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DROWNING
CACOPHONY

MONEY 8
'INDIA STILL FASTEST-
GROWING ECONOMY'

SPORTS 12
NOW IS
THE TIME

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2019; PAGES 12-13



the pioneer



I HOPE TO DO
ANOTHER TELUGU
FILM SOON: REKHA

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AP govt clips wings of pvt power companies

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh government on Monday made several key changes to its policies on solar, wind and hybrid power, primarily withdrawing the facility for energy banking and drawal that was purportedly causing a huge financial drain on the power distribution companies (Discoms).

In an order, the Jagan Mohan Reddy government said it has observed statutory audit in power purchase cost and deteriorated financial position of the Discoms.

"Taking this into consideration, and in order to strengthen the financial position of the power utilities, amendments have been made to the policies, Energy Secretary Srikanth Nagulapalli said in the order. It also said any injection of



Energy Secretary Srikanth Nagulapalli

energy between synchronisation and declaration of Commercial Operation Date shall be treated as inadvertent power and no cost shall be paid by the Discoms.

The changes to the solar, wind and hybrid (solar + wind)

power policies have been made in the backdrop of the YSRC government's process of reviewing all power purchase agreements entered into by the previous TDP regime with renewable energy generators. **Continued on Page 3**



Two women from Andhra turned away by police at Sabarimala

PNS ■ SABARIMALA

The Kerala police on Monday afternoon did not allow women to go to the Sabarimala temple to pray. Two women from Andhra Pradesh, both under the age of 50, were disallowed from entering the shrine. The police turned them away after checking their identity cards. The temple tradition dis-

allows women in the age group of 10 to 50 years to enter the temple precincts.

The two-month-long Sabarimala temple festival officially opened for pilgrims on Sunday.

On Monday afternoon, women police officials on duty spotted the women, who had come from Andhra Pradesh, at the Pamba base camp. **Continued on Page 3**

CM launches toll-free number to check illegal sand mining

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy launched toll-free number 14500 here on Monday to lodge complaint against illegal transportation of the sand across the State. Minister for Mines Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and others were present during the launch.

On Saturday, the government has issued an order to implement the amended Act against illegal excavation and transportation of the sand. Rs 2 lakh fine and two years imprisonment will be awarded to the accused in the illegal sand transportation or mining. The decision of YS Jaganmohan Reddy was approved at the recently held Cabinet meeting, and accordingly the Government Order was released.

As part of this, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy launching toll-free number in Amaravati on Monday

After facing criticism from opposition parties on the sand supply, the government has come out with this endeavour to put an end to the sand mining mafia

As a part of the new sand policy, the government has decided to impose a fine of Rs 2 lakh on those indulging in illegal storage, sale/resale and transportation of sand and apart from imprisonment up to two years for committing the offence

Reddy launched the 14500 toll-free. The number was launched to bring public attention to report corruption of

any form related to sand mining, transport, storage and sale, officials informed. **Continued on Page 2**

Pawar, Sonia discusses govt formation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

NCP chief Sharad Pawar met Congress president Sonia Gandhi at her 10 Janpath residence here on Monday to discuss the possibility of formation of a government in Maharashtra.

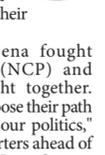
The NCP is in talks with ally Congress for a possible alliance with the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena after its alliance with the BJP fell apart over the chief minister's post.

Congress and NCP leaders have held a series of meetings in the last few days to finalise modalities for a Sena-led government in Maharashtra.

Ahead of his meeting with Gandhi, Pawar said all political parties seeking to stake claim in forming the government in Maharashtra have to "choose their own paths".

"BJP-Shiv Sena fought together, we (NCP) and Congress fought together. They have to choose their path and we will do our politics," Pawar told reporters ahead of the start of the Winter Session of Parliament. Maharashtra was placed under President's rule on November 12 after no party or alliance staked claim to form government.

Pawar's meeting with the Congress chief comes a day after the NCP's core committee held a meeting in Pune and resolved that the current President's rule in Maharashtra should end and an "alternative government" should be formed.



Indian Bank to auction Ganta's property on Dec 20

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In another jolt to TDP leader and Vizag North MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao, Indian Bank has issued notice to auction his immovable property, which is in the name of Pratyusha Resources and Infra and other related companies.

On Monday, the bank in its notice mentioned that the Pratyusha Resources and Infra (Pvt) Limited borrowed huge amounts of money and failed to repay it even after the due date. Allegations were levelled against Ganta, while he was the Minister for HRD in the TDP government, but there was not much pressure on him owing to his position, sources said.

The company was listed in the Non Performing Assets (NPA) among many other firms and companies. The bank in its notice said since there was no response to the demand notice to borrowers, the bank authorities seized the properties on December 27, 2016 and February 12, 2017. The total outstanding due, including the interest component was Rs 208.69 crore. **Continued on Page 3**

The public notice said five properties in Visakhapatnam were earmarked for auction and rest-one each in Rangareddy district of Telangana and Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu and two properties in East Godavari

Ganta Srinivasa Rao or his associates were not available for comment



Ganta Srinivasa Rao

Furthermore, it was decided to auction the properties. A publication of the notice said tenders would be accepted online from November 18 to December 17 and would be open till December 19 and auction would be conducted on December 20.

'Insolvency' reports false: LEPL-AirCosta

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

News was circulated on social media on Monday that LEPL Chairman Lingamaneni Ramesh has filed an insolvency certificate at National Company Law Tribunal and proceedings are on. But, LEPL has clarified that no insolvency petition was filed by Lingamaneni Ramesh individually, or LEPL as a company.

They explained that a German entity has filed a petition against LEPL-AirCosta regarding a commercial dispute arose on the issue of maintenance of an aircraft engine, which involves a small amount.

LEPL-AirCosta has issued a press note stating that they signed an agreement with the German entity for repairs, maintenance and overhaul services to the aircraft.

National Company Law Tribunal has issued the notification only regarding the petition filed by that German entity and asked Interim Resolution for commencement of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process of LEPL. But, we appealed against the said orders in an appropriate judicial forum, they informed.

Pawan has the last laugh on sand crisis

G RAVI KIRAN ■ VIJAYAWADA

Though Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan had faced drubbing in the Assembly polls, he did not go into oblivion, but striving to make his presence felt by fighting for people's cause. His long-march in Vizag to highlight the sand crisis won accolades not only from masses, but also from his political opponents. Pawan has a last laugh as the government has issued advertisement to leading dailies on Monday stating that sand is easily available across the State. With this the Jana Sena supremo has succeeded in highlighting the sand crisis.



He thanked the media and politicians, who supported his fight on sand crisis. He has posted the government's advertisement on the toll-free number of sand in his Twitter

tweeted on the government's response on the illegal sand mining and transportation.

He has tweeted "JSP wholeheartedly thanks the media, individuals and other political stakeholders for making YSRC leader Jagan Reddy to realise his mistakes on sand policy, which killed 50 workers and rendered 35 lakh construction workers jobless."

Pawan Kalyan wanted to convey that the Chief Minister has realised his mistake only after his long march, which he has taken out in Vizag on November 3. He also reminded his deadline with this tweet it seems. **Continued on Page 2**

Priyanka targets govt over electoral bonds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi raised the issue of electoral bonds on Monday alleging that they were cleared by avoiding the Reserve Bank of India.

On Monday she took to Twitter to allege, "Electoral bonds were cleared bypassing RBI and dismissing national security concerns in order to enable black money to enter the BJP coffers. It appears that while the BJP was elected on the promise of eradicating black money it was busy lining its own pockets with exactly that! What a shameful betrayal of the Indian people."

This is not the first time the Congress party raised the issue of electoral bonds. In May this year, Rahul Gandhi trained his guns at the Election Commission while raising the issue of alleged manipulation of EVMs and electoral bonds.

He had tweeted: "From Electoral Bonds & EVMs to manipulating the election schedule, NaMo TV, 'Modi's Army' & now the drama in Kedarnath; the Election



Priyanka Gandhi

This is not the first time the Congress party raised the issue of electoral bonds. In May this year, Rahul Gandhi trained his guns at the Election Commission

Commission's capitulation before Mr Modi & his gang is obvious to all Indians. The EC used to be feared & respected. Not anymore.

In April this year, the Congress had demanded that the BJP reveal its source of funds through electoral bonds.

Steroids for bodybuilding dangerous: Salman Khan

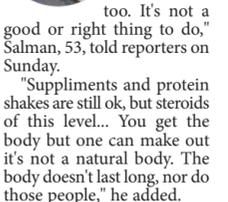
PNS ■ MUMBAI

Actor Salman Khan says one should steer clear of steroids to build muscles as such substances may cause health hazards.

Salman, who is an inspiration for fitness-conscious people, said the trend of consuming steroids is "absolutely wrong".

"No one should use it. In fact, a lot of people misuse it. It is really bad for their bodies. Liver, kidneys (are affected). Several people have had heart failures too. It's not a good or right thing to do," Salman, 53, told reporters on Sunday.

"Supplements and protein shakes are still ok, but steroids of this level... You get the body but one can make out it's not a natural body. The body doesn't last long, nor do those people," he added.



TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Kartik & Krishna Paksha Panchangam
Tithi : Saptami, 03:35 pm
Nakshatram: Ashlesha 09:23 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 02:48 pm - 04:12 pm
Yamagandam: 09:13 am - 10:37 am
Varjyam: 10:38 am - 12:10 pm
Gulika: 12:01 pm - 01:25 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 07:51 pm - 09:23 pm
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:39 am - 12:23 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Isolated Thunderstorms
Temp: 32/23
Humidity: 83%
Sunrise: 06:22
Sunset: 05:39
Current Weather Conditions
Updated November 18, 2019 5:00 PM

Democrats invite Trump to testify in impeachment inquiry

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi invited President Donald Trump to testify in front of investigators in the House impeachment inquiry ahead of a week that will see several key witnesses appear publicly.

Pushing back against accusations from the president that the process has

been stacked against him, Pelosi said Trump is welcome to appear or answer questions in writing, if he chooses.

If he has information that is exculpatory, that means ex, taking away, culpable, blame, then we look forward to seeing it, she said in an interview that aired Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation." **Continued on Page 3**



Donald Trump

Number of Indian students in US cross 2 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of Indians studying in the US increased by almost three per cent over the last year to 202,014, -- the sixth consecutive year marking such growth.

According to the 2019 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange released on Monday, Indians make up over 18 per cent of all international students in the United States.

India provided the second highest number of graduate students and jumped up to third place in undergraduates, it said.



Speaking at the United States India Educational Foundation (USIEF), the Embassy's Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs Charisse Phillips said, "Student exchanges between our two countries help strengthen the

foundation upon which our strategic partnership is built. Indian students are looking for a great education and the United States offers the best return on this investment." In 2018-19, US colleges and universities hosted more than

one million international students for the fourth consecutive year. The total number of international students expanded for the thirteenth consecutive year.

The top places of origin for international students studying

in the United States were China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, Brazil and Mexico. The top host states were California, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana.

Open Doors is published by the Institute of International Education (IIE), which has conducted an annual statistical survey on international students in the United States since its founding in 1919 and in partnership with the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs since 1972.

With praise for NCP in RS, Modi sparks speculation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Speaking on the 250th session of the Rajya Sabha, Prime Minister Modi praised the NCP, a party that has emerged as a king-maker in Maharashtra, sparking speculation amid the political deadlock in the state. The PM praised NCP and BJD for deciding to stay away from the well of the House.

Calling the Upper House "eternal", Prime Minister Modi stressed the significance of

the House. From mentioning abrogation of Article 370 to triple talaq Bill, Modi highlighted how "historic" the House has been.

Praising the Rajya Sabha, he said it was the House's maturity that ensured the Bill on Triple Talaq and the one on GST were passed, in spite of opposition to it. Mentioning abrogation of Article 370, Modi said, "Whenever it has been about national good, the Rajya Sabha has risen to the occasion and made a strong contribution.



Librarians told to learn digital resources for research community

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

On the fifth day of National Library Week celebrations, Dr VS Krishna Library of Andhra University organised a workshop on 'EBSCO Research Data Bases and IEEE Resources' on the premises of Engineering College Library here on Monday.

Addressing the participants, Andhra University College of Engineering (A) Principal Prof P Srinivasa Rao, who was the chief guest, highlighted the use of digital resources for academic and research community on the Andhra University campus. He stated the role of libraries and in particular the internet/digital/online sources and their use in review of literature for research studies. He urged the participants of the workshop to update their knowledge and enhance the quality of research in the university.

Prof K Visweswara Rao and Dr VS Krishna presided over the function. In his presidential address, the chief guest discussed the objectives



Andhra University College of Engineering Principal Prof P Srinivasa Rao addressing a gathering during National Library Week celebrations in Visakhapatnam on Monday

of this workshop and the role and use of e-Resources to the academic and research community. He narrated the present scenario of research in the country and stressed the need to increase the research output.

In the technical session of

the workshop, Samuel Kiran, Business Manger, EBSCO, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and Roby Mathew, Regional Manager from EBSCO, acted as resource persons. They spoke about EBSCO e-Resources such as Academic Search Ultimate,

HBR Ascend Discovery search, e-Books and other e-Resources. Also, they conducted online quiz for all the participants.

In all, 80 participants from Andhra University colleges of Arts and Commerce, Engineering and Science and Technology participated in the workshop.

Prof Linga Raju, Dr K Satyanarayana, Librarian from Indian Institute of Petroleum Energy, Andhra University, and others were



National Hackathon from December 6

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A two-day national-level Hackathon - Seeghra Tantra (Smart and Swift approach) - would be conducted at Andhra University College of Engineering (Autonomous) from December 6.

Releasing a poster in connection with the event, Prof P Srinivasa Rao, AUCE, Principal, spoke about the details of the event. It is being conducted by the Department of Computer Science and Systems Engineering and is beneficial for the students of all engineering branches, pharma and law.

Convener of the event Prof D Lalitha Bhaskari stated that the Hackathon is going to be conducted based on six themes related to real world problems and it would stand as a platform for the students to showcase their problem solving skills.

The registration for this event starts from November 18 and will be open till November 28. No individual participation is allowed as only teams consisting of two to three members are only permitted. First round scrutiny will be done on December 6 and six teams against each theme will be selected for finals.

This is an 18-hour Hackathon where the final



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The registration for this event will be open till Nov 28. Teams will have to develop a model based on their ideas within the time frame of two-days. Following student coordi-

nators can be contacted for further information- Vikas (9985630195) and Devendra (8919165254).

CAPSULE



Srirangam Ashramam pontiff at Tirumala

VIJAYAWADA: Varaha Mahadesikan (Andavan), Chief Pontiff of Srirangam Srimath Andavan Ashramam, visited Sri Vari temple, Tirumala on Monday. On his arrival in front of Sri Vari temple, TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal and temple priests welcomed him with temple honours and led him to sanctum sanctorum. Deputy executive officer Handranath, VGO Manohar, Parpathayadur Gurappa and others were present.

CM launches toll free number...

Continued from Page 1

Later, he called the toll-free number and spoke to officials working at the call centre there. The Chief Minister also made several suggestions to call centre employees on how to deal with the issues that might crop up in future.

After facing so criticism from opposition parties on the sand supply, the government has come out with this endeavour to put an end to the sand mining mafia. As a part of the new sand policy, the government has decided to impose a fine of Rs 2 lakh on those indulging in illegal storage, sale/resale and transportation of sand and imprisonment up to two years for committing the offence.

CONSTRUCTION OF OPD AT HOMI BHABHA CANCER HOSPITAL Sraavan Shipping lends a helping hand

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

For the construction of new OPD blocks in Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (HBCH&RC) here, G Sambasiva Rao, MD, Sraavan Shipping Services Private Limited and K Kumar Raja, MD of Kumar Raja Projects Private Limited, lending helping hand.

They donated Rs 2 lakh each for OPD blocks to facilitate more cancer patients to avail services. Expressing satisfaction over treatment extended by HBCH&RC in treating cancer patients, Rao said donations are important to cancer organisations and the people and programmes they support, including research to advance new treatments.

At present, the hospital is functioning from containers that converted into rooms. It has the latest equipment for screening of breast, oral and cervical cancer. The hospital is also providing palliative care, hospice service, home care and conducting screening



G Sambasiva Rao, MD, Sraavan Shipping Services Private Limited, handing over a cheque for Rs 2 lakh to an official of Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre in Visakhapatnam on Monday

camp. Thanking the donors for their noble cause, Dr D Raghunatha Rao, Director, HBCH&RC, said: "Ours is patient-centric services instead of commercial venture. So, we need more corporate donations for creating infrastructure like the ability to do neuro-surgery, thoracic surgery, paediatric surgery, musculoskeletal surgery - and advanced treatment like marrow trans-

plantation and hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy, isolated limb perfusion." Foremost, the need of the hour is mobile cancer screening van, which would move in nearby villages during health camps for screening of breast cancer and send information online to the experts who in turn will analyse the data and diagnose the disease.

Pawan has the last laugh..

Continued from Page 1

Though the TDP had staged protests before Pawan Kalyan's long-march, the heat was generated only after Pawan's long-march. Suicides of building workers have also added fuel to the fight of Pawan Kalyan. After

the long-march of the Jana Sena chief, ministers targeted Pawan Kalyan stating that sand crisis occurred due to floods. While YS Jagannathan Reddy reviewed the sand status two times and tried to explain the situation to the people on a defensive mode.



RS marshals to don white uniform in summers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Marshals of Rajya Sabha are likely to don white uniforms, resembling those of Navy officers, during Parliament sessions in the summer season.

As the 250th session of the Rajya Sabha began on Monday, the marshals appeared in deep blue winter uniform standing alongside Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Many of the members of the House were surprised to see the marshals in new uniform abandoning the earlier attire which included a turban.

"It has happened perhaps for the first time. At least I don't remember such change," a House member said. The new uniform looks more like those worn by military personnel. It includes a cap giving the look of a police or military officer. It could not be ascertained immediately that if the new uniform is for special occasions like the current landmark 250th session only or permanent.

Right 'doses' of yoga can reduce depression, anxiety

PIANS ■ NEW YORK

If applied in right 'doses', yoga and breathing exercises can improve symptoms of depression and anxiety in both short and long terms, reveal new research.

Published in the Journal of Psychiatric Practice, the study from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) provided evidence that yoga can be a helpful complementary treatment for clinical depression or major depressive disorder.

To reach this conclusion, a group of 30 clinically depressed patients were randomly divided into two groups. Both groups engaged in Iyengar yoga (founded by BKS Iyengar) and coherent breathing with the only difference being the number of instructional and home sessions in which each group participated.

Over three months, the high-dose group spent 123 hours in sessions while the low-dose group spent 87 hours.



Results showed that within a month, both groups' sleep quality significantly improved. "Tranquility, positivity, physical exhaustion and symptoms of anxiety and depression significantly improved in both

groups, as measured by several validated clinical scales "Think of it this way, we give medications in different doses in order to enact their effects on the body to varying degrees. Here, we explored the same

concept, but used yoga. We call that a dosing study," explained Chris Streeter, associate professor of psychiatry at BUSM. Past yoga and depression studies have not really delved deeply into this. "The data is

crucial for accompanying investigations of underlying neurobiology that will help elucidate 'how' yoga works," added study co-author Marisa M Silveri, neuroscientist at McLean Hospital and associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Research has shown combining therapy and medication has greater success than either treatment alone. Although studies with more participants would be helpful in further investigating its benefits, this small study indicates adding yoga to the prescription may be helpful.

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Indian Coast Guard ship Shaurya enters Jakarta



Indian Navy personnel being accorded a warm welcome in Jakarta



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is expanding its horizon and has deployed ICGS Shaurya (Offshore Patrol Vessel) from Coast Guard Eastern Seaboard on a good will visit to Jakarta (Indonesia), Darwin (Australia) and Singapore.

The ship, which commenced her voyage from Port Blair on November 12, entered the port of Jakarta on November 17. The deployment aims at capacity building through conduct of mutual exercises and professional interaction with maritime agencies of countries being visited.

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The visit to Jakarta will enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime search and rescue, maritime pollution response, anti-piracy, armed robbery and other arenas of common interest.

The ship on arrival at Jakarta was welcomed by a delegation consisting of senior officials from BAKAMALA (Badan Keamanan Laut Republik Indonesia), the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency and Indian Defence Attaché.

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During the stay in Jakarta, the ship will have cross deck visit onboard ICGS Shaurya and Indonesian ships with joint exercises on pollution response, search and rescue and mock drill on Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) is planned during the ship's stay in Jakarta. The ship will sail out from Jakarta on Nov 20 to enter Darwin, Australia, on November 26.

VIOLATION OF RULES IN TEMPLES

Endowments dept faces wrath

G RAVI KIRAN
VIJAYAWADA

Every religion has its own beliefs and customs, but of late, the YSRCP government was attracting the ire of Hindu religious bodies for violating norms in appointing officials in the temples.

In protest against the indifferent attitude of the government, Hindu Organisations are planning to stage a protest to save the sanctity of temples across the State.

The Endowments Department is facing the wrath of Hindu religious bodies. They are lashing out at the temple authorities for providing space to the people belonging to other religions in different ways. Recently, they staged protests at Tirumala and other places against the campaign of other religions on the premises of Hindu temples.

At Srisailem temple, people of other religion are working against the Government Order and more than a 100 shops at the temple are being run by persons belonging to other religions against the rules, Aravinda Reddy, VHP leader alleged.



The VHP and other organisations alleged that after the YSRCP came to power in the State, recruitment of persons belonging to other religions has been increased.

Aravinda Reddy said: "There are people, who are belonging to other religions, working in Srisailem temple. We complained about them to Executive Officer Ramakrishna and he is considering our complaints. But, he is unable to take

action quickly due to the pressure exerted from the YSRCP leaders. Already, a few people have been shifted to other places. Apart from permanent employees, there are more outsourcing employees."

Aravinda Reddy said: "Shops are being run by persons belonging to other religions on the temple premises against the norms. There is a rule that other persons belonging to other religions cannot partic-

ipate in auctions of shops, but that rule is not being implemented. Almost more than 100 shops are being run by people belonging to other religions," he pointed out.

Aravinda Reddy said: "We are planning to mobilise Hindu activists to gather at Srisailem and stage a protest against the irregularities of temple authorities."

BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana has warned

BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana has warned the State government two days ago that the BJP will not tolerate partisan attitude of the government towards a particular religion. He alleged that the government is violating rules in temples and providing support to other religions.

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the State government two days ago that the BJP will not tolerate partisan attitude of the government towards a particular religion. He alleged that the government is violating rules in temples and providing support to other religions.

'Over-speeding claims more lives in mishaps in State'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Over 82 per cent of road accident deaths occur due to over-speeding in the State, according to the latest Road Accident Report prepared by the Union Government's Transport Research Wing.

Over speeding and driving on the wrong side has claimed more lives than other violations in 2018. In the State, a total of 7,556 people died and 23,456 suffered injuries in 24,475 road accidents in 2018.

In 2017, 8,060 persons lost their lives, while 27,475 people suffered injuries in 25,727 road crashes in the State.

The over-speeding was the reason for 17,440 road accidents and claimed 6,196 lives and causing injuries to over 5,670 motorists in the State in 2018. In 2017, over-speeding claimed 6,768 lives.

While the driving on the wrong side was the reason for the death of 192 persons in 1,345 road accidents, drunken driving led to death of 85 persons and injuries to 847 persons in the State in 2018.

The report underlines that over 72.48 per cent of the fatal and non-fatal road accidents were due to the over-speeding and rash and negligent driving.

In his recent visit to Vizag, DGP Gautam Sawang said that the maximum speed limit on the NHs and SHs in the State is 80 kmph. But, majority of the motorists have been violating the speed limits.



DGP Gautam Sawang said that the maximum speed limit on the NHs and SHs in the State is 80 kmph. But, majority of the motorists have been violating the speed limits.

"We are planning to procure more speed laser guns and interceptors to check in the over-speeding on the NHs to mitigate the road crashes," said Gautam Sawang

Road Transport Authority (RTA) officials opined that focusing on over-speeding, drunken driving, helmet and seat belt can help reduce a large number of road injuries and deaths.

RTA official expressed that the speed laser guns failed to detect the speed of the vehicles during the night time. It is almost impossible to intercept the over-speeding vehicles during nights, they added

"We are planning to procure more speed laser guns and interceptors to check in the over-speeding on the NHs to mitigate the road crashes," said Gautam Sawang.

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Indian Bank to auction Ganta's property on Dec 20

Continued from Page1

Interested persons could check the documents of the properties from December 10 to December 13 spending their own money. The public notice said five properties in Visakhapatnam were earmarked for auction and rest-one each in Rangareddy district of Telangana and Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu and two properties in East Godavari. Ganta Srinivasa Rao or his associates were not available for comment.

The notices were issued under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Estates and Enforcement of Security Interest Act to Pratyusha Resources and Infra (Pvt) Ltd, P Raja Rao representing Pratyusha Resources and Infra (Pvt) Ltd, Chennai, PV Prabhakar Rao, Visakhapatnam, PV Bhaskara Rao, Ganta Srinivasa Rao, Visakhapatnam, KB S u b r a h m a n y a m , Visakhapatnam, Kumari Narne Amulya, Visakhapatnam, Pratyusha Estates (Pvt) Ltd and Pratyusha Global Trade.

AP govt clips wings of pvt power companies

Continued from Page1

The policies, brought in by the previous TDP government in January this year, enabled 100 per cent banking of energy all through the year.

According to the January policy, the unutilised banked energy shall be considered as deemed purchase by Discoms at 50 per cent of the average pooled power purchase cost, as determined by the APERC for the applicable year. Payment for the deemed purchase was, however, capped at 10 per cent of the total banked energy during the applicable year.

Ever since he assumed power in May, Jagan has been alleging the PPAs signed by the Naidu government caused a loss of Rs 5,000 crore to the state exchequer and left the power utilities bleeding. The government started a process for re-negotiating the PPAs with the green energy generators, ignoring the Centre's warning against the move. Challenging the government decision, over 40 power producers approached the state high court which has referred the matter to the APERC.

GVMC to make optimum use of Ward Secretaries

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation is planning to make optimum use of the newly appointed Ward Secretaries. The civic body has started attaching a certain number of Ward Secretaries to a particular street with a focus on ascertaining the civic challenges and augmenting the services in that particular area.

The mapping of Secretaries to a particular stretch is being done in such a way that it can empower them as the change agents of those colonies on behalf of the GVMC.

The urban local body has got nearly 3,000 Ward Secretaries in the recent recruitment. Officials of the GVMC, which is currently understaffed, expect that Secretaries with minimum education qualification of graduation would help them in improving the delivery of services in the city.

GVMC Commissioner G Srijana said that Ward Secretaries attached to the particular street will take care of water supply, civic amenities, waste management, road repairs, street lighting, welfare schemes and other works in their jurisdiction. "They will monitor these services on a daily basis and provide feedback to the GVMC. For exam-



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ple, while the Amenities Secretary will take care of the roads, drains, potholes and water supply, Welfare Secretaries will create awareness among women self-help groups on composting, segregation and Swachh Survekshan apart from working on the welfare schemes," said Srijana.

GVMC urban community development project director Y Srinivasa Rao said that the GVMC is responsible to monitor and carry out the functions of six different categories of Ward Secretaries. "But Ward Secretaries of various departments will work in a synchronisation to deliver the optimum services to the public," said Srinivasa Rao.

Democrats invite Trump to testify...

Continued from Page1

Trump could come right before the committee and talk, speak all the truth that he wants if he wants, she said. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer echoed that suggestion. If Donald Trump doesn't agree with what he's hearing, doesn't like what he's hearing, he shouldn't tweet. He should come to the committee and testify under oath. And he should allow all those around him to come to the committee and testify under oath, Schumer told reporters.



He said the White House's insistence on blocking witnesses from cooperating begs the question: What is he hiding? The comments come as the House Intelligence Committee prepares for a second week of public hearings as part of its inquiry, including with the man who is arguably the most important witness.

Gordon Sondland, Trump's ambassador to the European Union, is among the only people interviewed to date who had direct conversations with the president about the situation because the White House has blocked others from cooperating with what he dismisses as a sham investigation. And testimony suggests he was intimately involved in discussions that are at the heart of the investigation into whether Trump held up U.S. military aid to Ukraine to try to pressure the country's president to announce an investigation into Democrats, including former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading 2020 candidate, and his son, Hunter. Multiple witnesses overheard a phone call in which Trump and Sondland

reportedly discussed efforts to push for the investigations. In private testimony to impeach investigators made public Saturday, Tim Morrison, a former National Security Council aide and longtime Republican defense hawk, said Sondland told him he was discussing Ukraine matters directly with Trump. Morrison said Sondland and Trump had spoken approximately five times between July 15 and Sept. 11 the weeks that 391 million in U.S. assistance was withheld from Ukraine before it was released. And he recounted that Sondland told a top Ukrainian official in a meeting that the vital U.S. military assistance might be freed up if the country's top prosecutor would go to the mike and announce that he was opening the Burisma investigation. Burisma is the gas company that hired Hunter Biden.

Morrison's testimony contradicted much of what Sondland told congressional investigators during his own closed-door deposition, which the ambassador later amended. Trump has said he has no recollection of the overheard call and has suggested he barely knew Sondland, a wealthy donor to his 2016 campaign.

2 AP women turned away at Sabarimala...

Continued from Page1

Being doubtful about their age, the women police officials stopped them and asked for their identity cards. Finding that both were under 50 years of age, the police officials explained to them about the traditions of the temple. After hearing the police, both agreed to abide by the rules and

returned. A similar incident took place last Saturday when three women were not allowed to pray at the temple after the police found they were below 50 years of age. Though the Supreme Court on Thursday gave a 3:2 verdict referring the Sabarimala review pleas to a larger bench, it maintained that it has not stayed its September 28, 2018

order allowing women of all ages to enter the temple. But this time the Kerala government has made its position clear that it would not make any effort for the entry of women into the temple to pray.

Last year, the police provided security to women who faced stiff resistance from activists of some right-wing outfits to their entry into the temple.

Expedite construction works at Tirumala, EO tells officials



TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal speaking at a review meeting in Tirumala on Monday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal called upon officials to speed up the ongoing construction works of TTD boondi complex near Srivari temple.

Addressing senior officials at a review meeting at the TTD administrative building on Monday, the Executive Officer pressed need for enlarging the toilet units next to Nada Neeranjanam for convenience of devotees. He instructed immediate removal of temporary sheds near newly constructed rest houses at Tirumala. He also wanted officials to prepare an action plan for provision of archakas' quarters and FMS services at all TTD temples in other regions.

He asked the JEO to review the development works taken up in TTD local temples under the supervision of senior TTD officials by conducting video conferences.

He urged officials to prepare in advance all book and CD releases planned for release at Sri Padmavathi Ammavari Brahmotsavams. Singhal directed IT department officials to upload the student admission applications, or all TTD educational institutions in the TTD website at the earliest.

He also wanted FAQs to be prepared and uploaded in the website on rooms, Arjita Sevas, online bookings as the TTD call centre was daily receiving 2500 -3000 calls.

He also wanted devotees complaints and suggestions resolved on the same day. The accounts department staff should also be given refresher training in ERP applications to improve quality of their services.

Tirupati JEO P Basant Kumar, FACA O Balaji, Chief Engineer G Ramachandra Reddy and others participated.



'Administration has come to a standstill in YSRCP regime'

PNS ■ TANUKU

Former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu alleged that the administration has come to a standstill after YSRCP coming to power in the State. Addressing a party meeting here on Monday, he accused the YSRCP government of not conducting house-warming celebrations for flats built during the TDP regime so as not to give credit to the TDP.

On account of economic recession, prices of essential commodities are on the rise, but the government is hiking the J-Tax on the commodities, he alleged.

The YSRCP government was indulging in mud-slinging on the TDP on the power-purchase agreements, he said. Accusing Jagannathan Reddy of trying to betray interests of the State, Chandrababu demanded him to execute project to inter-link rivers in the State. Farmers in and around Amaravati parted with 33,000 acres for the State capital, he said adding that it demonstrates the credibility he enjoys among the people. The YSRCP leaders have been claiming credit for the rainfall in the State, but failed to fill reservoirs and canals, he lamented.

AI tool to predict life expectancy in heart failure patients

IAN S ■ NEW YORK

Researchers have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to predict life expectancy in heart failure patients. The machine learning algorithm based on de-identified electronic health, records data of 5,822 hospitalised or ambulatory patients with heart failure at UC San Diego Health in the US.

"We wanted to develop a tool that predicted life expectancy in heart failure patients, there are apps where algorithms are finding out all kinds of things, like products you want to purchase," said Avi Yagil, Professor at University of California.

"We needed a similar tool to make medical decisions. Predicting mortality is important in patients with heart failure. Current strategies for predicting risk, however, are only modestly successful and can be subjective," Yagil added.



From this model, a risk score was derived that determined low and high risk of death by identifying eight readily available variables collected for the majority of patients with heart

failure: Diastolic blood pressure, Creatinine, Blood urea nitrogen, White blood cell count, Platelets, Albumin and Red blood cell distribution.

Yagil said the newly devel-

oped model was able to accurately predict life expectancy 88 per cent of the time and performed substantially better than other popular published models. "This tool gives us

"We wanted to develop a tool that predicted life expectancy in heart failure patients, there are apps where algorithms are finding out all kinds of things, like products you want to purchase," said Avi Yagil, Professor at University of California

insight, for example, on the probability that a given patient will die from heart failure in the next three months or a year," said researcher Eric Adler.

"This is incredibly valuable. It allows us to make informed decisions based on a proven methodology and not have to look into a crystal ball," he added. The tool was additionally tested using de-identified patient data from the University of California San Francisco and a data base derived from 11 European medical centers. "It was successful in those cohorts as well," said Yagil.

"Being able to repurpose our findings in independent populations is of utmost importance, thus validating our methodology and its results," Yagil added. Researchers said the partnership between physicists and cardiologists was critical to developing a reliable tool and extensive knowledge and experiences from both sides proved synergistic. The study was published in the European Journal of Heart Failure.

SHORT READS



Tanveer Sait

MLA attacked at wedding in Karnataka

BENGALURU: Congress MLA and former Karnataka Minister Tanveer Sait was attacked by a man with a knife at a wedding ceremony in Mysuru late on Sunday night, police said. Sait, the Narasimharaja constituency MLA, was immediately rushed to a hospital in Mysuru where he underwent a surgery, they said. The attacker has been identified as Farhaan Pasha, aged about 25 years. As Sait was seated at the function, Pasha attacked him and tried to escape but was caught by those at the venue and later handed over to the police. The incident has been caught on video at the event. Pasha is being interrogated, police added.



Kaushalendra Kumar

MP raises issue of climate change

NEW DELHI: A member of the Janata Dal (United) on Monday raised the issue of climate change and its impact on India. "In the entire country there is climate change. In Bihar we first saw drought and in July there was so much rain in Patna," Kaushalendra Kumar of Janata Dal (United) said in Lok Sabha during Zero Hour. Stressing that the economy was going from bad to worse, Suresh Dhanorkar (Congress) said job crisis has become a major issue. He said new jobs were not being created and sought an explanation from Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on the matter.

Search op launched to track down suspected militants in J-K

JAMMU: Security forces have launched a search operation on the basis of a tip-off about the movement of suspected militants in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said on Monday. The Army and police launched a search operation on Sunday following the information provided by some villagers about the suspicious movement in a forest area of Surankote, they said. The operation is on to track down the suspected militants, they added.

Guj: Two held for bid to circulate fake currency notes

RAJKOT: Police on Monday foiled a bid by two men to circulate fake currency notes of Rs 100 denomination at a pawn shop in Jetpur town in Rajkot district of Gujarat and arrested them. Police recovered 46 pieces of the fake bank notes from the accused Mohammad Siraj Hamid and Amin Kadri, who were booked under sections 489 A (counterfeiting currency notes) and section 114 (abetting present when offence committed) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), a Jetpur police station official said.

WALAYAR SISTERS' DEATH CASE

Public prosecutor removed, probe ordered: Pinarayi

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Days after acquittal of the accused in the Walayar sisters death case triggered a controversy, the Kerala government on Monday announced the Public Prosecutor who handled it has been removed and said a probe is on to identify lapses in the police enquiry, if any.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced this in the state assembly in response to allegations by the Opposition that the police and the prosecution failed in providing justice to the victims.

He said the state government

will go in for an appeal against the POCSO court order.

"The government is looking into the allegations that there were lapses in the police inquiry and the prosecution. The special public prosecutor has been removed from the post.

State will appeal against the acquittal," Vijayan told the House.

Public outcry and protests erupted in Kerala seeking justice to the family of the Dalit sisters aged 11 and nine after a special POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) court in Palakkad acquitted the accused on

October 25.

Replying to question by member M Vincent, the chief minister told the Assembly the special public prosecutor Latha Jayaraj has been dismissed.

"The mother of two minor girls, who were found dead in Walayar, had approached the Kerala High Court, on November 12, seeking to quash the order of Palakkad special court (POCSO Act) acquitting all the accused in

the case.

The elder child, aged 13, was found dead on January 13, 2017, and the younger child, aged nine, died 52 days later.

There were five accused in the case and separate charge sheets were filed against each accused. However, they were acquitted.

"The state will support the parents' demand for CBI probe," Vijayan said.

He also dismissed the Opposition allegation his party had interfered in the case and said such tendencies are not encouraged by the Left party.

The girls' mother in her plea to the high court had said the court acquitted the accused persons who were charged with rape and abetment of suicide, disbelieving eyewitness accounts.

The trial court dealt with the case in a most casual manner and it failed to take an active role in the trial process to ensure that a fair trial was conducted, the woman contended in her plea.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes had last week said it will seek clarifications from the doctors who performed the post-mortem on two minor Dalit girls, who were raped and later found dead under "suspicious circumstances".

"The acquittal of the accused in the case by the POCSO court had led to a lot of anger and protests by political parties and NGOs as they alleged the Kerala police deliberately did a bad investigation to help the accused come out of the case."

The elder child, aged 13, was found dead on January 13, 2017, and the younger child, aged nine, died 52 days later. There were five accused in the case and separate charge sheets were filed against each accused. However, they were acquitted

— PINARAYI VIJAYAN, Chief Minister



Sanitation worker recreates old songs for anti-trash campaign

PNS ■ PUNE

Pune-based sanitation worker Mahadev Jadhav's unique style of parodying old Bollywood songs to discourage citizens from dumping garbage in public is earning him kudos on social media.

The idea to recreate the old songs struck the 57-year-old employee of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) when he saw some "educated people" throwing plastic bags containing trash on roads in Parvati area while going for a morning walk.

"Since I have a penchant for singing and writing poems, I have been using the same interest to create awareness regarding waste management and segregation of dry and wet garbage at source, and discouraging people from dumping garbage in public," said Jadhav, who is attached to Waste Management department.

Videos of Jadhav holding people's attention by singing while sweeping the streets have



The idea to recreate the old songs struck the 57-year-old employee of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) when he saw some "educated people" throwing plastic bags containing trash on roads in Parvati area while going for a morning walk

gone viral on social media.

Recalling his experience, Jadhav said one morning he saw well-to-do people dumping garbage on roadside while out for a morning walk.

"Annoyed by their attitude, I decided to create awareness about the ill practice through singing. I twisted the classic Hindi song 'Kajra Mohabbat Wala' into 'Kachara Sookha aur Geela, sabne mila kar dala,

kachare ne leli sabki jaan re, gaur se suniye meheraban...," he said.

A key member of a PMC cultural group, Jadhav and his like-minded colleagues visit schools, colleges as well as housing societies where they perform skits and sing songs on the importance of waste management.

Taking the 'Kajra Mohabbatwala...' theme forward, Jadhav adds, "Carry bag ye plastic wala, isko aadat kar dala, aadat ne le li sabki jaan, gaur se suniye meheraban" (the habit of using carry bag has killed us).

Jadhav claimed he was getting invitations from residen-

tial societies who want him to create awareness among the residents about waste management through his unique style.

Jadhav's senior Dnyaneshwar Molak, who heads the PMC's waste management department, said the former turned a social cause into a personal mission, which is a matter of pride.

"We are planning to appoint him as our cleanliness brand ambassador for the Central government's cleanliness survey, to be conducted by the civic body," he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had appealed people in the past to stop using plastic to take care of environment.

JNU students' protest rocks capital; march stopped by police

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Thousands of Jawaharlal Nehru University students, carrying placards and chanting slogans, marched towards Parliament on the first day of the Winter Session on Monday, demanding a total roll back of the hostel fee hike, but were stopped by police around half a kilometre from the institute's campus in south Delhi.

The students, who were holding a protest on the university's premises for the last three weeks, hit the streets seeking to get the attention of Parliament about their demands, asserting they will not relent until the government withdraws the hike.

Hundreds of police personnel stopped the students on the Baba Gaganath Marg, around 600 metres from the main gate of the university and some of them were forcefully blocked from moving ahead.

Several leaders of the agitation were detained by police when they were insisting on marching forward.

Initially, the barricades outside JNU's gates were removed



and the students were allowed to march.

The HRD Ministry appointed a three-member committee to recommend ways to restore normal functioning of the JNU which has been witnessing periodic protests by students over a variety of issues.

Akshat, a JNU student said, "The students' union has not been informed by the ministry about the formation of a panel. The administration's officials and the panel should speak to

the elected union to solve the issue."

"We are being given a lollipop in terms of the partial rollback. I am the first from my family to reach university. There are many others like me. Education is not the birthright of a privileged few," Priyanka, another student, said.

Students took out the march carrying banners that read "save public education", "fees must fall" and "ensure affordable hostels for all".

EPF scam: UPPCL employees boycott work

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) employees on Monday began their 48-hour work boycott against the provident fund scam and sought a government guarantee for the safe return of their money invested in the DHFL.

Over Rs 2,600 crore of the state power employees' provident fund (PF) was reportedly invested in the scam-hit Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited (DHFL), prompting the state government to order a CBI probe.

However, the units generating power have been exempted from the protest to prevent grid failure.

Led by Vidyut Karamchari Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti (VKSSS), a joint forum of power employees and engineers, about 45,000 employees of the power department began their protest at 8 am on Monday for 48 hours, its convener Shailendra Dubey said.

The employees are demanding issuance of a notification by the government taking responsibility for safe return of their money, invested in DHFL by the Uttar Pradesh Power Sector Employees' Trust.



The employees are demanding issuance of a notification by the government taking responsibility for safe return of their money, invested in DHFL by the Uttar Pradesh Power Sector Employees' Trust.

The employees are also demanding arrest of the former chairman of the corporation and other IAS officers responsible for the scam, Dubey said, adding that they converged at the Shakti Bhawan in Lucknow while in other districts also they held protest meetings.

The state's power minister Shrikant Sharma, while terming the work boycott as politically motivated, said that government was taking full

care of the employees.

"The employees are like a family for us. We are taking full care of them to ensure that they do not face any problems. The work boycott is politically motivated," Sharma said.

The home department has also directed all district magistrates and police chiefs to ensure proper security of all employees who are not taking part in the work boycott and vital installations in their areas.

UP: Man kills wife, later commits suicide

PNS ■ BANDA (UP)

A 50-year-old man allegedly killed his wife and later committed suicide by jumping in front of an express train in Uttar Pradesh's Chitrakoot district, police said on Monday.

On Saturday night, Surajbhan Kesarwani had an argument with his wife Asha alias Rani (45) and in a fit of rage hit her with a blunt weapon, they said.

Later that night, he fled home and committed suicide by jumping in front of the Mahakaushal Express near Piprawal Bridge, police added.

After ascertaining the man's identity, police reached his house early on Sunday morning to find his wife dead, they said.

Police added that Kesarwani ran a roadside eatery and was a drug addict.

The couple is survived by two sons and a daughter, who were at home when the murder took place but are said to be unaware of the incident, police added.



Meghalaya-based insurgent group HNLB banned by govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Meghalaya-based insurgent group Hynniewtep National Liberation Council (HNLB) has been banned by the central government for its increased activities of violence and other subversive acts.

In a notification, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said the HNLB along with all its factions, wings and front organisations has been openly declaring as its objective the secession of the state's areas, which are largely inhabited by Khasi and Jaintia tribals, from the Indian Union.

The group continues to intimidate and bully civilians

to extort funds, maintains links with other insurgent groups of the Northeast to carry out acts of extortion and intimidation, and maintains camps in Bangladesh to give sanctuary and training to its cadre, it said.

The central government is also of the opinion that HNLB's activities are detrimental to the sovereignty and integrity of India.

If these are not immediately curbed and controlled, the HNLB will regroup and rearmed itself, expand its cadre base, procure sophisticated weapons, cause loss of lives of civilians and security forces, and accelerate its anti-national activities, the MHA said.

'Electoral bonds tool for anonymous donations'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday alleged that electoral bonds became instruments of anonymous donations bordering on "opaque money laundering" and asked the Modi government to answer how many thousand crores were received by the ruling BJP through them. Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala cited a media report, which claimed that the government, in a bid to seek "secretive funds", "overruled" the Reserve Bank of India on the issue of introducing electoral bonds. "RTI reveals how 'electoral bonds' became instruments of anonymous donations bordering on opaque 'money laundering'," Surjewala said in a tweet.



Randeep Surjewala

Public transport increases in Srinagar: Officials

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The movement of public transport in Srinagar improved significantly on Monday as life was inching towards normalcy in the valley after a prolonged shutdown against the Centre's decision to scrap Jammu and Kashmir's special status, officials said.

Most modes of public transport have been restored across Kashmir as mini-buses have started plying on more routes. Intra-district and inter-district connectivity have improved significantly, according to officials.

Auto-rickshaws and inter-district cabs have been plying for a while now, but the movement of intra-district cabs across the valley has also



increased in the last few days, the officials said.

Police also cracked a whip on the roadside vendors, who used to put up their stalls on the TRC Chowk-Lal Chowk road every day.

The officials said the vendors were not allowed to erect their stalls on Monday to allow the smooth flow of traffic as the city, especially the areas around the commercial hub of Lal Chowk, had been witnessing frequent massive traffic jams.

Repository of crops across 128 zones launched

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones in India for better nutritional outcomes was launched by the Women and Child Development Ministry (WCD) on Monday.

Union WCD minister Smriti Zubin Irani along with Bill Gates, co-chair of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK) here.

The BPKK, will be the repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones in India for better nutritional outcomes, a WCD statement said.

At the launch, WCD Secretary Rabintra Panwar handed over the letter of intent to Hari Menon, Director, India Country Office, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Irani said for India to reach



the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is now time to bring together the science of implementation with the science of communication so that nutrition is on the political and administrative agenda along with hygiene and clean drinking water.

Speaking on the occasion, Gates said that if there was one problem that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation would like to solve in India, it is the problem of malnutrition among women,

Irani said for India to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is now time to bring together the science of implementation with the science of communication so that nutrition is on the political and administrative agenda along with hygiene and clean drinking water

expectant mothers and children.

"Solving this problem will bring about a dramatic change in the development of India and help the country to attain the SDGs," he said.

Eminent agricultural scientist, M S Swaminathan said to make India nutrition secure, a five-point action programme has to be implemented.

The five-point action programme includes ensuring calorie rich diet for women, expectant mothers and children and

ensuring intake of proteins in the form of pulses to eradicate protein hunger in women and children.

He also stressed on the need to eradicate hidden hunger due to deficiency of micro nutrients like vitamin A, vitamin B, Iron and Zinc and ensure clean drinking water supply.

The fifth point he raised was about spreading nutrition literacy in every village particularly in mothers with children less than 100 days old.

Swaminathan further said that lack of proper nutrition among children affects not only the physical development of the child growing into adulthood but also affects brain development.

He urged the Ministry of WCD to create a band of community hunger fighters who will be trained to deal with hunger among women, expectant mothers and children by following this five-point action programme, the statement said.

TAJ MAHAL WILL NOW BE IN 'AGRAVAN', INSTEAD OF AGRA?

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After changing the names of Allahabad to Prayagraj and Mughalsarai to Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar, the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is planning to change the name of Agra to Agravan. The state government has asked the Ambedkar University in Agra to look into the historical aspect of the name. The history department of

the university is now looking at the proposal.

Prof Sugam Anand, head of the department of history in Dr B R Ambedkar University of Agra, confirmed this to IANS. He said, "we have received a letter from the state government to look for historical evidence if Agra city was known by any other name. We have begun the research and will reply to the letter."

According to sources, the

According to sources, the Yogi government is planning to change the name from Agra to Agravan since some historians believe that this was the original name of the city that is home to the Taj Mahal

Yogi government is planning to change the name from Agra to Agravan since some historians believe that

this was the original name of the city that is home to the Taj Mahal.

Historians and experts

have been asked to look into the circumstances and time when Agravan's name was changed to Agra.

BJP MLA Jagan Prasad Garg, who passed away recently, had earlier written a letter to Yogi Adityanath, requesting him to change the name of Agra to Agravan. The proposal had re-ignited the controversy on the issue. Those who want it named as 'Agravan' have been placing their

argument in support of it since long but many others call Agra as Akbarabad after Emperor Akbar, who made it the capital of the Mughal Empire. Tourism trade experts, however, have reservations on any such move.

"Agra is known worldwide as the city of Taj Mahal and a change of name would not go down well," said Rakesh Tiwari, a travel and tour operator.



Capsule



Nusrat Jahan admitted to hospital ICU with respiratory distress

KOLKATA: Bengali actor and Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha member Nusrat Jahan has been admitted to ICU at a hospital here following respiratory distress, sources close to her said on Monday. Jahan was taken to the Apollo Gleneagles hospital here around 9.30 p.m. on Sunday night after she complained of breathing problems. "She is stable and conscious," the sources said. Sources said the MP from West Bengal's Basirhat constituency is under the treatment of internal medicine specialist Sandip Mandal. "Nusrat has been admitted in hospital due to a respiratory issue. She has a history of asthma," the sources said.

'Over 6K corruption cases against govt officers pending trials'

BHUBANESWAR: Altogether 6,817 corruption cases against Odisha government officials are pending trials in various courts, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said on Monday. The chief minister said this in reply to a question raised by BJD member Sudhir Kumar Samal in the Assembly. The state government has appointed prosecution liaison officers at vigilance courts to expedite the cases and SPs of various vigilance divisions are holding regular meetings with special judges of the vigilance courts to ensure speedy trial. The vigilance wing of Odisha Police has registered cases against 895 Group-A officers, 798 Group-B officers, 3,535 Group-C officers, 193 Group-D officers and 1,396 public servants for their involvement in corrupt practices, CM said.

Political parties have to choose their path: Sharad Pawar

NEW DELHI: Ahead of his meeting with Congress president Sonia Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Monday said all the political parties seeking to stake claim in forming government in Maharashtra have to "choose their path." The Sena had reached out to the Congress-NCP combine for support after its alliance with the BJP collapsed. "BJP-Shiv Sena fought together, we (the NCP) and the Congress fought together. They have to choose their path and we will do our politics," he told reporters before the Winter Session of Parliament began. The saffron alliance had secured a comfortable majority by winning 105 and 56 seats, respectively, in the 288-member Maharashtra assembly. Pre-poll allies Congress and NCP won 44 and 54 seats.

Oppn in LS demand Farooq be allowed to attend House

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the government over the detention of sitting Lok Sabha MP Farooq Abdullah, opposition members on Monday termed the National Conference leader's detention as illegal and demanded that he be allowed to attend the House.

Opposition leaders also raised the issue of MPs not being allowed to visit Jammu and Kashmir after abrogation of its special status, whereas parliamentarians from Europe have been taken to the state, with Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury describing the EU delegation as "bhade ke tattu" (hirelings). "Our leader Rahul Gandhi was not allowed to visit (Jammu and Kashmir), several MPs were sent back...whereas bhade ketatu from Europe were being taken there. Isn't it an insult to all MPs. I want to ask MPs of ruling alliance don't they think it was their insult," Chowdhury said.

On the detention of Abdullah, he said the NC supremo has been under detention for 106 days and it is his constitutional right to attend the House. Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Chowdhury said it was an "atrocious" not to allow the



Oppn leaders also raised the issue of MPs not being allowed to visit Jammu and Kashmir after abrogation of its special status, whereas parliamentarians from Europe have been taken to the state, with Cong leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury describing the EU delegation as 'bhade ke tattu'

former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister to attend Lok Sabha proceedings. The Speaker said when Home Minister Amit Shah informed the House in the previous session that Abdullah was not under detention, he was correct. The written information of his detention was received

later by the Lok Sabha secretariat. He said now he has written information that Abdullah is under detention.

DMK leader TR Bалу sought Birla's intervention in the matter, saying the speaker is the custodian of the House and should ensure that members are

allowed to attend the House.

"What has happened with Farooq is illegal...You are custodian of the House...You have to make intervention," Bалу said. The DMK leader also said that same is the case with PDP leader and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti and noted that her daughter has said that the PDP leader has been man-handled. Making a passionate appeal that Abdullah be allowed to attend the House, National Conference MP Hasnain Masoodi said the former chief minister was under preventive custody and it can be revoked by the Speaker's order.

"Farooq Sahab represents Srinagar and it is right of the 20 lakh people of Srinagar that their voice be heard in the House...I have proof that he is not in preventive custody, your one order can revoke it," Masoodi said while addressing the Chair.

Similar sentiments on Abdullah's arrest were made by TMC leaders as well.

Chowdhury also raised the issue of withdrawal of Special Protection Group cover of former PM Manmohan Singh and the Gandhi family.

MPs ride bicycles, wear masks, drive e-cars to reach Parl

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several MPs on Monday made a statement against pollution in the national capital by riding bicycles, sporting masks and even choosing electric vehicles over fuel guzzlers as they arrived for the Winter Session of Parliament.

The air quality in Delhi improved marginally on Monday but remained in the "poor" category for the second consecutive day. At 9 am on Monday, the air quality index (AQI) in the national capital stood at 207 against an AQI of 254 at the same time on Sunday.

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi wore a mask as a mark of protest in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Parliament premises against rising air pollution levels. BJP MP Mansukh Mandaviya reached Parliament riding a bicycle and so did his party colleague Manoj Tiwari. Prakash Javadekar arrived at Parliament in an electric car.

"The government is gradually switching to electric cars as they are pollution-free. I appeal to people to contribute to fight pollution- start using public transport, electric vehicles etc", he told reporters.

Executive must ensure greater respect for RS: Manmohan Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha as the council of states should be given "greater respect by the executive", and should have been consulted before the "drastic measures" were taken of converting a state into Union Territories and redrawing of its boundaries, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Monday, in direct criticism of the government's move to abrogate Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir.

Addressing the Rajya Sabha on the first day of the winter session, the senior Congress leader said that it is "a very important duty" of the Rajya Sabha to "ensure that no law is passed in a moment of heightened emotion", — again a reference to the August 5 move by Parliament to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution that granted special status to Jammu & Kashmir, and convert it into two UTs of J&K and Ladakh.

Singh suggested several measures to make the Rajya Sabha more effective and give it more teeth, including that the Upper House be allowed to discuss and deliberate important measures in greater depth.



He also said that Parliament should follow the practice for all Bills to be brought before the Upper House. But Article 110 allows the Lok Sabha "precedence in money bills", he said. "We have seen misuse of money bills leading to bypassing of the Rajya Sabha without any deliberation," he said, adding that Parliament should "ensure that such instances are avoided as this reduces the stature of the institution."

He said the Upper House has a central role to play in the form of "checks and balances to a majority government" as it presents the interests of the states.

He said that the Rajya Sabha being half in size of the Lok Sabha the members do not get time to share their insights.



Shiv Sena stages walkout from LS over farmers' issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid power tussle, Shiv Sena on Monday raised voice against its former alliance partner BJP on the first day of the winter session of Parliament, seeking immediate relief for farmers affected by unseasonal rains in parts of Maharashtra and staged a walkout from the Lok Sabha. Sena's stand-off with the BJP was visible in the lower House as its members were the first among other opposition parties to stage protest against the government and disrupt the proceedings. Both the Sena and the BJP had fought the Maharashtra Assembly elections together, but failed to reach a power-sharing deal leading to imposition of President's rule in the state.

As soon as Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla completed the obituary references, the Sena MPs stood on their seats and started shouting slogans

saying, "we need justice for farmers". In an editorial in its mouthpiece "Saamana", the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena recently had raised the issue of farmers who had suffered crop losses and had advocated adequate compensation without attaching any conditions.

Other opposition parties joined the Sena MPs later but they sought the release of National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah from detention. Abdullah has been in detention in Kashmir since August 5 when the Central government abrogated the special status of the erstwhile state. The opposition, led by the Congress, including the National Conference, Nationalist Congress Party, Revolutionary Socialist Party and Dravida Munetra Kazhgam, went to the well of the House shouting slogans "stop dividing country" and "we want justice".

People's hearts can be won without rushing to well of House

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said in Rajya Sabha that people's hearts can be won by political parties even without rushing to the Well of the House to register their protest on various issues. Speaking in the House during a special discussion marking 250 sessions of Rajya Sabha, he said the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Biju Janata Dal have wonderfully adhered to parliamentary norms by not entering the Well of the House.

"Yet they have made their points effectively. Much can be learnt from this ... people's hearts can be won even without rushing to the Well," he said. Modi said parties, including his BJP, has to learn from the NCP and BJD in this regard. The prime minister also said Rajya Sabha is about checks and balances. "This is absolutely essential ... here is also a difference between checking and clogging," he said.



Central ministers playing 'dirty politics' on Delhi water

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after a BIS report stated that drinking water in the national capital failed quality tests, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday accused the central ministers of playing "dirty politics" and scaring people by saying that the city's drinking water is poisonous.

Kejriwal said five random water samples will be lifted publicly from each ward in the city for examination and asserted that only 1.5 percent of the 1.55 lakh water samples picked up by the Delhi Jal Board in January-September this year have failed the tests.

Union Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Saturday released the second phase of the Bureau of Indian Standardisation (BIS) study which stated that Delhi along with Kolkata and Chennai failed in almost 10 out of 11 quality parameters of drinking water. "Its dirty politics, people are scared by the way Central ministers are saying Delhi water is poisonous," the Delhi chief minister said at a press conference.

Union minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said Kejriwal was giving "poison" to people in the name of free water supply and demanded that he should step down from the post of chief minister.

"As per WHO standards, one sample per 10,000 popu-



He has not told where from these samples were lifted. But, we will lift random samples from each municipal ward in a transparent manner and test it — ARVIND KEJRIWAL, Chief Minister of Delhi

PASWAN CHALLENGES KEJRIWAL TO NAME OFFICIALS TO TEST DELHI WATER

Accusing Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of doing politics over the issue of water quality in the national capital, Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Monday challenged him to name officials for a team comprising city and central officials to test water. Speaking in Lok Sabha during the Zero Hour, the Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution minister, said water supplied by the Delhi Jal Board is not fit for drinking. While the rich and middle class use ROs and other purifiers or depend on bottled water, the poor suffer, he said after some Lok Sabha MPs from the capital raised the issue besides that of air pollution. A war of words has erupted between the Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party and the BJP ahead of the assembly polls in the city after test of water samples drawn from cities across the country showed that Mumbai had the best water quality and Delhi the worst. Kejriwal has rejected the report prepared by the Bureau of Indian Standardisation (BIS) as "false and politically motivated". A visibly piqued Paswan slammed the AAP over its response and said its government used to make tall claims about the city's water quality but is now levelling allegations against him.

samples were lifted from Delhi. He has not told where from these samples were lifted. But, we will lift random samples from each municipal ward in a transparent manner and test it," Kejriwal said.

He has not told where from these samples were lifted. But, we will lift random samples from each municipal ward in a transparent manner and test it," Kejriwal said.



CJI Bobde congratulated by Bar leaders

● Shares dais with senior judges of Jamaica, Bhutan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Newly-appointed Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde on Monday sat on the dais in a courtroom with Chief Justice of Jamaica Bryan Sykes and senior-most Judge of Bhutan's Supreme Court, Justice Kuenly Tshering, a first for the head of the Indian apex court.

Justice Bobde, 63, was administered the oath of office by President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday.

He was congratulated by Bar leaders on being appointed as the 47th head of the Indian judiciary.

The CJI, who headed the bench comprising Justices B R Gava and Surya Kant, started holding the court at 11.30 am and was first congratulated by Rakesh Khanna, the senior advocate and the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

BIKE-BORNE ASSAILANTS SHOOT DEAD PETROL PUMP MANAGER

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Unidentified bike-borne assailants allegedly shot dead a petrol pump manager and looted his bag containing Rs 11.22 lakh in cash near the Baghabeer Baba temple located within the Belipar police station limits here on Monday morning, police said.

A hunt was on for the assailants, ASP, South, Gorakhpur Vipul Kumar Srivastav said, adding that the

police were checking the video footage of the route.

The filling station manager of the Mehrouli petrol pump in the Belipar area, Anand Swaroop Mishra, was going to a State Bank of India branch at the Mahavir Chhapra area, along with another employee, on a motorcycle to deposit the collection of Sunday and Saturday, when the two bike-borne assailants came from behind and opened fire at him, looted his bag containing Rs 11.22 lakh in cash and fled, the ASP said.

INX MEDIA CASE

ED moves HC for rectification of error in PC's bail order

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday approached the Delhi High Court seeking rectification of an "inadvertent" error in the order denying bail to former Union finance minister P Chidambaram in the INX Media money laundering case. The ED in its application urged the court to correct the "accidental slip/inadvertent error" in the November 15 verdict passed by Justice Suresh Kait. Kait has reproduced some paragraphs from a 2017 Supreme Court order rejecting

bail to Delhi-based lawyer Rohit Tandon in a money laundering case, as per the application. The error was in four paragraphs of the 41-page judgment given by Justice Kait.

The judge also referred to a 2017 high court order in the Tandon versus ED case in which it was observed that "there is a provision of trial by special courts in case of 'schedule offences' under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Possibility of a joint trial would arise under Section 44 of the PMLA only when a charge



sheet is filed upon completion of investigation and the case is committed to a special court. The ED, in its plea filed

Possibility of a joint trial would arise under Section 44 of the PMLA only when a charge sheet is filed upon completion of investigation and the case is committed to a special court

through the central government's standing counsel Amit Mahajan and advocate Rabat Nair, sought correction of the errors which "inadvertently and due to accidental slip have crept in paragraphs 35, 36, 39 and 40 of the order."

"It appears that the factual assertions which have been

attributed to the respondent ED as part of its submissions, forms part of one of the judgments which was relied by it during the course of arguments.

"Inadvertently, it appears that the said factual portion of the judgment relied by the ED instead of being quoted or

summarised as the part of the relied upon judgments, have been inadvertently/accidentally referred to in the order dated November 15 as the factual submissions made by the ED," the application said.

The ED clarified that it has not placed those facts as part of its submission in support of the argument for rejection of bail to Chidambaram. It said the facts of Tandon's case are neither a part of the investigation papers of Chidambaram's case nor were remotely relatable to the probe undertaken by the ED in this case.

Dealing with a new Lanka

India has to up its strategic engagement and amp up its economic presence to neutralise Gotabaya's pro-China tilt



In a multi-polar world that's grunting through protectionism and a slow economy and where every nation is trying to steer its course, each has been unanimously electing a muscular leadership to helm its destiny. In that sense, the victory of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the nationalist strongman of the Sri Lankan People's Party (SLPP) and the brother of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in the island nation's elections does not come as a surprise. Particularly in the aftermath of the Easter bombings, which showed how scattered IS modules were choosing virgin targets, the Sinhalese Buddhist majority consolidation has been complete. And from their perspective, they elected a militarist who was responsible for the clean-up of the Tamil movement and its fighters earlier and whom they believe can tackle terrorism as well as execute what's best for them.

At the same time in a revisionist throwback, they have entrusted their collective fate to the Rajapaksa clan. For with Gotabaya as President, he is sure to bring in brother Mahinda as Prime Minister (he has been President before but can still be PM) and as is their wont, the power structures are expected to be concentrated in a family that has been punishing to Tamils, worrying for India and benevolent to Chinese strategic interests and investment. Going by India's troubled relationship with Mahinda and the Tamil wipeout, there are stressors no doubt and apprehensions about Gotabaya. Apart from taking down Tamils, Mahinda aggressively sought to reduce dependence on India by aggressively pursuing the Chinese, accused New Delhi of intervening in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka by propping up his own protege Maithripala Sirisena against him and ensuring he lost the elections. Sirisena's SLFP and ally UNP, whose leader Ranil Wickremesinghe became Prime Minister, formed a coalition Government which was pro-India. The Indian establishment was also too overt rather than being covert about its interventions. So a hurt Mahinda never settled down, his party scoring in local elections till he forced a coup last October, subduing Sirisena, getting him to sack Wickremesinghe and becoming Prime Minister for 51 days. Gotabaya took charge of Defence and Security, kept the Tamil-majority areas under strict military vigil and put Indian diplomats under surveillance. It is this distrust that needs to be healed now for geo-strategic reasons if we don't want China to run far ahead.

Of course, India's latest diplomacy in the neighbourhood has factored in the pragmatism by smaller neighbours, who have successfully played on its anxieties with China and are negotiating the best of both worlds given the competitive muscle-flexing by two Asian majors. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka are all happily walking the trajectory of "trade ties" with China and "historical linkage" with India to buttonhole both nations into giving concessions. Gotabaya, too, has seized the PR advantage by calling India "our relative" soon after his win and holding his oath ceremony at Anuradhapura, the city born out of our historical linkages. The Modi Government has changed tack over the last year and is pushing proactive participation over historical assumptions in its Lanka policy. The Chinese are way ahead here and we cannot be immune to their growing footprints. They have a 99-year lease on the Hambantota port after Sri Lanka's failure to repay loans and are using it to enhance their military arc in the Indian Ocean region all the way to east Africa. The Chinese have even created an island off Colombo, a new financial hotspot and a key conduit to east Africa, besides securing hold of the island nation's infrastructure sector, hospitality and supply chains. And while we may be debating about the adoption of Huawei's 5G technology in the country, Sri Lanka has made it abundantly clear that it has no security fears about the new-generation mobile telephony technology. India has, therefore, to do a very tightrope act with Lanka if it wants to protect its strategic interests amid a Chinese swamp. That, too, without compromising too much on Tamil and minority interests. Economics is a good starting point. We need to work on investment and project partnerships, encourage soft diplomacy via people-to-people contacts and strengthen an institution like BIMSTEC to ensure a more multi-layered communication. Thankfully, Gotabaya has good personal equations in the power corridors of Delhi and will be amenable to negotiations. But for a win-win, India has to be a respected stakeholder, not appear like an exploitative neighbour.

Perilous for pedestrians

The number of walkers killed on India's roads has nearly doubled in four years. What can be done to reduce that?



According to statistics released by the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the number of pedestrians killed on India's roads climbed from 12,330 in 2014 to 22,656 in 2018 — an increase of 84 per cent in just four years. Many things can be extrapolated from these numbers. The first, of course, is the dramatic expansion in the country's road network. The other quite obviously is the total lack of pedestrian safety in the country. There are no pavements or sidewalks left beyond central Delhi and select other Government zones in other cities, which have not been occupied by hawkers and parked cars. There are a few crosswalks or an alternative method to cross major thoroughfares. The traffic police and transport authorities, in their desperation to make traffic flows smoother have also done little to chalk out a plan for pedestrians, who come last in their scheme of things.

However, blaming the authorities and the rash driving habits of Indian drivers is a valid criticism. While studying pedestrian deaths, there should be far more planning to ensure their safety, including in vehicle and road design. Pedestrians themselves should share a lot of the blame. Even when there are overpasses, underpasses and traffic lights to cross roads safely, they blithely ignore these and cross the roads in the face of oncoming traffic just sticking their hands out. With little or no understanding about how much faster vehicles have become, pedestrians often take their lives into their own hands. Crossing a road, even at a traffic light in one's favour while staring down at a phone, is downright dangerous. Driving down any of the new high-speed expressways, drivers will find pedestrians without a care in the world crossing the road while cars zoom by at speeds well over 100 km per hour. With such blatant disregard of road use and behaviour, no matter what is done, pedestrians will still die. And the number of deaths can easily be brought down. One method is to teach schoolchildren the basics of road safety, both as pedestrians and drivers. The other is to build proper methods for people to cross the roads and stop encroaching them. India's roads are horribly bloody as it is and far too many people die on our roads every single day. In any another country this would be a national emergency. In India, this is barely given a second thought. That needs to change urgently.

Drowning cacophony

It's unfortunate that while key players in the Ayodhya case are keen for closure, Asaduddin Owaisi has struck a discordant note by saying that Muslims don't need charity



A SURYA PRAKASH

The unanimous verdict of the Supreme Court in the Ram Janmabhoomi case, which has brought conclusion to a vexed issue that has disturbed communal harmony for early five centuries, as also the responsibility and Constitutional correctness displayed by Hindu and Muslim leaders in the aftermath of the judgment, will certainly make November 2019 a memorable month in the history of democratic India. That all of this is happening at a time when the nation gears itself up to celebrate the 70th anniversary of its Constitution this month, is indeed a happy coincidence and augurs well for our democracy.

The judgment has been well-received across the country in a spirit of harmony and universal brotherhood. In fact, while both sides were apprehensive before the verdict was delivered, they committed themselves to accepting the order, whatever the outcome. Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to the people to accept the apex court's verdict, irrespective of which way it went. Union Home Minister Amit Shah sent out a similar appeal and supervised the extensive preparatory work to ensure peace after the verdict. A day after the judgment, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval invited the top leaders of both communities for a discussion at his residence and secured their unflinching commitment to the maintenance of peace and communal harmony. All of them swore by the Constitution and said that the November 9 verdict of the apex court must lay the foundations for a new India built on harmony and universal brotherhood.

Though the one billion-strong Hindu community finally got the plot of land, which it so deeply reveres as the birthplace of Lord Ram, it conducted itself with utmost sensibility and level-headedness. Similarly, although the Muslims lost their case, they remained committed to the pre-judgment resolve that they would accept the outcome, whichever way it went.

There can be no doubt that this was the result of a close coordination between the Union Government and the leaders of the two communities in the weeks before the order. Can there be a better example of good governance in the most diverse nation in the world? In fact, India's response to the Ayodhya verdict should be a lesson in democracy for nations around the world.

The post-verdict scenario has left the doom-sayers — especially the international media and some of their cousins in our country — totally flummoxed.

The general acceptance of the verdict had a lot to do with the way the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court examined the issues before it and its reasoning *vis-a-vis* its verdict. For example, while the Hindus have been asserting that it is a matter of faith, the court made it clear that this was a dispute over immovable property and that it does not decide title on the basis of faith or belief but



on the basis of evidence. It said in deciding title to a disputed property, it applies principles of evidence.

After weighing the evidence, it held that "on the balance of probabilities, there is clear evidence to indicate that the worship by the Hindus in the outer courtyard continued unimpeded in spite of the setting up of a grill-brick wall in 1857. Their possession of the outer courtyard stands established together with the incidents attaching to their control over it." Further, the court held that in the inner courtyard, "there is evidence on the preponderance of probabilities to establish worship by the Hindus prior to the annexation of Oudh by the British in 1857."

These two conclusions of the court, coupled with the fact that the Muslims offered "no evidence" to indicate that they were in exclusive possession of the inner structure prior to 1857 since the date of the construction of the mosque in the 16th century, weighed heavily in determining the outcome of this litigation.

While holding that the suit filed on behalf of the deity was maintainable, the court directed that a trust be constituted for the construction of a temple and to deal with related issues and the allotment of an alternate land to the Muslims for the

construction of a mosque and associated activities.

Significantly, it observed that the allotment of the land to the Muslims was necessary because "though on a balance of probabilities, the evidence of the possessory claim of the Hindus to the composite whole of the disputed property stands on a better footing than the evidence adduced by the Muslims", the fact remained that the Muslims were dispossessed following desecration of the mosque in December 1949, and later because it was destroyed on December 6, 1992. In other words, the court noted that there was no abandonment of the mosque by the Muslims.

In view of these facts, the court said it would exercise its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to ensure that a wrong committed is remedied. It said, "Justice would not prevail if the court were to overlook the entitlement of the Muslims who have been deprived of the structure of the mosque through means which should not have been employed in a secular nation committed to the rule of law. The Constitution postulates the equality of all faiths. Tolerance and mutual co-existence nourish the secular commitment of our nation and its people."

Therefore, in order to provide restitution to the Muslim

community, the court used its powers under Article 142 and directed that they be granted five acres of land within the city of Ayodhya. This Article empowers the court to pass a decree or order "for doing complete justice" in any cause or matter pending before it. It can provide relief where there is "palpable injustice." In fact, the court has held in the past that it is advisable to leave the power undefined so that it has the elasticity to mould the relief.

This is a power that is used sparingly and is indicative of the court's desire to go the extra mile to ensure balance. While several key players in this litigation are keen to apply the closure, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has decided to file a review petition. This is a legitimate move because the court's procedure provides for it.

However, it is unfortunate to hear Asaduddin Owaisi, AIMIM chief and MP from Hyderabad say that the Muslims do not want this "charity" of five acres of land. Fortunately, such discordant notes in the post-judgment phase are far and few. That is why the symphony of democracy and constitutionalism across the country has completely drowned the attempts at cacophony by a few disrupters.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal.)

“ IN ORDER TO PROVIDE RESTITUTION TO THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, THE COURT USED ITS POWERS UNDER ARTICLE 142 AND DIRECTED THAT THEY BE GRANTED FIVE ACRES OF LAND WITHIN AYODHYA. THIS IS A POWER THAT IS USED SPARINGLY AND IS INDICATIVE OF THE COURT'S DESIRE TO GO THE EXTRA MILE TO ENSURE BALANCE ”

SOUNDBITE

Our patriotic Government will not allow anybody to encroach on even an inch of Nepal's territory. India should withdraw its forces from Kalapani area.



Nepal Prime Minister — KP Sharma Oli

There is no other actor in the history of world cinema who is as accomplished as Kamal. That's why he's *Utaga Nayagan* (Universal Hero).



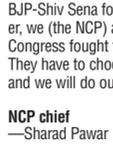
Actor — Rajinikanth

Improvements in the Indian health system have been significant. There are specific disease programmes and vaccine coverage has improved.



Microsoft co-founder — Bill Gates

BJP-Shiv Sena fought together, we (the NCP) and the Congress fought together. They have to choose their path and we will do our politics.



NCP chief — Sharad Pawar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Task cut out

Sir — Gotabaya Rajapaksa's presidential win was pretty convincing. As for Sajith Premadasa's defeat, it is no doubt painful for him as it would be for any presidential hopeful. But there may be some consolation for him with the fact that he can now forget about his election promises, which he would have been required to fulfil if had he been elected.

Gotabaya played his cards well. In times when Sri Lanka is faced with several problems, including the state of the economy, fears set off by the Easter Sunday bombings and not to forget the revulsion towards corruption, he refrained from taking on his opponents, especially Premadasa, and conducted himself in a business-like manner. This approach came as a breath of fresh air in the electoral politics that is generally vitiated by effrontery and name-calling. Thus, he must have endeared himself to the voters, who were fed up with the present state of affairs.

Finally, winning the executive presidency is one thing and living up to the expectations of

The quest for equality continues

The Supreme Court's decision to refer the review pleas made in the Sabarimala case to a larger seven-judge Bench elicited a mixed reaction. One is inevitably led to ask if the apex court lost its earlier conviction to look kindly on the review petitions and not dismiss them even in the face of no "apparent error" in its original historic judgment. Nevertheless, it was some solace that it did not reverse or stay its judgment allowing the entry of women of all ages into the Sabarimala temple.

Even though women in the 10-50 age group can still legally enter the temple, the prospect of them being allowed to have Ayyappa *darshan* looks bleak. Belligerent opponents of women's entry seem to be determined to put blockades to prevent women in the menstruating age from entering the temple "to preserve the sanctity" of the temple. Last time, frenzied attacks and "purification rituals" made headlines. It is not clear when the original ruling stands, why the State Government now deems it right to ask women to get Supreme Court's order for "protection." The Left Government seems to have developed cold feet for fear that it will have to face a political backlash from "true Ayyappa devotees."

The top court's decision to bracket women's entry



with other issues of gender inequality and refer it to a larger Bench "to consider all issues" pertaining to faith *vis-a-vis* women's rights and gender equality is certainly amenable to be interpreted as a dilution from its earlier position. Parsi and Muslim women, too, should be able to enter their places of worship; it is not clear why the present case should be mixed up with the denial of rights to those women.

G David Milton Maruthancode

Politics of convenience

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Three men in a boat" (November 18). The editorial lucidly lays bare the dire exist-

tial needs of the three parties — Shiv Sena, Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) — who have come together to forge a strange, new alliance.

Anybody will agree with the fact that between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Shiv Sena, it was the latter which had shown a greater and stronger commitment to the concept of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism.

Meanwhile, the Congress had always been critical of the Sena's ideology, dubbing it as "extremist", "fascist" and "chauvinist." The Shiv Sena on its part treated the grand old party as its most serious opponent. Yet, both parties have instantly shed every inhibition, resentment, repugnance and ideologies to form a Government.

Such forsaking of whatever they stood for to share power and pelf is business as usual for political parties. But the least one expects is that they do not loftily pretend that it is all *pro bono publico* (for public good). This will be tantamount to "hypocrisy."

NS Rajan Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Equal education, equal chances

Stakeholders really need to understand the essence of the National Education Policy, 2019 and the challenges connected with it



MADHURI DHARIWAL

“We are our choices,” said Jean-Paul Sartre, the French philosopher, political activist and literary critic. Most people don’t realise how big a privilege it is to have the freedom of choice. I teach students ranging from five to 26 years, none of whom got to choose whether to work or study in a regular school. Eight-year-old Preiti is always hungry and 17-year-old Vijay seeks to escape a drunken father’s beatings, while fending for his siblings. Both were at a standard one learning level. However, I also had students who were receiving quality education, free of cost and guaranteed until class VIII and this was possible due to the Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, is the legislation which provides free schooling to kids aged 6-14 years. A section of the Act, linked to the aspect of school “choice”, is Section 12(1)(c), which made it mandatory for all private, unaided, non-minority schools to reserve 25 per cent seats for children from a socially and/or economically disadvantaged background. This gives parents an opportunity to apply to schools they had hitherto lacked access to. The spirit of the Act, was to foster an environment of social inclusion, along with developing empathy for marginalised communities. However, there were many challenges, including clarity on the letter of the policy that had to be addressed first. Across the country, over 20 lakh seats must be reserved per year in private schools, according to the provision of the Act and there have been over 41 lakh admissions until 2018. The Draft National Education Policy (NEP), 2019, presents certain recommendations and challenges with respect to Section 12(1)(c). The recommendations are mainly centred around uniform technology usage for transparency and accountability; funding to be received on time; correct reporting of numbers; no discrimination in schools and extra support to students falling behind. An NGO working in this space, has come up with a Sustainability Benchmark, based on its experience of operations over the last six years. If implemented, it would address the recommendations/challenges mentioned in the NEP Draft, 2019 as well. States can be classified into three categories, based on their implementation standards — Mature, Maturing, and Nascent. This is not an attempt to rank States in an order, rather, a self-evaluation for them, to seek areas of improvement. Another motive of the benchmark is to highlight the bright spots in implementation in States that are doing well, in different aspects of the policy. The current scenario in the country and criticism around this policy is linked to multiple factors: A competition between Government and private schools; perceived discriminatory behaviour in private schools; low self-confidence among children enrolling through RTE due to the vast socio-economic differences; schools wrongfully claiming minority status to avoid 12(1)(c) admissions and delays in private schools receiving reimbursements, among others. However, there are many studies that highlight factors such as high self-efficacy in girls, more pro-social, generous and egalitarian behaviour in “richer” students with “poorer” classmates and also, how a lack of integrated classrooms will lead to a further segregated society. There needs to be a better system of monitoring and regulation of private schools, as there are concerns being raised about their quality. This is linked to parents making less-informed choices while selecting schools. However, a Bright Spots Report, 2019, based on its survey, shows that the top five factors affecting school choice are proximity to home; quality; transportation provision; board of education; results — in that order, thus showing that school quality is an important factor in parents’ choice.

Another current issue raging in the country, with respect to 12(1)(c) is the judgment by the Karnataka High Court in May, which accepted the petition, to read down the provision, thereby making admissions in private schools conditional upon the non-existence of Government or Government-aided schools in the neighborhood (i.e. Government schools be filled before parents can choose to send their wards to private ones). With over 6.5 lakh children studying under the provision in the State in 2018-19 and having received around 88 per cent of its reimbursement for the same year, as claimed from the Centre, it is a massive setback to the State and by extension to the nation, to see a State like Karnataka reduce the number of 12(1)(c) seats from 1.52 lakh to about 17,000 per year. The judgment was challenged in the Supreme Court (SC), through a Special Leave Petition. The SC has issued a notice to the Karnataka Government to reply and the verdict is pending. With the current version of the NEP 2019, which was released at the end of October, the stance on 12(1)(c) is lacking clarity. There are no details on implementation of the policy and hopefully the Winter Session of the Parliament will provide more lucidity. Stakeholders really need to understand the essence of the policy and the challenges connected with it, by engaging in constructive dialogue about the practical implications of the policy and how it affects lives and giving fact-based rationale for the same. It is for stakeholders to think about the choices they are making, as it impacts the right to choose, for millions of children in our country.

(The writer is Lead-Operation at a social organisation working on the implementation of the RTE Act.)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

KEJRIWAL IS GIVING POISON TO DELHIITES IN THE NAME OF FREE WATER. DELHI WATER WAS FOUND TO BE THE MOST POISONOUS IN A SURVEY OF 20 CITIES.

—UNION HEALTH MINISTER
HARSH VARDHAN



SIR, YOU ARE A DOCTOR. YOU KNOW THIS REPORT IS FALSE AND POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. A PERSON LIKE YOU SHOULD NOT BECOME A PART OF DIRTY POLITICS.

—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
ARVIND KEJRIWAL

Hello minister! Can you hear me?

One parameter in India’s Ease of Doing Business that requires improvement is dispute resolution, particularly in the crippled telecom industry



BINDU DALMIA

When the big boys of India Inc. are pushed to the wall in a market slugfest of the kind that’s playing out in the telecom sector since three years, it’s an area angels fear to tread. And, only a collective call by the Government comprising a cross-section of stakeholders from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the high-powered Committee of Secretaries (CoS) has the power to intervene in a timely and judicious way. Because it is already a case of “too little, too late” to salvage the near-collapse of an erstwhile profitable sector, now laden with debt of over ₹7 lakh crore.

Telecom as a sector is “too big to (let) fail”, a theory that asserted when certain behemoths that comprise a sector “are so large and interconnected, their failure would be disastrous to the greater economic system and that they therefore must be supported by the Government when faced with potential failure”.

With increasing teledensity and internet penetration, telecom services are today consumer essentials, much like FMCG or pharma goods, and are consumed by every section of society. And like power, telecom and internet are deemed essential utilities and the vehicles forwarding the digital revolution.

India is currently the world’s second-largest telecommunications market with a subscriber base of 1.20 billion and is amongst the top five employment generators in the country. Which is why there is cause for alarm with the second quarter losses posted by listed telecom companies after the October Supreme Court (SC) order crossing unsustainable levels of ₹1 lakh crore in debt, with Vodafone-Idea, RComm, Airtel and TATA Tele being the worst-hit in a descending order.

One shares the Prime Minister’s optimism to aim for a \$5 trillion economy, as much as one lauds the Finance Minister’s interactive-resolution modus, which is a refreshing departure from her predecessors in not procrastinating decision-making till the annual Budget to address the industry’s pain points. And pain points abound, from the beleaguered banking, automobile, realty, power and aviation sectors, with the latest crisis in telecom having overtaken all others.

While India’s improved ranking in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business index (EODB) is an outcome of the Modi regime’s commitment to reforms, one parameter in the EODB that requires improvement is dispute resolution, particularly in the crippled telecom industry. Resolution and relief are very much within the Centre’s discretion, as they are the winners in this case and need to make concessions in the overall interests of the sector. Regulatory uncertainties in the distressed sector are casting negative ripple effects on the already subdued business sentiments within the country. While Indian business has been reluctant to commit to fresh capital expenditure (CapEx) investments, we can ill-afford a negative perception amongst foreign direct investors. The National Digital Communications Policy 2018 envisaged attracting investments worth \$100 billion in the telecommunications sector by 2022, which is only possible in an enabling environment, where time is spent on growth instead of fighting fires. Given that the beneficiaries of the trade diversion from the US-China trade wars have been Vietnam and

“WHILE NO COUNTRY HAS STRUCK THE PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN REGULATION AND FREE ENTERPRISE, IT IS IMPERATIVE TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE, AS ALL INTERLINKAGES IN THE MODERN SUPPLY CHAIN GET AFFECTED AND RISKS THAT BESET ONE SECTOR CASCADE THROUGH THE REST OF THE ECONOMY. AND IF UNRESOLVED, THE DISRUPTIONS COULD EXTEND FOR YEARS, DESTROYING VALUE FOR ALL INVOLVED”



Taiwan in preference to India, for the country to make a global impact, we need a more facilitatory approach so that multinational corporations (MNCs) view it as a potential centre for making profits.

To attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), “India needs to salvage even the recent entrants like Flipkarts from making losses that are giving nightmares to Walmart, the Paytms to Alibaba and the Vodafone giving nightmares to its UK parent”.

Vodafone is the largest foreign direct investor in the country and its year-old joint venture with Idea Cellular is the worst hit, with net losses at ₹50,922 crore. This is unfairly the second setback for Vodafone after the UPA-2 had amended its tax laws with retrospective effect with claims of \$2 billion in taxes. The entire sector is today at risk of lowered credit ratings, jeopardising the asset quality of banks that have an exposure of ₹1 lakh crore. This will further deepen the existing Non-Performing Assets (NPA) crisis, as borrowers become unable to service debt due to contingent liabilities.

The distress in telecom is largely attributed to Reliance Jio’s entry three years ago that disrupted the economics of the sector. Jio’s hyper-competitive pricing triggered massive consumer attrition, giving it a vantage particularly in rural areas and eroding average revenue per user and user-counts of competitors. The problems of the industry have been compounded by the SC judgment that favoured the Government in the dispute between DoT and telcos. The Government’s demand to include non-core items while computing Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) has had a crippling effect on 15 telcos asked to shell out a staggering ₹1.3 lakh crore.

Let’s remember that “the Supreme Court is fair, but not infallible”.

Besides, the Indian telecom market which is the second-largest in the world in terms of data consumption, is too large to be held hostage by either erstwhile cartels, or the likely emergence of a duopolistic scenario, or the eventualty of allowing single-player dominance. Which is where we are headed if the Government fails to salvage existential issues facing two out of the three private players, Vodafone-Idea and Bharti Airtel.

Ideally, the Government aims at three non-State players, plus one public sector telco in the market, because India needs multiple carriers to ride the digital revolution forward. That the Government is not in favour of a monopoly is a decision in the right direction. But to avert monopolistic conditions, or even a duopoly, intent must be followed through by supportive action.

So what are the relief measures sought by the industry? They hope for positive recommendations from the CoS committee to restore the health of the sector by the regulator setting minimum floor tariffs for mobile calls and data; a moratorium on spectrum payments/a longer tenure to pay up spectrum liabilities through staggered payments; a waiver on interest and penalties on the AGR-related dues; lowering of taxes and levies; freeing up of ₹7,000 crore of blocked Goods and Services Tax (GST) input credits; a favourable review of the SC ruling, failing which they plan a curative petition before a five-judge Bench that may deliver a better judgment than the one on October 24, and lastly that TRAI restore its credibility by playing neutral.

Empirical evidence in economic

history points to signs of distress showing up much before a cancer turns full blown and incurable. Even the global economic crisis of 2008 was preceded by symptoms like bubbles in asset value of stocks and real estate. Nations, sectors or corporates don’t collapse overnight but show symptoms of malaise much ahead of an impending crisis.

Governments play an important role in gauging the declining health of sectors ahead of time by assessing risks, whether they are caused due to corporate misgovernance, faulty policies, or bought on by cyclical market conditions, or a slowdown caused by de-globalisation. A case in point is the timely intervention by the Union Minister for Commerce when he recently chided e-commerce companies indulging in predatory pricing which adversely impacted small retailers, a regulatory role TRAI should have played three years ago by setting a floor price. Because predatory pricing is as damaging as surge-pricing.

India’s private sector players are capable of delivering quantum “Winning Leap solutions” if regulators, courts and Government policies make it easy to do business. While no country has struck the perfect balance between regulation and free enterprise, it is imperative to find a way out of the impasse, as all interlinkages in the modern industrial supply chain get affected and risks that beset one sector cascade through the rest of the economy. And if unresolved, the disruptions could extend for years, destroying value for all involved.

(The writer is an author, columnist, Chairperson for the National Committee of Financial Inclusion at Niti Aayog and member of RSS Ladies Intellectual cell.)

Big ticket privatisation move welcome

With a Government that is looking at the sale of PSU assets including under-utilised plants and land, it makes sense to look at rapid denationalisation, thereby creating a vibrant space for the private sector



KARAN BHASIN

The Finance Minister has indicated that BPCL (Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited) and Air India are likely to be privatised by March 2020. This is an extremely significant development as India hasn’t seen big ticket privatisation since the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government between 1999-2004. Although, there were attempts to privatise Air India in the previous tenure of the Narendra Modi Government, however, the terms didn’t generate adequate interest. Things have changed since then and we’ve seen many investors express interest in acquiring Air India. Privatisation of Air India is not just

about freeing critical taxpayer resources that are deployed to keep the debt-ridden airline alive but it is more about a signal to the world, that the Indian Government is finally back on track to gradually move out from businesses. This implies a greater role for the private sector in the Indian economy — a welcome sign for the rest of the world that is looking at India as the next driver of global growth.

The fact that we’re looking at privatisation should not come as a surprise given that Modi himself mentioned how the Government has no business to be in business. Therefore, a mandate of 303 gives him the necessary political capital to denationalise many of our public sector assets. The sale of BPCL is perhaps more significant as unlike other Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), it is not exactly a loss-making enterprise funded by taxpayer largesse.

However, its operations in an oligopolistic setting and yet is one of the

least-efficient companies in the sector. Therefore, clearly, the new rule for privatisation is not just about getting rid of loss-making PSUs but instead, getting rid of any inefficient unit that can be better operationalised in the hands of the private sector.

This renewed approach towards privatisation is indeed required in order to transform the Indian economy and therefore, while political opposition may persist to the move, the potential benefits from such a move will overshadow any such resistance. It is important to recognise that a major share of wealth created in India happened post-1991 reforms where the Indian Government removed the policy of licensing.

In fact, ever since such requirements began to be muted in the 1980s, we see a sharp increase in India’s growth rates. All of this reveals an undeniable fact that India’s growth has accelerated ever since we embraced private capital. Therefore,

getting rid of these companies will result in an overall value creation, not just for these firms but also for the rest of the economy.

The biggest advantage of privatisation over disinvestment is that it facilitates the change in management of these PSUs. A major reason why the PSUs are not as efficient as the private sector is their management and the lack of an incentive structure that focuses on economic efficiency and generation of private profits.

Therefore, while disinvestments would result in non-tax revenues for the Government, the management remains largely the same. Therefore, there are limited implications for broader wealth creation for these companies through disinvestment.

The timing of privatisation is also critical as it comes at a juncture when our growth has slowed down. Therefore, privatisation will have two positive implications for the economy. First, it will revive the sentiment and since economics is about

self-fulfilling prophecies, a positive sentiment is critical towards accelerating the process of growth recovery. The second aspect is more transactional as it is to do with public finances.

During an economic slowdown, a Government’s tax revenues don’t grow as per expectation. We see some of this in the current financial year as there’s a major revenue shortfall which is likely to affect the financials of the Government. The other aspect is that since deficit is reported as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), slow growth will amplify the amount of deficit during slow growth years.

However, privatisation can bridge the deficit through non-tax revenues and its positive impact on sentiment will also have a muted, yet important second order effect on growth rates.

However, just as the Government is looking to privatise Air India and BPCL, it is also looking to revive BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam

Limited) and MTNL (Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited). The plan to introduce a voluntary retirement scheme and to merge these two enterprises is good. However, it will succeed only if we scale down their operations significantly.

That is, the Government should downsize the merged entity and retain only the strategic operations of the company while the rest of it and its assets can be sold off to private players.

With a Government that is looking at the sale of PSU assets including under-utilised plants and land, it makes sense to look at rapid privatisation, thereby creating a vibrant space for the private sector.

The exit of the Government from production will free up critical resources that it can then devote to enhancing State capacity and provisioning of the public goods and services.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based public policy researcher)



FOREIGN EYE



POLITICIANS MUST WAKE UP TO CRISIS

Germany’s economic pre-eminence means that its response carries a special weight within Europe. It has narrowly avoided going into recession. Its economy remains strong but the boom has ended and German politics will have to respond with more expansionary strategies. Stability has long been the dogma in Berlin, but 60 years after the legacy of Marx and Engels was discreetly put to one side by the SPD, revisionism is in the air again.

(The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



NSE facilitates primary subscription for retail investors in SDLs

NEW DELHI: Leading bourse NSE on Monday said it has introduced facilitation of subscription in State Development Loans (SDLs) through its e-Gsec platform that will enable retail participation in securities issued by state governments. The e-Gsec platform was launched by the National Stock Exchange (NSE) in April last year, to allow retail investors to invest in government securities and hold them in existing demat accounts. SDLs are dated securities issued by state governments through normal auctions similar to the auctions conducted for dated securities issued by the central government. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducts auctions for such securities on a weekly basis where 10 per cent of the notified amount is allotted for eligible investors under the scheme for non-competitive bidding (NCB).



TRAI to finalise views on call connect charges by Nov-end

NEW DELHI: The telecom regulator expects to finalise its views on the contentious call connect charges issue by the end of this month, a top TRAI official said on Monday. Last week, TRAI conducted an open house discussion with industry representatives and other stakeholders on whether there is a need to postpone the applicable date for scrapping the call connect charges also called Interconnection Usage Charges (IUC) beyond January 1, 2020. A senior TRAI official, who did not wish to be named, said the regulator is hopeful of firming up its views by November-end but did not divulge further details.



USFDA pulls up Mylan for violations at Andhra plant

NEW DELHI: American health regulator USFDA has pulled up Mylan Laboratories for violation of good manufacturing norms, including lapses in handling raw materials and issues related with cleaning of equipment, at its Andhra Pradesh-based manufacturing facility. In a warning letter issued to the company's CEO Heather Bresch, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) said inspectors during May 27 to June 5, this year found significant deviations from standard manufacturing practices at the company's Unit 8 in G Chodavaram village in Vizianagaram.

NO 5 PC SLUMP

'India still fastest-growing economy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is not facing 5 per cent economic slowdown and continues to be the fastest growing economy in the world, Union Minister Anurag Thakur said in Lok Sabha on Monday.

During Question Hour, Thakur also said that a number of steps are being taken by the government to strengthen the economy that includes merger of banks and tax concessions to industries.

"There is no 5 per cent slump. Where did you get the figure. Show us," he countered when Aam Aadmi Party MP Bhagwant Mann said the country is facing slump in the economy.

The Union minister of state for finance said India continues to be the fastest growing economy in the world even though many countries in the world are facing economic slowdown.



"By 2025, India will be a five trillion dollars economy," he said.

Highlighting series of steps taken by the government to strengthen the economy, Thakur said tax concessions have been given to industries, foreign direct investments and

MSME sector.

The minister said several banks have been merged with bigger banks and ultimate aim of the government is to keep four strong banks with solid footing and ensure increased economic activities.

He said strong actions have

Yet India, despite some recent deceleration of GDP growth, is still projected by WEO to grow at the fastest rate in 2019-20 among G-20 countries

—ANURAG THAKUR, Union Minister

been taken against blackmoney and number of tax payers has been doubled due to demonetisation and implementation of the GST regime.

Thakur said as per the National Statistical Office (NSO), the GDP growth on average was 7.5 per cent in 2014-19, which is the highest amongst G-20 countries.

He said the World Economic Outlook (WEO) of October 2019, projects a significant slowdown in world output and trade in 2019.

"Yet India, despite some recent deceleration of GDP growth, is still projected by WEO to grow at the fastest rate

in 2019-20 among G-20 countries," he said.

The minister said the government has been taking several measures to address moderate levels of fixed investment rate in the economy, plateauing of private consumption rate and a modest export performance, with a view to increasing the GDP growth of the country.

Thakur said in the last five years, the government implemented major reforms to build the investment climate in the country for becoming a US 5 trillion-dollar economy.

He said introduction of Insolvency and Bankruptcy

Code (IBC) in 2016 is a significant step towards cleaning and strengthening of the financial system of the country.

Implementation of Goods and Services Tax in 2017 stands out as the most important measure for improving ease of doing business in the country and Make-in-India programme is a major initiative towards increasing the indigenous capacity of the country to produce world class goods and services, he said. Thakur said continuous liberalisation has resulted in record and unprecedented inflows of foreign direct investment into the country and all along the government has kept inflation low, fiscal spending disciplined and current account deficit manageable to ensure macroeconomic stability to sustain a healthy investment climate in the country.



Gold prices fall Rs 85 on weak global trend

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold fell by Rs 85 to Rs 38,775 per 10 gram on Monday, tracking weak international prices, according to HDFC Securities.

On Saturday, the yellow metal had closed at Rs 38,860 per 10 gram.

"Spot gold prices for 24 Karat in Delhi were trading lower by Rs 85 on strangled spot demand and weak international prices.

The weakness in rupee, which fell around 7 paise against the dollar during the day, limited the down side in gold prices," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said.

Silver prices also tumbled by Rs 290 to Rs 45,250 per kg from Rs 45,540 per kg.

In the international market, gold prices were trading lower at USD 1,464 an ounce, while silver was quoting at USD 16.88 per ounce.

International spot gold prices remained in the trading range below USD 1,470 an ounce as round of positive comments on the US-China trade deal cheered investor sentiments, he added.

'IOC, GAIL to pay Adani 5% more charge than public LNG terminal'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC) and GAIL India will pay Adani Group 5 per cent more in hiring charges for using the private firm's upcoming LNG import facility at Dhamra in Odisha than their own similar terminal, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday.

India's largest oil firm IOC, which recently commissioned a 5 million tonne liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal at Ennore in Tamil Nadu, as well as gas utility GAIL have "both technical and financial capability to develop their own LNG terminal," he told the Lok Sabha.

The two firms have, however, hired capacity in Adani's under-construction LNG import terminal at Dhamra.

IOC had in 2015 signed to use up to 60 per cent of the terminal's capacity for importing gas for its refineries at Haldia in West Bengal and Paradip in Odisha. GAIL too had signed up for 1.5 million tonne of the terminal's regasification capacity.

"GAIL and IOC have agreed to pay the tolling charge of Rs 60.18 per million British thermal unit for the regasification facility at Dhamra LNG terminal with annual escalations in line with their respective



contractual provisions," he said in a written reply to a question.

This charge compares to Rs 57.38 per mmbtu regasification charges for Ennore LNG terminal, he said.

GAIL's own Dhabhol LNG terminal in Maharashtra levies Rs 49.28 per mmbtu regasification charge.

In addition, there are other charges such as terminal charges, vessel-related charges and port charges for utilization of the Dabhol LNG terminal.

"The regasification charges for Ennore and Dhamra terminals are inclusive of terminal charges, vessel-related charges, port charges, and any

IOC had in 2015 signed to use up to 60% of the terminal's capacity for importing gas for its refineries at Haldia in West Bengal and Paradip in Odisha. GAIL too had signed up for 1.5 million tonne of the terminal's regasification capacity

other port-related charges," Pradhan said.

Originally, IOC and GAIL had on September 21, 2016, signed a 'non-binding' agreement to buy 50 per cent stake in Adani Group's Rs 5,500-crore Dhamra LNG project in Odisha. But that agreement expired on September 20, 2018, without being translated into a firm pact apparently because of differences over valuation.

"It has been informed that the regasification charge for Dhamra terminal is Rs 60.18 per mmbtu for the first contract year (year of commissioning) which is likely to be in FY 2021-22," Pradhan said.

"GAIL has executed a Tolling Agreement in line with its procedures to meet the supply commitments of customers located in the eastern

Worldwide public cloud revenue to grow 17% in 2020

PNS ■ BENGALURU



The worldwide public cloud services market is forecast to grow 17 per cent in 2020 to total USD 266.4 bn, up from USD 227.8 bn in the previous calendar year, according to Gartner, Inc. "At this point, cloud adoption is mainstream," Sid Nag, research vice-president at Gartner, said in a statement.

"The expectations of the

outcomes associated with cloud investments therefore are also higher. Adoption of next-generation solutions are almost always 'cloud-enhanced' solutions, meaning they build on the strengths of a cloud platform to deliver digital business capabilities," he said.

Tata Motors ties up with Lithium Urban

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Monday said it has inked a pact with commercial EV fleet provider Lithium Urban Technologies to address mobility solutions across passenger, mass transit and freight segments.

As part of the agreement, the auto major will supply 400 Tigor EV units to Lithium Urban by the end of the current fiscal, Tata Motors said in a statement. The partnership also entails supply of 100 more electric vehicles, like the upcoming Nexon EV, from the company's stable, it added.



BSE, ICCL complete trading from Disaster Recovery site

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leading stock exchange BSE and its clearing corporation ICCL on Monday said they have successfully completed trading and all their related operations from Disaster Recovery (DR) site for entire one week, starting from November 11 for all its segments.

The recently implemented interoperability functions were conducted from DR for the first time. All the operations across all market segments were also performed from DR site without any hiccups, the BSE said in a statement.

A disaster recovery site is a real time replication of the primary site and ensures that all data is available at disaster recovery site with near zero time lag. This enables the BSE to switch over to disaster recovery site at any time during

the day, in case of any eventualities.

"BSE and ICCL (Indian Clearing Corporation Ltd) successfully completed trading and all-related operations from its state-of-the-art DR site for entire one week, starting from November 11 to November 15, 2019 for all its segments," the exchange added.

The exchange said the switchover to DR and coming back to PR (primary site) have also been a very seamless affair with no impact to any of its market participants including members, clearing banks and depositories.

The live trading from DR was to simulate a city-wide disaster, in which the main site would not be available. Since 2014 onwards, the BSE has conducted live trading on two consecutive days from its DR site, twice a year.

Telecom's linkage to other sectors will emerge stronger with 5G: DoT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom is a "critical" sector with direct impact on economic growth, employment and other crucial domains like healthcare and agriculture, and the advent of 5G will strengthen this connect, DoT Secretary Anshu Prakash said on Monday.

Addressing the ASEAN-TRAI program on 'capacity building and sharing of best practices in policy regulation and development', Prakash said the sector is also playing a major role in empowering citizens, contributing to better governance and enhancing transparency.



"Telecom is critical, it is a core infrastructure sector with direct impact on economic growth, on employment and on other sectors because other sectors ride on telecom.

Grant 3-year moratorium for telecom companies: COAI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government should grant telecom companies a three-year moratorium followed by an extended timeline for payment of all statutory dues at easier interest rates, as the telecom sector is reeling under massive losses after the Supreme Court ruling on AGR liabilities, COAI said on Monday.

Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) Director General Rajan Mathews told PTI that operators need "oxygen" and urged the government to take a call on debt restructuring of all the dues that telecom operators

"It is also time to redefine AGR (adjusted gross revenue) prospectively," Mathews said



owe to the government.

Mathews said most 4G licences have 11-year validity left, and that the government

could pack in another 10 years, thus allowing operators to pay back all the outstanding dues spread over the entire licence period.

"It is also time to redefine AGR (adjusted gross revenue) prospectively," Mathews said.

The telecom industry has been haemorrhaging, with combined losses of listed mobile network firms surpassing Rs 1 lakh crore in the September-ended quarter.

'Govt mulling tech development board'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka government would contemplate the setting up of a Karnataka Technology Development Board to promote information technology and knowledge economy, said state Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday. The proposed board would be responsible for investment promotion, industry development and manpower development of the broad technology sector, and shall aim to strengthen the

state's position as one of the world's leading hubs in the high technology arena, he said.

Speaking after inaugurating the three-day Bengaluru Tech Summit 2019, he said the state has topped the first-ever innovation ranking rates by Niti Aayog.

He said that during an interaction with the industry leaders after becoming Chief Minister, he had promised them a legal framework for promoting innovation through a statute, which he fulfilled by setting up the Karnataka Innovation Authority through legislation.



Asian markets mixed as dealers eye trade talks, HK rallies

AFF ■ HONG KONG

Asian markets were mixed Monday on broad optimism that China and the United States are close to a mini trade deal, while Hong Kong rallied after last week's hefty losses but investors remain on edge over violent protests that have wracked the city.

US traders sent the Dow above 28,000 for the first time on Friday after top White House officials played up the progress of negotiations with Beijing.

Donald Trump's economic adviser Larry Kudlow said the first part of a wider pact was on track, while Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said that there'll be a deal "in all likelihood".

Then on Saturday, China said Vice Premier Liu He had spoken to US Trade



Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, and had "constructive discussion on each side's core concerns regarding the phase-one agreement".

It added that the two sides

will "continue to maintain close communication".

The comments provided a much-needed fillip after differences over whether, when and by how much to reduce tariffs on each other's goods spilled out into the open.

The comments provided a much-needed fillip after differences over whether, when and by how much to reduce tariffs on each other's goods spilled out into the open

Trump this month denied the Chinese commerce ministry's claim that the two sides had agreed to roll back existing tariffs as part of the deal, details of which have not been released.

Shanghai rose 0.6 per cent and Tokyo ended 0.5 per cent higher, while Taipei added 0.6 per cent and Bangkok put on 0.1 per cent.

"Renewed optimism about US-China trade negotiations seems to have been the main initial driver of improved risk sentiment," said Patrik

Schowitz at JP Morgan Asset Management.

"In the current round of talks, more than in previous rounds, we see momentum toward reaching at least a limited trade deal, and certainly a mini-deal would remove some of the negative sentiment overhang for the real economy and markets."

However, AxiTrader's Stephen Innes said investors were beginning to see a bottoming-out of the global slowdown.

"Much of this view is depen-

dent on a phase-one deal with China getting signed, auto tariffs put aside, and (as) hard Brexit risks subside," he said.

"Yet should an agreement not be reached and tariffs are raised further, it's conceivable the global economy will continue to slide, very possibly into a recession in the quarters ahead." Hong Kong climbed more than one per cent, having lost almost five per cent last week, with traders keeping tabs on events after another weekend of street clashes but with the city's transport network avoiding the disruption that characterised last week.

Still, the situation remains on a knife-edge with demonstrators holed up in a university campus, trying to repel police with petrol bombs and bricks and officers warning they may use live rounds if confronted by deadly weapons.

“The Deccan Cliffhanger, which starts from Bavdhan, is a visual treat for cyclists and tourists alike, as it goes through the picturesque Tawandi ghats, Dandeli forest, Belgaum, Karwar and finally ends up on the shores of Bogmalo beach

Cyclist P.V.R. Sasikanth, an endurance athlete, will be the first from the city to participate in Race Across America, finds V SATEESH REDDY

CITY CYCLIST TO RACE ACROSS AMERICA

Cyclist from the city, P.V.R. Sasikanth, has recently earned the distinction of being the first one from Hyderabad to get qualified for the Race Across America (RAAM) - an international cycling event. Finishing the Deccan Cliffhanger cycling race — a 646-km race from Pune to Goa that was held this month — within 30 hours in the solo category was his entry into RAAM.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Sasikanth says, “The seventh edition of the Deccan Cliffhanger race began at The Cliff, Forest Trails at Bhugaon in Pune and ended in Bogmalo Beach in Goa. Nearly 40 racers from across the country took part in the event. We had to finish the race within 32 hours but I completed it in 30 hours to finish fifth. This qualified me to participate in the RAAM. Till date, only three people managed to complete the RAAM race from India.

Now, I’m training under Srinivas Gokulnath — India’s first RAAM finisher in 2017. The RAAM race starts from the West coast to the East coast of America that has to be completed in 12 days. “The Deccan Cliffhanger, which starts from Bavdhan, is a visual treat for cyclists and tourists alike, as it goes through the picturesque Tawandi ghats, Dandeli forest, Belgaum, Karwar and finally ends up on the shores of Bogmalo beach.”

“Ever since I came to know about the RAAM through the Hyderabad Bicycling Club (HBC), four years ago, I dreamt of participating in it. I was informed that I have to finish Deccan Cliffhanger to qualify for the RAAM. So, with the help of my team I practised a lot and finally managed to qualify for it. I hope I will give my best in the RAAM too,” says Sasikanth.

For more than 35 years, Race Across America (RAAM) has been challenging ultra-cyclists from

around the globe to push their physical and mental limits to the farthest reaches. Starting in Oceanside, under one of the longest piers in California, the RAAM spans 3,000 miles, climbs 1,75,000 feet, crosses 12 states and finishes in Annapolis, Maryland, the east coast sailing mecca.

In the Deccan Cliffhanger race, every racer is backed by his/her team members for support on various levels. Sasi’s team included Krishna Kunam, Vignan, H.S. Ahamad, Hemanth Chandan and Rajeev Kalva. During the race, the team trailed Sasikanth in a vehicle with food and water to make sure he gets his required nutrition, electrolytes and water.

Speaking about the infrastructure in the city for cyclists, Sasikanth says there are no particular cycle tracks inside the city due to which most of the cycling events are held on the outskirts. “Even the roads inside the city are too small to cycle properly.



The HBC is striving to set up tracks around the ORR and we have requested state minister K.T. Rama Rao to facilitate this idea. The HBC regularly conducts 5k, 10k and 25k cycling events on special days like Independence Day, Gandhi Jayanthi and more, to inspire people to take up cycling. During the events, we also explained the benefits of cycling

daily.” “I want to encourage people to use cycles for commuting as this not only improves health but also reduces pollution. Along with the HBC, I give my support to new cyclists by motivating them through the right techniques. I am confident I will complete the RAAM race that will start on June 16, 2020,” he concludes.

A MUSICAL TRIBUTE that lifted spirits

Music lovers had their day out with the splendid vocal and flute recitals that commemorated the legend in classical vocal, Pandit Jasraj, reports V SATEESH REDDY



filled the Gandhi Centenary hall at the Exhibition Grounds in Nampally and swayed the audience off their feet. They were accompanied by Sateesh on the mridangam, Ojas Adhia on tabla and Vyas Murthy Katti on harmonium.

Pandit Jasraj, who belongs to the Mewati Gharana — a musical apprenticeship tribe of Hindustani classical music — and has a musical career that spans eight decades. Jasraj received awards on various platforms for his excellence in classical music and many of his classical and semi-classical vocals have become albums and soundtracks for films.

The musical event, organised by the Economic Committee of Exhibition Society of Surmandal, ICCR, and the Rithwik Foundation, begin with Jayateerth

Mevundi performing the raga Gorakh Kalyan. Jayateerth, known for his Kirana Gharana (singing style) displayed his musical prowess that was received with a standing ovation from the audience. From the beginning to the end, the well-known Hindustani vocalist captivated everyone with his amazing control over his vocals.

Shashank Subramanyam, followed Jayateerth’s vocal performance, with his splendid flute recital. Shashank is a Grammy-nominated exponent of the bamboo flute. The raga he played, much to the audience delight, was Nasika Bhushani which is a mix of 72 melakartas. He enthralled listeners by showing his command over the flute.

“I am very happy to perform at this programme. In

Carnatic tradition, the flute is always given higher priority and hence my devotion equals its importance. As it is my solo performance, I played the Nasika Bhushani,” said Shashank.

The icing of the cake that came later, and that left the audience completely mesmerised, was when the duo jointly performed ragas like *Puriya Dhanashree*, *Bho Shambho Shiva Shambho Svayambho* — a bhajan on Lord Shiva — and *Krishna Nee Begane Baaro* which is a Kannada bhajan.

Surmandal founder, Mohan Hemmadi, said, “This is our Golden Jubilee year in music. We organised a musical evening here in Exhibition Grounds a couple of months ago and we are happy to perform here again. This event is a tribute to the living legend, Pandit Jasraj.”



Jhund lands Amitabh, Manjul in legal trouble

Filmmakers are always vary of copyright issues especially when it comes to big budget films that involves A-listers. Now, Hindi-film *Jhund*, directed by Nagaraj Manjul and starring Amitabh Bachchan, has run into a similar controversy. Hyderabad-based Telugu short-filmmaker Nandi Chinni Kumar, has sent legal notices to the makers of the movie and its lead actor, over alleged copyright infringement.

According to Kumar, he wanted to make a biopic titled *Slum Soccer* on Paul, a slum soccer player who was the Indian captain at the Homeless World Cup. The filmmaker claims to have registered the story and script with Telangana Cinema Writers Association on June 11, 2018. Though Nagaraj Manjule, director of Marathi blockbuster *Sairat*, brought rights to make a movie on the life of Vijay Barse, who is the coach of Akhilesh Paul, his film *Jhund* also showcases Akhilesh’s story in a major role, thus allegedly violating the copyrights.

Bachchan is essaying the role of Vijay Barse, a Nagpur-based retired sports teacher who starts a slum soccer movement, in the film.

According to Kumar, Nagaraj Manjule claimed to have bought rights from Akhilesh Paul for Rs 4 lakh but was reluctant to show the documents. “Even Akhilesh denied selling him the rights. Nagaraj humiliated me and forced to come for settlement without showing papers,” Kumar said. He alleged that the producers of the film indulged in deceit and cheating and thus delayed his project by threat and criminal intimidation over phone.

— IANS



“EVEN AKHILESH DENIED SELLING HIM THE RIGHTS. NAGRAJ HUMILIATED ME AND FORCED TO COME FOR SETTLEMENT WITHOUT SHOWING PAPERS. THE PRODUCERS OF THE FILM INDULGED IN DECEIT AND CHEATING AND DELAYED MY PROJECT

Nandi Chinni Kumar

PARTY



A REUNION OF SORTS

Reunions are always a night to remember and Sunday night was no different as the who's who of Tollywood and Bollywood got together for an award function. The award in question is the Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) national award that has been named after Nagarajuna's father. Veteran actor Rekha and late actor Sridevi were felicitated at the awards held in the city. The awards were conferred on the two actors for the years 2018 and 2019. Filmmaker Boney Kapoor, who accepted the award on behalf of his wife, got emotional while accepting it. Chiranjeevi was the chief guest, Telangana IT secretary Jayesh Ranjan and Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar were few other known faces who graced the event.

—Full Report on page 11

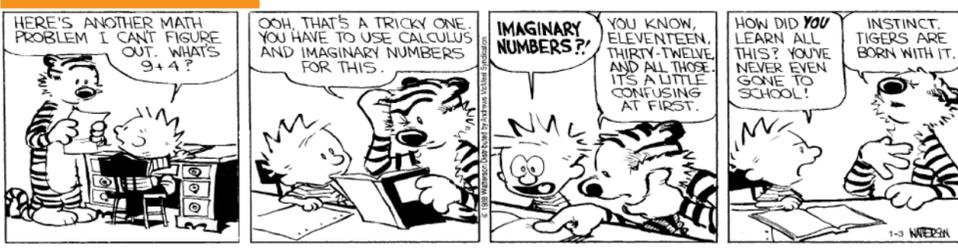


FUN TIME

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



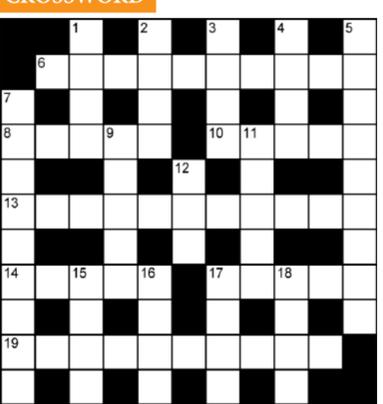
SPEED BUMP



NANCY



CROSSWORD



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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

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

ACROSS

- 6 Something chewed but usually not swallowed (7,3)
- 8 With lots of sunshine
- 10 A stand for an artist's painting
- 13 Straight away
- 14 Tossed
- 17 Put words on paper
- 19 Daily publications
- 7 Helper
- 9 A female relation
- 11 Change
- 12 Baby goat
- 15 Uses oars
- 16 Cried
- 17 Rub with a cloth
- 18 Yours and mine

DOWN

- 1 Part of your face
- 2 Absent
- 3 One time
- 4 Hens lay these
- 5 People who work for a business



I HOPE TO DO ANOTHER TELUGU FILM SOON: REKHA



Actors Sridevi (late) and Rekha were conferred with prestigious Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) National Award for 2018 and 2019 respectively at a glittering ceremony in Hyderabad over the weekend. The Akkineni family, industrialist T Subbarami Reddy, Megastar Chiranjeevi, Ramesh Prasad, Brahama-nandam, PVP, Adivi Sesh,

Vijay Deverakonda, Manchu Lakshmi and Karthikeya among a host of others attended the event. Boney Kapoor, who received the award on his wife's behalf, in a choked tone said, "She would've felt humbled with this award and I accept it on behalf of her with all humility." The evergreen Rekha after collecting the award went down the memory lane and said it's a homecoming of

sorts for her to visit Annapurna Studios again. "I've spent a good decade here shooting. There were times where five different films of mine were shot here and I was hopping from one floor to other. It makes me nostalgic and I am overwhelmed. I'm on this podium because of ANR *garu* and Anjali aunty, both of whom who starred in *Suvarni Sundari*. I liked everything about the film

and I must've watched it 100 times. Although I couldn't interact with ANR *garu* much, every day on my way to shoot in Hyderabad, I used to visit his house and

seek his blessings from outside. And when I finally met him at his home one fine day, the first sentence that came out of his mouth was that "I knew you visited my

house daily. The best piece of advice he gave me was to focus on what I put in my stomach and what I feed my brain. I still follow that advice today. My first Telugu

film I did was *Ammakosam*, which I did on the insistence of Anjali aunty. I hope to do another Telugu film soon by learning pure Telugu." "I am happy to have

received the award alongside Sridevi. My little sister is one of the world's greatest actresses. Nobody has performed so subtly with so power like her," she said.

I always wanted to do a film on OU student leader: SANDY

Sandeep Madhav speaks to NAGARAJ GOUD about rejecting 40 stories before helming *George Reddy*, investing close to two years in the project and more

After his breakthrough role in *Vangaaveeti* (2016), Sandeep Madhav aka Sandy listened close to 40 stories but none caught his fancy. Days later, his roommate Jeevan Reddy, who helmed *Dalam* earlier, told him that he will headline his

biopic. A brilliant scholar and a charismatic student leader of Osmania University in the '60s, George Reddy left an indelible impression on revolutionary politics among students, before communal elements brutally murdered him in daylight in 1972. He was 25. Sandy soon began reading about him, getting inspired in the process. "I got a bit emotional as I came to the end of his story. Like many I felt we lost him too early. He was offered a position at ISRO (George was a gold medalist in physics) but he couldn't take it up as he wanted pursue many other things at OU. He would've taken ISRO to new heights for sure," Sandy muses.

Later Jeevan gave him the complete narration of the script. "It got me all excited. I felt it was the right script to choose after

Vangaaveeti. I've been to OU multiple times and I always had this wish of doing a film on a student leader from the campus. As luck would have it, I've done a biopic on the campus' brightest student face," he adds.

As a part of his prep for the film, Sandy learnt boxing for six months as George was also a pugilist. "From a video interview, some pictures and interactions with people whom he knew, I got a slight hang of his body language which I tried to incorporate into the role," he shares, quick to remind that most South films that showed students as leaders drew inspiration from George.

He doesn't rue the fact that he invested close to two years on the project, especially after the praise he received for his turn in *Vangaaveeti*. "Yes, there were well-wishers who told me that two years is a long time to spend on this project but I was extremely pleased with the way the product was shaping up every day. I knew we were making a quality product and had a fair idea of its reach. But once the trailer was released, we weren't expecting the kind of response it cut across for sure," he states, adding that after the film's release, he would take a call on what kind a story he will pick for his next assignment. "I have many filmmaker friends who want to make a film with me. I want to move away from this biopic zone and do something light-like a comedy. Plus, I want to have a couple of releases next year."



Mahanati cameraman replaces Divakar Mani

With filming of *Virata Parvam* 1992 set to resume next month, there is a major change on the technical front. Apparently, original cinematographer Divakar Mani has decided to bid adieu to the project. The reason, we hear, has something to do with the film's inordinate delay. "Divakar wanted to wrap up the film by this year-end or by January-end as he wanted to move to other commitments. However, following Rana's unavailability, the film's shoot had to be deferred. He felt that movie could take another three months to finish, so he decided to honour his prior commitments. He had a word with director Venu Udugula who was happy to have let him go. Divakar will now be filming

Naga Shaurya's next with debutante director Souujanya Medarametla, while *Mahanati* cinematographer Dani Sanchez-Lopez has been signed on to shoot remaining portions of *Virata Parvam*," a source close to the development told us. Set in '90s backdrop, *Virata Parvam*, a love story, also sheds light on the Maoist movement, specifically the moral dilemma that prevailed back then. The likes of Sai Chand, Nandita Das, Easwari Rao and Zarina Wahab are playing supporting roles. It is a joint production venture between Suresh Babu and Sudhakar Cherukuri. Udugula has wrapped up 40 per cent of the filming so far.



Addala to helm Asuran Telugu remake

Announced last month, the Telugu remake of *Asuran*, to star Venkatesh, had finally found its director. No it's not Hanu Raghavapudi whose name did the rounds a week ago. The remake will be directed by Sreekanth Addala, who has earlier worked with Venkatesh for *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*. The director hasn't made much headway with his next *Kuchipudi Vari Veedhilo* despite narrating the story to multiple top-league actors. And it seems Suresh Babu, who is producing the project along with original producer Kalaipuli S Thanu, felt that he was the right man for the job. In an interview to journalist TS Sudhir, the producer spilled the beans.



Released last month in Tamil Nadu, *Asuran*, starring Dhanush and Manju Warrier, and directed by Vetrimaran, has set the cash registers ringing. Based on Sahitya Akademi-winning writer Poomani's book *Vekkai*, the film, an action-drama, is about farmer Sivasami (played by Dhanush) and his fight to save his land and son from the most affluent family in the village. In the same interview, Suresh has also said Venky is taking the film as a challenge and he wants to discover himself as an actor. He also mentioned they will not make a regular Telugu film out of *Asuran* but added that it will not be as dark as the original. "However, it will have all the emotions that *Asuran* had," he said.

Shruti Haasan heads to UK soon for upcoming concerts

Actress-singer Shruti Haasan, who has Ravi Teja-starrer *Krack* in her kitty, is also focusing on her musical career. She will head to the UK later this month for her latest gigs. Shruti, who had toured the UK earlier this year, will be doing another set of concerts there in November and December. The gigs will start from November 28. "I've really enjoyed performing in the UK and the response has been great. I'm also meeting some really accomplished musicians who I hope to collaborate with in the near future," she said in a statement. This year, Shruti starred in her first international series, *Treadstone*, which released a few months back. She plays the recurring character Nira Patel in the action drama series. Apart from her film commitments, Shruti plans to release her debut album as well.



PTI ■ MUSCAT

Winless in four games so far in an increasingly disappointing campaign, the Indian football team faces higher-ranked Oman in a do-or-die World Cup qualifying round match here today.

A first half strike from Sunil Chhetri gave India hopes of beating Oman in the first leg in Guwahati in September but it ultimately turned out to be so-near-yet-so-far as the Gulf nation struck twice in the final 10 minutes to outwit the home side.

Oman are coming into this match after an emphatic (4-1) win over Bangladesh on November 14.

India, on the other hand, are struggling after an impressive goal-less draw against Asian champions Qatar as they needed late equalisers in their identical 1-1 draws against lower-ranked Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

After three draws and a defeat, India are fourth in the Group E table with three points while Oman are second with nine points from four matches. Qatar are on top with 10 points from four matches.

An upset win over Oman will certainly keep Igor Stimac's side in the hunt for a next round berth but a loss will virtually send India out of reckoning as far as the 2022 World Cup qualification is concerned.

If India lose, they will trail Oman by nine points and have only three matches — maximum nine points — left to play in this second round of the qualifiers.

Even the runner-up sides from the eight groups are not guaranteed an automatic spot in the third round of the qualifiers.

A draw against Oman will also make it difficult for India to qualify for the next round. Their last three matches — all to be played next year — are against Qatar (at home on March 26), Bangladesh (away, June 4) and Afghanistan (at home, June 9).

But getting a least a point against Oman may prove crucial as it will make it easier for India to get an automatic third round berth for the 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers.

This campaign is also a joint qualifying round for the 2023 Asian Cup and the third-placed teams and the best four fourth placed teams from the eight groups automatically get a spot in the third round of the qualifiers of the continental championships.

Stimac's side has struggled not just in defence but four matches into this campaign, it is also clear that its offence is also not in the best of form.

India is no longer dependent on only Chhetri to score the goals but the inability to convert the chances has cost the team dear.

Stimac has no illusion about who is the favourite today but he is also hoping that his players will convert the chances which

Now is the time

Struggling India face Oman in do-or-die World Cup qualifying round away match



Indian coach Igor Stimac shake hands with his Oman counterpart before the start of pre-match press conference in Muscat on Monday

Indian Football/Twitter

come their way and score goals.

Oman vs India
Live from 8:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

"Oman are much better now than the team we played against in Guwahati. They are the favourites. We know for a fact that match is going to be very difficult for us," the high profile Croatian coach said.

Historically too, India are the underdogs, having not won any of the 11 matches they have played against Oman who have emerged victorious on eight occasions.

Before the Guwahati match in September, the two sides played out a 0-0 draw in the run-up to the 2019 Asian Cup in the UAE. In the two legs of the 2018 World Cup qualifiers played in 2015, India had lost to Oman 0-3 in Muscat before a 1-2 defeat in Bangalore.

India will still be without senior central defender Anas Edathodika as he returned home before the Afghanistan match due to a family emergency, dealing a further blow to a team which has lost the services of Sandesh Jhingam, Rowling Borges and Amarjit Singh due to injuries.



Indian coach Igor Stimac during team's practice session

Indian Football/Twitter

Points not revenge on Chhetri's mind

MUSCAT: India are not looking at revenge but full points against Oman, skipper Sunil Chhetri said on Monday as they gear up to take on the hosts.

Oman had beaten India 2-1 in Guwahati in September but Chhetri dismissed talks about India gunning for a revenge.

"We won't think about revenge or anything closer to that, absolutely not. At the end of the day, the points matter. It's not a derby as they are not our neighbours," Chhetri said during a training session.

"These are the qualifiers and we have only one thing in our mind, to go out and give everything that we have and take the result. I mean the important point is to go and play well, especially in the away matches."

Oman striker Al Mandhar has already scored four goals in four matches during the qualifiers but Pritam Kotal felt everyone should be dealt with equally to come out with a favourable result.

"It's not only Al Mandhar, other attackers like Al Alwai, Al Ghassani everyone can impose equal danger to a defence line. They are quick, they switch positions fast and can score from long. We have to be extra cautious of their long-range shots," Kotal opined.

Custodian Gurpreet Singh Sandhu picked that staying unbeaten on the road is the priority now and Oman is going to be a difficult opponent to play against.

"It's always difficult playing away from home and we recognise the threats (from Oman) given their ability and strength. We have to make sure we deal with them well." PTI

SINGLES

INDIA TO MEET PAKISTAN IN SEMIFINAL

SAVAR: Chinmay Sutar and Shubham Sharma starred in India's comprehensive 120-run win over Hong Kong in the ACC Emerging Teams Cup on Monday. India will now clash with arch-rivals Pakistan in the semifinals. Sutar smashed an unbeaten 104 off 85 balls and Sharma an unbeaten 65 off 55 balls as India amassed 322 for five in 50 overs. Opener and wicketkeeper B R Sharath too made a valuable contribution with 90 off 93 balls. Sharma also contributed with the ball taking four wickets for 32 runs in 10 overs as India bowled out Hong Kong for 202 in 47.3 overs. Shahid Wasif top-scored for Hong Kong with 68 off 84 balls. India take on Pakistan in Dhaka tomorrow while other semifinal will be played between hosts Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The final too will be played in Dhaka on November 23.

BOPANNA PULLS OUT OF DAVIS CUP TIE

NEW DELHI: Senior player Rohan Bopanna pulled out of India's upcoming tie against Pakistan due to a shoulder injury, paving the way for Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan's inclusion in the playing squad. Bopanna, who underwent an MRI scan on Monday, communicated his unavailability to non-playing captain Rohit Rajpal. The 39-year-old was expected to be paired with veteran Leander Paes for the doubles rubber of the November 29-30 tie. "It's disappointing not to have Rohan in the side. But we want him to protect his shoulder. He needs shots (injection) for treatment. We have an able replacement in Jeevan. He has done well on the Tour and we will have a good left-right combination," Rajpal said.

MURALI VIJAY OUT OF MUSHTAQ ALI

CHENNAI: Experienced opener Murali Vijay will miss the Super League and Knockout matches of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament to be played in Surat from November 21 due to an ankle injury. Vijay has done well in the recent Vijay Hazare Trophy (50 overs) and Mushtaq Ali Trophy making 284 runs (8 matches, 1 century) and 127 runs (from 6 matches) respectively. He will be replaced by left-arm spinner M Siddharth in the squad, a press release from Tamil Nadu Cricket Association said. Tamil Nadu chief selector M Senthilnathan said Siddharth was picked as it was felt there were enough batsmen in the squad and as a back-up spinner.

VIJENDER TO FACE ADAMU IN DUBAI

DUBAI: Indian boxing star Vijender Singh will square off against two-time former Commonwealth super middle-weight champion Charles Adamu of Ghana in his next professional bout here on November 22. Vijender, managed by Top Rank Promotions and IOS Boxing, made his US debut earlier this year in July, recording an 11th successive win, beating Mike Snider. WBO Asia Pacific & Oriental super middleweight champion, will take on the 42-year-old Adamu in a 10-round fight. Adamu is a veteran of 47 fights with a record of 33-14-0, including 26 knockouts. He completed most recently in Feb this year, winning via a Technical Knockout to end losing streak. AGENCIES



Cristiano Ronaldo, left, celebrates with his teammate Diogo Jota after he scored Portugal's second goal

AFP ■ PARIS

Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 99th international goal as reigning champions Portugal secured their place at the Euro 2020 finals with a 2-0 victory away to Luxembourg, while France ended their qualifying campaign with victory.

Bruno Fernandes struck the opening goal on 39 minutes on Sunday before Ronaldo tapped in a scrappy second late on to clinch second place in Group B behind winners Ukraine, who drew 2-2 in Serbia.

Iranian striker Ali Daei holds the world record with 109 international goals scored in 149 appearances between 1993 and 2006.

"All records must be broken and I will beat that record," said Ronaldo.

Portugal became the 17th nation to qualify for next year's multi-host tournament, which kicks off in Rome on June 12, joining the likes of world champions France, Spain, Italy and England. "We can't give the match high marks for style," said Portugal coach Fernando Santos, who admitted the heavy pitch made life challenging for his team.

"I'm very happy for my players because the qualifying campaign has been more difficult than we expected.



99 not out

Ronaldo scores 99th Portugal goal as holders seal Euro 2020 spot

"We're through to the finals of a major tournament for an 11th straight time. You've got to believe in these players."

Portugal knew they would book their place at Euro 2020 with a win or by matching Serbia's result from their game in Belgrade. But they were made to work hard by a Luxembourg team ranked 96th in the world that notably held France to a 0-0 draw in 2018 World Cup qualifying.

Sporting Lisbon midfielder Fernandes broke the deadlock before half-time, controlling Bernardo Silva's pinpoint pass expertly before lashing in from 20 yards.

Ronaldo, who smacked in a hat-trick in Thursday's 6-0 thrashing of Lithuania, moved to the brink of his international century four minutes from time.

Silva's far-post cross was forced towards goal by Diogo Jota, with Luxembourg goalkeeper Anthony Moris getting a hand to the ball before Ronaldo turned in from the goalline.

FRANCE SIGN OFF

Later on Sunday, world champions France wrapped up top spot in Group H as goals from Corentin Tolisso and Antoine Griezmann sealed a 2-0 win over Albania in Tirana.

"I'm very dependent on the players," French World Cup-winning coach Didier Deschamps said after his 100th game in charge.

"It's a personal pride. But it's good to see what the players do together. At times, it can be a bit more difficult with changes to the players, injured players, but the spirit is there."

The visitors made a quick start on the pitch, though, as Bayern Munich midfielder Tolisso headed Griezmann's free-kick into the bottom corner.

The Barcelona star slotted in the second himself on the half-hour mark, before the dead rubber petered out in the second period, with Olivier Giroud going closest to a third by striking the post.

AFP ■ SAO PAULO

Max Verstappen underlined his potential as a champion of the future on Sunday with a commanding victory for Red Bull in an astonishing and crash-hit Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos.

The 22-year-old Dutchman twice passed newly-crowned six-time world champion Lewis Hamilton in a thrilling contest that had two safety car interventions and saw the Ferraris of Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc clash and retire, before clinching the eighth victory of his career.

His third win this season also made up for his disappointment in last year's race in Brazil when he looked certain to win before a late accident wrecked his hopes of victory.

He made the most of pole position and finished a dominant winner ahead of his former Red Bull teammate Pierre Gasly, now with Toro Rosso, as they delivered a Honda-powered one-two for the Japanese company for the first time since the heyday of local hero Ayrton Senna.

Frenchman Gasly came home 0.062 seconds ahead of Hamilton, who finished third for Mercedes but was demoted to seventh following a post-race stewards' investigation after crashing with luckless Thai driver Alexander Albon, the man who replaced Gasly at Red Bull, in the final laps.

Hamilton's demotion gifted McLaren's Carlos Sainz his first Formula One podium, subject to several other stewards' inquiries.

"Lewis was very quick," said Verstappen. "So I had to keep pushing all the time. He pitted early so we

MAX BENEFIT

Verstappen wins crazy Brazilian GP as both Ferraris crash out



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Brazilian GP

had to be on top of our pit-stops and we had a good move on him.

"I could control the race with the tyres I had, so, for me, it was unbelievable. It was a lot of fun out there and great to win the race."

VETTEL, LECLERC SUMMONED

Ferrari team boss Mattia Binotto has called drivers Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc to a clear-the-air meeting after their collision wrecked the team's hopes in Sao Paulo.

The pair, who collided while fighting for fourth place, were forced to retire from the race, leaving Ferrari embarrassed and pointless and the drivers arguing about who was to blame. "There will be time (for us all) together at Maranello to understand what happened," said Binotto.

"It's not for me to blame them, it's for them to recognise it." Both cars were damaged and forced to retire in the incident, which came after a Safety Car restart when Vettel 'closed the door' on a challenging Leclerc.

It resulted in Ferrari's first scoreless race since the 2017 Singapore Grand Prix and refocused criticism on the team's habit of generating self-inflicted damage — and the fractious relationship between their drivers.

"I have not reviewed yet, I don't want to do it yet," insisted Binotto. "I think doing things in the heat of the moment, we may have the wrong conclusion."

"I heard both drivers, but they will come as well together to discuss again what happened and there will be time for the team to analyse all the video and the data."

"Whatever will be the judgement, more important is we are disappointed and sorry for the team."

"But first, the two drivers should be sorry for the team — as it has been a very small crash with big consequences..."

"They are silly things that should not happen."

Reid to focus on individual improvement

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

With no international assignment till next year, the Indian men's hockey side will focus on individual improvement rather than team tactics during the ongoing national camp, chief coach Graham Reid said on Monday.

After securing a 2020 Olympic berth in the qualifiers against Russia, the team is currently undergoing a three-week training and conditioning camp which will conclude on December 8.

"Given there is no tournament immediately following the three-week camp in



Bhubaneswar, it is a perfect opportunity for us to change focus from team tactics to more about individual improvement," Reid said as

detailed analysis and review from our performances last season including the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Odisha. This will provide a good road-map for us in our quest to squeeze as much improvement as we can in the next nine months," the 53-year-old Australian added.

The Indian team recently secured its place at the 2020 Olympic Games by defeating Russia 11-3 on aggregate at the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers here.

India's next assignment will be the twin home leg matches of the FIH Pro League against the Netherlands in January next

year.

Meanwhile, Bhubaneswar will host India's home matches during the 2020 Hockey Pro League, the sport's governing body announced on Monday.

"The first team that India will host is the Netherlands on January 18. The Pro League will feature 144 matches in the coming season."

Australia's home matches will be played in Perth and Sydney, while England will be playing its share in London.

The first match will feature the Netherlands and China on January 11, 2020 at the Wujin Hockey Stadium in Changzhou.