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Maha mayoral polls
Sena-Cong-NCP combine outsmart BJP
PNS ■ MUMBAI

The BJP was outsmarted on Friday by emerging political combinations in Maharashtra and lost mayoral polls in Latur and Ulhasnagar despite having a majority in both civic bodies.

The Shiv Sena managed to win the posts of mayor and deputy mayor in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane.

The BJP, however, managed to keep its flock together and got the support of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena to win the posts of mayor and deputy mayor in Nashik.

In Latur, the Congress' Vikrant Gojamgude was elected mayor, in what is being seen as a setback for former BJP minister Sambhaji Nilangekar.

Woman kills husband, buries him, sets up kitchen above

ANUPPUR (MP): A woman in Madhya Pradesh's Anuppur district allegedly killed her lawyer husband a month ago, buried him in the house and then set up a kitchen above to destroy all evidence of the crime, police said on Friday. Accused Pratima Banawal (32), a resident of Kotma, some 30 kilometres from the district headquarters and over 500 kilometres from state capital Bhopal, to mislead the police, even filed a missing person complaint about her deceased husband Mohit (34), Kotma Sub Divisional Officer of Police K N Prasad said.

Amaravati is AP capital in new map

VIJAYAWADA: The Centre released a new map of Andhra Pradesh with Amaravati as its capital city. The Survey of India released the political map following the demand of Guntur MP Galla Jayadev in Parliament on Thursday. Jayadev had said Andhra people were being humiliated without a capital. "It is an insult for Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had laid the foundation stone for Amaravati as AP capital in 2015," he added.

The Centre's fresh initiative has put to rest doubts over the location of the capital city. Political circles were rattled by the constitution of the expert committee on capital by the Jagannath Reddy government. Political analysts say now it is difficult to change the capital.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Karlik & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi: Dwadashi: 03:43 am (Next Day)
Nakshatram: Hasta: 02:45 pm

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

Rahukalam: 09:15 am- 10:38 am
Yamagandam: 01:25 pm - 02:49 pm

Varjika: 10:06 pm - 11:34 pm

Gulika: 06:28 am - 07:52 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 09:14 am - 10:42 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:40 am - 12:24 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Haze

Temp: 24/17

Humidity: 73%

Sunrise: 06:25

Sunset: 05:39

Current Weather Conditions

Updated November 22, 2019 5:00 PM

ANALYSIS 7
TOO LITTLE AND A LITTLE TOO LATE

MONEY 8
GOVT RELIEF MAY NOT SAVE TELCOS

SPORTS 12
ISHANT IN PINK MODE

HYDERABAD, SATURDAY NOVEMBER 23, 2019; PAGES 12 ₹3



POOR SCREENPLAY,
DRY ACTING MAKE
GEORGE REDDY
A DULL WATCH

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HC clears TSRTC privatisation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a massive relief to the state government, a division bench of the Telangana High Court on Friday dismissed the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) plea filed by the vice president of Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS) Prof PL Vishweshwar Rao challenging the decision of the state cabinet to privatise permits of 5,100 routes of TSRTC.

The bench made it clear that the state government has ample power to take such a decision of giving permissions to private bus operators under Section 102 of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988.

The bench also said that the cabinet decision was taken when the entire public bus transport system had come to a grinding halt in the state and at a time when the people of the state were reeling under lack of public transport due to the indefinite strike by the



RTC employees.

In his counter affidavit filed before the High Court, the Chief Secretary of the state Dr SK Joshi stated that the cabinet decision taken on November 2, 2019 to give permits to 5,100 private bus operators per se might not be open to judicial review by the HC since the process was still pending with

the state government. He also said that the further process as required to be undertaken by the state government could not be prohibited by the High Court. He urged the HC to dismiss the petition filed in view of larger public interest.

The matter will come up for hearing on Monday before the division bench of the HC.

The CS Dr SK Joshi stated that the cabinet decision taken on Nov 2 to give permits to 5,100 pvt bus operators per se might not be open to judicial review

Later, arguing the case before the HC, the advocate-general of the state BS Prasad submitted the cabinet decision in question in a sealed cover to the court. Surprised at this, the High Court asked the reason for the submission of the certified copy of the cabinet in a sealed cover in a secret form. It also asked the AG to reveal the contents of the cabinet decision in open court.

Continued on Page 4

CM KCR WRIT RUNS

BJP ENDS IN A BLANK

NAVEENA GHANATE

■ HYDERABAD



KCR's stand that the 'strike is illegal' has been upheld by the HC. Let alone the demands of the striking employees, now employees are helpless and at the mercy of KCR

for Revanth Reddy and V Hanumanth Rao, hardly anyone extended any support. Congress seems to have apparently realised that the workers were on weaker turf and instead of supporting them, they were battling among themselves. BJP was battling over being legally correct or politically correct. Those who wanted to tame KCR faded into oblivion. Despite BJP MP being man-handled, Congress leader calling for Pragati Bhavan siege, the opposition parties are helpless and at the mercy of KCR.

Touted as the main opposition, Congress leaders, except

BJP leader Dr. K Laxman said that the strike was the start of downfall of KCR and the CM is solely responsible for current crisis in Telangana. Who is responsible for appalling consequences of TSRTC strike? BJP should introspect on who to blame for the setback in the TSRTC strike which has no legal standing. Despite all the talk around BJP leading at the Centre, KCR took shelter under the rules and proceedings followed by Narendra Modi government.

Continued on Page 4

Man torches wife, children and relatives

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

In a horrific incident, a man set ablaze his estranged wife, two of his children, and three others related to him in Khammampally village late on Thursday night.

The condition of three of the burn victims was stated to be critical. Three others were stated to be in a stable condition in hospitals, according to reports reaching here. The perpetrator of the heinous crime was on the run, police said. Marital discord is suspected to be the main reason behind the attack carried out by Chilumala Laxmirajam of Manikonda village in Gangadhara mandal. Following differences with him, his wife Vimla and their two children had come to their maternal home in Khammampally.

Continued on Page 3

the question of government formation.

Sources in the three parties indicate that if all goes well, they could stake their claim to form the government before Governor B.S. Koshyari even today, though the final call will be taken at the evening meeting.

Sena MP Sanjay Raut said the post of CM will be decided "very soon" and dismissed speculation in a section of media that he was the front-runner for the post.

Sources said that Inspector V Saidulu had allegedly asked

Axe hangs over 50% jobs in TSRTC

L VENKAT RAM REDDY

■ HYDERABAD



- Given privatisation of 50% routes, RTC staff requirement halved
- Only about half of 48,000 striking employees may get conditional job offers
- VRS not even an option due to RTC's financial position

JAC blowing hot and cold, says strike will continue

'Save RTC' protest at depots today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



TSRTC Employees Unions' JAC, which has been blowing hot and cold on prolonging the 47-day-long strike, on Friday expressed its discontent over the lack of response from the state government to its conditional offer to withdraw the agitation, with JAC convenor Ashwathama Reddy asserting once again that the stir would continue.

The state government did not respond specifically to JAC's proposal that the employees unions would call off the

strike if the workers were taken back and allowed to resume their duties unconditionally.

Continued on Page 2



ASI Narasimha being taken to hospital after he set himself ablaze in an attempt to commit suicide on Friday

Revocation of citizenship

TRS MLA gets four-week relief in HC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Friday granted interim stay for four weeks on the Union Home Ministry's order cancelling the citizenship of TRS MLA Ramesh Chennamaneni. Ramesh moved the court on Thursday, seeking to set aside the order issued by an inquiry panel constituted by MHA. Justice Challa Kondanda Ram posted the case for further hearing to December 16.

The TRS MLA also prayed for suspension of related proceedings pending disposal of his plea.

Ramesh was re-elected to the Telangana Assembly from the Vemulawada constituency last year.

Continued on Page 4



The ASI, Y. Narasimha, to collect money from the local event organizers. The two then had a heated argument over the same, following which he was reportedly transferred to the Manchal Police Station.

The ASI was recently transferred to the Manchal Police Station and he reported for duty on Thursday.

Continued on Page 4

Sena, Cong, NCP name Uddhav Thackeray as CM

PNS ■ MUMBAI

After separate meetings of the Shiv Sena and the Congress, NCP and their smaller allies, a consensus has apparently emerged on Sena President Uddhav Thackeray's name for the post of Chief Minister, Sena leader Sunil Prabhu told mediapersons.

Similarly, after a meeting of the Congress-NCP with allies, a similar statement was made by Samajwadi Party

All the legislators have unanimously given full powers to Uddhav Thackeray to take any decision pertaining to the post of CM and the other government formation aspects

- SUNIL PRABHU

President Abu Asim Azmi on the same question.

"Most leaders felt that Uddhav Thackeray should be the CM. However, we have left that decision to him and his party," Azmi said briefly to the media.

The top leaders of Sena, NCP and Congress are scheduled to have a meeting around 4 pm which would be decisive on

the question of government formation.

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Sena MP Sanjay Raut said the post of CM will be decided "very soon" and dismissed speculation in a section of media that he was the front-runner for the post.

Sources said that Inspector V Saidulu had allegedly asked

Minspace Metro station to be opened on Nov 29

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Providing much-awaited relief to techies and other professionals commuting to Raidurg, the crucial Metro station at Mindspace will be opened on November 29.

HMRL announced that the HI-TEC City-Raidurg stretch of Metro Rail Corridor-3 is scheduled to be inaugurated by Minister for MA&UD, IT, I&C KT Ramarao and Minister for Transport P Ajay Kumar on November 29.

The opening of Raidurg station and the 1 km stretch up to HI-TEC City will complete Corridor 3 upto Nagole in all respects.

NVS Reddy inspected the stretch on Friday, along with HMRL Chief Electrical Engineer DVS Raju, Chief Signalling & Telecom Engineer

Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS) Janak Kumar Garg is expected to inspect the section on 26/27th November.

The inauguration planned for 29th is subject to safety clearance from CMRS. He noted that the issues were raised with his US counterpart in New Delhi in June 2019 and with US interlocutors

in Washington DC in September/October 2019, where they "emphasised that this has been a mutually beneficial partnership, which should be nurtured," he said.

The minister added that application process for the H-1B

visa has become more complex for employers worldwide, including for Indian IT companies.

increased from 6% in FY 2019 to 24% in the first three quarters (October to June) of FY 2019 for new H-1B petitions for initial employment.

As per the analysis, in the first three quarters of FY 2019, USCIS denied 24% of H-1B petitions for 'initial' employment. This is four times the denial rate of 6% in FY 2015. For continuing employment, 12% of H-1B petitions were denied.



to certain recent administrative changes in the H-1B programme, which has increased documentation requirements on the petitioners. This has also

HC's ruling puts RTC workers in a fix

Employees in Mahabubnagar firm on continuing strike

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

With the High Court ruling in favour of the state government, the future of striking RTC employees hangs in balance. The RTC workers in Mahabubnagar district are in a fix over their fate in the coming days.

The RTC employees and workers waited for three consecutive days and made a bee-line at the depots to resume their duties. However, the government's decision to wait till the High Court ruling has prevented them from joining the duty.

Meanwhile, following the High Court verdict, the RTC JAC members in Mahabubnagar district have divided into two groups. The striking RTC employees are holding the JAC leaders responsible for the crisis and blamed them for their optimistic attitude in regard with



The families of the employees said that they are facing a tough situation subsequent to the decision of the JAC and government

government's privatisation issue. The employees said that if JAC has given nod to employees to rejoin the duties on the advice of the government respecting the deadline of the Chief Minister, the families of employees could have earned some support from the administration. Meanwhile, the JAC leaders in Mahabubnagar are keen on continuing their strike and planned to intensify the stir in the coming days.

However, the families of the employees say that they are facing a tough situation subsequent to the decision of the JAC and government.

More than 48,000 employees have been on strike for over a month, demanding better wages, regulated working conditions and payment of dues, among other things. The strike, has resulted in chaos, throwing public transport in the state out of gear.

Practice crop rotation, Minister tells farmers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

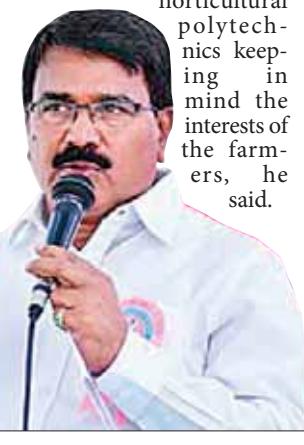
Agriculture Minister Singireddy Nirjan Reddy asked farmers to rotate crops and cultivate crops other than paddy. Speaking after declaring open the inter-collegiate sports at Konda Laxman Bapuji horticultural university here, he said that the farmers would not be able to get remunerative prices since they banked on only one crop.

He said that the soil and climatic conditions in Telangana favour growing horticultural crops. A horticultural college is going to be opened in Mulugu soon, he said. Cultivation of agricultural crops commenced in central Asia roughly about 10,000 years ago, he said adding that horticultural crops were already prevalent then. On account of the negligence of the successive rulers who ruled the state prior to TRS did not give importance to agricultural edu-

Soil and climatic conditions in state favour growing horticultural crops. A horticultural college will also be opened in Mulugu soon

—NIRJAN REDDY
Agriculture Minister

cation, he said adding that engineering education has been promoted reckless to add to the ranks of the unemployed. The TRS government sanctioned agricultural and horticultural polytechnics keeping in mind the interests of the farmers, he said.



ZP chairperson dares Maoists to prove corruption charges

PV KONDAL RAO

■ WARANGAL

The ZP Chairperson of Mulugu, Kusuma Jagadeesh's statement over corruption charges, levelled by the outlawed CPI Maoist's, has put the latter in a fix. The ZP chairperson has denied any wrongdoing and dared the Maoists to prove the charges.

The statement, issued by Jagadeesh, could be first-of-its-kind released by a political leader on naxalites after being branded anti-people by them. The statement, unlike in the previous cases, has opposed the naxalites stand. The ZP chairperson, Kusuma Jagadeesh in his statement has categorically rebutted the allegations pertaining to the land grabbing claims levelled by the naxalite leader Sabitha of the Mahadevpur Committee.

The Maoists previously had also issued several statements on political leaders in the north Telangana districts and their statement was never opposed by any of the persons who faced allegations. On the



Kusuma Jagadeesh has categorically rebutted the allegations pertaining to the land grabbing claims levelled by naxalite leader Sabitha

extremists openly to prove their allegations in the presence of the public. In certain issues raised by the naxalites, the ZP chairperson accused the naxalite leader of tarnishing his image and demanded the naxalites to prove them or face the wrath.

This sudden statement can become a rude jolt to the presence of the naxalites in the Etturnagaram belt of the Mulugu forest district and many feel that there can be some political motivations behind the issuance of statement of the Maoists.

However, the ZP chairperson came down heavily on the naxalites and challenged the

Missing wrestling official traced to Vizianagaram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Government Railway Police (GRP) on Friday have traced the location of All Manipur Traditional Belt Wrestling Association official H Ngapunii Lanah, who went missing from the East-Coast Express in which he was travelling with his teammates on November 19. A police official is on his way to the spot.

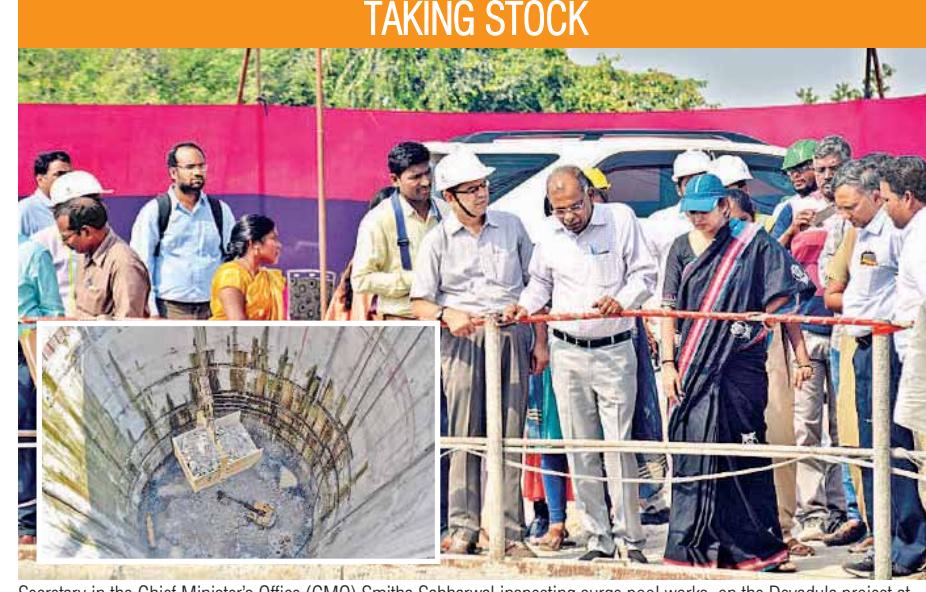
"We traced have the location of Lanah to Cheepurupalli in Vizianagaram district on Friday. Except for a minor injury, he is safe and we have sent a Sub-Inspector to the spot to assist Lanah," confirmed GRP Nampally Sub-Inspector Dasya Naik.

He said they had started searching for Lanah after receiving a missing complaint and traced his location in Cheepurupalli. The case was also transferred to Samalkota railway station due to point of jurisdiction, he added.

Ministers offer prayers in Komuravelli

PNS ■ MEDAK

Finance Minister Harish Rao and Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav offered prayers to the Komuravelli Mallikarjunaswami on the eve of accomplishment of Kumbhabhisheka. The Ministers inaugurated the Nityanandana satra, and six roomed choultry on this occasion. The Nityanandana satra was built with a cost of Rs 53 lakh and choultry with Rs 30 lakh. Government Whip Bodakunti Venkateswarlu and MLA Muthithi Reddy Yadagirireddi were also present.



Secretary in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) Smrithi Sabharwal inspecting surge pool works, on the Devadula project at Devenapet village in Warangal urban district on Friday

Former OU VC passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prof V Ramakistayya, former vice-chancellor, Osmania University, and former chairman, APPSC, passed away here on Friday. Born in Munugudu village of Nalgonda in 1932, he was a university professor and served O S M a n i a University in many capacities.

Ramakistayya had an illustrious career and till his last breath, was serving the society through his efforts to spread the cause of selfless service, upright nature and commitment to government service. He is survived by four sons and a daughter.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao has expressed his condolences to members of the bereaved family.

He said Ramakrishnaiah was a towering personality about whom Telangana would be proud of. He said Ramakrishnaiah was involved in social work till his last breath, and conveyed his condolences to members of the bereaved family.



ICOMOS MEETING

India defends Ramappa proposal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A delegation comprising BV Papa Rao, Architect GSV Surnarayana Murthy and Kakatiya Heritage Trustee, M Pandu Ranga Rao well defended the Indian proposal of Ramappa Temple to be inscribed as World Heritage Site in front of about 30 international heritage experts of ICOMOS in a meeting in Paris on Friday.

ASI officials Dr Janhwi Sharma and Milan Kumar Chauley attended meeting through skype. The Government of India nominated Ramappa Temple as its candidate in January 2019. In September 2019, UNESCO sent an ICOMOS expert Dr Vasu Poshyandana to visit the Ramappa Temple.

After this expert visit in September, ICOMOS experts discussed the proposal and

held detailed meeting with Telangana and ASI officials today.

Papa Rao, who led the delegation, is satisfied that the discussion and clarifications given by the Indian experts. The delegation was also asked to submit some more information by February 2020. Thereafter ICOMOS will do final evaluation of the pro-

posal and send their recommendation to UNESCO in April/ May 2020. UNESCO will then put the proposals for voting of World Heritage Committee consisting of 21 member countries of UNESCO in a meeting in June/ July 2020 in China. Final decision will be taken in this UNESCO meeting in China.

Continued from Page 1

Axe hangs over 50% jobs in TSRTC

Now, with the state cabinet

deciding to privatise 50 per cent of these routes, amounting to 5,100, and with the High Court upholding the decision, RTC can cut half its services, thereby halving manpower requirement as well.

That is, the corporation, in its new avatar, may require the services of at the most 24,000 employees; and, that too, if it is open to hire from among the 48,000 striking employees, whom KCR once described as "self-dismissed".

The larger question having far-reaching consequences is: How can the government terminate the services of half the corporation's employees?

Normally, the procedure followed, when the government wants to get rid of surplus staff, is to offer VRS (voluntary retirement scheme) for staff. On this front, TSRTC cannot do anything as it is already reeling under huge debt burden of over Rs 5,000 crore. VRS involves substantial one-time payment to the retrenched staff and the corporation, as the government pointed out in the HC, is not in a position to pay even salaries under the existing circumstances. So, VRS is longer an option.

In reviews that KCR held over the past two days the consensus seems to have been that the government can consider taking back half the staff should they agree to certain 'conditions' stipulated by the govern-

JAC blowing hot and cold, says strike...

Continued from Page 1

"It is unfortunate as the Chief Minister has not taken any decision on taking back the employees on jobs," he observed.

At a press conference here, the JCA convenor said that the strike would be held at all depots on Saturday with the tagline being 'Save RTC'. He urged workers not to go to depots for beseeching RTC officials to take them back into jobs. The RTC JAC would meet again on Saturday to discuss the strike, in which the future course of action would be determined, he said. He claimed that RTC was suffering not because of the workers but due to government policies.

Ashwathama claimed that the government did not care even though RTC employees had taken a step back and announced that they would end the strike.

ment to join duty. Central to these conditions is an undertaking by the prospective employees that henceforth they would not resort to strikes and stay clear of trade unionism.

UoH scholar wins award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Karra Vinod Kumar from University of Hyderabad (UoH) has won Best Poster Presentation Award' at the ICNIB 2019.

He won the award during the 5th International Conference on Nano-structure interfaces and consequent effects on the electrical properties of MOS devices'.

'Avian botulism killed over 20k migratory birds'

PNS ■ JAIPUR

The mass death of over 20,000 migratory birds in Sambhar lake of Rajasthan was caused by avian botulism, according to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI). In its report released on Thursday, it said, "Omnivore and insectivore species were most affected."

All age group birds were affected and were found paralysed over wings and legs, showing neck-drooping syndrome. The report said that the birds that reached the centre of the lake survived but those at the edges died.

Owing to heavy rains on July 8, the lake became full up to the brim with more water which reduced its salinity. However, when water evaporated and seeped into so far dry soil, prominently across the edges of this 180 sq km lake bed, it increased the salinity there. Hence, at shores, increase in salinity caused the



death of feed of these birds which consumed crustaceans and plankton and preferred to be confined to the lake edges. However, Greater Flamingos, lesser flamingos and other migratory birds, which remained at central areas of this lake, were not impacted by the demise of micro-organisms, so they survived.

The report from Bareilly came amid blame-game by politicians. While Rajasthan

alytic disease caused by the Botulinum neurotoxin (BoNT) of the bacterium Clostridium botulinum. It occurs all over the world and this disease can account for over lakhs of waterbird deaths in a year. This is not contagious but spreads to birds through their consumption of maggots infected with the toxin. Its presence is extremely hard to detect before the outbreak.

Earlier in November, thousands of birds were seen floating dead in the lake and their carcasses scattered on the edge of the 12 km catchment area. The dead birds seen floating in

this largest inland salt lake in the country, include plovers, common coot, black-winged stilt, northern shoveler, ruddy shelduck, and pied avocet among many other migratory birds.

Harsh Vardhan, a renowned environmentalist, said that no forest department official has ever been appointed to look after the lake. The lake comes under the Hindustan Salt Limited, a public limited enterprise formed in the post-independence era to manufacture salt. Its job is to manufacture salt. So who should look after the lake; this has never been decided, he said.

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CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg

Dressed/With Skin ₹180
Without Skin ₹205
Broiler at Farm ₹124

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD 412
VIJAYAWADA 442
VISHAKHAPATNAM 440
RETAIL PRICE ₹4.12
(IN HYDERABAD)

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**CRIME
CORNER**
**Robbers strike at
Hayathnagar**

A unidentified gang, reportedly bearing resemblance to the infamous 'Chaddi Gang', robbed residents of two houses in Kuntloor village of Hayathnagar on the city outskirts in the early hours of Friday. According to the police, around 2 am, a six-member group of men, a few in their undergarments, broke into the houses by damaging the doors. They threatened the occupants with sticks and took away cash and gold. The gang reportedly forced them to even hand over the jewelry they had on themselves and valuables in the house. Police are investigating and are yet to confirm if the group is the notorious 'chaddi gang'. "Two of the gang members wore shorts. It could be another interstate gang as well," officials said, adding they were scanning footage from surveillance cameras in the surroundings. A woman was injured in the incident and the burglars stole 20 tolas of gold and Rs 70,000 cash from the residents before fleeing the scene. The Hayathnagar police have registered a case and are investigating the incident.

**Municipal
accountant
in ACB net**

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials on Friday conducted searches in the accounts section of Boduppal Municipal Corporation office and took an accountant into their custody. The accountant was identified as Rajender Reddy. ACB officials caught him red-handed while receiving a bribe from a contractor. The arrested was remanded to judicial custody by the ACB court. An investigation is underway.


Man torches...

Continued from Page 1

Their relatives were stated to have arranged a meeting of family elders to resolve the issue. Vimala and Laxmirajam were married 12 years ago and have two children, Jaipal and Pavithra.

Going by the circumstances under which the victims were found, it is suspected that, late on Thursday night, Laxmirajam used a bottle of thinner (flammable liquid used with paint) and fire crackers to torch the family members when they were asleep. His wife Vimala, daughter Pavithra, son Jaipal, brother-in-law Raju, his wife Rajeshwari and their daughter Sunita were sleeping in the room. All of them suffered third-degree burns. Vimala, Sunita and Pavithra, found in a critical condition, were shifted to Gandhi Hospital here, while the other three were shifted to a Government hospital in Siddipet.

BIKE TAXIS ZOOM SANS HELMETS

■ Several mobility aggregators in city do not provide a helmet for pillion riders

CONRAD DIAS ■ HYDERABAD

Despite showering our screens with advertisements about the safety of a passenger, the mobility aggregators are only keeping the rule of handing out a helmet only on papers. The Traffic officials of Hyderabad said that an awareness programme will be held with the service providers, asking them to follow the rules.

Though there are several bike taxi service providers in Hyderabad, none of them provide a helmet for the rider. Speaking to *the pioneer*, Anil Kumar, Additional Commissioner of Hyderabad Traffic Police said that in the past, various awareness programmes had been held to make the riders aware.

"We had an awareness programme with mobility aggregators few months ago regarding road safety and we had clearly informed them to follow traffic rules and regulations. We always take strict actions against anyone trying to break the rules. We are planning to organise another awareness programme in the near future."

Earlier this year on April 21, a person, riding pillion on an online Bike Taxi died after the two-wheeler was hit by a truck in Punjagutta. According to the police, Avinash Ranbaore, a software professional, had hired a bike taxi from Cyber Towers to go to Secunderabad. While the driver was able to escape with injuries on his arms and legs, Avinash died on the spot due to severe head injuries.

When reached out to a popular company, which provides bike tax, the spokesperson said that their company has zero tolerance against any such



On April 21, a person, riding pillion on an online bike taxi died after the two-wheeler was hit by a truck in Punjagutta

cases and does not negotiate with anyone who tries to break the law. "Safety of customers is our priority and it is by the law that the pillions must also wear a helmet. If in any case the rider does not provide helmet to the rider then the customer must complain about it to the company and we take strict actions against them and the rider is off-loaded. The company has a zero tolerance against such cases and has no negotiations."

Dr Kamal J Soi, Member of National Road Safety Council shared his expert opinion and gave a few suggestions that should be adopted by the mobility aggregators. "The service providers should provide bikes with built in GPS navigation system and it should be

placed in such a position that it does not hinder the vision. The mobility aggregators should provide helmet to the pillion riders as it is mandatory. Around 35 percent of road accidents in India are of two-wheelers."

Dhanush R, a private employee said that sometimes even the driver is not wearing one. "There were times he asked the driver for a helmet, but was told that they didn't have an extra one because it was difficult to carry one," he said.

Though Ola declined to officially comment on the same, however, their rules for the bike taxi service comes with the requirement of mandatory safety gear in the form of an ISI-certified helmet and a first aid box, both of which are seldom seen. And while Ola advises users to cancel rides if there is no helmet provided, there is no such indication or instruction on the app while booking a ride.

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SHORT READS

Raj: ACB arrests junior engineer for taking bribe

JAIPUR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has arrested a junior engineer while accepting a bribe of Rs 8,000 in Rajasthan's Tonk district, officials said on Friday. The accused Akhilesh Chaturvedi was posted in Jaipur Vidyal Niranjan Limited (JVNL) in Diggi area. He had demanded a bribe from the complainant to provide electricity connection, an ACB spokesperson said.

Chaturvedi was not providing the connection despite the completion of all the formalities by the complainant, the spokesperson said. The accused was arrested red-handed on Friday while accepting the bribe and a case has been registered against him under sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, the spokesperson added.

We will take less time to improve air quality: Javadekar

NEW DELHI: It took Beijing fifteen years to reduce air pollution but we will take less time to improve air quality in the national capital, Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said in Lok Sabha on Friday. Responding to a question on "air pollution and climate change," he said a mass movement is required for the purpose. "It took Beijing 15 years (to fight air pollution). We will take lesser time," he said, referring to air quality in Delhi.

SP celebrates Mulayam Singh Yadav's 81st birthday

LUCKNOW: The Samajwadi Party celebrated the 81st birthday of its founder Mulayam Singh Yadav at the party headquarters here on Friday. Flanked by his son and party president Akhilesh Yadav as well as senior leaders, Mulayam Singh Yadav cut the birthday cake amid loud cheers of party workers and leaders. On the occasion, an 81-kg laddoo was also presented to him. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended birthday greetings to Mulayam Singh Yadav. "Wishing good health, long and active life while extending best wishes to former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh Mulayam Singh Yadav on his birthday," Adityanath said.

Delhi govt creating hype on pollution for political reasons: Centre

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government is "creating hype" on the issue of rising air pollution in the national capital due to "political reasons," Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Choudhary told the Rajya Sabha on Friday. Responding to queries during Question Hour, he said, "It may be the failure of the state government. There are many reasons for rise in pollution. However, the state government is creating hype for political reasons." He said there was no need to blame farmers for the rise in pollution as stubble burning has contributed to only 3 per cent to the overall air pollution in Delhi. On stringent measures taken against farmers to curb stubble burning, the minister said, "It is wrong to send farmers to jail. However, it is a state subject." On the Supreme Court's directive, some states are offering Rs 100/quintal assistance to farmers. Even the central government's agriculture research body ICAR has developed seven post harvesting machines to reduce stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, he added.

SC to hear review pleas of Maradu flat owners for relief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Friday agreed to hear in open court the review petitions of some Maradu flat owners in Kochi seeking appropriate relief from the builders.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra said it would hear the review petitions in an open court on the point of appropriate relief from the builders.

The counsel appearing for the Kerala government submitted a status report and said the state had partially complied with the earlier apex court order of demolition of the Maradu flats.

In compliance of the top court's earlier order, the state government has paid 27.99 crore as interim compensation to the Maradu flat owners and it will be paying 33.51 crore more to them, the counsel said.

The court then asked the state government to ensure full compliance with its orders, including demolition of the Maradu flats.

It had on October 25 asked the Kerala government to give Rs 25 lakh each as interim



The court then asked the state government to ensure full compliance with its orders, including demolition of the Maradu flats

compensation to the owners of Maradu flats, being demolished on the court's orders for violation of environment norms by builders, after it was informed that they have been given a lower amount.

It had directed the builders of Maradu flats to deposit Rs 20 crore within one month with the court-appointed committee in the matter, and said the attached bank account of

the builders be detached for depositing the amount.

The court also asked the committee to assess the documentary proof of payments made by flat owners to builders after some homebuyers told the bench that they had paid more than Rs 25 lakh to the developers.

The committee of a retired high court judge will oversee the demolition and to assess

total compensation payable to affected flat owners.

The court on September 30 refused to entertain a plea of flat owners seeking stay on its order to demolish the four apartment complexes in Maradu which were built in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone norms.

On September 27, it directed demolition of the flats within 138 days, a timeline given by the Kerala government, and had asked the state to pay Rs 25 lakh interim compensation to each flat owner within four weeks.

It said the government may consider recovering the interim compensation amount, which will be paid to flat owners, from the builders and the promoters.

It clarified that its primary concern was that no construction should have been carried out at the eco-fragile coastal zone and the question was not regarding any individual.

On May 8, the apex court had directed that these buildings be removed within a month as they were constructed in a notified CRZ, which was part of the tidally-influenced water body in Kerala.

Akhil Gogoi-led KMSS stages protest against CAB in Assam

PNS ■ GUWAHATI



Gogoi expressed fears that due to opposition of the state governments of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh to the Bill, it will be imposed on Assam and Tripura

Sahitya Akademi awardee Dr Hiren Gohain, who was part of the KMSS agitation, said, "An attempt is being made by the Centre to divide Assam on religious lines... till our last drop of blood, we will oppose CAB which is against the interest of the indigenous people of the state."

Gogoi expressed fears that due to opposition of the state governments of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh to the Bill, it will be imposed on Assam and Tripura.

Protests against the Bill have been raging in Assam over the past week, with activists of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) along with 30 ethnic students' organisations organising rallies

across the state on Thursday evening.

Speaking to reporters, AASU Chief Advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya had asserted, "Assam is not a dustbin for illegal Bangladeshi. Under the Assam Accord, 1985, we have already accepted the Bangladeshi who came here illegally till March, 1971. Now, attempts are being made to thrust more Bangladeshi upon us through the CAB."

Bhattacharya alleged that the BJP was trying to polarise the society on religious lines.

'Allies support idea of forming govt with Sena'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

NCP leader Jayant Patil on Friday said the smaller pre-poll allies of his party and the Congress have backed the idea of forming a government with the Shiv Sena to keep the BJP away from power in the state.

"Our pre-poll allies have supported the idea of forming a government in Maharashtra to keep the BJP away from power," Patil, who was accompanied by senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan, told reporters after the meeting here.

The Sena, NCP and Congress are currently working out modalities for formation of a government in the state, which has been under President's rule since November 12.

Jayant Patil


called Central Public Information Officers marginally declined from 9.72 per cent last year to 9.29 per cent in 2018-19.

The CIC disposed of 17,188 Second Appeals and Complaints cases in 2018-19. A total of 22,736 cases were registered during the same period. At the end of the year, the Commission had 29,655 cases pending before it," it said.

The figures are based on annual returns submitted by all 2,145 registered public authorities with the Commission.

Tribal & home ministries top RTI rejections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



19, were rejected. This is a decline from 5.13 per cent applications rejected last year.

The number of RTI applications received by Central government ministries and departments increased by 1.36 lakh, about 11 per cent higher than 2017-18, it said.

"Highest percentage of RTI

applications rejected was reported by Ministry of Tribal Affairs (26.54%) and Ministry of Home Affairs (16.41%), a statement from personnel ministry quoting the report said on Friday.

The first appeals before seniors against the decisions of RTI processing officers

called Central Public Information Officers marginally declined from 9.72 per cent last year to 9.29 per cent in 2018-19.

The CIC disposed of 17,188 Second Appeals and Complaints cases in 2018-19. A total of 22,736 cases were registered during the same period. At the end of the year, the Commission had 29,655 cases pending before it," it said.

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PIL in HC for inspecting paper slips of VVPAT EVMs used in 2019 LS polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The petition claims that the alleged "great discrepancy" in number of votes polled and counted at majority of the constituencies 'creates doubt'

number of votes polled and counted at majority of the constituencies "creates doubt" in the minds of voters, including the petitioner, that the EVMs were tampered with.

The petition claims that the alleged "great discrepancy" in

and votes counted in around

'Not privatising Railways; only outsourcing'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is not privatising the Indian Railways but only outsourcing commercial and on-board services to private players in order to provide better facilities to commuters, Railways Minister Piyush Goyal said in Rajya Sabha on Friday.

Responding to a series of queries during Question Hour, Railways Minister Piyush Goyal said such a step has been taken as it is not possible for the government to meet the fund requirement of Rs 50 lakh crore estimated for the next 12 years to operate Railways.

"Our intention is to give bet-

ter services and benefits and not to privatise the Indian Railways. The Indian Railways is and always continues to be the property of India and people of India," Goyal assured in the Upper House.

As per the government's estimate, the Indian Railways require about Rs 50 lakh crore in the next 12 years



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"Every day, members come with a new demand for lines and better services. It is not going to be a possibility for the Government of India to provide Rs 50 lakh crore for the next 12 years. We all know that," he said, adding there are budgetary constraints and other real issues.

Noting that thousands of

Belur college appoints Muslim teacher in Sanskrit department

PNS ■ KOLKATA



Although the BHU authorities backed him, Khan has not been able to take classes

Although the BHU authorities backed him, Khan has not been able to take classes.

Ali, who is in his early 40s, asserted that he had never faced any discrimination as a Sanskrit teacher.

"I never felt that I was out of place or unwanted while studying or teaching Sanskrit. Here, at the Belur college, the management has arranged for my accommodation and ensured that I do not face any inconvenience," the assistant professor maintained.

A student of the Sanskrit department at Ramkrishna Mission Vidyamandira said he was looking forward to attending Ali's classes.

Bill to ban e-cigarettes introduced in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Hardik extends support to JNU students' protest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A bill to ban production, import and sale of electronic cigarettes and similar products was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Friday.

The Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Bill, 2019, seeks to replace an ordinance issued on September 18.

The bill was introduced by Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

The bill makes the manufacturing, production, import, export, distribution, transport, sale, storage or advertisement of such alternative smoking devices a cognizable offence, attracting a jail term and a fine.

First-time violators will face a jail term of up to one year and a fine of Rs 1 lakh. For subsequent offences, a jail term of up to three years

health risk to people, especially youth and issued an ordinance to ban such products.

The bill authorised officials to conduct searches in premises, stating that where such searches were not permissible, authorities might attach properties, stocks of e-cigarettes or records maintained by the manufacturer, producer, exporter, transporter, importer, stockist against whom a complaint had been made.

In a message posted on his Twitter handle, he said the students are not fighting a battle for themselves but for the coming generations.

He said there is a "conspiracy to end JNU" and alleged that the youth are being misguided in the name of religion and nationalism by the government.

"The country's youth are engrossed in fake nationalism and religion instead of gaining education and are indifferent towards the movement in JNU. In fact, everyone should participate in this movement," he said in the message in Hindi.

SC seeks Centre's reply on allowing private firms to use Aadhaar data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court Friday asked the Centre to respond to a plea challenging the constitutional validity of the amendments made in the law allowing private entities to use the Aadhaar data provided voluntarily by customers for ID authentication.

A bench, comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justice B R Gavai, took note of the plea filed by S G Vombatkere, who alleged that the 2019 amendments into the Aadhaar Act was violative of the earlier apex court judgments.

Earlier, a 5-judge Constitution bench, while upholding the validity of

The apex court issued notice on the fresh PIL and tagged it with a separate pending case for hearing.

The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed in Rajya Sabha in July by a voice vote, although many Opposition parties had opposed it citing various reasons, including apprehensions data theft.

The amendment bill, which also provides for a stiff Rs 1 crore penalty and a jail term for private entities for violating provisions on Aadhaar data, was earlier passed by Lok Sabha on July 4. It was introduced on June 24 to replace an ordinance issued in March 2019.

new trains and more investment are required for providing new facilities/rakes and meet the passengers rush, Goyal said: "If there are private players willing to invest and come and run on the existing system, which continues to be always owned by the Indian Railways the consumers and passengers will benefit."

Maintaining that the government is corporatising railways not privatising it, Minister of State for Railways Suresh Angadi said, "We are outsourcing only the commercial and on-board services to private players. Ownership will be with railways. We are giving only licenses. They are bringing in new rates."

Clean campaigns

Electoral bonds are deeply flawed and more than debate, we need to create a transparent module of political fund-raising



The opacities about funding through electoral bonds have been discussed for quite some time now, benefitting almost all political parties in varying degrees, though the latest expose, courtesy transparency activists accessing RTI documents, has stirred up a big storm in the ongoing Parliament session. That the bonds would further institutionalise the politico-corporate nexus has long been established though the Opposition, which has clearly received the thinnest slices of such donations, is now crying foul.

What was under the table is just legitimate now, allowing any corporation, trust, NGO or individual to donate unlimited amounts of money to our political parties. The lies have been piling up ever since the electoral bonds were introduced. For example, while it was claimed that the secret alphanumeric code would insure the donor from being tracked or identified, documents have proven that the State Bank of India (SBI) not only knows who bought how many bonds for whom, it is even required to furnish the information to probe agencies when they need them. The blackout of information has only been in the public domain. Latest documents have proven a more insidious link and a cavalier dismissal of objections. The bond movements, it appears, were closely watched by the Finance Ministry and the protests by SBI and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) over grey areas were turned down. The Election Commission was summarily dismissed as well. And while the ruling party indeed sought the Opposition's views on the scheme and assured transparency to them, it had set up a clandestine architecture. Yet all internal communications on the subject were denied by several Ministers when grilled in the Parliament. In short, the Government of the day successfully firewalled any criticism and set up a system which implied crony capitalism. Donors, by virtue of the guarantee of anonymity, could route kickbacks to parties and the latter would have to reward the largesse of the former with "friendly" policy-making and trading off favours. The poll panel had earlier claimed that electoral bonds made its job of tracking donations from overseas and Government companies difficult. The Government had consistently defended itself saying since the bonds were purchased through banking channels, there was no question of slush money being in circulation, and there was an in-built accountability. But fact of the matter is that accountability is for a few privileged eyes only to decide whether the funds are ethically intended or a backdoor form of wheeling-dealing. Remember, apart from a sealing on cash donations, there is no upper limit for donations. The bonds may be issued by banks but they can never gauge the larger understanding between donor and recipient that drives such transactions.

Real transparency demands that the haze of doubts be eliminated once and for all. Else, the electoral bonds scheme will poison the electoral process rather than cleansing it. Both the donor and political recipient must be identified clearly. Some reformists have suggested State funding, at least at the candidate level, but that would involve an estimated outlay of ₹2,000 crore, something, experts say, can be achieved by truncating the MPLADS (MP Local Area Development Scheme) allocations from five to four years. Direct funding will undoubtedly encourage entrants to participate in elections, clean up the system, reduce dependency on parties to call the shots and dilute the bargaining strength of criminal candidates with muscle and money power. More people in the fray will further motivate the bigger parties to democratise themselves. In the end, elections and their management are an expensive affair and streamlining campaign funding is a work in progress. The main purpose for which electoral bonds were introduced, the need to remove ambiguous sources of money coming into the electoral process and stash cash, has still not been achieved, if seizures during the May Lok Sabha elections are anything to go by. The Election Commission, too, has to set realistic limits of electoral spending, the sum of ₹70 lakh per candidate too little to make good. A workable budget per Lok Sabha constituency, coupled with full disclosure of corporate donations, should be the way forward. Former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi had once suggested creating a National Electoral Fund to which all donors could contribute. The allocations to political parties would then be in proportion to the votes they got. Not only would this protect the identity of donors, it would also weed out black money from politics. But neither the corporate nor the political class believes in such altruism or accountability. So a sustained push by the citizenry may take long but is the only way to drive change.

Kolkata turns pink

Pink-ball cricket is upon us. Is it going to just be a gimmick or a reality of the modern game?



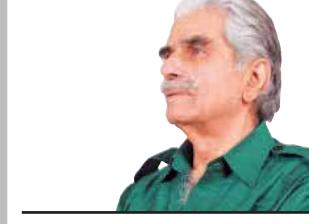
The lights that shine across all major monuments of Kolkata had changed their hue from blue, which is Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's favourite colour, to pink. This to acknowledge India's first day-night Test match and its uniquely coloured pink ball. It was appropriate that this new format was being played in India's greatest cricket ground, Kolkata's Eden Gardens, and the crowds included the likes of Banerjee and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Unfortunately, for the latter, even though Indian cricketers were

polite with her while being introduced, they were nothing like that to Bangladesh's batsmen, bundling them out for just 106. Watching India bat under the lights at the end of a Friday is a good way to begin the weekend, according to most Indian cricket fans and therein lies the greatest attraction of pink-ball cricket. The Test format might be the longest and most challenging of all and the most adaptable of major sports but it is unwieldy both for fans at the stadium and even those watching on television. The shorter variants of the game, both one-day internationals and T20, are played in the evenings and afternoons to attract more spectators into the stadium. Moving Tests towards the evening should help get both working-age people and students in droves.

However, what would really make the game interesting is a viable opponent. Taking nothing away from the stellar performances of India's outstanding pace battery away, Bangladesh has barely put up a fight. Our neighbour has improved tremendously over the past few years but this is clearly a team in strife, thanks to corruption allegations that have cost them their best player, Shakib Al Hasan. Success on the field and a good game are what ensure the long-term viability of a sport or format. India was initially aghast at T20 cricket and commentators called it a travesty. Then, it won the inaugural T20 World Cup in South Africa in a thrilling contest with Pakistan. And well, we know the rest. Would better competition have made a major difference? One could argue that there are few good teams in the sport right now. But at least India has made a start and the best part of pink-ball cricket may be when our boys tour — no more early morning starts to watch when they travel to Australia and New Zealand and morning cricket when India is in the Caribbean. As for us fans, there is a long way to go.

Forget the brag, get real

Like in J&K, where the Government's decision to split the former State into two Union Territories has led to resentment, undemocratic methods are allegedly under way in Nagaland, too



ASHOK K MEHTA

On November 20, Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated in the Rajya Sabha that after more than 100 days, the situation in Jammu & Kashmir was "normal" and that not a single bullet was fired, nor a death reported in Kashmir ever since the abrogation of Article 370. The normalcy claim was, however, debunked by a total shutdown the very next day. Shah must know that the absence of violence should not be construed as peace. Lockdown in the region has not been lifted. Political leaders and activists are still in detention and internet and cell phone services are totally or partially shut. It is, perhaps, too early to celebrate the mirage of normalcy.

Now, rewind to last month. October 31 will be remembered for more than one reason. It marked the deadline for converting the former State of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories — Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh — following the abrogation of Article 370. It was also for the first time in the history of India that a full-fledged State anywhere in the country was reduced into two Union Territories, whose security would be managed centrally. Two Lieutenant Governors were sworn in on the same day as Sardar Patel's 144th birth anniversary and Indira Gandhi's 35th death anniversary, the latter becoming coincidental but meaningful.

October 31 was also the deadline set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the closure of the Naga identity issue, following the Nagaland Framework Agreement of August 2017. Like in Jammu & Kashmir, undemocratic methods are allegedly under way here, too, to achieve a political solution to India's oldest and mother of all insurrections in Nagaland.

Ironically, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) or NSCN (I-M)'s demand for a separate flag and Constitution — both done away with in Jammu & Kashmir — has created a flutter among the Northeastern States, who enjoy special status under Article 371 of the Constitution. The opening up of two fronts is never a wise option with adversaries like Pakistan and China scouting for opportunities.

Still, the Government can rejoice for achieving its long-standing nationalistic agenda of terminating Jammu & Kashmir's special status and integrating it with the Union of India, though without pondering over the long-term consequences, as premature self-congratulations indicate. The aim of the political surgery is to end terrorism, corruption and dynastic rule, which will put Jammu & Kashmir on the path of development — these ills, the Government feels, have been the result of its special status. Lockdown in Jammu & Kashmir has crossed the 100-day mark despite the international community urging us to restore human rights currently being denied to the people. The Supreme Court, too, had asked the Government to come up with a plan by November 10 to relax restrictions.



On November 14, Constitutional issues relating to Article 370 and Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, came up for a second hearing but was moved to a new date, December 14. In the first hearing on October 4, the Constitution bench had overruled a plea for an interim order, staying the implementation of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, by October 31. It said that "we can always turn the clock back."

The independence of the judiciary against a strong executive and legislature is faced with a test. Business and trade are at a standstill. The president of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sheikh Ashiq, pegged the loss to the business sector at over ₹10,000 crore. But the overall damage to Kashmir's economy could be double this figure.

Delhi has been preparing younger, new political actors, most of who have been vetted by Shah to replace the old leadership. Prime Minister Modi praised the Block Development Council (BDC) elections as a democratic exercise though it was anything but that. Elections were held before October 31 under the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act and not the Indian Panchayat Act, so that polls could be indirect and "managed." Elected Panches and

Sarpanches selected one among them as the head of the block councils. Many of the elected Panches were confined to hotels in Srinagar, removed from their regions. The elections were farcical as 60 per cent of the Panches and Sarpanches' seats were vacant and winners were elected unopposed.

All political leaders, except the BJP, were in detention. Still, it was the Independents who won the maximum seats. The aim is to create a political class owing allegiance to New Delhi, preferably from Jammu. With the Legislative Council abolished, Legislative Assembly seats have been increased effectively from 83 to 90, excluding 24 for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. It is still not clear as to who will do the delimitation: The Election Commission of India or a delimitation panel. Any tinkering with the demography will be outright dangerous.

The new Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, GC Murmu, has said that elections will be held soon. Managing Srinagar by remote control from New Delhi will not be easy given the decades of trauma generations of Kashmiris have suffered. A 11-member team, comprising mental health specialists, which visited Kashmir after scrapping of the special status, reported "marked increase in psychological distress

in the region." A report titled, *Imprisoned Resistance: 5th August and its aftermath*, was released in New Delhi last week. No meaningful political outreach will be feasible when Kashmiris are stripped off their identity. Their hearts and minds, won over the years by the Army, are now largely lost.

Three security issues will continue to cross-fertilise: Existing alienation, which has turned into resentment; mounting radicalisation and Islamisation; and home-grown and cross-border terrorism dormant at present due to the lockdown. Kashmiris are less angry about deprivation of the special status than their land being downgraded to a Union Territory. The insult to their identity is palpable and will remain even when statehood is restored. The largely spontaneous civil disobedience movement will breed more radicalised youth, who will take to street violence and join the ranks of insurgency. The contours of a new insurgency will likely appear by next summer. Unlike in the past, Kashmiris will more readily support insurgents than the security forces.

In the short-term, once the passes close and snow sets in the hinterland by the end of November, insurgents will be forced to take refuge in villages and towns. The pause in secu-

rity forces' operations due to the lockdown has undermined the counter-insurgency and intelligence grids considerably.

Troop density in the Valley is at the highest levels since "Operation Parakram" (2001-02) when nearly 2,000 terrorists were killed. Pakistan will remain constrained due to the fear of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which will review its actions in blocking terrorist financing in February 2020. Pakistan has not launched a single big attack after Pulwama, in fact, Mumbai. But the 250-300 terrorists in the Valley, radicalised youth and overground workers will keep the security forces busy for long. Disaffected Kashmiris are hurt when Modi brags at home and abroad about having abrogated their special status while chasing the mirage of turning Kashmir into a land of milk and honey. "We have tried other ways and failed... so let's give a chance," is the contention.

Emotional integration of Kashmir has been put off even as North-eastern States, enjoying special status, are getting restive. Shah must get real. (*The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander IPKF South, Sri Lanka and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff.*)

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SOUND BITE

This is now a fight for the dignity and self-respect of Maharashtra. Now, even if we are offered the throne of (Lord) Indra, we are not interested.

Sena MP
—Sanjay Raut



The truth is that no discussion about the Indian-Afghan relationship would be complete without a mention of Bollywood and cricket.

Afghan Ambassador
to the US
—Roya Rahmani



India faces many regional and geopolitical threats. Islamic insurgents are a constant threat, spreading terror throughout J&K and elsewhere in India.

Congressman
—Francis Rooney



We hope Pakistanis will ask the Chinese Government why it is pursuing a development model in Pakistan that deviates from what brought it its own economic success.

Top American diplomat
—Alice Wells



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Deeper malaise

Sir — Amid vigorous efforts to tackle non-performing assets (NPAs), the revelation of ₹50,760 crore being ripped off from Government banks in April-September reflects deep systemic disorder. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was rolled out to sort things out but none factored in the time-frame of resolution, thus making the entire process ineffective. The focus of every segment of governance is on being seen to be doing something rather than on when, how and in what time-frame.

R Narayanan
Mumbai

Clear the air

Sir — The Supreme Court's decision on the ambit of the RTI Act will serve as a precedent to usher in greater transparency, especially on the part of organisations that have hitherto been reluctant to comply with the Act, such as the Board of Control for Cricket in India and Mother Dairy. This judgment contradicts the opinion of former Chief Justice of India

(CJI), KG Balakrishnan, who was opposed to the Delhi High Court's ruling, which has now been upheld. However, even now, important points like the criteria for the nomination of judges have been excluded from the purview of the RTI Act. Such an exclusion could defeat the entire purpose of the verdict. The names of donors, who purchase electoral bonds to

All is not lost for the telecom industry

This refers to the editorial, "Turmoil in telecom" (November 21). The telecom industry is turning out to be another aviation business because of the kind of returns it is giving. Vodafone-Idea's spectrum dues to the Government reached ₹88,000 crore and those of Bharti Airtel stood at ₹45,000 crore. However, it's not just the Indian telecom that is witnessing a decline. This trend is to be seen worldwide as growth rates have taken a setback in the face of declining average revenue.

The two-year moratorium given by the Government will bring partial reprieve. Unless return on capital employed for global telecom services is raised, this industry cannot revive. Higher operating costs have squeezed margins for telcos. And while Vodafone has threatened to leave the Indian market, if indeed it were to shut shop, the biggest sufferers could be the consumers as this would lead to the duopoly of Reliance and Airtel. There could be a possibility that these two firms may take end users for granted, knowing it well that competition is

all but over, with little incentive or pressure to reduce prices. It is, therefore, essential that the Government offers them incentives to induct newer technologies so as to make the shift to 5G technology at the earliest, invest more in R&D and better customer experience.

Bal Govind
Noida

fund political parties, should also be made available to the public upon enquiry. The BJP uses plenty of anti-corruption rhetoric but information about its own funding sources remains concealed. As of now, the operation of Constitutional agencies still remains mostly opaque, whereas it should be transparent.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

bodies like the World Trade Organisation (WTO), BRICS and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RECP), an IFS officer's career is much more exciting now. The External Affairs Ministry has not expanded much by establishing more embassies and consulates and, hence, the number of candidates designated for the IFS has hardly gone up.

Varun Dambal
Bengaluru

Take lessons

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Breathing new life" (November 22). All the five public sector undertakings (PSUs), which have been put on strategic sale by the Government, had been performing quite well. Some were even role models for private firms. The Government should have taken corrective steps when they started registering losses. Even now, a comprehensive examination must be done to find out the causes for their debacle.

Rati
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Reap the AI benefit

Soon job seekers will be sifted by algorithms and exercises that test problem-solving skills, creativity and how people respond to stress



KUNAL GUPTA

For years, the biggest challenge in the recruiting industry was manually testing applicants. Now, thankfully, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a reality and its use for recruitment is rapidly evolving. Soon, the days of reading endless resumes and covering letters, then holding interviews, will give way to AI-led candidate assessment. Job seekers will be sifted by algorithms and exercises that test everything, from problem-solving skills and creativity, to how they respond to stress. AI will enable Human Resource (HR) professionals to reach the right candidate in the least possible time, with low-cost inclusion.

According to a recent study, 52 per cent of talent acquisition leaders say the hardest part of recruitment is identifying the right candidates from a large applicant pool. While, 56 per cent say their hiring volume will increase this year; 66 per cent of recruiting teams will either stay the same size or contract. This means that recruiters are being tasked to do more with lesser resources.

Business leaders looking to hire or HR managers should consider fast-rising employment solutions that provide AI-enhanced recruitment. It is crucial for any company to not merely hire employees but recruit the most qualified person.

In today's business climate, firms with first-mover advantage usually lead the way and soon, talent acquisition in India will undergo a paradigm shift. So, to keep up with advancements in the industry, HR professionals should become part of the AI revolution as the benefits of doing so are many. AI-enhanced HR solutions are becoming the backbone of the industry, especially for companies that need to recruit thousands of employees in a short time.

A recruitment system based on AI is capable of screening candidates in a more systematic way while looking out for a particular skill set, without any human intervention. It has algorithmic power to conclude the performance of job applicants.

It can even track online interviews on a real time basis and if an applicant faces difficulties in a particular sphere, then the AI will ask similar questions, repeatedly, to gauge how the candidate reacts to pressure. The only thing left for the recruiter is to provide the AI with a database to work on and to check the final list of the candidates before the recruitment system sends out emails for an interview. All recruiting systems are designed to tremendously improve the recruiter's efficiency to ensure that companies don't miss the best candidates and they are the first ones to be selected for the interview.

Today's business leaders are always looking for people who perfectly fit the skill set they are looking for and there is tremendous pressure on recruiters to match and hire the candidates who can meet the management's expectations. AI-optimised hiring helps recruiters match the right employees with the right company. Plus, the AI recruitment software delivers solutions at a low cost so that it reduces a firm's cost per hire. Companies have to invest in the AI system once unlike the recurring costs of recruitment agencies that charge firms per employee hired.

However, there are many challenges to leveraging AI's full potential. First is competence, as the AI ecosystem, like its most important subfield, machine learning (ML), is still very small. It's difficult to find and hire good talent. The simple way to solve it is to hire an agency which has highly-skilled professionals familiar with AI technologies that will give HR teams training on fixed intervals. Non-adoption is another major risk. Any challenge in the world and especially in business, is an opportunity for AI. Adopting AI will require patience and a willingness to learn and will be complex and lengthy, so firms need to start now. Between the ongoing development of AI to recruit applicants and the understandable lag in implementation at this early stage, many of the features that it can bring to the hiring process are still to be completely implemented.

Like every new computing technology, AI still has a long way to go and there are some serious concerns which need to be addressed. As is obvious, AI has been invented to replace the human workforce and if it is adopted on a large scale, this will result in huge unemployment. There is no doubt that adopting AI will enhance the work culture and productivity, but it will also create economic unbalance in most sectors.

The second big concern is privacy, as we have seen various AI-infused web platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp lacking in this sphere. So along with adopting AI, organisations should equally give importance to the protection of the privacy of their staff and prospective employees.

To conclude, AI is a very new and unexplored segment and it will require major infrastructure to educate people about it before we let it come into our lives in a major way.

(The writer is MD of a talent consulting firm.)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

MODI HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO FORGIVE PRAGYA FROM THE HEART BUT SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY ON IMPORTANT ISSUES SUCH AS INDIA'S DEFENCE.
—CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON
RANDEEP SURJEWALA



THE CONGRESS SEEMS TO HAVE LOST ITS FAITH IN DEMOCRACY AND FORGOTTEN THAT PRAGYA THAKUR IS AN ELECTED MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
—BJP MP
MEENAKSHI LEKH

Too little and a little too late

The Govt has put a moratorium on pending spectrum payments for telecoms without altering the overall timeline of clearing all dues by 2030-31. But, given the huge amount to be paid, this won't be of much help



UTTAM GUPTA

Vodafone Idea Limited (VIL) — a joint venture between UK-based Vodafone and KM Birla-owned Idea Cellular — and Bharti Airtel have reported a staggering loss of ₹51,000 crore and ₹23,000 crore respectively for the second quarter of the current financial year ending September 30, 2019. This is primarily due to a recent order of the Supreme Court (SC) directing telecom companies to give "unpaid" dues towards licence fee and spectrum usage charges (SUC).

The order is the culmination of a long-drawn court battle between the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) and service providers. While the former insisted that for determining the licence fee and SUC — which is charged as a percentage of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) (at eight per cent and three-five per cent respectively), apart from telecom services revenue — AGR should also include revenue from non-telecom services viz. rent, profit on sale of fixed assets, dividend, interest and so on, the latter opposed it. The SC upheld the DoT's view.

As a result, service providers will now have to pay excess of the amount calculated on the basis of total revenue i.e. from telecom services plus non-telecom activities over the amount already paid based on revenue from telecom services only. Together with interest on excess amount, plus penalty, interest on penalty, this would be ₹53,000 crore for VIL and ₹36,000 crore for Airtel.

However, with a view to avert the crisis for the telecoms, the Government has put a moratorium on pending spectrum payments during 2020-21 and 2021-22 (without altering the overall timeline of clearing all payments by 2030-31). But, considering the magnitude of the unpaid dues (as per the SC's order), this won't be of much help. For instance, in case of VIL, against total liability of ₹53,000 crore, the relief from suspension of spectrum payments is only ₹24,000 crore. In the case of Airtel, the quantum of relief works out to ₹11,000 crore against a liability of ₹36,000 crore. The Government has also alluded to exonerating them from payment of interest and penalty on dues as per the apex court's order but that is no consolation as this would be available only when the SC allows it, which is unlikely.

So, the three big firms are staring at a bleak future. Vodafone has opined that "the future of the Indian JV is in doubt and we won't be infusing any further equity into the venture." The Birla Group too, has echoed similar views, hinting that the company could be taken to insolvency. Bharti Airtel, too, is on the brink.

VIL has a customer base of 320 million whereas Bharti Airtel has 265 million. At 585 million, they account for nearly 50 per cent of the total subscribers in India. If, these two companies go into liquidation, this could have catastrophic implications, not just for banks who have an exposure of over ₹200,000 crore to the duo, but also for subscribers who would be left high and dry.

They are looking to the Government for relief by way of reduction in licence fee and SUC, reduction in Goods and Services Tax (GST) from the existing 18 per cent to five per cent and so on. Even as the Government considers this, it needs to ascertain as to how the sector landed in the current morass.

In September 2016, in a bizarre move rarely seen before, greenfield 4G operator Reliance Jio

AT THE CORE OF THE TELECOM CRISIS IS THE FREEBIES CULT, WHICH RJIOP HAS IMPLANTED AND WAS GLOSSED OVER BY THE POWERS THAT BE THERE IS URGENT NEED TO GET RID OF IT. THE INITIATIVE HAS TO COME FROM SERVICE PROVIDERS ONLY EVEN AS VIL AND AIRTEL HAVE DECIDED TO RAISE TARIFF RJIOP'S INTENT TO FOLLOW SUIT IS A GOOD SIGN. TRAI MUST NOT ABDICATE ITS RESPONSIBILITY IT SHOULD PROMPTLY ORDER A 'FLOOR PRICE' AND ENSURE THAT NO OPERATOR SETS TARIFF BELOW IT

“ ”



(RJIO) entered the Indian telecom market with "free" and "unlimited" voice calls and low-cost data. After launching an introductory offer for free — both data and voice for six months, from April, 2017, it charged data at a throwaway price of ₹50 per GB, even as voice calls continued to be free ad infinitum. For a conglomerate (RJIO) investing thousands of crores in laying infrastructure, an attempt to sell services virtually for free was a brazen case of "predatory" pricing with the sole intent to snatch customers from incumbent players. The latter were forced to reduce their tariff drastically to match the former. Post-revision, the tariff in India at less than \$1 per GB is a fraction of what customers in other countries pay (\$30 in Japan; \$18 in Korea; \$15 in UK, China and Germany and \$10 in the USA).

As a result, incumbent operators, who were making profits prior to RJIO's entry, are incurring losses. Several operators' downed shutters while others were bought over (e.g. Tata Teleservices was acquired by Bharti Airtel). Today, there are only three private operators viz. VIL, RJIO and Airtel, down from a dozen earlier. When, predatory pricing happens, it is for the sector regulator, in this instance the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), to intervene. The TRAI should have nipped the problem in the bud. But it saw nothing wrong and adding insult to injury, in February 2018, it came out with fresh amendments to the Telecom Tariff Order (TTO) to define predatory pricing in a manner so as to give legitimacy to the actions of RJIO.

As per the amended order, a tariff is considered predatory if in a relevant market (circle), an operator, who is a significant market player (SMP), offers services at a price that is below its average variable cost (AVC) with a view to reduce competition or eliminate competitors in that relevant market. An operator will be

considered SMP if "it controls 30 per cent of the market share or above," which is calculated on the basis of gross revenue and subscriber market share. Further, AVC is defined as the cost that is calculated by identifying those expenses, which change with output, adding them and then dividing the result with total number of units produced.

Simply put, the regulator prescribed a two-fold criterion for a firm to be a predator. First, it offers services at less than AVC. Second it has market share over 30 per cent. During the relevant period, 2016-18, even as all firms were selling below the AVC, incumbent operators had market share more than 30 per cent (natural as they have been around for over two decades) whereas, RJIO had share of less than 30 per cent. So, in the eyes of the regulator, the former were predators even as the latter was not. In other words, a company which started it all (RJIO) was termed innocent even as others who suffered due to its onslaught were charged with indulging in predatory pricing and scuttling competition.

The amended order was "one-sided" and "discriminatory," aimed at favouring RJIO and unfairly targeting incumbent players. The order was challenged before the Telecom Disputes Settlement Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT), which set aside TRAI's order and even observed that it was "non-transparent." However, by the time TDSAT pronounced its verdict on December 13, 2018, the damage was already done.

Other actions of the TRAI, such as a steep cut in the Interconnect Usage Charge (IUC) (it is a charge the telecom service provider of a caller pays to the telco on whose network the call terminates) in September 2017 from the existing 14 paisa per minute to six paisa per minute also impacted the incumbent operators. This drastically reduced their revenue from IUC even as RJIO was increasing its market share by leaps and

bounds (courtesy, free voice calls). TRAI has also prescribed adopting the "Bill and Keep" (BAK) regime from January 1, 2020, thereby reducing the IUC to zero. This will give a further jolt to the incumbent operators. The only reason (unsaid) behind the powers that be letting RJIO continue with its bizarre practice may have something to do with Modi's grandiose plans for pan-India broadband connectivity. Low tariff (even free voice call) which RJIO had promised, helped increase coverage, especially for a majority of the poor. But, what it ignores is that public interest is not served merely by keeping price low/free. Providing services on a "sustainable" basis and maintaining "quality" is no less important.

This won't be possible if, service providers are in dire financial straits. To some extent, incumbent operators are themselves to blame. For instance, they ought to have factored in a negative outcome of court proceedings (these have gone on for over a decade) and made contingency provisions in their books. They have also lagged behind in embracing new technologies (they are still glued to 2G/3G) even as RJIO has latched on to 4G. But, at the core of the crisis is the freebies cult, which RJIO has implanted and was glossed over by the powers that be. There is urgent need to get rid of this cult.

The initiative has to come from service providers only. Even as VIL and Airtel have decided to raise tariff, RJIO's intent to follow suit is a good sign. TRAI must not abdicate its responsibility. It should promptly order a "floor price" and ensure that no operator sets tariff below it. It should watch out for an act of predation and deal with it sternly.

However, there is no getting away from the fact that the service providers have to set their house in order.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst.)

Is judicial action divorced from public interest?

In Goa, livelihoods of 300,000 people associated with the mining industry disappeared overnight after judicial intervention. This is painful, particularly when the country is going through the worst employment crisis and has no alternative



ABHAY RAJ MISHRA

are staring at a major employment crisis. Over 300,000 people are dependent on mining in the State and they have become the face of massive livelihood loss triggered by judicial intervention. Ever since the SC cancelled 88 mining leases in Goa on February 7, 2018, life has come to a grinding, tragic halt for these workers and their families.

This is no longer just an economic crisis — which is severely debilitating in its own right — but a grave humanitarian crisis as well.

Livelihoods disappearing overnight as a result of judicial intervention, because the Executive and the corporate masters did not do their jobs properly, is painful particularly at a time when the country is going through the worst employment crisis in its history. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), unemployment in 2017-2018 was at a four-decade high of 6.1 per cent. New job seekers are not able to find sustainable employment and August 2019 saw the highest rate of unemployment in India at 8.4 per cent.

The most recent example of mass job losses as a result of the collapse of

a big organisation is Jet Airways. Due to poor management of funds, the founder himself led one of India's best airlines into bankruptcy and closure. However, employees of the airline were aware of the unfolding situation and had braced themselves for the layoffs. But in the case of Goa, the miners and other workers were unprepared.

This, when there was no financial crisis in the mining sector. Rather it was booming, with iron ore being an exportable produce of the State.

Goa could have generated three times more revenue from iron ore mining but has not only lost this opportunity but is dealing with the extensive collateral damage that has followed the cancellation of the leases. The ban has taken a toll on the State's revenue stream and its social fabric has been ripped apart. Not just the mining sector but all other stakeholders and the supportive infrastructure, comprising equipment suppliers, the logistics and ancillary industry and the transport sector, have flourished.

Goa is the only State with a unique logistical arrangement for

movement of iron ore from the mines to the ports, unlike other States which rely on Indian Railways for the same. Iron ore is carried by trucks and barges from the mines to the ports.

The ban on mining has resulted in unemployment for workers hired by 12,000 truck owners, 150 barge owners and 150 ancillary units and has spelled doom for them. Not only have they suffered from livelihood loss, there is a larger crisis looming as the families have near about exhausted their meagre savings and have been subsisting on loans and handouts from well-wishers.

Even banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in the State have been drawn into the slide. When the going was good, these institutions eagerly extended credit lines to the truckers and storage providers. Now, in the absence of a running business concern, the ability of people to repay has vanished and a huge Non-Performing Asset (NPA) crisis is

tor and the burgeoning tragedy begins to hit uncomfortably home.

In any economic ecosystem, one segment aids and benefits from the other. The interdependency, which the Goan mining industry had so healthily created with respect to the State's other revenue driver, internal tourism and food industry, is also hit as people don't have the money to spend anymore. As individual economies of families waste away and die, the State is suffering from a socio-economic disaster.

It is imperative that mining restarts to provide livelihoods in the mining sector and ancillary industries to lakhs of people of the State. There is enough research available to indicate a direct link between crime and lack of livelihood. Studies have established that India's Maoist movement is deeply rooted in the poor socio-economic conditions prevalent in parts of the country with large tribal populations. It has mostly affected areas where there is a conflict between the State and the populace on the economic derivation of forest produce and mining such as in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, and agriculture in parts of

Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Such aggressive posturing by citizens has huge direct and indirect costs. In Goa there were only two major sources of livelihood — mining and tourism. Without these, Goa has nothing. Any social unrest and spikes in crime rate can spell doom for Goa's tourism economy too, which so far has been characterised by friendly service by the Goans, discipline, cleanliness and law and order.

Laws are meant to create a conducive environment for the citizens of the State. Goa, however, has become a case where the law and its interpretation has spelled doom for its residents. This cannot become a precedent and must be addressed immediately. Situations like these need more complex solutions. It is simplistic to penalise lakhs of people for the actions of a few with the stroke of a pen. Stakeholders must come together to rescue these lives and livelihoods before it is too late.

(The writer is president of a Delhi-based not-for-profit organisation dedicated towards finding solutions to the problems of the helpless.)



DON'T EXTRADITE ASSANGE TO USA

Sweden's decision to drop an investigation into a rape allegation against Julian Assange has illuminated the situation of the WikiLeaks founder and made it more pressing. He must be defended against extradition to America in a case that digs at the foundations of freedom and democracy and could see him sentenced to a total of 175 years. It is a matter of Press freedom, and the public's right to know. It's unclear if it would be safe to extradite Assange to the US. It is certain that it would not be right.

(The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



Investments via P-notes rise in Oct after registering fall for 4 months

NEW DELHI: After declining for four consecutive months, investments through participatory notes (P-notes) in the Indian capital market marginally rose to Rs 76,773 crore at the end of October. P-notes are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly after going through a due diligence process.

Before registering gain in October, investments through P-notes had been declining continuously since June, according to the latest data from markets regulator Sebi. The total value of investments via P-notes in the Indian markets (including equity, debt, and derivatives) rose to Rs 76,773 cr till the end of October from Rs 76,611 crore at Sept end. At the end of August, the Indian capital market saw a total inflow of Rs 79,088 cr through P-notes, a drop from Rs 81,082 cr till July-end.



Alembic Pharma gets USFDA nod for generic chronic iron overload treatment tablets

NEW DELHI: Drug firm Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Friday said it has received approvals from the US health regulator for its generic Deferasirox tablets used for treatment of chronic iron overload due to blood transfusions in patients over two years of age. The company has received final approvals from the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for its Deferasirox tablets in the strengths of 90 mg and 360 mg and Deferasirox tablets for oral suspension in the strengths of 125 mg, 250 mg, and 500 mg. Alembic Pharmaceuticals said in a regulatory filing, "The tablets are generic versions of Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation's Jadenu tablets and Exjade tablets for oral suspension in the same strengths, it added."



Bailed Ghosn speaks to wife after Japan court permission

AFP ■ TOKYO

Former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn spoke to his wife for the first time in eight months on Friday, his spokesman said, after a Tokyo court lifted a ban on contact between the pair.

Ghosn is on bail in Tokyo as he awaits trial on four charges of financial misconduct related to his time as chairman of the Japanese car giant he is widely credited with saving from the brink of bankruptcy.

Ghosn spoke to his wife Carole, now in New York, for an hour shortly after noon via video conference, the spokesman for the family told AFP without clarifying details of their conversation.

The Tokyo District Court had banned Ghosn from contacting his wife Carole despite several petitions from the tycoon's legal team, who have described the measure as

Govt relief, tariff hikes may not save telcos: Fitch

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Friday said the two-year moratorium on payment of spectrum dues for telecom companies and hike in tariffs are unlikely to be sufficient to offset the impact of the Supreme Court ruling on past statutory dues on Bharti Airtel and Vodafone-Idea.

The Supreme Court on October 24 ruled against the telcos in a 14-year-old dispute on the definition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) which forms the basis for payment of statutory dues. The court ruled that non-telecom revenues should be included in AGR for payment of licence fee and spectrum usage charge.

"The decision by all three private Indian telecommunication companies to raise tariffs from December 2019 and a two-year moratorium on payment of spectrum dues (announced by the government this week) are positive for the industry," Fitch said.

"However, these are unlikely to be sufficient to offset the impact of a recent Supreme Court judgement for incumbents Bharti Airtel and



"The decision by all three private Indian telecommunication companies to raise tariffs from December 2019 and a two-year moratorium on payment of spectrum dues (announced by the government this week) are positive for the industry," Fitch said.

Vodafone Idea Ltd."

Reliance Jio (Jio), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries, is not affected by the ruling and is likely to continue to gain revenue market share, which will support RIL's deleveraging

plans, Fitch said.

Fitch said it has a negative outlook on the sector for 2020, primarily due to heightened financial risk associated with the large unpaid AGR-related dues.

On November 20, the government announced plans to suspend payment of deferred spectrum dues for two years, which will ease cash flow pressure on all three telcos. Vodafone Idea and Bharti will benefit the most as their negative free cash flow will reduce by USD 1.7 billion and USD 850 million a year, respectively, for the financial year ending March 2021 (FY21) and FY22.

The incumbents are likely to file a review petition in the Supreme Court and have also approached the government to seek other forms of relief including waiver or grant of deferred payment terms for the AGR dues and a reduction of licence fees and spectrum usage charges.

"Despite the tariff hike, Fitch still believes it will take negative rating action on Bharti if it pays the AGR dues within three months and funds the payments entirely by debt," it said. "We will resolve the Rating Watch Negative on Bharti's ratings once we have greater clarity on the timing and financial impact of the regulatory dues and any remedial measures."

Sebi invites agencies to process, maintain investor complaints

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is planning to rope in an agency to process and maintain records of investor complaints received by the regulator.

The mandate for the agency is to receive grievances from investors through physical or electronic mode and categorise them. Also, the agency will be responsible for tracking complaints' status online and conduct follow-ups, besides preparing action taken reports (ATRs) and updating the status of grievances on Sebi's online platform for complaints, SCORES.

Sebi Complaints Redress System (SCORES), which registers and tracks investor complaints against listed entities or intermediaries, is a web-based and centralised grievance system developed by the markets watchdog.

In a notice, the regulator has invited applications "in prescribed format for pre-qualification of agencies for processing and maintenance of



The mandate for the agency is to receive grievances from investors through physical or electronic mode and categorise them

records of investor complaints received at Sebi".

The scope of the work also includes despatching complaints to intermediaries or companies as well as mail acknowledgment letters to investors.

Besides the selected agency will be responsible for proper storage facility of the complaints received and the ATR for 2 years and any other work related to investor awareness and education as well as investor grievance redressal.

Spelling out the eligibility criteria, Sebi said the agency should have an expertise in the

field of handling registrar and transfer activities or depositary services or have an experience of handling investor matters. The agency should have provided similar services to public sector undertakings, public sector banks, financial institutions and listed companies, among others.

The annual average turnover of the contractor should be at least Rs 50 lakh during the previous three years and should not have incurred any loss in two consecutive years during the past five years ended March 2019.

Leather exporters penetrate new markets to boost shipments: CLE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leather exporters from India have penetrated new markets such as the US, Canada, Russia, Japan, Australia, and South Korea to tap increasing demands in these countries and boost the country's overall exports, CLE said on Friday.

Council for Leather Exports (CLE) Chairman P R Aqeel Ahmed said that they have organised Reverse Buyer-Seller Meet here to showcase products to global companies. "Besides the traditional market of Europe, the industry has penetrated many potential markets like USA, Canada, Russia, Japan, UAE, Korea, and Australia," he said in a statement.

In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that any violation of foreign direct investment (FDI) regulations is covered by the penal provision of the Foreign

DPIIT received some complaints of e-comm firms offering deep discounts: Piyush Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has received complaints that e-commerce companies are offering deep discounts, indulging in predatory pricing, exercising control over inventory and influencing the prices of goods sold on the platform, Parliament was informed on Friday.

In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that any violation of foreign direct investment (FDI) regulations is covered by the penal provision of the Foreign

Management Act (FEMA), 1999. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) administers the FEMA and Directorate of Enforcement is the authority for the enforcement of the act.

been received in this department, complaining that e-commerce companies are offering deep discounts, indulging in predatory pricing, engaging in B2C business, exercising control over inventory and influencing the prices

RBI appoints advisory panel on DHFL

PNS ■ MUMBAI

After superseding the board of the crippled mortgage lender DHFL, the Reserve Bank on Friday constituted a three-member panel to advise its administrator to help recover nearly Rs 84,000 crore that the troubled company owes to the system.

The panel constitutes a veteran banker, the head of a leading insurer and also representation from a lobby grouping of asset managers.

The RBI had on Wednesday used recent changes in the laws to supersede the board of DHFL, announced to resolve the issue under the provisions of the bankruptcy code and appointed R Subramaniakumar as the administrator.



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Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2019 provide for appointing such a panel to advise the administrator "in the operations of the financial service provider during the corporate insolvency resolution process", it said.

The city-headquartered pureplay mortgage lender is the first NBFC/HFC to go for bankruptcy resolution.

Last Friday, the government had notified Section 227 of the IBC empowering RBI to refer financial sector players like NBFCs and HFCs, but excluding banks, with assets worth of at least Rs 500 crore to insolvency courts.

As of July 2019, the home

financier owed Rs 83,873 crore to banks, the National Housing Board, mutual funds and bondholders, including retail bondholders. Of this, secured debt is Rs 74,054 crore and Rs 9,818 crore is unsecured.

Most banks have or are going to declare DHFL account as NPA in the third quarter.

DHFL defaulted on its payment obligations in respect of bank borrowings and market borrowings, which reveals serious concerns about the conduct of the affairs of the company, the RBI said.

DHFL lenders were working on a resolution plan to pick up 51 percent in the company by converting a part of their debt into equity. But the plan was yet to be formally cleared.

Con electronics Ind expected to double to Rs 1.48 L cr by FY25

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In 2018-19, in which Rs 32,200 crore was contributed from domestic manufacturing, according to the joint report by CEAMA and Frost & Sullivan.

The report is based on product categories, which include air conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, television (TV) and audio. "The overall market size of the five categories covered in this project for the year FY19 is 76,400 crore and the market is estimated to grow at a CAGR of 11.7 per cent till FY25," the report said.



Lupin launches device to track metered-dose

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug maker Lupin on Friday said it has launched a device to track usage pattern of metered-dose inhalers (MDI) by patients suffering from chronic respiratory diseases.

The device -- Adhero -- would help the patients track their MDI usage and facilitate improved adherence to therapy, Lupin Ltd said in a statement. The bluetooth-enabled device is attached to the top of a MDI and with built-in sensors helps track a patient's daily medication usage and consumption pattern.

The inhalers are the preferred treatment option for managing chronic respiratory diseases such as Asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in the country.

However, it is estimated that nearly 45 per cent patients do not adhere to therapy in terms of filling, refilling prescriptions or maintaining prescribed medication schedule, which adversely impacts clinical outcomes.

The Mumbai-based drug maker said it has collaborated with Aptar Pharma, a leading provider of drug-delivery devices, components and services in bringing the device to the market.

of goods sold on the platform," he said.

The onus of compliance of the provisions of FDI policy is on the investee entity.

The policy is made legally enforceable through notifications under FEMA, 1999, by the RBI.

In a separate reply on onions, the minister informed that the prohibition on export of onions has been imposed in view of the prevailing adverse domestic availability and price situation.

"No report of adverse impact on onion growers in the country, particularly in Maharashtra, has been received in the ministry," he said.



RBI administers the FEMA and Directorate of Enforcement is the authority for the enforcement of the act

been received in this department, complaining that e-commerce companies are offering deep discounts, indulging in predatory pricing, engaging in B2C business, exercising control over inventory and influencing the prices

"Some representations have

Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson, former U.S. Trade Representative Mike Froman and other dignitaries.

During the meeting at Beijing's ornate Great Hall of the People, Xi reiterated to the group China's stance that a deal requires "mutual respect and equality."

The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday that China's lead negotiator in the talks, Vice Premier Liu He, invited

his U.S. counterparts to Beijing for more talks, suggesting hopes for progress.

The latest flareup in trade tensions came after President Donald Trump imposed punitive tariffs last year on billions of dollars' worth of Chinese exports to the US, seeking to ramp up pressure for changes in Chinese trade and investment policies.

China has retaliated with tariff hikes of its own. After grad-

Xi says Beijing wants trade deal, can 'fight back'

AP ■ BEIJING



As we always said we don't want to start the trade war but we are not afraid. When necessary we will fight back but we have been working actively to try not to have a trade war

XI JINPING, Chinese President

of mutual respect and equality," Xi told the group.

The delegation from Bloomberg's New Economy

Forum, a conference held in Beijing this week, included former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former

ual escalations of sanctions and halting progress in trade talks this year, the two sides are working toward what they say will be a preliminary agreement to pave the way for tackling more complex issues.

However, the prospects even for such a "Phase 1" deal are uncertain. China has said it wants a promise from the U.S. side to gradually reduce the tariffs already in place. It's unclear if the U.S. side would be willing to do that.

Meanwhile, Trump agreed to hold off on raising tariffs further last month pending the negotiations. But the U.S. side still is due to hike tariffs on \$160 billion worth of imports from China next month.



As a part of Haritha Haram, I regularly bring hundreds of plants from government nurseries near Karimnagar and distribute them to people living in the colonies near my home. Now, I can see that my work has made an effect as people have started coming to my house by themselves to collect plants from me

HARIKA NAMPALLI
 SOCIAL WORKER



“



STRIVING FOR A BETTER SOCIETY



Be it distribution of rice to the needy or plants for increasing the green cover, Harika Nampalli has done them all. V SATEESH REDDY finds out about the initiatives common people can take up for the greater good of all

Karimnagar-based Dr Harika Nampalli, for the last three years, has been organising various social activities like distributing rice for free, assisting with voter enrollment, distributing plants and clothes for the needy and also spreading awareness about the dangers

of plastic. As a doctor, empathy comes naturally to her. Harika completed her Bachelor's in Dental Surgery from Kamineni Institute of Dental Sciences, Nalgonda in 2017. After completing her BDS, she started working at the dental department in the government hospital in Karimnagar.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*,

Harika says, "When I was studying BDS, I used to visit nearby old age homes along with my friends. I would enquire about the needs of the people there and fulfil their small wishes like watching movies, birthday celebrations and going on rides around the town. This has given me utmost satisfaction and made me want to help

more people in my hometown like this in others issues as well such as distribution of plants and so on."

Harika says that the government hospitals are the only places where the poor can get proper treatment that is also affordable. She says that, while treating the patients, she also enquires about their family's well-being and helps by giving them rice and old clothes. She has conducted many drives to collect old clothes from people to donate to the needy.

She says, "Often I approach to people and ask them to donate their old clothes for the needy. Along with this initiative, I also ask them to donate rice for the underprivileged directly or organisations that work for social causes. A four-member family usually buys 24 kg of rice every month. Even if they donate a part of it then it will be helpful for the needy."

She said that due to number of people she was able to approach for charity, she has managed to distribute more than 2,500 kg of rice till date to various orphanages.

Inspired by the Telangana State government's Haritha Haram programme, Harika has also been distributing plants to the people. She says, "Haritha Haram is a great initiative by the Government of Telangana State. As a part of Haritha Haram, I regularly bring hundreds of plants from government nurseries near Karimnagar and distribute them to people living in the colonies near my home. Now, I can see that my work has made an effect as people have started coming to my house by themselves to collect plants from me. I am very happy for the interest people are showing in going green."

Recently, Harika participated, in collaboration with an NGO, in an event titled Mission 365 Days, where the members explained the various traffic rules to the Karimnagar public by conducting rallies. The district traffic officials appreciated Harika for her efforts.

"I also participated in voter enrollment process in my hometown with the support of an organisation to increase the voters. We helped people enroll and let them know the importance of voting by through discussions and debates," she shares.

Harika has also taken the initiative of purchasing jute and cloth bags with her own money and distributing the same to people by visiting their homes. She educates people to carry their own bags when they go shopping.

For her efforts, former MP Vinod Kumar felicitated her with the Best Youth Service Award in 2019. On a concluding note, Harika says that she needs to inspire more people with her activities.

Undauntedly scaling new heights

It is not easy to get financial support to go abroad for education, let alone for projects that involve capturing mountain peaks. But, Vikasa Tarangini, part of an organisation dedicated to social service, announced financial support of more than Rs 7 lakh for mountaineer Amgooth Tukaram. This money will help the trekking enthusiast from Telangana in his next expeditions to two mountains — Mt Kosciuszko in Australia and

Mt Aconcagua in South America.

Spiritual guru Chinna Jeyar Swamy, while giving the cheque to Tukaram, appreciated his skills and achievements. "People should provide financial support to youths like Tukaram whenever they can for the sake of the community's development," he said.

Tukaram, overwhelmed by the help, thanked Swamy ji. This generation can make the impossible possible, he said. Tukaram will begin his journey on January 7, next year.



Lifting India's spirits across the globe



Body building is the next form for a fitness enthusiast. ANUSHKA PRADEEP talks to a freelance fitness expert to find out what it takes to take body building to an international platform

Hyderabad has been evolving to find its place on the global map by gaining worldwide recognition in several aspects, be it sports, cuisine, movies or more. The city has earned itself yet another honour when one of the city residents, K. Satyanarayana Raju, represented India at the 53rd Mr Asia competition held by ABPF (Asian Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Federation) in Indonesia where he won a bronze medal. In an exclusive with *The Pioneer*, Raju tells us his tale of success, his journey, his passion for the craft of body building and much more.

K.S.N. Raju, by profession, is a freelance fitness trainer at the Apollo Life Studio in Madhapur. He has trained many celebrities including Boyapati Srinu, Ajay, Manchu Manoj, Manchu Vishnu, Sunil, Ravi Teja, Navdeep, Raj Tharun and several others in the film industry. When he started his career about 15 years ago, he would participate in numerous bodybuilding competitions in the state and the country, winning such titles like Mr Telangana, Mr South India among many others.

In response to what it was that kick-started his journey towards bodybuilding, Raju said, "It may sound silly now but it all began with the *Terminator* I watched when I was young. The movie made me a big fan of Arnold Schwarzenegger and I decided to follow his path. Few years down the lane I went ahead and started my own gym called the Body Line Gym. Initially, it all began as a passionate hobby, which soon turned a full-fledged career."

"Right now I'm in my 50s and my journey in bodybuilding started approximately 30 years ago. This

journey of mine began at a time when people were not even properly aware of what bodybuilding was. In addition to the prevailing lack of information regarding this profession, it was also difficult to source the right kind of food necessary for our diet. Back then, sourcing supplements for proteins and other nutrients was unheard of. To be honest, I don't think even I possessed a complete knowledge of the field. Quality equipment was unavailable. There were almost no reputed trainers, courses or institutions that taught bodybuilding. And in those times, a youngster spending that sort of money towards such a field was considered a taboo. It was only my passion for bodybuilding that fuelled me to keep going and do whatever it takes to overcome the difficulties I faced."

Generally, most families are reluctant about such unconventional ventures. But Raju says he is lucky when it comes to this. He says that his family has always been

supportive of his career. He especially thanks his mother for being his pillar of support who helped him become the kind of person he is today.

Upon being asked about the next milestone he has to reach, he promptly replied "I won a silver medal in the Mr World event and bronze in Mr Asia competition. My next goal is undoubtedly to win the gold medal for India in the upcoming Mr World and Mr Asia events. But this dream of mine is currently on hold. I require financial support to continue further. Hence am currently on the lookout for sponsors who can help me attain my goal. My ultimate goal, however, is to gain recognition as a prominent bodybuilder across India."

"Hard work is the key to success. There are no shortcuts in the path to build a lasting future. Both hard work and constant dedication are extremely crucial if one considers making it big in any field at all," he advises the youth keen on following their dreams.





George Reddy,' which is a take on the life of a student leader by the same name, has you in its grips right from the get go. The plot begins with Maya (Muskaan Khubchandani), a research scholar from the USA, trying to acquaint herself with the revolutionary leader by travelling to the places he visited.

The movie steadily gathers pace and establishes the fact that George is fighting for the rights of Osmania University. Although one initially feels that George is a hooligan, director Jeevan Reddy, turns the tables around and has the audience voicing for George.

We watch as George grows up in Kerala under the care of his mother who introduced him to Bhagat Singh's essay, *Why am I an atheist?*, sowing the seeds for his revolutionary ideas.

The main crux of the movie is how George, an avid reader and an intellectual in the film, helps his peers with their education. George's dedication for the betterment of the people is shown when George, despite bagging a lucrative post in the Mumbai University, leaves it to stay and work for the welfare of others.

Having started out with students, his movement reached its crescendo when universities pan-India came out in support of George and his ideals. Students from universities such as Andhra University and Madras University hold protests at their universities. As the film depicts, the protagonist also took his ideas to the next level where he applied his revolutionary methods to help the general public, and is also seen constantly questioning the status quo.

However, when it comes to casting, the energy and momentum in George Reddy's character —

Biopics are the rage now. But that only opens up such films to more scrutiny than others. K RAMYA SREE finds out if the much anticipated *George Reddy* lives up to the expectations

up to the level of such intense scenes. However, the background score by Suresh Bobbili did help build the suspense just when the pace of the film seemed to be lagging.

The art department, despite managing to capture the essence of the 70s with the wigs and the costumes, got it wrong with the vehicles used in the film that seemed out of place in a student campus, especially considering the time period. Also, the portrayal of George's personality is inconsistent. While in one scene, he accepts his suspension from

the dean without protest, in another, he is seen walking into the police station and bailing out his friends unabashedly. Many such scenes, that need an explanation or are avenues to gain a deeper insight into George's thought process, are brushed away under the carpet with the director hoping you don't remember them.

Coming to the dialogue delivery, the role of the hero of such a fiery biopic necessitates that his character has the prowess to captivate the students and audience alike. However, Sandeep's opportunity to capture the hearts of people, just like how the real George Reddy did, was not fulfilled. The dialogue delivery was not strong enough for such a character who was a rebel in every sense of the word. This results in the audiences forgetting the scenes right after they exit the theatre.

Special mention must be given to his friends and other student leaders who stand by him at all times and fight along with him, come what may. Ironically, their dialogue delivery felt way stronger than the protagonist himself. Actor Satyadev was seen in the film just for the heck of it. He does not talk to George face to face, does not fight the elections against him and just pops up in between to deliver a dialogue or two. All these disjointed bits and pieces of the screenplay leave the audience confused as to why some of these characters were even present in the film.

Kaushik, another student leader, who seemed to have a meaty role in the beginning doesn't get to register his presence in the second half. The female protagonist, Maya, also seemed to play no significant role in the film.

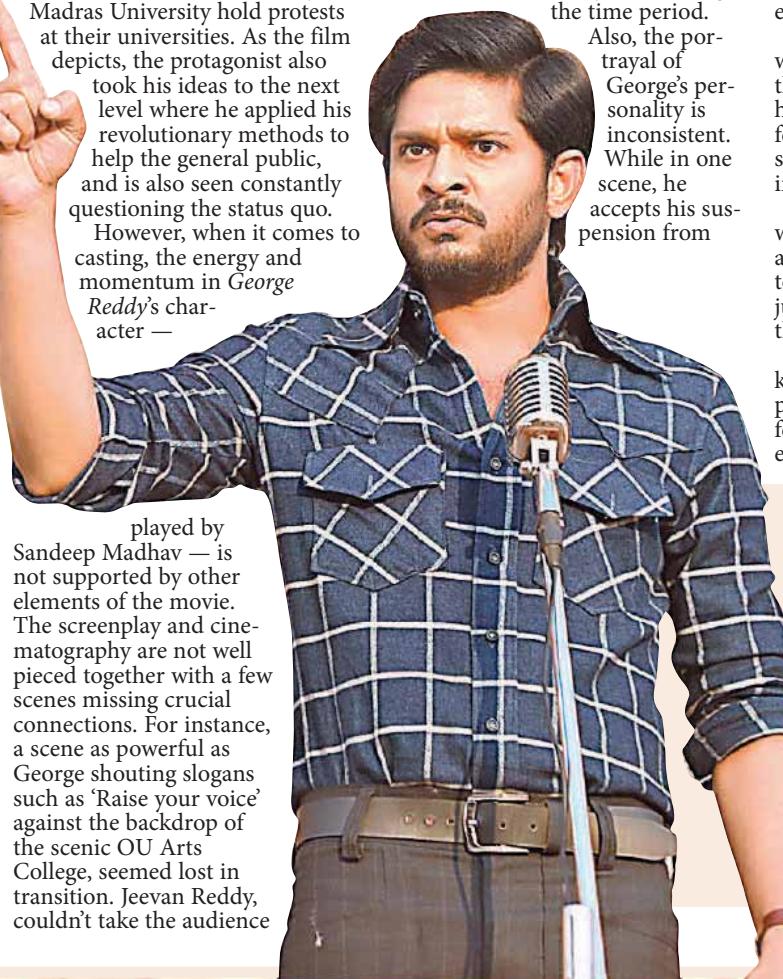
Emphasis could've been laid on what inspired a studious, intellectual, goal-oriented person like George to choose student politics instead of just jumping to the action part of the film.

While the first half of the film keeps that suspense element with a pinch of comedy, the second half felt like an imposition for the audience.

VERDICT:

While the movie fails on some aspects, the overall experience ensures you are left in awe of the student leader and his ideas and is worth watching at least once. However, there are quite a few unanswered questions that pop up at the end of this two-and-a-half-hour drama.

Rating: 2.5



played by Sandeep Madhav — is not supported by other elements of the movie. The screenplay and cinematography are not well pieced together with a few scenes missing crucial connections. For instance, a scene as powerful as George shouting slogans such as 'Raise your voice' against the backdrop of the scenic OU Arts College, seemed lost in transition. Jeevan Reddy, couldn't take the audience

Naga Babu: Some journeys have to end at some point

The Pioneer last week reported that the popular comedy show on ETV, *Jabardash*, has lost its judge

that he will reveal more details on his YouTube channel in the days to come.

Aired on Friday, "It has been a happy and an emotional journey. To judge a show for seven-and-a-half years is not simple and I believe some journeys have to end at some point. The decision to quit the show was my own. I extend my thanks to Shyam Prasad Reddy and ETV for giving me a chance to be on the show. I was going through a financial crisis when it was offered to me. The show helped me to improve my situation."

Although he refrained from divulging details on his next move on the small screen front, he will be judging a *Jabardash* kind of a show on Zee Telugu shortly.

has been on the show as a judge since early 2013 and his last act



Rahul to play Black and White cabbie

Having green-lit a romantic drama sometime ago that would see him teaming up with Satyadev, actor Rahul Vijay has now given his nod to another film, *The Pioneer* has exclusively learnt. He will be introducing a new director, Ravinder, with the film, a crime thriller which deals with a gold robbery.

The director has been a script doctor for Ohmkar's *Raju Gari Gadhi* franchise. "Rahul was floored by the director's narration. He felt the content would be something different for the Telugu audience and decided to take it to sets on a priority basis. He will be seen as a cabbie. The movie

has been titled *Black and White* and the title has a lot of significance to the actor's characterisation," confirmed a source close to the development.

The source further added that the film will be set in Hyderabad. "Some portions will be shot on highways on the outskirts of the city. It will go to floors next month and will be wrapped up by February," the source added.

— NG

RAHUL HAS WRAPPED UP SHOOTING FOR COLLEGE KUMAR, A BILINGUAL

tollywood

It's unusual for actors not to ride on the coattails of their impressive debut to bag one movie after the other. But, NAGARAJ GOUD finds out how Sushanth Reddy plays the waiting game, eager to capture the story he truly believes in

SUSHANTH REDDY
keen to make
every move
count



Instead of hurrying up and signing projects in a jiffy after his impressive debut with Tharun Bhascker's buddy comedy *Ee Nagarani Emaindhi* last year, Sushanth Reddy has chosen to play the waiting game till the right project comes his way. He says that he knows exactly the kind of film he wants to associate with for his sophomore outing. "I want to work with people who share thoughts similar to mine and who are willing to treat stories greater than anyone on the sets. I believe that a story is the most indispensable element on the sets and I met lot of people who believe that. I want to be part of a story that was never told before. Even if it was, I wanted it to be narrated in a different way. *Bombhaat* is

one such story," he says in a conversation with *The Pioneer*.

Smiling, he adds that

there is no room for confusion to creep in. "If I was

confused, I would've done

two to three films at a time

and would've got more confused," he adds.

Bombhaat marks the directorial debut of Raghavendra Varma aka Buji, who assisted K. Raghavendra Rao in the past. A Hyderabad-set affair, the film's shooting was wrapped up recently. It also features Chandini Chowdary and Simran. "I liked the attitude of Buji garu and the film's writer, Akshay Pola, towards cinema and what they were trying to tell through *Bombhaat*. The film is a romantic love story with a sci-fi twist to it. It is loaded with commercial bells and whistles. They

were trying to revisit a genre that hasn't been attempted in Telugu in a long time. I found the content interesting and decided to come on board," he maintains.

While he is guarded about revealing the plot, saying that the more he talks about it, the more chances of him giving away the story, he mentions that it's a coming-of-age story for his character, Vicky, to a certain degree.

"Vicky confronts a situation which is beyond his abilities. How he overcomes his fears and handles the situation is the film's gist," shares the actor, who will be seen as a final year engineering student in the film.

Prod him on the switch from a new-age realistic film like *Ee Nagarani Emaindhi* to a commercial fare like *Bombhaat* and he states, "There are many forms of storytelling and I believe *Ee*

Nagarani Emaindhi was one which kept things absolutely real. *Bombhaat* is a commercial fare. I don't believe in categorising films, at least when I'm acting. If I like the story, I take it up.

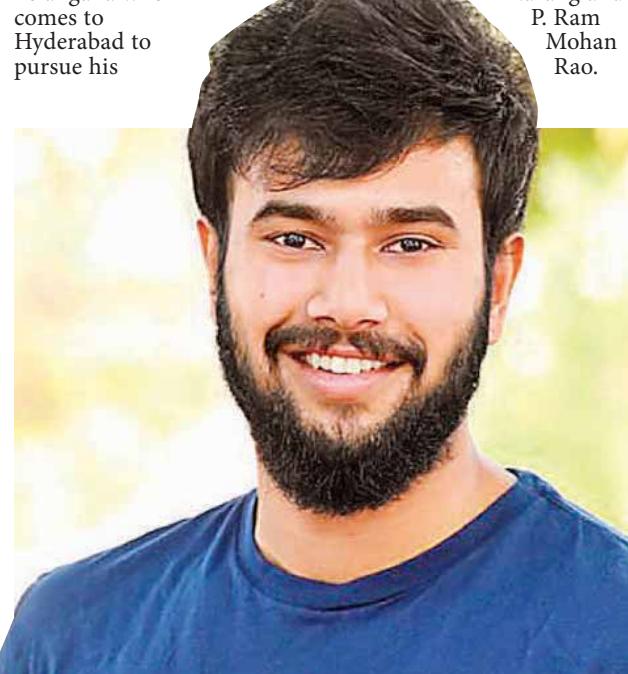
The thought that it's a commercial film never crossed my mind. My focus is more on delivering what the director wants."

Sushanth adds that he is in touch with his friends — Vishwak Sen, Abhinav Gomatam and Venkatesh — from *Ee Nagarani Emaindhi* and is happy the way their careers are progressing. "A few weeks ago, we met for Tharun Bhascker's birthday party and even attended a short film festival in Bengaluru," he points out. Is a sequel to *Ee Nagarani Emaindhi* on the cards? "It's definitely in the pipeline for sure. The gang will come back," the actor asserts.

FIRST LOOK

With Naga Chaitanya set to ring in his 33rd birthday today, the producers of his untitled next with Sekhar Kammula have unveiled his look from the film. A love story, the actor will be seen as a youth from Telangana who comes to Hyderabad to pursue his

dreams, the makers have announced dropping a teaser on Friday. Sai Pallavi, who will be playing a dancer, is cast opposite him in the film. The movie is a joint production venture between Kammula, Narayan Das, Sunil Narang and P. Ram Mohan Rao.



Naga Babu and star performers Chammak Chandra, Rakesh, Ram Prasad to a another entertainment channel. Speaking for the first time about his departure from the show, Naga Babu pinned the blame on business differences with show runners Mallama Entertainments. Simultaneously, he hinted that his remuneration was never the criteria for leaving the show. While his speech lacked clarity, he did say

that he will reveal more details on his YouTube channel in the days to come.

He has been on the show as a judge since early 2013 and his last act

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bangladesh won the toss and India everything else against a ball they are not acquainted with on the first day of their maiden Day/Night Test, the quality of contest spectacularly failing to match the manic pre-match hype.

First the Ishant Sharma-led Indian pace unit terrorised the visitors, bundling them out for 106 in just under 31 overs even before twilight set in.

With two of their batsmen cussed, the mentally-scared Bangladesh attack then found itself at the receiving end of a masterclass from the Indian captain Virat Kohli, who remained unbeaten on 59 off 93 balls, as India reached 174 for three at stumps on the opening day.

The stodgy Cheteshwar Pujara, with two pink ball hundreds under his belt in first-class cricket, scored a chiselled 55 as India took a 68-run lead. It looks like the cricket loving Kolkata public will not have an opportunity to witness even three full days' action.

The city turned pink, the crowd responded to the brainchild of its favourite son Sourav Ganguly, who arranged a first-of-its-kind match in less than a month's time.

However, the gulf in standards along with the singular lack of intent from the visitors took some sheen away from the game.

Earlier, Ishant grabbed his first five-wicket haul on Indian soil after a good 12 years, finishing with 5 for 22 in 12 overs after a brave decision by opposition captain Mominul Haque to bat first on a seam-friendly pitch.

Umesh Yadav hurried the Bangladeshi batsmen for pace with 3 for 29 in 7 overs while Mohammed Shami was deadly bowling the cutters wide off the crease with figures of 2 for 36 in 10.3 overs.

He also bowled two sharp bouncers, leaving Liton Das (24) and Nayeem Hasan (19) concussed.

Bangladesh lasted just 30.3 overs in their first innings with specialist spinners Ravindra Jadeja bowling a solitary over and Ravichandran Ashwin wasn't even required to roll his arms over.

Clearly the menacing Indian pace attack exposed Bangladeshi's lack of technical finesse as the 'Pink Ball Test' was agreed upon three days before their tour departure on the initiative of newly-elected BCCI president Sourav Ganguly.

Bangladesh batsmen looked unsettled by the capacity crowd, something they have never encountered even in their home Tests and the world-class bowling made it even more difficult.

Such was their plight that for the first time in the subcontinent, batsmen Nos 3, 4 and 5 (skipper Mominul Haque, Mohammad Mithun, and senior-most player Mashfiqur Rahim) were all dismissed for a duck.

Pushed into the unknown territory without any practice back home, Bangladesh opening duo of Shadman Islam and Imrul Kayes survived some anxious moments in the first six overs before Ishant Sharma trapped the latter.

Umesh then triggered the collapse in his second spell with two wickets in three balls, first being skipper Mominul who was dismissed by a beautiful diving one-handed catch by Rohit Sharma.

Next was Mohammed Mithun

Ishant in Pink mode

Senior pacer's 2nd 5-wicket haul in India (first in 12 years) help all-round India lord over Bangladesh, hype beats cricket hands down



India vs B'desh (2nd day)
Live from 1:00pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1

Ishant Sharma celebrates after taking wicket of Bangladesh batsman during first day of first Day/Night Test between India and Bangladesh at Eden Gardens in Kolkata

Hasina, Mamata ring bell



Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, center right, and Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee, center left, stand to ring the Eden Bell to start the 2nd Test PTI

IANS ■ KOLKATA

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rang the customary Eden bell in the presence of BCCI President Sourav Ganguly, Bangladesh Cricket Board chief Nazmul Hasan Papon and batting legend Sachin Tendulkar among other dignitaries.

Hasina and Mamata met the teams before the national anthem was played by the Army Band in front of a packed house. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who was supposed to be in attendance, however could not make it.

The historic match was supposed to kickstart with Army paratroopers flying into Eden to hand over a pink ball each to the two captains just before the toss. But due to security reasons, that

had to be cancelled at the last moment by the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB).

The other former cricketers present were S Ramesh, Saba Karim, Sunil Joshi, Ajit Agarkar, Venkatesh Prasad, Kapil Dev, Dilip Vengsarkar, Mohammed Azharuddin, Kris Srikkanth, Farokh Engineer and Chandu Borde.

Athletes from other sports like Abhinav Bindra, P. Gopichand, PV Sindhu, Sania Mirza and Mary Kom were also there.

Naimur Rahman, Mohammed Mahmudul Hasan, Mahabub Hossain, Mohammed Hasibul Hussain, Shahriar Hossain Biddut, Kazi Habibul Bashar and Mohammed Akram Khan were the former Bangladeshi cricketers who were present.

Das, Nayeem concussed

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Two Bangladesh batsmen — Liton Das and Nayeem Hasan — were retired hurt from the ongoing Day/Night Test, forcing the visitors to bring in as concussion substitutes players who had been dropped from the team. Both Das and Nayeem were hit by Mohammed Shami snorters and were replaced by Mehidy Hasan and Taijul Islam at the Eden Gardens.

Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Das was taken to a city hospital for a scan before another Shami delivery hit Nayeem, who was interestingly attended to by Indian team physio Nitin Patel.

Bangladesh, thus, became the first team to make two concussion substitutes in a Test match.

Mehidy came in as concussion substitute after Das was hit.

However, Mehidy, an off-spinner, will not be allowed to bowl as per the concussion substitute rule. Mehidy, though, did not last long as he was dismissed by pacer Ishant Sharma for just eight runs.



Nayeem Hasan stands as physiotherapists look into the helmet after he was injured AP

Das was retired hurt after being hit on his head at the stroke of lunch.

Trying to play a pull short off a Shami bouncer, the heavily-lacquered pink ball blazed in and hit his helmet in the forehead region in the third ball of the 20th over. He was batting on 16 then.

The physio rushed in, conducted a test and he continued batting, responding with a boundary in the next delivery.

Das hit another boundary in the next over off Ishant and

added nine runs before complaining of discomfort. He was next seen walking off the field after a long conversation with the umpire, forcing the end of the first session.

Das' like-for-like substitute Saif Hassan is down with a (split webbing) injury, forcing the visitors to opt for Mehidy as concussion substitute.

According to the protocol, a proper medical report has to be submitted to the match referee for a concussion substitute.

Captain Kohli fastest to 5K

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Virat Kohli on Friday became the fastest to 5000 runs as captain, completing the feat in 86 innings during day one.

As captain, Kohli was also the quickest to 4000 Tests runs (65 innings). He is the sixth captain to reach the 5000-run mark.

Australian great Ricky Ponting had taken 97 innings to complete 5000 runs as captain, ahead of West Indian legend Clive Lloyd (106 innings), South African Graeme Smith (110), Australian Allan Border (116) and New Zealand's Stephen Fleming (130).



Legends relive glorious Eden moments



India's former cricket players Sachin Tendulkar, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh and VVS Laxman join in a talk show during break on 1st day

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Indian cricket legends including Sachin Tendulkar and Anil Kumble on Friday revisited their glorious on-field moments at the Eden Gardens.

In a special programme during the lunch break on the opening day, Tendulkar, Kumble, Harbhajan and Laxman relived some of the iconic moments at the famous venue here, including the 1993 Hero Cup final versus West Indies and the 2001 Test versus Australia.

All of them thanked their captain and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly for bringing them together. Ganguly, too, was supposed to be part of the 40-minute discussion on Star Sports but could not make it as he was understandably caught up with administrative issues.

"We have not had a chance to sit like this since our playing days. It is a special day and there could not have

Tendulkar.

The electric atmosphere at the Eden Gardens reminded Harbhajan of his playing days.

"The atmosphere here takes me back to 15 years ago. Test cricket was different back then. It is a special feeling and I feel so much love every time I come here. Hats off to Ganguly for doing this. Even if I play under 100 captains, he will always be my captain," said the champion off-spinner.

Tendulkar had heard good things about Harbhajan from the local officials during a game in Mohali and, subsequently, asked for the spinner to bowl to him in the India nets. Harbhajan, a teenager then, was in awe of Tendulkar.

"The game changed so quickly because of that hat-trick. The way we won the game ushered in a new phase for the Indian team. Bhajji was sensational, got Ricky Ponting out so many times and Laxman and Dravid partnership did wonders for the confidence of the dressing room," said Tendulkar.



An illuminated building displays an image of BCCI President Sourav Ganguly, on the eve of the 1st pink-ball Test; B'desh PM Sheikh Hasina and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee meet players



Indian cricketer Mithali Raj rides in a cart during a grand parade of India's former cricket captains; (right) Sourav Ganguly posts picture with Eden crowd during first day of Day/Night Test