As if menstruation and procreation were sins rather than the law of the universe. With their early hold on interpreting religion, they appropriated primacy by unequal means and solidified it as an ordained custom. They monopolised godliness when faith is a soul concern, irrespective of gender. They even equated the deity's rights to that of Ram *lalla's*, humanising the claims of the God-kings to be treated as private individuals in their own homes. Such has been the sanctity of this practice in the public domain that even Judge Indu Malhotra, during the earlier ruling, had wondered if the ban should be respected as the ritualistic right of a sect to keep to its customs as a secular allowance. The apex court doesn't usually admit a review plea but given the confusion, it did so despite a 3:2 verdict, with justices Rohinton Nariman and DY Chandrachud against another relook. Though petitioners may claim an admission of oversight is implicit in this decision, there are layered takeaways. One, it is intended to defer another ruling of landmark proportions so soon after the Ayodhya verdict and control the fallout. Second, the top court has suggested widening the ambit of a woman's devotional rights across religions, including the entry of women into mosques and Parsi shrines and the practice of female genital mutilation in the Dawoodi Bohra community. This could work both ways. For one, the localised appeal by a sect could be circumvented and made a subset of a larger ruling on democratic rights of women across religions. Or the Hindu sect could be treated at par with the other groups with a right to practise their socially sanctioned faith and attendant rituals. Last but not the least, the deferment helps most mainstream political parties, which do not want to deal with the ramifications before the Kerala elections in 2021. For the BJP, which has thrown its weight behind a review of the order allowing women inside the shrine, its stance has so far not yielded results, the party failing to win either a seat or increase its vote-share during the Lok Sabha elections. The Congress, in fact, has gained for endorsing the same line, that the hill shrine be entitled to its own traditions. So the court's need to study the objections raised is a reprieve for all parties concerned.

Yet it raises a vital question. Why do we need the highest judicial authority of the land to lay down the code of societal evolution and dynamism when we should be reforming practices and executing them ourselves? Why are we still hesitant to acknowledge that we need to look at women as they are without being referenced by the patriarchal gaze, be it social or religious. Lord Ayyappa himself as a fountainhead of divinity would not have discriminated between his people. The Hindu pantheon has always prided the sacredness of both the masculine and feminine as essential attributes of spiritual enlightenment and has made women the originator of *shakti*. Our early Vedic texts are replete with examples of women scholars and priests. Believers maintain that Lord Ayyappa had sworn not to marry till his earthly mission was fulfilled and women devotees who understand empathise with the woman who still waits for him. But Ayyappa is also the most democratic god there is. Devotees dress uniformly in black, symbolising a renunciation of worldly pleasures and donning a garb of equality beyond caste and other social hierarchies. A Dalit can lead the prayers if he is the group leader and a Brahmin follower must touch his feet, too. Nowhere in Hindu rituals is such liberalism on display. So lord Ayyappa himself would not turn away the genuine seeker, be it a woman or man. When will we understand this?

Setback for Congress

The SC dismissal of the Rafale plea has given the BJP fresh ammunition to target the party



Now that the Rafale jets have made their way to India and their indispensability has been proven to our forces, the Supreme Court was expected to dismiss a review petition against their acquisition. Politically though, it gave the BJP, weather-beaten by the latest round of Assembly results, some ammunition to beat the Congress with all over again. The latter was in for some embarrassment, not because its poll plank on the questionable nature of the Rafale deal was battered electorally, but because the court warned the party's former

chief Rahul Gandhi for justifying his "*chowkidar chor hai*" jibe, citing court observations that were never made. While the court exempted him from a contempt case, the BJP used the severity of its warning to demand a national apology from the Gandhi scion for insulting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The "*chowkidar chor hai*" slogan wasn't just in bad taste but gave the BJP an opportunity to crest public opinion by taking a high moral ground. It, in fact, turned the slogan on its head to make its most effective brand slogan of "*Main bhi chowkidaar*." The Congress, therefore, will have no manoeuvring space in its self-defence now and the BJP won't let go of a chance of cornering Rahul on this. Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad lost no time in reminding that not only did Rahul call the Prime Minister a thief, he lied about the former French Prime Minister's statements and misquoted the Supreme Court. Without a cogent defence on the sliding economy and other pressing issues, the BJP is expected to use the Rafale ruling to animate much of the discussions in Parliament. The Congress may want to shy away from being reminded about its follies but cannot walk away from them either, considering that Rahul continued with the Rafale bandwagon in the run-up to the Maharashtra polls. He may be now demanding a JPC probe and the Congress, as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, may keenly vet the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor-General) report on Rafale but there's no political capital to be made. Already facing a crisis of confidence, the Congress now needs to be careful in choosing its target and subject. It needs to work on specifics and choose issues that impact everyday life rather than blustering against the monolithic consistency of Modi. It has an existing grassroots matrix to revive its local presence in States first, championing local issues. That seems to be working. Anti-Congressism is now a convenient excuse for everybody and the party must now think whether it really wants to be an excuse in Indian politics or be something else.

Pay heed to warning signs

It is unfortunate that the Government has failed to take cognisance of the deteriorating law and order situation in the country when one expected it to act responsibly



AJOY KUMAR

A little less than two weeks ago, the national capital witnessed unprecedented protests by hundreds of policemen. The personnel gheraoed their headquarters, demanding intervention and support of senior officers with respect to the clash that took place between them and the lawyers at the Tis Hazari district court complex. On their part, the lawyers have been on a strike and have threatened to continue with it unless their demands are heard to protect them from what they call the high-handedness of the police. While the origin of the dispute is unclear, it has been reported that the clash was over a parking dispute. Whatever be the reason, the scuffle between them escalated into something much more serious. It was reported that three lawyers were shot and as a result of the struggle, more than 30 people were severely injured. Police vans and vehicles were set on fire and the lawyers' chambers were ransacked. The dispute continues to linger till the date of writing this article and peaceful ground between the police and the lawyers looks far away. Both sides have stuck to their guns, holding the other side responsible for the scuffle.

Almost a year ago, a similar dispute had erupted, which had led to the breakdown of the law and order situation. Again, a Central Government agency was involved. In October last year, an internal rift between the then Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Alok Verma and his number two, Rakesh Asthana, had become a public spectacle. Both Asthana and Verma hurled corruption charges against each other and approached the courts to ensure protection against legal action. In an extraordinary move, the Union Government sent both officers on leave and with effect, divested the CBI Director of all duties. This move was extraordinary because the CBI Director enjoys a tenure of two years after his appointment by a high-profile committee, which includes the Leader of Opposition.

However, this committee was bypassed to remove Verma, who among other voices, had cast aspersions on the Government for subverting investigations into significant cases. While I have written about the crisis of credibility in the past, the reason I want to recount this incident is because both the present crisis involving the police and lawyers as well as the last incident involving the CBI have two things in common: First, both situations make a mockery of the law and water down safeguards that are essential for a democracy to thrive. Second, in both cases no one from the Government took responsibility for the mess or showed interest to ensure that the situation is diffused in a responsible manner.

The failure to maintain law and order is unfortunately becoming more frequent over the last few years in the country. The law has been abused by individual lawmakers in power. It seems the rule of law has now changed to the law of rulers.



Therefore, I will not go through these details again.

The fact, however, is that we now live in a country where we have been immunised against impropriety in general. This is not necessarily always in the form of cases like Swami Chinmayanand and the Uttar Pradesh Police's handling of the rape case against the said BJP leader. Sometimes, mockery takes different forms. For example, the unilateral manner in which demonetisation was pressed upon the citizens and the lack of scientific examination into it that has had a tectonic impact on the country's economy.

Another example is how the Right to Information (RTI) Act was watered down or how fake news and hate speech have been allowed to thrive on social media. All of these instances, while completely unconnected at the first blush, have a disconcerting common thread running through them: They are all symptoms of a weakening democracy. The clash between the police and the lawyers is only the latest symptom of a more serious problem.

Now let's talk about the second issue, which relates to the fact that no one from the Government has taken responsibility for or ensured that the stand-off between the Delhi Police, which comes under the Union Home of Ministry, and the lawyers, is settled responsibly. It is here that questions about

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WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS FACED WITH A CRISIS, WE DO NOT SEE ANY OFFICIAL OFFER AN EXPLANATION OR PROVIDE REASSURANCE. IN A FEW INSTANCES WHERE WE HAVE SEEN MINISTERS TAKING QUESTIONS DURING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS, WE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED THAN REASSURED
”

leadership arise. Through the entire dispute we saw senior police officials stepping in. We have seen numerous voices throw their inputs into the mix. But what we did not see was the intervention of the Union Home Minister on this issue. We have seen the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi in the front and centre but none from the Union Government intervened. This is especially disappointing because it follows a trend where during the good times — typically election victories — we get to hear many representatives of the Government speaking on television for great lengths.

However, just as often, during times when the Government is faced with a crisis, we do not see any official offer an explanation or provide reassurance. In a few instances, where we have seen Ministers taking questions during difficult situations, we have been left a little concerned than reassured. One example of this was how the Finance Minister responded and reacted to the economic crisis. While taking questions on the slowdown of the auto industry, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman deflected the blame to cab aggregators like Ola and Uber for the plummeting sale of cars. A response like this seems to be disconnected from reality and displays a desire to deflect blame rather than taking responsibility to fix the situation. Not one person can be held completely responsible for a crisis. In an economic/job crisis, for example, external factors matter, too. However, as things stand today, there should be little debate on the fact that there are internal governance issues, which have exacerbated the problem further. It would have been nice to see the Finance Minister talk about redressing these issues rather than worrying about image management. The former is the kind of leadership that can help India steer itself through crisis. The showdown between the police and lawyers calls for a brand of leadership where people are reassured that the Government is capable of taking steps to ensure that the crisis is averted with minimum loss and with maturity. I am fortunate to see the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) at work. I have seen it taking steps while at the same time encouraging brand of leadership. No doubt, there will be instances where we may fall short, too, but I am optimistic that we will not shy away from the problem, no matter how uncomfortable. I will instead face the problem head-on. This is frankly what our voters expect from us. Similarly, I think we should not be shy of demanding same standards from other political leaders, too. (The writer is a former IPS officer, an MP and currently a member of the AAP)

SOUNDBITE

I generally do not comment on constitutional posts, but a few people (Governors) are acting just like BJP mouthpieces.

West Bengal CM — Mamata Banerjee

I have certain responsibilities as a filmmaker. I don't want to make mindless entertainment. As a filmmaker, I have to be socially relevant.

Filmmaker — Ananth Mahadevan

Kashmiris, who came to Pakistan for training, received a hero's reception. We used to train them and support them.

Ex-Pakistan President — Pervez Musharraf

Some of the top court's recent verdicts must be studied studiously. If somebody says some verdicts are in favour of an ideology, he cannot be blamed.

CPI(M) general secretary — Sitaram Yechury

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Being watchful

Sir — Post the news that the Israeli spyware, Pegasus, targeted over 100 members of civil society, including journalists and human rights activists, WhatsApp, the Facebook-owned messaging app, is now banning global users if they are found to be part of group chats with malicious or suspicious names, in some cases permanently.

It's welcome that at least some action is being taken to address the problem of the spread of false information. Further, the social media giant must roll out an upgraded version of its app that is secured from the spyware. This way, it can be stopped from affecting more phones.

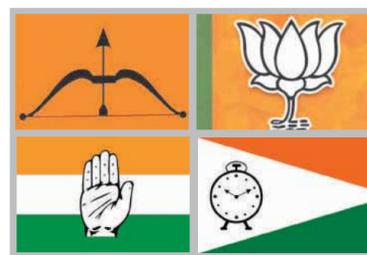
It is a matter of grave concern that Pegasus has had an impact on around 1,400 devices globally. The violation of one's privacy is a grievous offence. People may start feeling compelled to use other messaging apps if WhatsApp proves to be vulnerable to the malware. Something is better than nothing at all.

Tushar Anand Patna

Maharashtra saga continues

The riveting turn of events in Maharashtra politics since the Assembly poll results has been a study in the possibility of political realignments. The fast-paced developments have validated the proposition that "politics is the art of the possible." The "divorce" between the Shiv Sena and the BJP — after "cohabiting" as ideological peers for more than a quarter century following their inability to hammer out a mutually acceptable power-sharing formula — has given the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress to try and form a three-party coalition Government. The imposition of President's Rule has attracted criticism that it presaged "Operation Kamal" by the BJP to outwit its opponents and "manufacture a majority" for itself. The BJP cannot claim itself to be "a party with a difference" since it is not against horse-trading if it helps in seizing power. By the way, turncoats betray a staggering contempt for decency in public life. The Assembly is now kept "in suspended animation"; it means the doors for revocation of Central rule and the formation of a new State Government are wide open. There is now ample time for parties to try out all sorts of manoeuvres in the game of politics.

Talks are now said to be under way among the Shiv Sena, the NCP and the Congress on the contours of the Government, terms of power-sharing and a common minimum programme. Interestingly, the NCP is now said to ask for "rotational chief ministership", something that caused



the severance of Shiv Sena-BJP ties. It is evident from the non-committal positions of the NCP and the Congress over joining hands with the Shiv Sena and the speculation over the remote possibility of reconciliation between the erstwhile saffron allies that the current political scenario in Maharashtra is in a state of flux. We will watch with keen interest how things take shape. There is never a dull moment when news breaks split second by split second. However, how long will it take for the denouement of the political thriller in the "great State" is hard to tell.

G David Milton Maruthancode

Prepare an action plan

Sir — With air quality index breaching the 900-mark, bad air is severely affecting the health of

the residents of Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR). It is sad that though the reasons that contribute to air pollution are well-known, we have

been unable to alter the situation. One of the causes for such high level of pollution is the burning of crop residue by farmers in the neighbouring States of Punjab,

Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The lack of seriousness on part of the respective State Governments as well as the Central Government to devise an action plan has led to the present saga of people suffering from "severe" category of air pollution. The Government must proactively work with all stakeholders concerned to bring down air pollution levels.

Devendra Khurana Bhopal

Piecemeal measures

Sir — The problem of air pollution is not new to the capital city. It is also a fact that policy measures kick in at the nick of the time when health is at stake. Besides, much of the policies do little to address the heart of the problem, which is stubble burning. Bans, incentives and targeted subsidies are only temporary solutions. If indeed we intend to tackle the problem, behavioural changes are needed.

Sunita Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Clear roadblocks to innovation

India and the US must address key digital issues and help their trade relationship reach its full potential



JASON OXMAN

Innovation does not happen in a vacuum. The constant free flow of ideas and data across the globe fuels the development of the new chip that powers our smartphones and the apps we use to learn, play and connect with loved ones. But to ensure that these advancements and technological breakthroughs not only continue but thrive, nations must embrace an environment of cross-border cooperation and competitiveness. And few trading relationships hold as much promise as the partnership between the United States (US) and India. The US and India are positioned to gain more than all other markets from a significant reduction in global barriers to services trade, according to a study recently cited by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Further, the strengths of India and America's technological sectors are complementary and allow both countries to innovate and excel. The Indian Information Communications Technology (ICT) sector employs around 3.5 million workers and contributed 9.5 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014. India is the second-largest exporter of IT services and now has over 550 million internet connections and over 500 million smartphone users, making it the fastest-growing telecom market in the world. In addition, India has a vibrant start-up ecosystem, which is growing at a rate of 12-15 per cent annually. In fact, the nation saw the emergence of 1,200 startups in 2018 itself.

Similarly, the technology sector is essential for America's innovation, job creation and economic growth. Technology companies account for 10.2 per cent of the US economy and 7.6 per cent of its workforce, with application of technology products and services spanning all sectors. Every day, US companies work with partners and research hubs in cities around the world to create and bring to market new products and services that drive commerce and support jobs in the country.

By leveraging these strengths through international cooperation, both nations can pursue a meaningful digital future together. However, current policies in India challenge that growing relationship. Even where well-intentioned, Indian Government measures may inadvertently cut off Indian companies from collaborating with and benefiting from US partners. High tariffs, coupled with regulatory barriers, limit companies from importing products and components that drive local business and innovation. Potential digital barriers, such as restrictions on the movement of data and data localisation requirements, would compound investment uncertainty. The ongoing US-India trade talks provide an important opportunity for both countries to find solutions to long-standing technology trade issues, thus encouraging a robust, integrated and mutually beneficial trade relationship. As negotiators work toward a trade package, there are two essential issues to raise, which would elevate the promise of the bilateral innovation partnership. First, India's import barriers must be eased. ICT products are a key enabler of technology adoption and utilisation and an essential element of India's development as a technological leader. Reducing burdensome testing and conformity assessment programmes and high tariffs on ICT products would not only facilitate US sales, but would also allow India to buy the best equipment at the lowest cost. Additionally, breaking down these barriers would support job growth in both the US and India, and push the country further up the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, a key objective of the Indian Government. This would be a win-win for both the countries.

Second, the US and India must create a concrete and continuing dialogue to discuss digital issues. The Indian Government is considering a range of new policies, including a potential data protection law with restrictive elements and a broad framework for data governance. These are valid issues to consider and India is asking many good questions about how data should be handled to ensure that the economic benefits can be realised by all, including through finding ways for the Government to access data across borders to enforce the law and protect national security. However, if data policies in both the countries diverge so significantly that companies are unable to operate across borders, this will stifle innovation and economic benefits on both sides. A standing dialogue would provide a regular forum to discuss and inform digital strategies and help both sides avoid unintended consequences of new policies. The value of increased US-India trade is clear. Already, greater Indian openness to trade has led to economic growth and higher rates of economic inclusivity and educational attainment. The path to greater innovation starts with clearing existing roadblocks and ensuring that new ones do not emerge. The Information Technology Industry (ITI) council hopes that both Governments capitalise on the important opportunity of bilateral trade talks to address key digital issues and help the US-India trade relationship reach its full potential.

(The writer is CEO and president IIT council)

THE PREVIOUS SPEAKER RAMESH KUMAR HAD CONSPIRED ALONG WITH SIDDARAMAIAH. THE APEX COURT HAS GIVEN A CLEAR DECISION ON IT.

—KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER
 BS YEDIYURAPPA

POINT COUNTERPOINT



THE SC'S DECISION HAS EXPOSED BJP'S 'OPERATION KAMAL.' KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT IS ILLEGITIMATE IN LAW AND MUST BE DISMISSED IMMEDIATELY.

—CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON
 RANDEEP SURJEWALA

Understand the burning issue

With a robust combination of the right policies, economic incentives and awareness campaigns, the problem of managing crop residue in an environment-friendly manner can be addressed



SPOORTHY RAMAN

Delhi, one of the world's most polluted cities, is in the news again for its worsening air quality as the Government has been forced to close schools and declare a health emergency. The much-loved winter months in other parts of the country are a nightmare for the residents of Delhi-NCR as the area gets enveloped in a blanket of toxic haze.

With the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaching new levels each year and going as high as 1,200+ (classified 'Hazardous') this month, the city is suffocating, literally. Apart from coal and construction dust, vehicular emissions and smoke from Diwali firecrackers, stubble burning by farmers in the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh (UP) are cited as the primary reason for this crisis.

While the Delhi Government has been trying to bring down pollution levels through its vehicle rationing odd-even scheme and by closing polluting factories and coal-based power plants among other things, biomass burning is something it has failed to stop. For this, it needs the cooperation of its neighbouring States and has no control over the farmers there.

Crop residue burning is a practice where farmers set their entire fields on fire after harvesting the rice crop, to make way for the next i.e. wheat. The sowing of rice is timed such that its intense water needs are met by the monsoon rains in the Indo-Gangetic plains and the crop is harvested just before winter starts. However, the result is a whopping 23 million tonnes of paddy residue in the fields that need to be cleared in a short span of 10 to 20 days, before the farms are readied for sowing wheat. If the farmers had more time between crops, they could have just left this biomass lie in the fields and let it turn to mulch, which is an excellent fertiliser. However, with such a short gap between the two crops, setting fields afire seems to be the easiest way to get rid of the stubble. This however severely degrades the ambient air quality of Delhi-NCR.

Taking cognisance of the consequences of stubble burning, the Government banned it in June, imposing fines on those who defied the diktat and recently the Supreme Court (SC) even pulled up the chief secretaries of the three neighbouring States and ordered them to ensure that farmers don't burn crop residue anymore.

Nevertheless, the practice seems to have continued as growers contend that feasible, affordable and scalable alternatives are lacking. In an effort to encourage farmers to find alternatives to burning the residue, the SC had also directed the three States to pay ₹100 per quintal of paddy straw to growers, but it doesn't seem to have worked.

The atmospheric factors at play: People often wonder how a practice followed a few 100 km from Delhi-NCR has big implications. Here is the science behind this phenomenon. During winter, the region sees low wind speeds and temperature inversion — an atmospheric phenomenon where the temperature of the air near the surface is lower than that of the air higher in the atmosphere. Hence, when the pollutants from vehicular emissions and crop burning are released into the air, they are not dispersed but trapped in the lower layers of the atmosphere. As a result, the air quality takes a deep dive.

IT ISN'T DELHI-NCR ALONE THAT TAKES THE HIT; OTHER TIER-2 CITIES IN THE REGION ALSO SEEM TO BE AFFECTED BY BIOMASS BURNING. A 2019 STUDY, WHICH INVESTIGATED THE SOURCE OF POLLUTANTS IN 20 INDIAN CITIES OTHER THAN DELHI, FOUND THAT IN PLACES LIKE AMRITSAR, CHANDIGARH AND LUDHIANA, CROP RESIDUE BURNING, ALONG WITH EMISSIONS FROM POWER PLANTS AND SEASONAL DUST STORMS CONTRIBUTED TO ABOUT 50-52 PER CENT OF PARTICULATE MATTER



"Air pollution in cities like Delhi may be attributed to the growth of the metro and the pollutants from sources far away that get carried to the national Capital by the moving air or environmental conditions, which are unfavourable for the dispersion of pollutants," said Prof Vinoj V from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bhubaneswar, talking about his study published in 2018. The study, among other things, had found that crop burning has been increasing at an alarming rate of 25 per cent since 2000.

It isn't Delhi alone that takes the hit; other tier-2 cities in the region also seem to be affected by biomass burning for similar reasons. A 2019 research, which investigated the source of pollutants in 20 Indian cities other than Delhi, found that in places like Amritsar, Chandigarh and Ludhiana, crop residue burning, along with emissions from power plants and seasonal dust storms contributed to about 50-52 per cent of particulate matter.

In essence, the timing of winter-related atmospheric phenomena, coupled with the surge in emissions when the fields are set on fire, is a perfect pollution cocktail.

The health and economic costs of stubble burning: It is well-known that inhaling polluted air can lead to severe health conditions like lung cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, asthma, bronchitis and dementia. Not just this, air pollution also adversely affects crop yields in India. But, what really is the economic cost of stubble burning in these maladies?

A study, published by researchers at USA's International Food Policy Research Institute and Oklahoma State University, pegs that number at \$30 billion, includ-

ing the economic loss and associated health costs. It found that about 14 per cent of acute respiratory infections, recorded in Haryana, Punjab and Delhi in 2013, could be attributed to stubble burning. Researchers estimate that living in areas where there is intensive crop burning increases the chance of acute respiratory infections three-fold, with children under the age of five being the most affected.

Crippled policies adding to woes: As most studies have pointed out, a robust combination of the right policies, economic incentives and awareness campaigns are the need of the hour to curb the "burning" problem of air pollution. Badly-designed policies could have unintended effects on air quality, as shown by a research from the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in India and Mexico and the Cornell University, USA. It showed that groundwater conservation policies, introduced in 2009 in Punjab and Haryana, could have contributed to the rise in stubble burning.

Although rice is a lucrative crop for farmers, it is water-intensive. Hence, the 'Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act' and the 'Haryana Preservation of Subsoil Water Act' banned the transplantation of rice before monsoon to conserve groundwater. As the monsoon arrives in these States in July, the crop is harvested in early November, forcing farmers to clear their fields as soon as possible for wheat sowing. Using satellite data, the study found that prior to 2009, about 40 per cent of rice was harvested by late October and this number declined to 14 per cent after the law was enforced. The number of fires went up from 490 per day during late October prior to 2009, to 681 per day, peaking

around early November. The average daily PM2.5 concentrations in November were also found to be 29 per cent higher after the groundwater Acts were passed.

With the clamour for alternatives to stubble burning increasingly being heard, science may have solutions, as shown by a 2019 study. It analysed 10 alternatives to stubble burning and found that contrary to what farmers believed, these methods were not only environment-friendly, but also profitable. Among them is using Happy Seeder, a machine that can sow wheat despite the presence of rice straw in the fields. This yielded nearly 10-20 per cent increase in profits or about ₹1,498 per hectare on an average. The profits come from lower land preparation cost and the reuse of the crop residue, which increases soil moisture and benefits the long-term health of the soil.

However, these benefits come at a cost of ₹2.4 billion — necessary to produce about 16,000 Happy Seeders to cater to 50 per cent of the rice — wheat cultivation areas. With a meagre subsidy of ₹2,000 provided by the Government for purchasing machines to manage crop residue, machines like Happy Seeders are unaffordable to many farmers, leaving them with no options but to set fields on fire.

As most of these studies have pointed out, with a robust combination of the right policies, economic incentives and awareness campaigns, the pressing problem of managing crop residue can be addressed. It is about time that policymakers took note of such insights and acted to provide us all with clean air to breathe — a basic necessity of life.

(The writer is managing editor at a science portal)

The nuttiness of history in a nutshell

In analysing historical events, context provides uncomfortable perspectives that challenge simplistic versions of our understanding



NADEEM PARACHA

Histories, when confined to nutshells, become absolute facts devoid of context. They are turned into miniature caricatures, paraded as stripped actualities that anyone can dress in the manner they deem fit. This is particularly true in the age of social media, that only allows the exhibition of historical facts as end results. It completely ignores the complex historical processes which led to the end results.

For example, as miniaturised history, the 18th century French Revolution was an uprising of the poor against the rich. Just recently I heard someone say this in a podcast, positioning it as a "historical fact" which the podcaster said was aiming

at a "privileged, middle-class" foe. Indeed, the poor did rise up in France but the uprising was largely instigated and navigated by the middle-classes against common foes: The aristocratic/landed elite and the powerful clergy. The well-known historian Henry Heller, in *The French Revolution and Historical Materialism*, roots the revolution in the gradual growth of the middle-class in France.

According to Heller, by the 18th century, the political and economic aspirations and interests of the French middle class began to clash with those of the *ancien régime*, i.e., the monarchy, the feudal class and the church. This friction saw the middle-class intelligentsia strongly propagate the ideas of democracy, secularism and nationalism, which became the main ideological engines of the revolution. Another example is the American Civil War (1861-1865). In a nutshell, it is often explained as an armed conflict between the pro-slavery South and the anti-slavery North in the US. American economists M Thornton and RB Execlud write, in *The Economics of the Civil War*, that the

conflict was mainly due to economic tensions between the "industrialised North" and the "agricultural South." Prominent in this respect was the perception in the South that tax revenues collected there were largely being transferred to strengthen industrial interests of the North.

The anti-slavery position was adopted by the North and President Lincoln only after the Southern states declared their secession. Lincoln's original stance on slavery, which he displayed a year before the Civil War, was rather different. He had said: "I have no purpose to interfere with the institution of slavery where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I don't intend to."

There are numerous such examples from world history which, when carefully studied outside their nutshell versions, often add a deeper dimension to the end result. Many such examples are also present in Pakistan's history. Take for instance, the 1974 Second Constitutional Amendment and the 1986 Article 295-C in the country's penal code. The first ousted the Ahmadi community from the fold of Islam and the

second introduced the death penalty for those found to have committed blasphemy.

When explained in a nutshell, the Second Amendment is elucidated as the sole doing of the "socialist" regime of ZA Bhutto. Unlike various conventional religious groups that had opposed the creation of Pakistan, Punjab's Ahmadi community had backed Jinnah's call. They then became prominent in the country's State and Government institutions.

The Iranian-American author and academic Vali Nasr, in *The Vanguard of Islamic Revolution*, writes that soon after Pakistan's creation, radical religious groups in Punjab often "articulated economic grievances in Islamic terms." This contributed to the 1953 anti-Ahmadi movement when the provincial Government, headed by Mumtaz Daultana, failed to address an economic crisis. As a distraction, Daultana went on to tacitly support the movement. He was dismissed by the President after the movement was crushed by the military.

The 1973 international oil crisis badly hit world economies and Pakistan was no exception. Urdu

newspapers of this period are full of statements by religious parties expressing economic grievances in 'Islamic' terms. Then, an episode in Rabwah, in which a group of Ahmadi youth clashed with the student wing of Jamaat-i-Islami, suddenly triggered a brand new anti-Ahmadi movement in Punjab.

In his 1997 study of the Bhutto regime, Rafi Raza writes that Bhutto refused to allow the Opposition to discuss the issue in the Parliament. And when violence increased, he publicly threatened to crush the protests with the help of the military. However, with the army already engaged in fighting an insurgency in Balochistan, Bhutto demurred. On the insistence of some of his party's members in the Punjab Assembly, the religious parties were finally allowed to table a Bill.

In an essay for *Political Power and Social Theory*, Sadia Saeed writes that the 1953 movement had largely been crushed on the insistence of the military and the bureaucracy but that, by the 1970s, both had been weakened and distanced from politics. She also writes that the pressure to allow the Opposition to table the

anti-Ahmadi Bill also came from the Left and liberal quarters. For example, Wali Khan's National Awami Party did not oppose the Bill, and a June 7, 1974 editorial in *Dawn* explained the Bill as the Opposition's "democratic right."

Now, to Article 295-C. In the nutshell version of its history, this Article was introduced by the reactionary General Zia dictatorship. It is true that this dictatorship introduced various controversial laws in the name of faith, but the fact is, Zia was actually not in favour of introducing the death penalty in this context.

According to a February 11, 2011 article by Khalid Ahmad in *The Express Tribune*, some journalists and lawyers from Punjab approached the Federal Shariat Court in 1984, petitioning it to introduce stern laws against blasphemy.

On June 8, 1986, some members of the National Assembly — which was formed after the 1985 elections — agreed to table a private Bill that would include the death penalty for blasphemy.

The Zia-banned Government of Mohammad Khan Junejo pre-empt-

ed the move and tabled a Bill that did not include the death penalty. However, during a debate, which included no more than six legislators, the death sentence was added. As a last-minute addition, the Government hastily added "death penalty or life imprisonment" in the Bill that was passed.

Upon emotional appeals, especially by those who had demanded the death penalty, Zia, as President, signed the Bill into law in October 1986.

The addition of the words "or life imprisonment" was challenged by the same politicians in 1987 in the Shariat Court. In 1990, the court ruled that the death penalty alone should be mandatory for blasphemy. It asked the then sitting Government of Nawaz Sharif to remove the words "or life imprisonment" from the law. The Government planned to challenge the decision in the Supreme Court but since those who had originally demanded the death penalty were by then part of Sharif's party and coalition Government (the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad), the regime withdrew the challenge.

(Courtsey: Dawn)

CAPSULE



Retail inflation may average at 4% in FY20: SBI report

NEW DELHI: Surplus rainfall in August and September is likely to keep food and vegetable prices elevated going forward, and retail inflation may average at around 4 per cent in FY20, an SBI research report said. In October, inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) spiked to a 16-month high of 4.62 per cent on costlier food items. In 2019 five states- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka bore the brunt of excess rainfall and were affected by severe floods. The surplus rainfall during August and September seriously damaged many Kharif crops. "Going forward, thus, food and vegetable prices could remain elevated and inflation prints in November still may be on a higher side due to the low base in 2018."



Vodafone Idea shares crack over 20 pc; hit record low

NEW DELHI: Shares of Vodafone Idea nosedived over 20 per cent on Thursday amid reports that the DoT has issued notice to telecom operators to pay their revenue share dues within three months as directed by the Supreme Court. Vodafone Idea plunged 20.27 per cent to close at Rs 2.95 on the BSE. During the day, it tanked 21.62 per cent to its record low of Rs 2.90. The company's market valuation declined Rs 2,155.06 crore to Rs 8,476.94 crore on the BSE. Shares of Bharti Airtel also fell 1.59 per cent to close at Rs 362.65. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has issued notice to telecom operators to pay their revenue share dues within three months as directed by the Supreme Court, according to an industry source.



MMTC shares tumble over 7 pc on loss in Q2

NEW DELHI: Shares of MMTC on Thursday plunged over 7 per cent after the company reported a loss of Rs 47.78 crore in the second quarter ended September 30. MMTC's scrip declined 7.11 per cent to close at Rs 17.65 on the BSE. During the day, it tumbled 7.89 per cent to Rs 17.50. On the NSE, it dropped 7.34 per cent to close at Rs 17.65. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 36.92 crore in the corresponding quarter previous fiscal, a regulatory filing showed. It had a total income of Rs 6,787.19 crore in the July-September quarter compared to Rs 7,434.65 crore in the year-ago period.



Discussions on to find a solution for Manesar plant: HMSI

NEW DELHI: Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) on Thursday said discussions were going on with trade union members to find a solution for its Manesar plant, which has been shut indefinitely. The Japanese two-wheeler major decided to suspend operations at the manufacturing facility last week as workers protested for a over a week against the retrenchment of their 200 contractual colleagues.

INDIA WORLD'S 'MOST OPEN, INVESTMENT FRIENDLY' ECONOMY

Modi woos BRICS biz leaders

PTI ■ BRASALIA

India is the world's "most open and investment friendly" economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Thursday as he urged the BRICS business leaders to invest in the country and take advantage of its "limitless" possibilities and "countless" opportunities.

The five countries' grouping has led to economic development despite the global slowdown, Prime Minister Modi said in his address to the BRICS Business Forum.

"India is the most open and investment friendly economy in the world due to political stability, predictable policy and business friendly reforms. By 2024, we want to make India a five trillion dollar economy. The infrastructure alone requires USD 1.5 trillion investment," he said.

Noting that India has "limitless" possibilities and "countless" opportunities, he urged the BRICS business leaders to take advantage of them.

"I invite the business of BRICS countries to build and grow their presence in India."

"BRICS countries account for 50 per cent of the world's economic growth. Despite the recession in the world, BRICS countries accelerated economic growth, drove millions of people out of poverty and achieved new breakthroughs in technology and innovation. Now 10 years after the founding of BRICS, this forum is a good platform to consider the direction of our efforts in the future," Modi said.



The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressing the BRICS Business Forum, on the sidelines of BRICS Summit, in Brazil

India is the most open and investment friendly economy in the world due to political stability, predictable policy and business friendly reforms. By 2024, we want to make India a five trillion dollar economy. The infrastructure alone requires USD 1.5 trillion investment

—NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

Simplifying intra-BRICS business will increase mutual trade and investment, he said.

"Tax and customs procedures between us (the five countries) are getting easier. The business environment is getting easier with the collaboration between intellectual property rights, and banks. I request the BRICS Business Forum to study the necessary

business initiatives to take full advantage of the opportunities thus generated.

"I would also like to request that priority areas in business be identified among us for the next 10 years and based on them blue print of

intra-BRICS collaboration should be made," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said the market size, diversity and complementarities of the members of the BRICS countries were very beneficial to each other and urged the forum to map such complementarities in the five countries.

"If one BRICS country has technology, the other is related to raw materials or markets. Such possibilities are especially in electric vehicles, digital technology, fertilizer, agricultural products, food processing. I would urge the

forum to map such complementarities in five countries. I would also like to suggest that at least five such areas should be identified by the next BRICS Summit in which joint ventures can be formed between us on the basis of complementarities.

"The BRICS countries are well known for the hard work, talent and creativity of their people. Important initiatives like innovation BRICS Network, and BRICS Institution for Future Network will be considered during tomorrow's summit. I request the private sector to join these efforts focused on human resources. Connecting young entrepreneurs with these initiatives will also give more strength to business and innovation," Modi said.

There are possibilities of making tourism, business and employment between the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries more easy, he said. Modi thanked Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for his government's decision to give Indians visa-free entry in his country. "I thank the President of Brazil for deciding the visa free entry to Indians. We five countries should also consider mutual social security agreement," Modi said.

Modi is in Brazil for the 11th BRICS Summit which will focus on building mechanisms for counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthen India's ties with the world's five major economies.



'RBI to cut rates by 40 bps by February'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Headline inflation is bound to rise further to 5 per cent for November, but despite the pinch in price rise, the Reserve Bank will go for two consecutive rate cuts on growth concerns, a report said on Thursday.

The consumer price inflation fastened to 4.62 per cent for October in official data released on Wednesday, resulting in concerns over RBI's rate stance, given that the central bank is mandated to keep the number at 4 per cent.

GDP growth plummeted to a six-year low of 5 per cent for the June quarter and is expected to come lower for the September quarter and some analysts are also expecting it to slip below the 5 per cent for FY20.

Analysts at foreign brokerage Bank of America Merrill Lynch said the RBI will cut rates by 0.25 per cent in December, and follow it up with a 0.15 per cent in February. It can be noted that house economists at SBI have warned against rate cuts to push

It can be noted that house economists at SBI have warned against rate cuts to push up growth flagging the risk of "financial instability" that it can cause.

up growth flagging the risk of "financial instability" that it can cause. The higher inflation will be driven by base effects or lower inflation in the year-ago period when the same number had dipped to 2.2 per cent, and some pressure on onion prices, they said in a note.

It said the "fundamental drivers of inflation remain weak" which have resulted in the non-food and non-fuel core inflation getting limited to 3.3 per cent in October as against September's 3.7 per cent.

Sebi bars StarIndia proprietor from taking fresh clients

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred StarIndia Market Research proprietor Dharmendra Kumar from taking fresh clients for investment advisory services as he misrepresented the regulator his experience details at the time of seeking registration.

Besides, the markets regulator said Kumar defrauded investors by promising assured returns on investments in the securities market and charging them unreasonable fees.

The order comes following complaints received against StarIndia in SCORES portal wherein allegations with regard to fraud and non-rendering of services have been made against the investment advisor.

A Sebi probe, prima facie, found that Kumar did not meet the minimum requirement of five years' experience and knowingly misrepresented his experience details to the regulator while seeking registration.

"It can be, prima facie, held that the noticee (Kumar), by submitting incorrect information has obtained registration from Sebi as an investment adviser and has, prima facie, violated... the IA Regulations," the regulator said in an order passed on Wednesday.

"Further, there are also the, prima facie, findings that the noticee is defrauding investors by assuring returns on investments in the securities market and charging them unreasonable fees," it added.

Accordingly, Sebi said Kumar and "any other employee/ person working under him/



Besides, the markets regulator said Kumar defrauded investors by promising assured returns on investments in the securities market and charging them unreasonable fees

under his instructions shall cease and desist from soliciting/ acquiring any fresh clients for investment advisory services and undertaking the activity of acting and representing through any media (physical or digital) as an investment advisor, directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever till further directions".

Further, they have been asked to "cease and desist from offering any new investment advisory services to its existing clients for which fresh payment is required to be made by these client".

The services for which the existing clients have already made payment will be delivered to these clients and no renewal of these services have been permitted.

Apollo Hospitals Q2 net up 36 pc to Rs 86 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Apollo Hospitals on Thursday reported a 36 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 86.2 crore for the second quarter ended on September 30, 2019.

The healthcare major had reported a net profit of Rs 63.5 crore in the July-September period of 2018-19. Revenues grew 18 per cent to Rs 2,840.7 crore during the period, as against Rs 2,412.4 crore in the year-ago period, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise said in a statement.

"We are pleased to report a robust operational performance which continues to reflect the inherent strength of our service model that offers comprehensive care across multiple centres and formats," Apollo Hospitals Chairman Prathap C Reddy said.

The standalone revenues of the healthcare services division increased 15 per cent to Rs 2,463.3 crore in first half of the current fiscal, as compared to Rs 2,144.7 crore in the year-ago period.

In pharmacy segment, the company said its total store network as of September 30, 2019, stood at 3,607 outlets.

Shares of Apollo Hospitals on Thursday ended 2.03 per cent up at Rs 1,417.95 apiece on the BSE.



Gadkari suggests leather export industry to develop clusters in backward areas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday suggested the leather export industry to develop clusters in backward areas as they can get land and manpower at affordable prices, with a view to boost shipments.

The road transport and highways and MSME minister said the government can think of giving incentives to such clusters, which will have all the facilities like labs and design centres, for the leather industry.

"You plan a policy for next 50 years. Develop clusters in backward areas because there, you will get land and manpower at cheap rates. We can give power, and logistics

cost will be less there. We will try our level best for low taxation because the area is backward," he said.

He was speaking at the CLE National Export Excellence Awards here.

The minister suggested the industry to explore options of buying land and develop clusters around the 22 new green expressways.

Citing example of the Delhi-Mumbai highway, he said that this will pass

though economically backward and tribal areas in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana.

Land near Delhi and Kanpur is expensive, he said adding the industry should look at new locations now from the current hub in Kanpur, Agra and Chennai.

He also said the government would announce steps for the micro, small and medium enter-

prises (MSME) sector and by that, 99 per cent of leather units would come under the ambit of MSME sector from the current 92 per cent.

"I will make 99 per cent of the sector MSME. We have already taken up the decision and we will declare before November 18," Gadkari said.

He added that a cluster will have research, skill and training centres, besides laboratories and design centre and "we will help you for that and we can make scheme for that".

You plan a policy for next 50 years. Develop clusters in backward areas because there, you will get land and manpower at cheap rates. We can give power, and logistics cost will be less there

—NITIN GADKARI, Union Minister

HMSI launches BS VI-compliant SP 125 bike priced at Rs 72,900

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) on Thursday launched a new BS VI-compliant bike SP 125 with price starting at Rs 72,900 (ex-showroom Delhi).

The new bike replaces the company's 125cc model CB Shine SP. The Japanese two-wheeler major would, however, continue to sell BS IV CB Shine in the market.

Commenting on the launch, HMSI President, CEO and Managing Director Minoru Kato said the new model would



raise the bar for technology, style and performance in the 125 cc motorcycle segment.

The new model is around 11 per cent costlier than the out-

going model and, as per the company, delivers 16 per cent better fuel efficiency.

HMSI Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Yadvinder Singh Guleria said the company has a market share of 39 per cent in the 125 cc bike category.

The company has already sold 80 lakh 125 cc units in the market till date, he added.

"The production of the SP 125 has begun and the model would start arriving at the dealerships by the end of this month," Guleria said.

Jet Privilege goes for brand revamp; to be known as 'InterMiles'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Loyalty and rewards management company Jet Privilege Pvt Ltd (JPPL) on Thursday unveiled a new brand identity 'InterMiles' as part of its growth strategy.

Carved out as a separate entity from the now-grounded Jet Airways more than five years ago, JPPL has close to 10 million members.

"InterMiles will encompass both the award-winning loyalty and rewards programme (previously, JetPrivilege) and the ubiquitous rewards and recognition currency (previously, JPMiles)," the company said in a release.

JPPL, part of Etihad Aviation Group which holds 50.1 per cent stake, said it offers the members the opportunity to

earn and redeem 'InterMiles' across more than 10 categories and over 150 programme partners.

Jet Airways, which is undergoing insolvency process, still holds 49.9 per cent shareholding in the company. The full service airline shuttered operations in April after running out of cash.

Noting that interchangeability is the key element, JPPL Managing Director Manish Dureja said there is only a brand change and new benefits and features will be part of the programme.

"For us, we have to run the business and grow the business.

As part of our strategy, we have decided to do it under a different brand... It is basically extending the strategy in the last five years of going forward," he told PTI.

When asked about the impact of Jet Airways insolvency, Dureja

said, "we are not impacted (by it)".

JPPL was set up to manage and further develop JPMiles, a loyalty and rewards programme.

Even as Jet Airways faced turbulence before being forced to ground operations, JPPL has been a profitable venture. The

company's profit after tax rose to Rs 129.82 crore last year from Rs 121.64 crore in 2017, as per a document issued for prospective bidders of Jet Airways under the insolvency process.

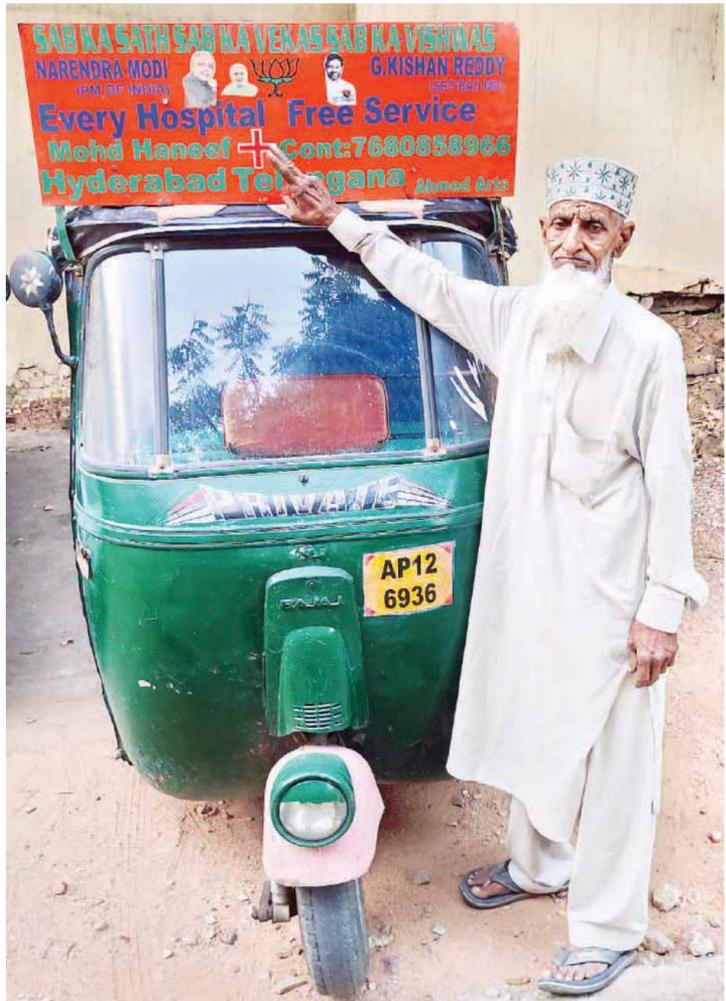
According to the company, 'InterMiles' suggests the interchangeable nature of the rewards currency where it can be earned and redeemed across platforms including airlines,

hotels, dine, shop, and fuel. JPPL is on an exciting transformational journey over the last five years to expand from an airline-centric programme to emerging as an everyday travel-and-lifestyle rewards programme as discerning consumers have shifted beyond transactional rewards and cash-back, the release said.

"We are embarking on a new journey with InterMiles, built

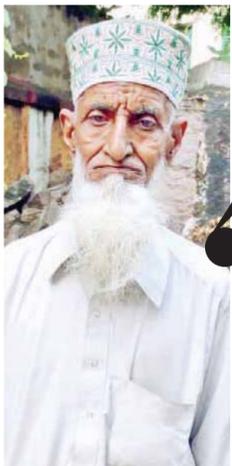


JPPL, part of Etihad Aviation Group which holds 50.1 per cent stake, said it offers the members the opportunity to earn and redeem 'InterMiles' across more than 10 categories and over 150 programme partners



NO BRAKES ON HELPING PEOPLE

Charity begins with a wish to see a stranger's life change for the better. Mohammed Haneef Saheb and his auto have helped countless people in 20 years through free transport to hospitals, finds V SATEESH REDDY



Every day, I transport more than 10 people for free to the hospitals, and I do this after I am done with picking and dropping off school-going children at their homes. My family has always encouraged me to provide free service. Helping the needy gives me the utmost satisfaction

MOHAMMED HANEEF SAHEB AUTO DRIVER

Hyderabad-based 84-year-old auto driver Mohammed Haneef Saheb has been transporting accident victims, pregnant women and elders to hospitals for free for 20 years. Even at this age, he is always ready to start the auto and race ahead to help people in need.

"I have been an autorickshaw driver in Hyderabad for more than 50 years now. I have always spent my earnings on helping accident victims, pregnant women and elders reach hospital for free," Mohammed Haneef Saheb told *The Pioneer*. Haneef earns Rs 30,000 per month, out of which he spends around Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 on helping others.

He shares, "Every day, I transport more than 10 people for free to the hospitals, and I do this after I am done with picking and dropping off school-going children at their homes. I have six daughters and two sons and all of them are well settled in life. They have always encouraged me to provide free service. Helping the needy gives me utmost satisfaction."

Sharing about how he helped a pregnant woman, Haneef recalls, "In 2010, I saw a pregnant woman wait-

ing on the West Marredpally road for a transport to reach hospital. Immediately, I went to her and she told me that she has to go to the NIMS in Panjagutta for a check up. I helped her reach the hospital for free that made her happy. She thanked me for driving slowly keeping in mind her situation."

Recalling the incident when a youth met with an accident, Haneef shares, "Once when I was heading home I witnessed a man crash his bike at the Secunderabad station. No one came to help him so I took him in my auto and admitted him at the Gandhi Hospital. I also advised him on how to drive to avoid accidents."

Haneef says that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas* initiative, among many others, have inspired him to continue helping people.

He has a board in his auto where he displayed his phone number for anyone who needs emergency transportation to hospitals. He says he doesn't hesitate to go even if they call from a distant place.

Every Muslim's dream is to visit the Mecca Masjid in

Saudi in his or her lifetime. Haneef did his Mecca tour on his bicycle.

"I started my Mecca journey on August 7, 2006 from Haj Bhavan at Nampally. I reached the destination in nine months after crossing seven countries. It was a great journey and I will do it again with my bicycle soon. It is not easy to get permission for the Mecca journey on a bicycle but the then MP, Kishan Reddy, helped me get all permissions."

He shares, "The fact that I am 84 doesn't bother me at all. I will continue these free services till my last breath. I hope many will also come forward to help others." People in need of emergency transport can contact him at 7680858966.

State wins big in Asian Shooting Championship

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At the 14th Asian Shooting Championship, that concluded at Doha, Qatar, participants from the Telangana State won laurels by bagging various medals including the gold in various categories.

Appreciating the efforts put by the winners, Amit Sanghi, President of the Telangana Rifle Association said that the juniors from the Telangana State dominated the Asian Games and that the country can expect more Olympic champions in the future.

While Esha Singh won three gold medals in individual, team and mixed events in 10 m air pistol in the junior category, Dhanush Srikanth also won three gold medals in the same events in the 10 m air rifle in the junior category.

Abid Ali Khan won the bronze and the gold in individual and team events for the 50 m Rifle Prone, in the junior category, Ayush Rudraraju won the gold for the clay pigeon skeet shooting in junior category. Kynan Chenai won Silver in the team clay pigeon trap shooting round.



Esha Singh



Ayush Rudraraju



Dhanush Srikanth

AMIT SANGHI, PRESIDENT OF TELANGANA RIFLE ASSOCIATION, CONGRATULATED AND APPRECIATED THE MEDAL WINNERS FROM THE TELANGANA STATE



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

SCALING NEW HEIGHTS

After meandering through villages, streams, ranges, people, vegetation, snow, rocks, and clouds of pristine and gigantic Himalayas for a week, a team of three girls and five boys from an international school in Hyderabad set foot on the base camp of Mount Everest

It's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves," said Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to have reached the summit of the tallest mountain in the world. That was precisely what drove the students from Indus International School to set foot on Everest base camp.

An expedition team

consisting of eight students (three girls and five boys) of grade 11 along with a leadership trainer trekked 110 km in seven days to complete the expedition — which had begun with disruptive weather conditions causing delay of four days from the planned schedule. The team, however, made up by walking non-stop in their journey.

The students displayed a high level of endurance and purpose, meandering through various villages, streams, ranges, people, vegetation, snow, rocks, and clouds of pristine and gigantic Himalayas to reach its tallest peak. They passed through many picturesque villages such as Tengboche, Deboche, Dingboche, Pheriche, Lobuche and Gorakshap.

The crown jewel was the student team unfurling the Indus School flag at 5,365 meters, on the Everest Base

Camp (EBC). "I don't think I was afraid even for a moment. I knew we would reach our destination. We had prepared hard for it, after all," said Zuzanna Wlazlo, a Class XI student who was part of the expedition team.

As part of the preparation, the school had run the students through a fitness regime to make the team mentally and physically ready.

"It was a spiritual experience wherein the students not only experienced the vastness of the Himalayas, but also felt the vast potential within. We, in Indus, believe in empowering our students with the qualities of mental toughness, resilience, and goal mindedness. The expedition to Everest Base Camp was one such endeavour," said Mitesh Singh, expedition leader at the Indus School of Leadership.

"The expedition has proven that endurance and mental toughness had brought success to the team. At Indus, students are put through strenuous situations to move out of their comfort zone," said Col Sathya Rao, Director at Indus School of Leadership.



PARTY



KIDS' DAY OUT

It was a delightful day for children as students from the International playschool — Jain toddlers — celebrated with a marathon and cycling event. While members of Hyderabad FC team showered their affection on kids by visiting Rockwell School & Aga Khan Academy, a special movie screening was also organised for special children at Cinepolis Mantra Mall Attapur.



CITY GUIDE

ART AND SPORTS

BRAVE 30 - AN MMA EVENT

India's biggest MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) event is back in Hyderabad. Mercury presents to you the *Brave 30*, at GMC Balyogi Sports Complex. Popular MMA athletes from across the globe will fight it out on the arena on November 23.



WORKSHOP ON PUPPET THEATRE

Leather puppetry workshop is the shadow theatre tradition of AP, Telangana and parts of Karnataka. Stories from epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata will be enacted. The workshop by B. Raju of Nimmalakunta leather puppetry, will be held on November 20 at Alliance Francaise.



THEATRE

JOD TOD

Jod Tod, a Hindi play presented by Kalayan Theatre group from Bengaluru, is a fulfilled cracking comedy about quintessential relationships and its complications. This light hearted fulfilled play will be held at Lamakaan on November 30 at 7.30 pm.



INDRAJAL

The play *INDRAJAL* is one of the masterpieces of Hindi writer Jai Shankar Prasad. It is a love story between Bela and Goli, members of a travelling community who dream of devoting their entire life to each other and how different reflections of our society play a role. It will be held at Phoenix Arena tomorrow at 7.30 pm.



MY FATHER - HIS EXALTED HIGHNESS

A play based on the life of the last Nizam of Hyderabad, Mercury presents to you the *My Father - His Exalted Highness*, once the richest man on the planet. It delves into his relationship with his daughter Shehzadi Pasha with the turmoil of accession looming in the background. It was written by Noor Baig and directed by Mohammad Ali Baig. It will be held today at Ravindra Bharathi.



MELANGE

STEPPIN OUT NIGHT MARKET

The Steppin Out Night Market, Christmas Edition in association with CRED Experiences, will be held at Hotel Taj Krishna. It's a one-stop gateway to the world of fashion with clothing, jewellery, home decor, and lots more which will be held on December 14.



ARIJIT - LIVE PERFORMANCE

My music, my country is bringing in Arijit Singh for a live performance. It was initiated by Hyderabad Talks as a platform for gifted Indian artistes and to re-introduce the ethnicity of Indian music. The event will take place on November 23 at Lal Bahadur Shastri Stadium.

FLUTE RECITAL

Surmandal and ICCR in association with Rithwik Foundation, Economic Committee is presenting a flute recital by Shashank and vocal recital by Jayateertha Mevundi accompanied by Sateesh (Mridangam), Ojas Adhia (Tabla) and Vyasmurthy Katti (Harmonium) on November 17 at Gandhi Centenary Hall, Exhibition Grounds from 6 pm onwards.



GET YOUR EVENT LISTED: To get your events listed, please send your details along with a poster and contact number to pioneer.features@gmail.com

FUN TIME

ARCHIE



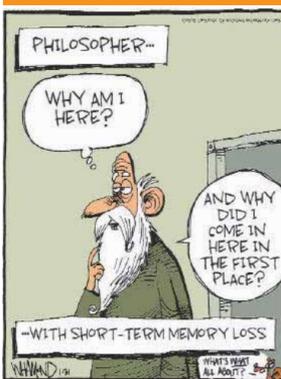
CALVIN AND HOBBS



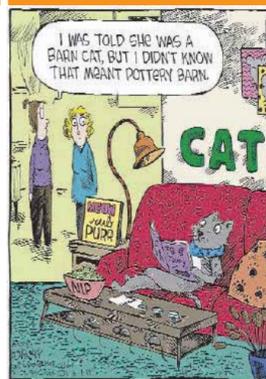
GARFIELD



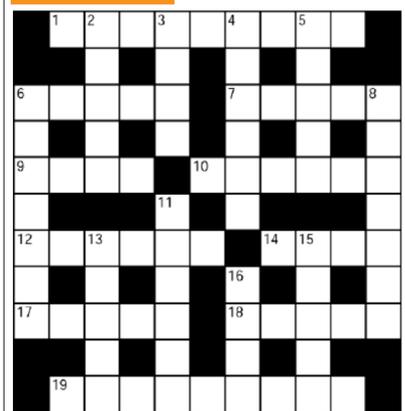
REALITY CHECK



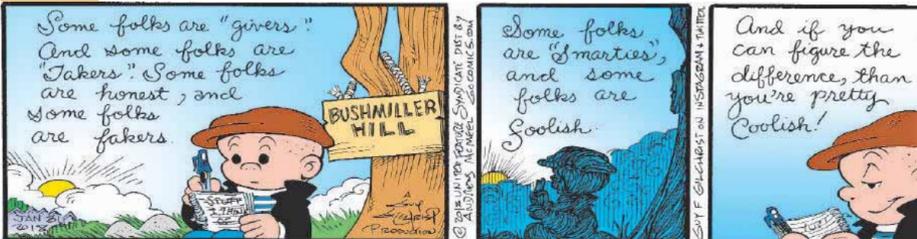
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- This accompanies thunder
- Leaving
- Correct
- Find these in a nest
- A large old fortified building
- Use this with a sewing needle
- A heavy metal
- A restaurant customer
- Enraged
- Yummy brown stuff

DOWN

- Time of darkness
- Welcomed
- A weekday
- Cloth
- A large farm in America
- One fifth of forty
- Travel by yacht





New Telugu girl on the block

Harshita Chowdary, who is making her debut with *Tholubommalata*, a family drama spearheaded by Rajendra Prasad, says she didn't dream of becoming an actress, a reason why she never pushed hard to get film opportunities. Recalling how she landed her debut film, the mass communications student says, "I've featured in a handful of print advertisements and through a talent agent, my portfolio was forwarded to director Viswanth. He liked the pictures and later called me for the audition. I bagged the role soon after."

She continues, "My parents know the dark side of the industry well, so they were initially skeptical of my debut. The diktat they gave me was to pick good roles. As of now, I'm not in a position to pick my work but I want to choose the best on offer. I have my limitations when it comes to portraying intimacy on screen and the kind of attires I need to don, as I want my parents to watch films that I do. I would seek their opinion before committing to strong and bold roles."

In *Tholubommalata* she plays a software engineer

who is attached to her mother. She falls in love with her brother-in-law (Viswanth) from where the story takes a turn. A Telugu girl, she initially dubbed for her part. "My voice has a certain base and I can sound husky as well. The director liked my dubbing but after watching the film, he felt the voice was grabbing all the attention. Not keen to take a chance with the film being his first one, he later roped in a voice artiste for dubbing. Her experience kind of helped my role to come alive more," Harshita, a fan of Soundarya and Nithya Menen, concludes.



REKHA, SRIDEVI TO GET ANR NATIONAL AWARD

T Subbarami Reddy says it was ANR *garu's* wish to present Sridevi with the award in his last years as she is a Telugu girl who became a pan-India star. Rekha's mother tongue is Telugu, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

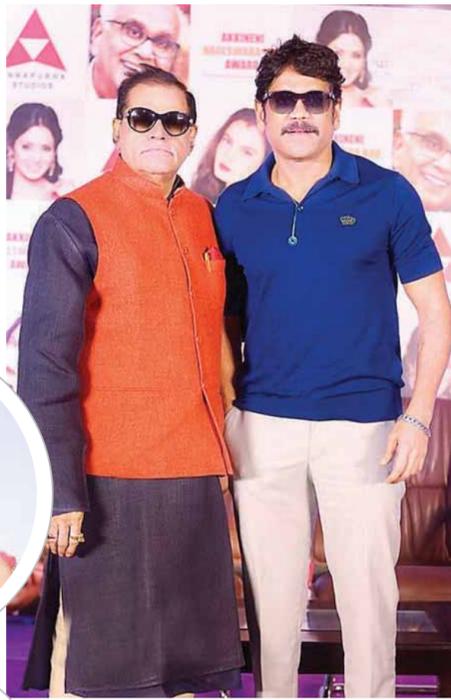
Bollywood actors (late) Sridevi and Rekha have been chosen for the prestigious Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) National Award for 2018 and 2019. The awards will be handed over in the presence of Megastar Chiranjeevi, VC's of JNSFAU and JNTU at a glittering ceremony in Annapurna Seven Acres, Hyderabad this Sunday, actor and ANR's son Nagarajuna said. While Boney Kapoor and her children Janhvi and Khushi will be accepting the award on Sridevi's behalf, Rekha will be flying down to the city.

At a presser in Hyderabad on Thursday, Rajya Sabha Member and industrialist T Subbarami Reddy, who is chairman of the selection committee, said the awards couldn't be given in the last two years as Nagarajuna was working round the clock. "Which is why, we are giving two awards this year. It was ANR *garu's* wish to present Sridevi with the award in his last years as she is a Telugu girl who became a pan-India star.



Rekha's mother tongue is Telugu," he informed.

Nagarajuna said when he rang Rekha to share the news; she said that she shares a bond with ANR and that she sought guid-



ance on the film industry from him. "She expressed her happiness to accept the award," he said. He added that she will be also presenting graduation certificates to 70 students from Annapurna College of Film and Media.

Earlier recipients of the award include Dev Anand (2005), Shabana Azmi (2006), Anjali Devi (2007), Vyjayantimala Bali (2008), Lata Mangeshkar (2009), K. Balachander (2010), Hemamalini (2011) and Shyam Benegal (2012),

Amitabh Bachchan (2014) and SS Rajamouli (2017). It comes with a memento, a citation and a cash prize of Rs 5 lakhs. The award was instituted by the Akkineni International Foundation in 2005 with intent to recognize the contribution of stalwarts to the Indian film industry.



RAVI TEJA IS 'KRACK'

Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja's next with director Gopichand Malineni has been titled as *Krack*. The actor is reteaming Malineni after successful ventures like *Don Sreenu* and *Balupu* for the flick that was launched in Hyderabad on Thursday. Leading producer Allu Aravind sounded the clapper-board for the first shot as writer Paruchuri Venkateswara Rao switched on the camera. Veteran director K Raghavendra Rao directed the honorary first

shot. A bevy of noted faces like Suresh Babu, NV Prasad, Dil Raju, Surender

Reddy, Naveen Yerneni, Bogavalli Prasad and Ram Talluri graced the muhurat. Speaking later, Malineni said, the film is inspired by incidents that happened in both the Telugu states and that it will be an intense action thriller. "It will go to floors this month itself, with intent of arriving next summer. It will tell the story of a powerful police officer and will have all elements that one expects from a Ravi Teja film. At the same time, I'm approaching it very realistically," he mentioned.

Shruti Haasan will cast opposite Ravi Teja, while the likes of Samuthirakani, Varalakshmi Sarath Kumar, Devi Prasad, Pujita Ponnada and Chirag Jani are playing supporting roles. On the technical front, SS Thaman is on board for music, while Mersal and Whistle cameraman GK Vishnu is the cinematographer. A production venture of Tagore Madhu under Saraswathi Films Division, Sai Madhav Burra has penned the film's dialogues.

NANI reschedules Hanu's film; likely to team up with a debutant next

For the past three years, Nani has planned his career in a way that after completing a present project, he would immediately dive headlong into the shoot of his next without wasting his time. However, this time around, after he wraps up Indraganti Mohana Krishna's *V*, which is in the final leg of its production, he hasn't given his nod to anyone yet. He was supposed to team up with Hanu Raghavapudi for an action-drama but due to reasons best guarded, he deferred the film to some other time. He has been hearing to stories of other directors for the past three months. Buzz about him teaming up with *Nimnu Kori* director Shiva Nirvana has made the rounds for a while but we hear he wasn't completely convinced with the script of Shiva. The latest is that Srikanth, a for-

mer assistant of Sukumar, has impressed him with a whacky story. He has given his in-principle nod and it will be more or less his next. *Padi Padi Leche Manasu* Sudhakar Chelukuri is tipped to produce it. Nani will be completing the filming of *V* by December-end or January; post which he will shift attention to Srikanth's film. — NG

NANI HAS GIVEN HIS IN-PRINCIPLE NOD AND IT WILL BE MORE OR LESS HIS NEXT PRODUCED BY PADI PADI LECHE MANASU SUDHAKAR

NIKHIL breathes a sigh of relief

Nikhil Siddhartha, who has been patiently waiting for the release of *Arjun Suravaram* for over seven months, has finally breathed a huge sigh of relief. The film's makers have announced that it will now be releasing on November 29. While it remains to be seen whether they will stick to it or not, Nikhil on his part has started promot-

ing the film on his social media pages. He hasn't even started his new film yet, although he officially confirmed that his next is *Karthikeya 2*.

In *Arjun Suravaram*, a remake of 2016 Tamil hit *Kanithan*; Nikhil will be seen as a journalist who exposes a fake certificate scam after being falsely implicated for cheating banks. Lavanya Tripathi is cast as his romantic interest. It is directed by original director TN Santosh.

It has been cleared with a 'U/A' certificate earlier this summer.

NIKHIL WILL BE SEEN AS A JOURNALIST WHO EXPOSES A FAKE CERTIFICATE SCAM IN HIS NEXT



Injury-time goal saves India



PTI ■ DUSHANBE

India escaped with a 1-1 draw after an injury-time goal saved them the blushes against lower-ranked Afghanistan in their FIFA World Cup Qualifier match here on Thursday.

The result meant the 106-ranked India remained winless in their qualifying campaign so far.

When the visitors seemed headed for their second defeat, substitute Seiminlin Doungel (90+3) provided India with a lifeline, outjumping his markers to head one into the far post.

Afghanistan had taken the lead through Zelfagar Nazary's strike (45+1), putting India on the backfoot.

India remained at the fourth position in Group E with three points from four

matches, while Afghanistan continued to be on the third with four points.

Starting the away game, being played in extremely cold conditions at the Central Republican Stadium, on a bright note, India conceded a goal in the first half's injury time (45+1).

Afghanistan went into lead after a fine move saw David Najem play a square ball to Zelfagar Nazary at the centre of the box, and the mid-fielder's attempt breached the Indian defence before finding the back of the net.

It wasn't really a home match for Afghanistan either, but wins here against Cambodia and B'desh, followed by draws with Tajikistan and Jordan have given them much-needed confidence ahead of the clash against Igor Stimac's 106-ranked India.

And the 149-ranked Afghanistan carried

that confidence into the game on a chilly evening when the temperature dropped to nine degree celsius.

The hosts looked the better of the two sides in the first half and the goal, in the added time of first session, was not inappropriate.

On and off, Afghanistan managed to put pressure on the Indian defence manned by Mandar Rao Desai, Adil Khan, Rahul Bheke and Pritam Kotal. With their enterprise, the likes of striker Ahmad Omran and mid-fielder Faysal Shayesteh kept India on their toes, forcing Bheke and Adil to make a few clearances in the first quarter.

India looked to take on the opposition but they could not create any clear chances, and the couple of half chances in the opening minutes failed to test the Afghan custodian.

There was a change straightaway for India after the break as Stimac substituted Mandar Farukh Choudhary.

The visitors showed urgency and looked desperate for an equaliser. They had a chance in the 58th minute but skipper Sunil Chhetri's header off a cross from right back Pritam Kotal was saved by Azizi.

At the other end, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu made a diving save.

While he will be disappointed to end the match in a stalemate, Stimac's decision to bring in Doungel in place of Kotal paid dividends.

Stimac made three changes to the lineup that drew against Bangladesh last month, starting with Kotal, Brandon Fernandes and Proney Halder in place of Anas Edathodika, Anirudh Thapa and Manvir Singh.

Henry to coach Montreal Impact

AFP ■ MONTREAL

Former Arsenal star Thierry Henry was Thursday appointed coach at MLS franchise Montreal Impact on a two-year contract as he gets a new chance of management after a disastrous spell at Monaco.

"Welcome to Montreal @ThierryHenry!" the Major League Soccer (MLS) club tweeted.

Henry, whose baptism by fire as a manager ended in his firing by French club Monaco in January, will coach Impact for a minimum of two seasons.

"Henry signed a two-year deal, with an option for 2022," the club said on its website.

Henry, 42, who helped France win the World Cup in 1998, is familiar with the MLS, having played from 2010 to 2014 with the New York Red Bulls.

He scored 51 goals and had 42 assists in 122 games with the club.

"It's an honour to coach the Montreal Impact and return to MLS," said Henry. "It's a league I know well, in which I had some very nice moments.

"I've always kept an eye on the club and now I'm here."

Henry becomes the seventh coach of the Montreal Impact in just eight years, succeeding Colombian Wilmer Cabrera, who was acting coach for two months after the dismissal in August of French coach Remi Garde after 10 months in charge.

Henry made his name as a world-class player at Arsenal where he scored 228 goals in 377 appearances, making him the English club's record goalscorer.

After winning the World Cup on home soil in 1998, he played in three further World Cups in 2002, 2006 and 2010.

He is also France's all-time leading scorer with 51 goals in 123 games, in front of Michel Platini.



Paes, top-players return for Pak tie

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday picked an unprecedented eight-member Davis Cup squad for the tie against Pakistan, including most of the top stars who refused to travel to Islamabad along with those who made themselves available irrespective of the venue.

Seasoned veteran Leander Paes returned to the Indian team after more than a year along with top players Sumit Nagal, Ramkumar Ramanathan, Sasi Kumar Mukund and Rohan Bopanna for the tie to be held at a yet-to-be-finalised neutral venue on November 29 and 30.

Nagal, Bopanna, Ramanathan and Mukund had reservations about travelling to Pakistan due to security concerns, the basis of the International Tennis Federation's decision to change the venue.

"It's a special case this time. We do not pick such a big travel party but we did not want the players who were ready to go Pakistan, to feel left out. So we had to create a balance," Zeeshan Ali, who is on the selection panel and is also the India coach said.

In the squad announced by the All India Tennis Association (AITA) selection committee, Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan, Saketh Myneni and Siddharth Rawat also found a place in the team. All these players were willing to travel to Islamabad when the others had refused.

AITA usually names five-member main squads along with one or two reserve players.

While the ITF is still considering the Pakistan Tennis Federation's appeal against the decision to shift the tie out of Islamabad, AITA has gone ahead with the team selection.

"We wanted the players to be mentally ready. They can make their respective schedules now. We did not want them to wait more to know if they will be picked or not. Irrespective of the venue, only these players will be a part of the tie, wherever it is played," said non-playing captain Rohit Rajpal.

"Not all of them would get to play but at least the new players will get a feel of what it is like being on the Indian Davis Cup squad. It will be a kind of experience for the new generation players like Rawat. We have to prepare the next rung," added Rajpal.

It has been learnt, that the ITF will stick with its decision to have the tie at a neutral venue. The world body is expected to announce its final decision by November 18.

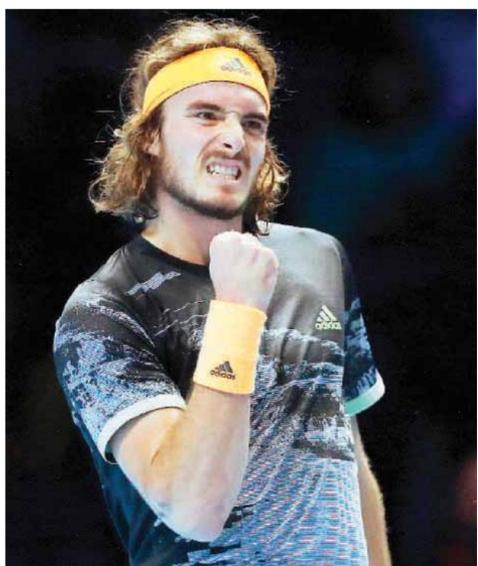
In the absence of top player Prajnesh Gunneswaran, India's singles challenge will be led by the in-form Nagal (ranked 127) and Ramanathan (190). Mukund (250) and Myneni (267) will be the back-up singles players.

Perhaps for the first time, the squad has three doubles specialists in Bopanna, Paes and Nedunchezhiyan.

Divij Sharan and Prajnesh, who were part of the five-member squad, which was announced earlier when the tie was to be held on September 14 and 15 are now unavailable for personal reasons.

While Sharan is taking a two-week break after his wedding reception on November 23, Prajnesh is getting married on November 28, a day before the start of the tie.

Tsitsipas reaches ATP Finals semis



Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates winning a point against Alexander Zverev
AFP ■ LONDON

Stefanos Tsitsipas coasted past defending champion Alexander Zverev in straight sets to advance to the last four of the ATP Finals on Wednesday after Rafael Nadal came back from the dead to keep his title hopes alive.

The Greek tyro, 21, broke his big-serving German opponent three times in the Group Andre Agassi match to seal a 6-3, 6-2 win at London's O2 Arena.

The straightforward victory, which took Tsitsipas's head-to-head record against Zverev to 4-1, was in sharp contrast to the earlier match, in which Nadal produced an astonishing comeback to beat Daniil Medvedev.

The Spanish top seed was on the brink of defeat when facing a match point at 5-1 down in the deciding set but stormed back to win 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

"Today is one of those days that one out of 1,000 you win and it happened today," said a delighted Nadal.

The 19-time Grand Slam champion, who also beat Medvedev in the US Open final, said earning a break back in the deciding set had infused him with confidence.

Both players were under intense pressure after losing their opening round-robin matches on Monday.

6 TEAMS UNVEILED FOR ATP CUP

SYDNEY: A Grigor Dimitrov-led Bulgaria was among the final six teams announced on Thursday for the ATP Cup in Australia.

Chile, Poland, Uruguay, Moldova and Norway were the other countries to make the grade, based on the ranking of their number one singles player at the second entry deadline of November 13.

The rest of the 24-nation field was announced in Sept, although Switzerland later pulled out after Roger Federer opted to skip the tournament. The field will be split into six groups across Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

As the highest-qualifying country at the second deadline, Bulgaria replace the Swiss and join Belgium and the Andy Murray-led Great Britain in Group C in Sydney. The championship takes place from January 3-12 in the lead-up to the year's first Grand Slam, the Australian Open in Melbourne.

Eight teams — with up to five players each — will emerge from the round-robin stage to compete in the knockout phase in Sydney until one is left standing with ties comprising two singles and one doubles match. PTI



Bryan brothers to retire in 2020

AFP ■ LOS ANGELES

US men's doubles duo Bob Bryan and Mike Bryan said on Wednesday they will retire at the end of the 2020 season, bringing the curtain down on one of the most successful pairings in tennis history.

The 41-year-old twins said in a statement they planned to hang up their racquets after taking part in next year's US Open, where they made their Grand Slam championship debut in 1995.

Since that first Slam appearance, the Bryans have racked up a record 118 trophies including 16 Grand Slam doubles titles. They also won Olympic Gold at the 2012 London Games.

Bob Bryan said the duo had opted to end their 2019 season after the US Open in order to remain fresh for next year.

"We decided that it would be best to rest our minds and strengthen our bodies in preparation for 2020 which will be our final season on the ATP Tour," Bob Bryan said in a statement.

"It has truly been a magical ride," he added. "However, we want to end this great ride while we're healthy and we can still compete for titles."

At their peak, the Bryans were a formidable doubles duo, rising to No 1 in the rankings for the first time in 2003.

They spent a total of 438 weeks at the top of the rankings and ended 10 seasons as the No 1 team.

'Go back to baseball' Ibrahimovic confirms LA Galaxy exit

AFP ■ LOS ANGELES

Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic confirmed his departure from the Los Angeles Galaxy on Wednesday, but gave no clue over his future plans or possible retirement.

The 38-year-old striker's departure from the Galaxy had been widely expected following the club's elimination from the Major League Soccer playoffs last month.

Ibrahimovic, who joined the Galaxy in the opening months of the 2018 campaign, announced the end of his Californian sojourn in a characteristically enigmatic post on Twitter.

"I came, I saw, I conquered. Thank you @lagalaxy for making me feel alive again," Ibrahimovic wrote. "To the Galaxy fans — you wanted Zlatan, I gave you Zlatan. You are welcome."

"The story continues... Now go back to watch baseball." The Galaxy said in a brief statement the club had parted company with Ibrahimovic by mutual agreement.

"We would like to thank

Zlatan for his contributions to the LA Galaxy and Major League Soccer," said LA Galaxy President Chris Klein.

"Since his arrival in 2018, Zlatan has positively influenced the sport of soccer in Los Angeles. We are grateful for his work ethic and passion. We thank Zlatan for his professionalism and immeasurable impact on the Los Angeles community and the soccer community in North America as a whole."

Ibrahimovic has been strongly linked with a return to Italian club AC Milan, where he played for two seasons between 2010 and 2012, scoring 42 goals in 61 league appearances.

Although Ibrahimovic was unable to help Los Angeles Galaxy return to the pinnacle of Major League Soccer, the Swede has been one of the most successful foreign players ever to grace the league, scoring 53 goals in 56 regular season appearances.



PTI ■ HONG KONG

World champion P V Sindhu exited the \$400,000 Hong Kong Open in the pre-quarterfinals but Kidambi Srikanth made the quarters for the first time in seven months after claiming a thrilling win in men's singles here on Thursday.

It was also curtains for H S Prannoy and Parupalli Kashyap after they suffered contrasting losses in the second round.

World number 6 Sindhu went down 18-21, 21-11, 16-21 to world number 18 Busanan Ongbamrunphan of Thailand in 69

Sindhu poor show continues

minutes to continue her recent dismal run in international circuit. It was Sindhu's first loss to the Thailand player in 11 meetings.

Earlier, former world number 1 Srikanth, who slipped to the 13th spot in the latest BWF rankings this week, emerged as the only Indian survivor after notching up a 21-11, 15-21, 21-19 win over compatriot Sourabh Verma in the men's singles second round. Srikanth had last

reached the quarter-finals at the Singapore Open in April. The Guntur shuttler, who received a first-round bye from world number 1 Kento Momota of Japan, will face Olympic champion Chen Long of China next.

Earlier, H S Prannoy suffered a 12-21, 19-21 loss to sixth seed Indonesian Jonatan Christie in the second round.

Former Commonwealth Games

champion Kashyap played his heart out before going down narrowly to world number 2 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei 21-12, 21-23, 10-21 in a match that lasted exactly an hour.

In other results, fourth seeded Japanese pair of Arisa Higashino and Yuta Watanabe the beat Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa 21-19, 21-12 in 42 minutes in the mixed doubles.

I'm coming for the One Championship World Title: Ritu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian wrestling superstar Ritu Phogat is set to make her professional mixed martial arts debut when she takes on Korea's Nam Hee Kim in an atomweight contest. The pair faced-off on Thursday at an open workout and are scheduled to meet in the One Championship ring at One: Age Of Dragons, which takes place on 16 November, at the Cadillac Arena in Beijing, China.

Ahead of her first foray into the mixed martial arts arena, the 25-year-old details how she envisions her path unfolding in a new sport, her ultimate goal, and how she plans to accomplish the mission she has set for herself.

"No question, I want to become a mixed martial arts World Champion, and everything I'm doing



now is preparing me for that," said Phogat. "I made the decision to jump into this with my full heart and will. My goal is to become the first Indian woman to win a mixed martial arts World Championship. I believe I'm in a great position to represent my country and I want to inspire as many women as I can. It's an honor."

Phogat is already an accomplished athlete, having garnered multiple accolades throughout her competition career. She is a Commonwealth Wrestling Championships Gold Medallist, World U23 Wrestling World Championships Silver Medallist, Asian Wrestling Championships Bronze Medallist, and multiple-time Indian National Wrestling Champion.

Already a recognizable face in her home country, Phogat now enters the international arena.

She looks to make her presence known. "One of my goals is to bring honor to Indian martial arts. I think it's really important that we celebrate my country's culture and history and I really hope I can represent that well on the global stage," said Phogat. "I have big plans, but first, I have to

take care of business against an opponent who wants to spoil the party. I've prepared well for this, but this is my first time, and we'll have to see where I'm at after this fight."

Ritu Phogat will make her professional mixed martial arts debut tomorrow and how she performs against her opponent, Nam Hee Kim, will be a great indicator as to how far she has yet to climb the mountain until she reaches the top. Reaching the pinnacle of the sport is something she is completely focused on. For Phogat, it's only a matter of time. "I'm in no rush."

I'm young, I'm strong, and I'm hungry," Phogat concluded. "Give me a few fights, let me get a feel for this and I'll be contending for a World Title soon. I promise my fans I'll give them something to cheer about. I want to make my country proud."