

NATION 5 SHARAD PAWAR MEETS PM MODI

MONEY 8 TRADERS' BODY DEMANDS 'BAN' ON AMAZON, FLIPKART

SPORTS 12 SHAMI DEADLY ON ANY SURFACE: SAHA

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY NOVEMBER 21, 2019; PAGES 12-13



# the pioneer



CINEMA WILL CO-EXIST WITH OTT SERVICES: ALLU ARAVIND

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## Rajat to head petrochemical investment panel

AMARAVATI: The Centre has appointed senior Andhra Pradesh bureaucrat Rajat Bhargava as head of a high-level committee to suggest necessary policy initiatives for attracting more investments into the Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemical Investment Regions (PCPIR) in the country.

Bhargava, the AP Industry and Infrastructure Principal Secretary, was appointed by the Union Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals.

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## Businessman kills self after failing to pay GST

AURANGABAD: An entrepreneur, owning a small metal polishing unit in Waluj Industrial area, committed suicide, after failing to pay Goods and Services Tax (GST), police said on Wednesday. Vishnu Rambhau Kalavane (53) hanged himself from the ceiling with a saree at his home in Pandharpur area on Tuesday, an official said. In a suicide note found at the scene, the deceased has stated that his failure to pay GST has forced him to take the extreme step, he added.

## Passport systems in 42 Indian missions integrated: MEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The External Affairs Ministry on Wednesday said it has integrated the passport issuance systems in 42 Indian missions and posts into the Passport Seva Project (PSP) so that people can directly apply from abroad.

In response to a Lok Sabha query, Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said the countries where the integration has been done include Australia, Canada, China, France, Italy, Kuwait, Malaysia, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, UK and the US.

He further said the Ministry is in the process of linking and integrating all the Missions and Posts abroad with the PSP. "The MEA has integrated

TODAY ALMANAC Month & Paksham: Kartik & Krishna Paksha Panchangam Tithi: Ashtami: 11:28 am Nakshatram: Purva Phalguni: 06:30 pm Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work) Rahukalam: 01:25 pm - 02:48 pm Yamagandam: 06:27 am - 07:51 am Varjyam: 01-09 am - 02:38 am Gulika: 09:14 am - 10:36 am Good Time: (to start any important work) Amritakalam: 12:31 pm - 02:01 pm Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:39 am - 12:24 pm VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Partly cloudy Temp: 32/22 Humidity: 76% Sunrise: 06:23 Sunset: 05:39 Current Weather Conditions Updated November 20, 2019 5:00 PM

## NRC will be implemented nationwide: Amit Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) will be implemented nationwide, said Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, asserting that no person from any religion need to be afraid of it.

"The NRC exercise is monitored by the Supreme Court. No religion has been targeted or isolated during the NRC exercise," said Shah responding to a query of Congress leader Syed Nasir Hussain. The MP asked whether the NRC provides citizenship to immigrants of six non-Muslim faiths.

Shah said NRC and The Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016, which lapsed on June 3,



2019, are two different issues and both should not be seen through one prism.

Shah said people whose names are missing from the NRC can approach tribunals formed at the tehsil level. The

Assam government will provide financial help to those who don't have the money to file pleas, he said. Shah said the government would bear the cost of hiring a lawyer. The updated final NRC,

"The NRC exercise is monitored by the Supreme Court. No religion has been targeted or isolated during the NRC exercise

- AMIT SHAH Union Home Minister

which validates genuine Indian citizens, has left out over 19 lakh applicants in Assam. Most of these are people who have not produced required documents to prove their claims and have the option of appealing to Foreigners' Tribunals and subsequently approach the courts.

In Assam, the NRC aims to identify illegal immigrants who entered the state and settled after March 25, 1971.

## I-T raids at Ramanaidu Studios

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Officials of the Income-Tax (I-T) Department on Wednesday conducted simultaneous raids on Ramanaidu Studios in Hyderabad and at several other premises owned by popular Tollywood producer Daggubati Suresh Babu. Searches are underway also against another biggie S. Radha Krishna, who owns production houses, Haarika and Hassine Creations and Sitara Entertainments.

The raids began early in the morning on Wednesday. The officials are reportedly going through I-T returns filed by the production house over the last few years to examine alleged tax evasion," sources said. Some documents were



reportedly examined and seized. An official statement is yet to be issued by the department.

According to available information, searches are on in 25 locations across Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and

Visakhapatnam. A majority of the locations are properties owned by the Telangana-based film production house owners. Both the production houses are readying to release their new films.

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## SC says Make exclusive law for Sabarimala

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Kerala government to formulate an exclusive law in connection with the administration of the Sabarimala temple. A bench headed by Justice NV Ramana asked the government to place before the court a law, before the third week of January, incorporating various aspects associated with the welfare of pilgrims. The apex court took exception to the government's bid to make joint law for administration of Sabarimala temple and other temples, and insisted there should be separate law.

## Concept Cities proposed at Vizag, Tirupati, and Anantapur

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh is going to plan concept cities for the development of Information Technology sector in Visakhapatnam, Tirupati, and Anantapur. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had a meeting with IT department officials and the Minister Mekapati Gautam Reddy on Wednesday at the Tadepalli camp office. The Chief Minister proposed setting up of a concept city in Anantapur region which was in the neighborhood of Tirupati and Bengaluru. He directed the officials to plan cities primarily in a radius of 10 sq km. He said it was strange that opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu speaks about industrial promotion and ease of doing business. He said industrial incentives worth Rs 4,000 crore that were to be dis-



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy held a meeting with IT department officials and the Minister Mekapati Gautam Reddy on Wednesday

bursed by the TDP government were still pending.

The Chief Minister said that the single-window system was introduced in sanctioning industries to provide transparency. He said land, water, and power supply would be provided at nominal rates to set up industries. Jaganmohan Reddy directed the officials to make village and ward secretariats and the volunteer's system tech-

savvy. Addressing the meeting of the IT & electronics communications department, he outlined the importance of the village and ward secretariats and said the system would help root out corruption. Hence it needed strong information and technological network. Ration cards, pension cards, Arogyasri cards, and fee reimbursement cards would all be issued by the village and ward secretariats.

## NHRC notice to AP govt on 32 labourers rescued from Anantapur

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Acting on reports that at least 32 bonded labourers from Odisha were being held captive in a brick kiln unit in Garladinne of Andhra's Anantapur district, who have subsequently been rescued, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the state government.

The NHRC in a press release stated that it has taken suo motu cognizance of media reports about the ordeal of the labourers and sought a detailed report from the chief secretary of Andhra Pradesh within one week.

NHRC, based on the media reports, stated that the district authorities have failed to do their lawful duty to protect the labourers from victimisation and hence, strict action is required to be taken against the

delinquent officers and also appropriate legal action against the brick kiln owner.

While expecting the officials to ensure that the bonded labourers reach their native places, the NHRC also said that they should be given medical care if required.

NHRC stated, "The labourers, including children and women, are being kept under bondage, without any basic amenities in violation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. Strict action is required to be taken against the brick kiln owner as well as the officers concerned for their negligence."

TNM has also carried a report according to which even as the rescue operation of the labourers is underway, officials have said that several children were sent to a local hospital in view of their health.

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## Chandrababu spreading canards over power deals: Balineni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Power Balineni Srinivasa Reddy has condemned the false campaign that non-conventional energy companies are heading for international arbitration. Countering the statement of TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday, Srinivasa Reddy said Naidu has tweeted that due to the policy

decision taken by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, the companies have gone for international arbitration, denting the image of the State.

Srinivasa Reddy said that no deal with any company has been cancelled and procurement of electricity from any company has not been stopped.

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## YSRCP govt won't last its full term: Devineni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao has predicted that a few YSRCP MPs are going out of their party. Speaking to the media here on Wednesday, he said that even YSRCP MLAs are discussing who the next CM would be and termed the party a sinking boat. Umamaheswara Rao suggested to YSRCP Chief YS Jaganmohan Reddy to take care of his own MLAs instead of targeting TDP MLAs. He alleged that a few ministers and MLAs are already competing for the Chief Minister's post.

Continued on Page 2

## No proposal to link social media accounts to Aadhaar: Prasad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has no proposal for linking Aadhaar with social media accounts of individuals, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

"There is no such proposal with the government for linking Aadhaar with social media accounts of individuals," Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

He was replying to a specific query on whether the government proposes to enact a law for linking Aadhaar with social media accounts of individuals.

Prasad said that as a matter of policy and by design, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) precludes itself from aggregating information arising from the use of Aadhaar, tracking and profiling individuals.

"...the system by intent is blind to the purpose for which Aadhaar may be used at the front end by the resident. Also, the core biometrics is encrypted at the time of enrolment/updates. It is never kept unencrypted and is never shared," he added.

Prasad said Aadhaar is based on three core principles of "minimal information, optimal

ignorance and federated database". "In its whole lifecycle, an Aadhaar database contains only the information that the resident provides at the time of enrolment or update... The database may also have mobile and e-mail, if provided by the resident, during enrolment or update," he said.

Aadhaar database contains name, address, gender, date of birth/age, photograph and core biometrics (10 fingerprints and 2 iris scans) of the enrolled resident. In response to another query, Prasad said non-resident Indians (NRIs) are entitled to obtain Aadhaar number after arrival in India.

"...the system by intent is blind to the purpose for which Aadhaar may be used at the front end by the resident. Also, the core biometrics is encrypted at the time of enrolment/updates. It is never kept unencrypted and is never shared

- RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD, Information Technology Minister



## 'Humiliated' APPSC chairman may quit post

G RAVI KIRAN ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) Chairman Uday Bhaskar may resign shortly as he is said to be facing an embarrassing situation with his own staff not respecting him.

As the government cannot remove him directly, it is believed that a situation has been created so that he may quit the post. It seems the strategy has worked well in favour of the Jaganmohan Reddy government.

According to sources, Uday Bhaskar had tried to complain to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan against the government. But, having come to know that the government has already given a negative feedback to the Governor, informing him that three cases are



going to be filed against him, the shocked APPSC chairman is in a dilemma as to what his next step should be. Now, he has lost all hopes of the Governor entertaining his complaint.

Normally, the Governor appoints APPSC Chairman and Vice-Chancellors for a

## Uday Bhaskar, a product of IIT-Kanpur

Dr Uday Bhaskar, Professor of Civil Engineering and Director of Foreign Universities and Alumni Relations of the JNTU Kakinada, is also the Director of Evaluation at the JNTU-K. A B. Tech graduate from the JNTU College of Engineering, Uday Bhaskar did his Masters and Doctoral studies in Environmental Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur.

term of six years. Uday Bhaskar was appointed in November, 2015, which means he still has two years to go. But, the YSR government is reluctant to continue him in the post.

Already, a few Vice-Chancellors have left under pressure from the government. The Vice-Chancellor of Acharya NG Ranga University (ANGRAU) was shunted out after a case was filed against him.

In the case of Uday

Bhaskar, the problem has cropped up due to leakage of papers for examination to Village Secretariat staff posts.

The Panchayat Raj Department has conducted the exam, but the infrastructure of APPSC was utilised in the process. Even the hall tickets were issued in the name of APPSC.

After the results, TDP alleged that one of the outsourcing employees working in APPSC has got the first

rank only because of the paper leakage. They have released the names and ranks of those candidates who were allegedly involved in paper leakage. The government has defended it and ruled out any action in this regard. After a few days, a few employees were removed from the APPSC.

The YSRCP government has conducted an inquiry into the episode and suspected that Uday Bhaskar had given all information to TDP leaders. The government started mounting pressure on Uday Bhaskar to leave the post.

Things have come to such a pass that even an office assistant is not responding to Uday Bhaskar's instructions. Feeling humiliated, Uday Bhaskar has decided to resign the post and he may do it within a week, according to sources.

## TSRTC JAC offers to withdraw strike

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

TSRTC Joint Action Committee (JAC) has said that the RTC employees will join their duties by calling off their ongoing strike,

which entered 47th day on Wednesday if the state government takes the employees back unconditionally. The JAC hoped that the state government and RTC management will initiate steps in this direction.

He said the employees would continue the strike till the State government responded on the

issue. The JAC has discussed in detail the directions issued by the High Court.

TSRTC JAC held discussions on the High Court verdict after receiving the verdict copy at Employees Union office located at Vidyanagar. Sixteen JAC leaders including convener E Ashwathama Reddy, co-conveners K Raji Reddy, Linga Murthy, Thomas Reddy and O Sudha participated in the meeting. They discussed whether to continue the strike or not and other issues.

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CAPSULE



423 child labourers identified

**VIJAYAWADA:** As many as 423 child labourers were identified in Prakasam district as part of the 'Operation Muskan' conducted under the supervision of District Superintendent of Police Siddhartha Koushal on Wednesday. Children under the age of 14 years working at various places in shops and establishments at railway stations and bus-stand complexes, roadside shops and other places were identified. Giving out the break-up, the SP said 134 child labourers were identified in Ongole sub-division, 77 in Kandukur sub-division, 55 in Markapuram sub-division, 75 in Darsi sub-division and 82 in Chirala sub-division. The SP said children were reunited with their parents and guardians after conducting counselling to them. Some children were referred to the home run by the District Child Welfare Department. Siddhartha Koushal appealed to the people to call the police if they come across child labourers so that they can be reunited with their parents or referred to children's homes.

# Technology can help in conservation of plants

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

At a time when Quick Response (QR) codes have become common for digital payments across the country, a college in the city is showing how the technology can benefit students and help in the conservation of plants.

The initiative of PB Siddhartha College of Arts and Sciences here is not only helping the students get information about plants at their fingertips but is also expected to contribute in plant conservation.

Students or anyone can use their smart phones to scan the QR code hung in the trees on the campus to access all the information about the plant ranging from its botanical name to its medicinal value.

An app generating QR code and available for free on the online stores can be used to scan the QR code and access the information. The user will see what has been incorporated and for detailed information can refer to books or do the Google search. Those scanning QR code will not only know the scientific name of the plant, but also its status by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which releases the status of all species every year.

"These days' people have awareness about conservation of plants, but they don't know



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- Students or anyone can use their smart phones to scan the QR code hung in the trees on the campus to access all the information about the plant ranging from its botanical name to its medicinal value
- "Today students don't have time and energy to go to the library and read books. They read about the plants in text books, along with the monograph and line diagram, but they can't identify the plants. If they see the live plant, they can easily understand and remember," said Srinivas Reddy

which plant has to be conserved and what is its name. The IUCN status shows, which are the endangered species. We hope that educated people will help conserve such species by growing them in their gardens," Srinivas Reddy, according to head of Botany Department at the college. The department has developed herbal garden on the college campus with 60 varieties of

medicinal plants like Tulsi, mustard, aloe vera and spearmint.

It has also grown 20 other varieties. These include 'Gyrocarpus Americanus', whose wood is used to make the world-famous Kondapalli toys. Scarcity of the wood, locally known as 'Tella Poniki' has affected the toy making in Kondapalli near Vijayawada. The Botany Department

worked for a month to collect all database about trees in the college campus and assigned QR codes to them. They catalogued the trees according to their species and incorporated vital information.

This has also made the learning easy and interesting for the students. "Today students don't have time and energy to go to the library and read books. They read about the plants in text books, along with the monograph and line diagram, but they can't identify the plants. If they see the live plant, they can easily understand and remember," said Srinivas Reddy.

According to Reddy, the exercise started as an experiment evoked a huge response. Many students, including non-biology students, faculty, morning walkers and other visitors are scanning QR codes to get the information.

Enthusied by the huge response, the management of this college is looking to extend the initiative beyond the campus. "We have submitted a proposal to assign QR codes to trees outside the campus. If the municipal authorities accept the proposal, we will do it, he said.

Reddy believes that such an exercise will create more awareness among people and they will be curious to know about different species and grow the endangered ones to help in their conservation.

# Poor monitoring of food trucks poses health risk to consumers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

At a time when the mobile food carts are mushrooming at every busy junction in the city, poor monitoring by the food safety officials is putting the health of denizens in risk.

About 30 per cent of mobile food business operators in the city are yet to obtain the mandatory food licence from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), according to food safety inspectors. The food stalls must comply with food laws, including the Food Safety and Standards Act, to ensure that food sold or prepared for sale is safe to eat and free from contamination.

The licence helps to identify the genuine traders and ban the unhygienic players. The tightening of rule will mainly check the flooding number of migrant vendors, who occupy the streets with their products manufactured in unknown locations and often using unhygienic contents.

According to Food Safety Controllers of GVMC, many roadside food counters are yet to register themselves as per the rules. "About 70 per cent of the food business traders availed required licence in the city. The problem largely with the food carts, as it is difficult to track them with many new



ones coming and some winding up. They were conducting inspections to check the licences of traders, but it could have improved if the staff crunch issue of the department was sorted out, he added.

"With good response from public, the roadside food carts are doing brisk business in the city and the rush at the counters speaks about itself. The consumer should file complaints with the food safety officials whenever they come across unhygienic food counters," said officials.

Consumer Rights activists have also taken up the issue to the food officials several times, but to no avail. Moreover, the traders are least bothered to get the license as the food inspectors are not imposing any fine for not having license.

The food cart is mushroom-

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■ The food stalls must comply with food laws, including the Food Safety and Standards Act, to ensure that food sold or prepared for sale is safe to eat and free from contamination

ing in MVP colony, Siripuram, Beach Road, Dwaraka Nagar and mostly where population of students and working bachelors is high.

# Retain Waltair Rail Dvn, Vijayasai Reddy tells govt

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

At a time the Railway Board is directing East Coast Railway to expedite the formation of new Rayagada Division, carving out of Waltair Division, Rajya Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy urged the Union government to retain Waltair Division in Vizag.

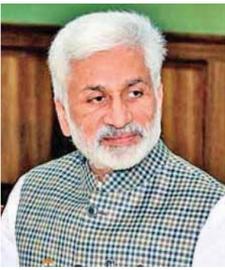
It may be noted that for creating a new zone, South Coast Railway, Ministry of Railways merged the existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions, making Vizag its headquarters. However, the Waltair Division, which was part of East Coast Railway with its area in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh was bifurcated to create a new division at Rayagada in Odisha. Hence, Waltair Division did not exist anymore as per the decision of the Union government.

However, during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Reddy

appealed to the Centre not to dilute and retain Waltair Division in Visakhapatnam.

The minister said that Waltair Division will be split into two parts - one part to be incorporated in the new zone by merging with the neighbouring Vijayawada division, while the remaining portion will be converted into a new division with headquarters at Rayagada under East Coast Railway (ECoR).

Headquartered in Vishakhapatnam, the Waltair Division is the fifth highest revenue generating division of Indian Railways. It earns more than the North-Western Railways and the North East Frontier Railway Zones. The benefits derived from the Waltair Division can easily be multiplied manifold as the money multiplier effect in Vishakhapatnam is the third highest in the Eastern Coast.



But, he argued that the government, instead of promoting the flourishing division, is dismantling it and bringing the Vishakhapatnam city under the Vishakhapatnam Division of the South Coast Railway Zone. This is a step in the wrong direction, as it will create unnecessary problems, which can easily be otherwise avoided.

According to him, taking the division away from

There is no precedence of dismantling an existing division and in this case dismantling the 125-year-old division would be a blunder both logistically and sentimentally for the people of Andhra Pradesh

Keeping these points in mind, he urged the government to keep the Waltair Division alive and finalise its contours with the Rayagada Division keeping in mind sentiments of the people of north Andhra

Vishakhapatnam to Vijayawada 350 km away will create operational and disaster management issues in terms of delayed response to accidents and reduced oversight on safety and maintenance.

Already in Visakhapatnam a full-fledged divisional set up with container terminals, a loco shed, a wagon workshop and 2,300 staff quarters among others are located. Continuing the Waltair Division would not cost the railways anything and a shift of divisional headquarters would lead to un-

necessary expenditure on infrastructure.

Furthermore, there is no precedence of dismantling an existing division and in this case dismantling the 125-year-old division would be a blunder both logistically and sentimentally for the people of Andhra Pradesh. Keeping these points in mind, he urged the government to keep the Waltair Division alive and finalise its contours with the Rayagada Division keeping in mind sentiments of the people of north Andhra.

# Vellampalli gives away CMRF cheques



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Singing paens to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, Endowments Minister Vellampalli Srinivas has wondered if there is anyone, who is capable of ruling the State like the YSRCP president. Distributing cheques drawn from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) to 51 applicants here on Wednesday, he said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had extended the YSR Aarogyasri services to Tamil Nadu, Bengaluru and Telangana. "Nobody is so compassionate to the people," he added.

Vellampalli said Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy had introduced the Aarogyasri scheme to save the poor by providing them treatment at corporate hospitals. Now, Jaganmohan Reddy is continuing his policies.

Lashing out at Chandrababu Naidu, he said the previous TDP government had diluted the Aarogyasri scheme by removing a few diseases from the list. He said, "We feel proud of working with a leader like Jaganmohan Reddy who is committed to his promise of imposition of prohibition in a phased manner."

He observed that Naidu and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan are making unnecessary and senseless remarks against the State government.



A winner receiving a memento in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday for winning a contest conducted on 'consumer rights'

# Students sensitised on consumer rights

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to spread awareness among students about their rights as consumers, Consumer Rights Organisation (CRO) is conducting elocution and essay writing competition at many colleges in Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam.

The competition is being supported by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food & Distribution. On Wednesday, elocution and essay writing competition was conducted at Alliance College of Hotel Management. In all, 83 MBA, PG and Degree students participated in it from GITAM University, Aditya College, Samata College, Andhra University, Alliance College and Avanthi College.

The topic of the competition was 'Rights, responsibilities and duties of a consumer.' Vikas Pandey - State President of Andhra Pradesh, was the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, Vikas Pandey



Students taking part in essay writing competition

said: "Competition is not only on the basis of protection to the consumer, but is like an incentive to progress. He congratulated the participants and informed them about the important departments related to consumers' day to day life like FSSAI, BIS, Legal Metrology, Drug Control, Civil Supplies and he explained the procedure of Consumer Redressal System.

Certificate of participation were given to participants and winner will be announced at the end of the competition on December 15 and they will be awarded in a programme conducted by CRO on the occasion of National Consumer Day on December 24.

# Gandhigiri by Iranian protesters gets Twitterati praise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A section of Iranians protesting against a sharp rise in petrol prices in their country embraced Gandhigiri to hand out flowers to troops deployed to control them, evoking support and praise from Twitterati.

Amid an Internet shutdown, Twitterati posted several clippings of protesters distributing flowers to security personnel in an Iranian

city. A user remarked: "Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi."

With a hashtag IranProtests, a user posted a clipping and wrote: "History has repeated itself. In the run up to the 1979 revolution, protesters handed out flowers to the police. In this video, protesters in Shiraz are handing out flowers to the riot police".

Another user wrote: "Protesters giving flowers to the police saying 'We are

not the enemy", in Shiraz."

A user wrote: "Fight hate with Love!!! I love it!!"

"To stand in the face of terror with love and to try to bring civility to the chaos, is an act of true bravery. Sadly, people will lose their lives in this battle as history has shown us over & over. But goodness will prevail. Hoping for sooner than later", wrote a user.

A user posted a clipping of a burning vehicle along with a remark: "Yes but then

they opened fire on protesters."

One user posted a throwback picture with protesters putting flower stems in gun barrels of troops and wrote: "#flowerpower #bernie-boston march on the #pentagon #WashingtonDC".

"Protesters in India should check this out", wrote a user. One was clearly reminded of a Sanjay Dutt-starrer movie. He wrote: "Munna bhai MBBS style".

# YSRCP gov't won't last its full term: Devineni

Continued from Page 1

However, he didn't cite any reason for the race for CM post and said the YSRCP government would not last its full term. He said, "While the State government has landed in financial problems by stopping the Polavaram Project works, it is claiming to have saved a lot of expenditure through reverse tendering. It has stopped Bandar Port work. Even the cement road works taken up by the Panchayat Raj Department have been stopped."

# US, Indian forces conduct disaster response exercises

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Soldiers of US Marine and Navy conducted a joint exercise with Indian soldiers in the area of humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

The joint exercise on Wednesday was held in Kakinada. The exercise included staff-planning events as well as field training that simulates moving a humanitarian assistance/disaster relief force from ship to shore. Training programmes like this will build the capacity of both the US and Indian participants, while improving their ability to operate together.

Speaking on the occasion, Rear Admiral Suraj Berry, Eastern Fleet Commander, said "The exercise was aimed at



(Right) US Navy personnel having discussion during a joint exercise with Indian soldiers in Kakinada on Wednesday (right) Taking part in a mock rescue exercise

improving the capacity of both India and the United States to face the challenges of humanitarian crisis during natural calamities like cyclone.

"We are here because both

the United States and India are willing to help each other in building their capacities to work better during bad times," said Lt Col Dana Demer, Special Purpose Marine Air Ground



Task Force Commander.

He said both the countries are well-equipped and well-trained for humanitarian assistance and disaster response. The activity was taken up as a

part of the nine-day Tiger Triumph that started in Vizag on November 13 and will conclude on Thursday in Kakinada. More than 500 US Marines and sailors and 1,200

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■ "We are here because both the United States and India are willing to help each other in building their capacities to work better during bad times," said Lt Col Dana Demer, Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force Commander

Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen are taking part in the nine-day joint exercise. The

exercise involves the ships - INS Jalashwa (L41) and USS German town.

# Drainage workers crave for safety gear

SEELAM AROZI  
VIJAYAWADA

Dragging split bamboo sticks and dressed in khaki, they set out for work at about 6 am and hang on at three main points in the city - Old City, Alluri Sitarama Raju Bridge near fruit market and Mogalrajapuram. Anxiety writ large on their faces, they keep waiting for prospective customers to give them work to clear blockages in drains at their homes. Not a single work comes their way on some days. Such is the plight of drainage workers in the domestic sector.

Though manual scavenging has been banned, the government has not provided the safety equipment to these workers. Worse, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), too, is not providing the safety gear to its sanitation employees. The death of a worker due to suffocation after entering a manhole to clear a clogged drain in the city in March 2018 is an



example of the civic body's indifference.

CPM leader Ch Babu Rao, who has highlighted their problems many a time in the city, said: "Drainage workers are prone to diseases, as they are forced to do manual scavenging. The civic body is putting

their lives at high risk by not providing the safety equipment to them to clean the septic tanks. It is the responsibility of the authorities to provide alternative employment to them. They belong to the poorest of the poor, so their welfare should be taken care of by

■ The death of a worker due to suffocation after entering a manhole to clear a clogged drain in the city in March 2018 is an example of the civic body's indifference

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■ In all, there are about 100-125 drainage workers in the city who hail from two communities - Parades and Relli. They are concentrated at Vambay Colony, Kandrika, Jakkampudi and New Raja Rajeswaripeta. From there, they branch out to various parts of the city

addressing their problems properly.

In all, there are about 100-125 drainage workers in the city who hail from two communities - Parades and Relli. They are concentrated at Vambay Colony, Kandrika, Jakkampudi and New Raja Rajeswaripeta. From there, they branch out to various parts of the city.

P Ramesh Babu, who

entered the profession 15 years ago, said, "We only work in the domestic sector, mostly removing the blockages in toilets and sinks. Each one of us earns not more than Rs 300-Rs 400 per day as we have to go without work most of the days in a month. Work is hard to come by except in the monsoon season."

The drainage workers say they had made several repre-

sentations to the VMC during the Rachhabanda programme during the tenure of YS Rajasekhara Reddy and during the Janmabhoomi programme of the TDP government. However no steps were taken to their lot.

K Durga Rao, Honorary President of the Vijayawada Drainage Union, demanded that the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, which often makes use of the services of drainage workers in the city, be provided with regular employment by absorbing their services. The civic body should recognise drainage workers and provide them with safety equipment. They should also be extended housing facility by the State government."

He further stated realising that the profession is turning highly hazardous and unviable duty to apathetic attitude of the government, drainage workers are migrating to other professions. "Many workers are now settling as auto-rickshaw drivers," he added.

# Chief Whip refutes Naidu's allegations against police

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Gadikota Srikanth Reddy

Government Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy has alleged that N Chandrababu Naidu has not lost his high-handed behaviour even after losing power. Speaking to the media on Wednesday at Tadepalli, he said Naidu, who had weakened the police force in the state making it ineffective, is now making allegations against the police for being straight-forward.

He has lambasted and ridiculed Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu for threatening the police and accusing them of booking cases against Chintamaneni Prabhakar and issuing notices to him. He said Naidu had made the police keep quiet on atrocities committed by TDP leaders.

He said the YSRCP government was neutral in its govern-

nance and would not hesitate to take action against those committing an offence whether it be from the ruling party or the opposition party.

Srikanth Reddy condemned Yanamala Ramakrishnu for supporting Chintamaneni, who had committed atrocities against Dalits and who has a rowdy-sheet against him. He said it was no wonder that Yanamala lost the elections from the Tuni constituency.

## CAPSULE

### Medical official, clerk in ACB net

**VIJAYAWADA:** Guntur District Co-ordinator of Hospital Services Ch Prasanna Kumar was arrested by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths, who caught him red-handed, while accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh through a clerk on Wednesday. The clerk was also listed as an accused and taken into custody. According to ACB sources, Prasanna Kumar demanded Rs 1 lakh bribe from a contractor - T Srinivasa Rao - who supplies food to the District Hospital, Tenali, for clearing his bills for 11 months amounting to Rs 20 lakh. The contractor approached ACB officials in Guntur. The sources said Prasanna Kumar instructed Gopala Krishna, who is working as a clerk under outsourcing agency at Bapatla, to negotiate and receive the bribe amount. As per the ACB team's instructions, the complainant had paid Rs 1 lakh to Gopala Krishna at the hospital. Soon, the ACB team raided and caught the clerk red-handed and later Prasanna Kumar was booked. Both the accused were produced in the ACB Court in Vijayawada.

# Will abide by any decision taken by party chief: Yarlagadda

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

## VAMSI MEETS DUTTA



Claiming that he is a big fan of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, YSRCP leader from Gannavaram Yarlagadda Venkata Rao on Wednesday said he had met the Chief Minister and apprised him of local issues. Addressing a press conference at Gannavaram, he said he would do his best to strengthen the party before the local body elections were held.

It may be recalled that Venkata Rao had met YSRCP president and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy along with ministers Kodali Nani and Perni Nani on Monday. "Just four days after assuming office as Chief Minister, Jaganmohan Reddy had thought about me though I was defeated in the elections. So great is his concern for me," Venkata Rao said.

He said he would respect any decision taken by Jaganmohan on him and asserted that he would keep supporting party workers in the constituency.

Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi on Wednesday met YSRCP political committee member Dutta Ramachandra Rao at Hanuman Junction.

Vamsi is learnt to have discussed several issues including his quitting TDP and the situation that is likely to arise after a by-election to the

Gannavaram constituency is announced. Vamsi's meeting with Ramachandra Rao, who was one of the close aides of late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, has become a hot topic for discussion among political analysts. Meanwhile, it is learnt that Jaganmohan Reddy had assured an MLC post to Venkata Rao.

Venkata Rao said there was no discussion on Vallabhaneni Vamsi during his meeting with the Chief Minister. Replying to a question, he said, "I do not want to react to Vamsi's comments. He has not joined YSRCP yet. You better ask

when he's joining the party." Stating that he is a man of character, he said he would not join any other party. "Only Vamsi knows whether he has decided to join YSRCP attracted by its government's policies or out of fear of cases," he said.

## Andhra, Hyd qualify for Vijay Merchant tourney

**VIJAYAWADA:** Andhra under-16 team emerged runner-up in South Zone Inter-State League Tournament, finishing with 21 points and Hyderabad with the same number of points and better run quotient were declared winners. Both the teams have qualified for All India Knock-Out Vijay Merchant Trophy Tournament scheduled to be held at Mumbai and Dharamshala.

## I-T raids...

Continued from Page 1

According to sources, sleuths are suspecting massive tax evasions in production, distribution and exhibition earnings. Ramanaidu Studio is set for a Dec release of 'Venky Mama' that stars the uncle-nephew duo Venkatesh and Naga Chaitanya. Over the last 10 years, given the drop in earnings from movie productions, Ramanaidu Studio has ventured into film distribution and exhibits.

# Lokesh, Devineni will go to jail soon: Vasantha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



YSRCP MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad has said that very soon the people, who had paid commissions to former ministers Lokesh and Devineni Umamaheswara Rao, will reveal everything about their corrupt deals before the media and send them to jail.

Addressing a press conference at Tadepalli, near here, on Wednesday, he alleged that in Mylavaram constituency Lokesh had collected three per cent commission. "It is certain that Umamaheswara Rao will go to jail," he said.

Condemning the recent 'unwarranted' statements by Umamaheswara Rao against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, he said the TDP leader was rejected by the people and also by his party leaders. This was evident during Opposition Leader N Chandrababu Naidu's fast against the 'non-existent' sand scarcity. Umamaheswara Rao was not allowed to sit on the dais, he

added. Krishna Prasad pooh-poohed Umamaheswara Rao's comments on the Polavaram project and said the project was started by the then Chief Minister of unified AP YS Rajasekhara Reddy, and it would be completed by his son Jaganmohan Reddy. He said the erstwhile TDP government had done nothing in the past five years to execute the project. The government knows its priorities and it would complete the Polavaram project by 2022 as envisaged by the Chief Minister.

On the charge made by Umamaheswara Rao that Navayuga company's contract

was terminated as the government was against the firm, he said the deal was scrapped as the government did not like the way the works were handled by the TDP government. He said a unique process of reverse tendering was followed by the government in awarding the project contract.

# Follow Gandhi's ideals, people told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The life of Mahatma Gandhi is the soul of the country and his policies of non-violence and truth will ever serve as guiding principles for us, said Fr P Amil Kumar, SJ, Vice-Principal of Andhra Loyola College.

He was addressing a meeting organised on the college campus to review Gandhi's autobiography 'My experiments with truth' on Wednesday. Zoology lecturer at the college G Lily Mary coordinated the book review by students of the college.

N Sravani, a second year under-graduate student, said most of the people in society are selfish and only a few of them would rise above narrow-mindedness and think about the common good in an optimistic manner.

"We should follow in the footsteps of Gandhi to find a lasting solution to problems plaguing the society," she felt.

She stressed the promotion of mother tongue to preserve the nation's culture and tradition. Great leaders like Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama were inspired by

Gandhi's experiments with truth, she added. Chief guest of the programme Golla Narayana Rao, Secretary of the Andhra Arts Academy explained how the debates between Gandhi and his wife Kasturba Gandhi had paved the way for women's empowerment and emancipation of the untouchables.

# Vizag celebrates International Children Day

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Marking the International Children's Day on Wednesday, students were sensitised on their rights and also programmes introduced by the government for the welfare and protection of them.

The World Children's Day is celebrated annually on November 20 in a bid to create awareness and support children's welfare across the globe.

District Child Protection Unit, District Woman and Child Development Agency and Swanthana, a voluntary organisation conducted International Children's Day at Visakha Government Women's Junior College here on Wednesday.

Addressing a gathering, N Sita Mahalakshmi, Project



Students taking pledge to mark the International Children's Day in Vizag on Wednesday (right) Dr Prem Khazal, Assistant Commissioner of Police, addressing a gathering

Director, Vizag district Women and Child Development Agency, urged all the stakeholders to ensure that children could exercise their rights and encourage girls in education, employment, medical and other fields. There are many laws dealing with the rights of

the children and also helpline numbers such as 181 (SAKHI) for women and 1098 for children.

She spoke about good touch and bad touch to the girl students and also suggested that every college should impart training to students on child

rights laws. Moreover, AP government has launched YSR Kishori Viaksam, especially for teen and young girls. It is creating awareness about different topics like child marriages, child sexual abuse, nutritional diet, menstruation, women's empowerment, traf-

ficking among others. Encouraging the students in police uniform, Dr Prem Khazal, Assistant Commissioner of Police, mentioned about that emergency toll free police number, 100, and said they will immediately track the callers with GPS facility if anyone calls them on this number. She urged all the students to call 100 whenever they are in danger or feel insecure.

A Satyanarayana, District Child Protection Officer, said that every child should be privileged to four rights: Right to live, Right to Protection, Right to Development and Right to Participation. College staff and Pragnan Kumar Lakkaraju, Anne Grace, Raj Kumar from Swanthana Organisation were present

# NHRC notice to AP govt on 32 labourers rescued from Anantapur

Continued from Page 1

According to revenue and police officials, arrangements are being made to send the labourers to their native places on Wednesday evening.

Anantapur Taluka Circle Inspector Krishna Reddy said, "We have booked a suo motu case against brick kiln owners under Child Labour (Prohibition and Abolition) Act and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 for the violation of children's rights. We are waiting to receive the report from local revenue officials to register another case under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act."

District Collector S Satyanarayana said that all the labourers will be sent to their native places this evening. He said, "All of them have been rescued and will be sent back to their native places safely. The brick kiln owners have been booked already."

When asked about NHRC's allegation of "officials' negligence" in pursuing the bonded labourers case, he said, "We have acted as soon as we got information about the happening." Meanwhile, human rights activists are demanding the rehabilitation of the affected families.

# Rajat to head petrochemical investment panel

Continued from Page 1

On Tuesday, a high-level meeting under Union Chemicals and Petrochemicals Secretary P Raghavendra Rao in Delhi discussed the proposed amendments to the PCPIR Policy that was put in place in 2007 and constituted the committee headed by Bhargava, a senior official here said.

"The Committee will submit it a report in a fortnight after consultations with Principal Secretaries of Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Gujarat. Besides, industry associations and other stakeholders will also be consulted," he said. This is the first time the Centre is seeking to amend the PCPIR Policy after it was introduced.

For over a year now, the Central government had been mulling new policy interventions to attract investments into the PCPIRs by addressing



various issues. At a recent summit on global chemicals and petrochemicals manufacturing hubs, the issue was discussed and accordingly, the Centre has now set up the high-level committee to come up with necessary suggestions for rejuvenating the PCPIRs, the official added.

The Centre, as per the PCPIR Policy, approved four PCPIRs at Dahej (Gujarat) on the west coast and Visakhapatnam - Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh), Paradeep (Odisha) and Cuddalore-Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu)

on the east coast. Barring Dahej, the other PCPIRs have not actually taken off as envisaged over the years.

After it remained in cold storage for over six years, the Andhra Pradesh government has now revived the Visakhapatnam-Kakinada PCPIR to attract an investment of over Rs 2 lakh crore under Master Plan-2031.

The VK-PCPIR is the largest in the country spread over an area of 640 sq km along the Bay of Bengal coast. Two big-ticket projects have now been lined up as anchor tenants for the PCPIR in Kakinada with an aggregate investment of over USD15.72 billion.

Haldia Petro Chemicals would set up a refinery in the Kakinada Special Economic Zone with an investment of USD11.43 billion to serve as the anchor unit with supply of required feedstock.

# TSRTC JAC offers to withdraw strike

Continued from Page 1

In a statement, the JAC urged the state government to refer the strike issue to Labour Court immediately as the High Court had given two weeks' time to the government to furnish the issues mentioned in the JAC notice to Labour Court.

Referring the Supreme Court's previous verdict that the aim of strike of workers is for solution of their problems but not leaving the duties, JAC asked the state government to provide workable conditions that prevailed before the strike to the workers. Then the workers will join their duties. JAC also urged the state government to consider the RTC as a model corporation.

Later speaking to the media, Ashwathama Reddy said that they received the High Court verdict copy on Wednesday. "We discussed it today. We are welcoming the High Court directions to Labour Court. We are also

welcoming the High Court's today's verdict. We are hoping that the state government respects it," he said. He exuded confidence that they will get justice in Labour Court.

He said that the state government as well as RTC management has the responsibility of protecting the dignity of the workers. The government has to take back the employees unconditionally. "We are requesting the government to invite us back for unconditional duties. We are ready to call off the strike if the government invites us unconditionally. Our main demand is unconditional duties. We are hoping that the Labour Court will solve our problems. We will raise the issue of salary for strike period in Labour Court. We didn't get any suggestion from the government. We are hoping that the government will respond to our statement. We will sign only on duty chart and attendance register," he stated.



# Chandrababu spreading canards over power deals: Balineni

Continued from Page 1

"We proceed as per the law and payments are being made as per the directions of the High Court. We shall implement the decisions of ERC as directed by the High Court," Srinivasa Reddy said. The minister said the government has to pay arrears not only to non-conventional fuel companies, but also to others. More than 18,000 crore arrears are pending for the last 16-18 months. "Chandrababu Naidu is responsible for the current situation and he doesn't have the right to talk about power sector in the State," he said.

Srinivasa Reddy said the State government has asked the Centre for subsidised loans to pay the arrears and the request is under consideration. "Jaganmohan Reddy is implementing the schemes and running the government with transparency. His policies will bring about a resurgence in the power sector," he said.

# European panel that toured J-K was on 'private visit' to India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A group of European parliamentarians who recently visited Kashmir were on a "private visit" to the country, the government informed Parliament on Wednesday.

"The government of Jammu and Kashmir has reported that a group of 27 members of European Parliament (MEPs), who belonged to different political parties including ruling and opposition parties, paid a private visit to India from October 28, 2019 to November 1, 2019 at the invitation of International Institute for Nonaligned Studies, a Delhi based think tank," Union minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said in a written statement in Rajya Sabha.

He was responding to a set of questions that sought to know which institution organised and

## GOVERNMENT TELLS PARLIAMENT



bore expenses of this Kashmir tour and whether the institution that organised it was working as a coordinating institution of the central government.

To another question whether the Union government has "distracted" from its policy of not allowing any external inter-

To another question whether the Union government has "distracted" from its policy of not allowing any external intervention on the Jammu-Kashmir issue, Reddy stated that India's consistent position has been that issues, if any, with Pakistan are discussed only bilaterally.

vention on the Jammu-Kashmir issue, Reddy stated that India's consistent position has been that issues, if any, with Pakistan are discussed only bilaterally.

"There is no scope for any third party role or mediation," the minister said.

In the first visit by a foreign delegation, a team of 23 MEPs travelled to Kashmir in October on a two-day visit to have a first-hand assessment of the situation after the state's special status was revoked in August by abrogating Article 370. Of the 27 MPs who came to India, 23 went to Kashmir.

# Fee hike: Visually challenged JNU students protest outside police hqs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Visually challenged students of Jawaharlal Nehru University on Wednesday protested outside the old police headquarters here against the alleged lathicharge by the force on varsity students protesting against hostel fee hike.

Rashmi Sharma, a differently-abled student, said, "We want a written apology from Delhi police on the lathicharge that they did on a visually challenged student."

"If the hostel fee hike is implemented, affordable and accessible education will be denied to us. A few days back, police were protesting after they were beaten up by lawyers. How could they forget that students also have a right to protest?" said Manish Chauhan, an MPH student.

A forum of Jawaharlal Nehru University's visually challenged students earlier alleged they were not allowed to go to Jai Singh Road towards the new police headquarters to



protest. However, members of the JNU Visually Challenged Students Forum said, their bus was stopped and taken to Vasant Kunj police station. Later, they said their bus was brought to the old police headquarters at ITO.

The forum had condemned the "police lathicharge" on visually challenged students during a protest on Monday over hostel fee hike by the JNU administration and had

demanding an apology from the police. Police had denied baton charging the students.

JNU students have been agitating against hostel fee hike for over three weeks.

The fresh protest by the students came on the day a meeting was underway between representatives of JNU Students Union and HRD Ministry appointed three-member committee to resolve the issue.

## WB Governor shown black flags on way to event in Murshidabad

PNS ■ DOMKOL(WB)

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, who has been at loggerheads with the state government, was shown black flags and asked to "go back" by alleged Trinamool Congress activists during his visit to Domkol area in Murshidabad district on Wednesday.

The governor, who was on his way to Domkol Girls College to inaugurate a newly constructed building there, was asked to "go back" and shown black flags by some people flanking the road, through which his convoy was passing, police said.

The TMC leadership, however, declined to comment on the incident. The governor has been locked in a war of words with the state government over a number of issues -- ranging from seating arrangement at the Durga Puja carnival to his unscheduled visit to Singur.

# People 'terrified' to drink Delhi water: Manoj to Kejri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari on Wednesday shot a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, claiming that people were "deeply scared" and "terrified of drinking the water supplied in the city which a BIS report has found to be "poisonous".

Kejriwal had earlier blamed Central ministers and BJP leaders for scaring people by saying that the water supply in Delhi was poisonous.

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.

"Since the BIS report found that the drinking water being supplied by Arvind Kejriwal government is poisonous, people of Delhi are deeply scared. Uncontrolled panic has set in Delhi, people are terrified of drinking the water you are supplying," Tiwari wrote in the letter.

He claimed that he has received calls and met people who are worried about the safety of their family members, especially children.

"People from many parts of Delhi are coming forward to



Manoj Tiwari



Arvind Kejriwal

report that their tap water stinks, sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between the smell of sewage and water that you are supplying as drinking water," the Delhi BJP chief alleged.

The quality of water supply in Delhi is snowballing into a major issue for the ruling AAP and the opposition BJP and Congress as the Assembly polls in Delhi draws near.

"Do whatever kind of politics you want to do, but do not play with the life of children, elderly and the innocent citizen of Delhi. In the name of free water you are supplying dirty water and you loudly claim that you are supplying clean drinking water," Tiwari wrote.

Battle lines have been drawn over the issue with the Delhi government on Wednesday nominating Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman Dinesh Mohaniya and Board member

Shalabh Kumar for a joint water sampling and testing along with a team of BIS officers.

Paswan has nominated BIS director general Pramod Kumar Tiwari and deputy director general Jayant Kumar Chaudhary for the water tests.

The Delhi BJP president said he will accompany the team as North East Delhi MP and asked the chief minister to declare the date and time for water sampling.

"Also, for fairness of the purpose and an impartial opinion on the quality of water, let the sample data and test results be analysed by a group of 2-3 neutral experts," he said.

The Delhi government on Tuesday said that it will form 32 teams to collect drinking water samples from across the city and the test results will be put in public domain within a month.

## Indigo flight makes emergency landing in Chennai

PNS ■ CHENNAI

An Indigo aircraft from Coimbatore carrying 168 passengers made an emergency landing here following detection of a smoke alarm on Wednesday, airport officials said.

The flight made a safe landing and all the passengers and crew members onboard were safe, they said.

Pilot of the Coimbatore-Chennai service contacted the control room after detecting the smoke alarm from the cargo area and sought priority landing, they added. Further details are awaited.



# SC asks Kerala govt to come out with exclusive law

## Administration of Sabarimala temple

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday asked the Kerala government to come out with an exclusive legislation regarding the administration of the historic Sabarimala temple.

A bench headed by Justice N V Ramana asked the state to place before it by third week of January next year the legislation, also covering the aspects of welfare of pilgrims visiting there.

The counsel appearing for the state said it has formulated amendments to the law that would deal with the temples and their administrations which are presently being governed by the Travancore Devaswom Board.

The draft law also proposes to give one-third representation to women in the temple advisory committee, the counsel said.

This aspect triggered a debate

in the courtroom with regard to September 2018 apex court verdict allowing entry of girls and women of all ages into the Sabarimala temple.

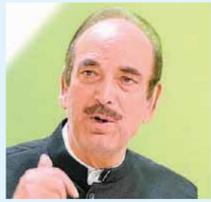
The state government said that for the time being, it proposes to give representation in the temple advisory committee to only those women who are above 50 years of age.

One of the judges of the bench referred to the September 28, 2018 verdict and observed that the direction allowing girls and women of all ages holds the field.

The top court was hearing a plea filed in 2011 which has raised the issue of administration of Sabarimala temple.

In August this year, the state government had told the top court that it was considering enacting a "separate legislation" with regard to administration of the Sabarimala temple.

## SHORT READS



### 'Govt should make full disclosure about electoral bonds'

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress on Wednesday demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention and urged the government to disclose all details about electoral bonds before Parliament. "What we are talking about today leads straight to the PM's Office. The BJP government is running 90 per cent of the business in this country with a few industrialists," senior party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad alleged.



### All schools, colleges in J-K open; attendance 98pc: Govt

**NEW DELHI:** All schools and colleges are now open in Jammu and Kashmir and there is 98 per cent attendance in these institutions, the government told Parliament on Wednesday. It asserted that all hospitals and healthcare centres are also "fully" operational. "Government of Jammu and Kashmir has reported that after initial restrictions, all the schools and colleges are now open in Jammu and Kashmir including the Kashmir valley," Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said in a written statement to Rajya Sabha. "Currently, the examinations for 10th and 12th standard are going on and there has been over 98 per cent attendance of students." He added that there are no restrictions on movement of students in the valley. "Further, all hospitals and health centres are open and all related medical services are fully functional," the minister said.

### 8 killed as car hits truck in Assam

**TEZPUR:** A car carrying eight persons, who were returning from their friend's wedding, hit a stationary truck on NH 15 in Assam's Udalgiri district on Wednesday, killing all of them on the spot, a police officer said. Vehicles, including the vegetable-laden truck, were stranded at Gelabai on the national highway, due to another accident that had occurred a short while ago, he said. The victims were friends of the groom, hailing from Borjhar area of Tezpur town, and were co-workers. The car was returning to Tezpur from Baihata. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination, he said.



## 'No comments': Sonia on Maha political developments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday refused to comment on the progress being made in the formation of a new government in Maharashtra. Her response came as Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut exuded confidence that a government led by his party will be in place by next month in Maharashtra. He said the picture will become clear in the next two days. "No comments," Gandhi said in Parliament House when reporters posed questions on the political situation in Maharashtra.

# Congress demands restoration of SPG cover for Gandhis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Anand Sharma on Wednesday demanded in Rajya Sabha restoration of the SPG cover to the Gandhi family and former prime minister Manmohan Singh by "rising above partisan politics" but senior BJP leaders maintained the decision was taken by the Home Ministry based on threat perception.

The central government earlier this month replaced the Special Protection Group (SPG) security cover given to Sonia Gandhi, her son Rahul Gandhi, daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and former prime minister Singh by the "Z-plus" security of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the House, veteran Congress MP Sharma said there was a clear evaluation of threat perceptions to the four leaders and withdrawal of SPG



cover makes them vulnerable.

"It is the responsibility of the state to protect its leaders," he said, while pointing out that the Congress-led UPA government had not disturbed security cover of former prime ministers, including that of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and also of other protectees.

This security cover was neither diluted nor withdrawn during the 10-years of UPA rule, he added. He further said that

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the House, veteran Congress MP Sharma said there was a clear evaluation of threat perceptions to the four leaders and withdrawal of SPG cover makes them vulnerable.

after withdrawal of the SPG cover to Gandhis and Singh there are concerns which are well founded.

"We would urge the government that these issues of personal safety, security and lives of our leaders have to be beyond partisan political considerations."

"Please rise above that. Review and restore (SPG secu-

urity cover). That would be in national interest, otherwise intention will be questioned today, tomorrow and in the future," Sharma said.

Defending the government's decision to downgrade the security cover, senior BJP MP Subramanian Swamy said the decision has been taken by the Home Ministry, and moreover the threat perception to the Gandhis has disappeared with the end of the LTTE in Sri Lanka.

"Threat perceptions have always been the judgement of the Home Ministry...It has been always been a special committee in the Home Ministry which decides. If there is any question about it, one can go to court and challenge it," he said.

He further said the threat originally arose out of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

# Govt to modify NOC guidelines for buildings near defence units

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Defence ministry is deliberating revising no-objection guidelines for buildings in the vicinity of defence establishments and ensure that security is not jeopardised while accommodating development needs.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who had served as Defence Minister in the previous NDA government, said there is "no conflict" between civilians and armed services on the issue.

In October 2016, the Defence ministry had issued a circular regarding guidelines for issue of No Objection Certificate (NOC) for building constructions.

As per the guidelines, Army stations requiring NOC from the Local Military Authority (MLA) within distances specified



ified have been identified. It is a "sensitive issue" but the situation is not that no permissions have been given for projects, Sitharaman told Lok Sabha.

There are projects that are getting clearances. After 2017, as many as 22 proposals related to Mumbai were received and out of them, only one is

under examination. Seven projects were given permission, she added.

"Without hesitation, permissions were given," the minister said even as she stressed that national security cannot be put in danger.

The minister said during her tenure, she had six meet-

ings on the issue and assured that matter is "almost nearing the stage of finalisation".

"342 establishments of Indian Army have been identified under the circular dated October 21, 2016. No establishment of Air Force, Navy and other establishments of Army have been identified," Minister

of State for Defence Shripad Naik said in a written reply.

He said the ministry has received representations related to the circular.

On whether the government has received representations regarding non-compliance with the circular, the minister replied in the affirmative.

"Based on these representations, revision of NOC guidelines is under deliberation in the Ministry of Defence in consultations with the Services and Coast Guard."

"The matter is being monitored to ensure that the security of defence establishments does not get jeopardised while accommodating development needs," Naik noted.

There is "no conflict" between civilians and armed services personnel but it takes time to address issues, Sitharaman said.



## Four arrested for Rs 400 cr GST fraud, ED might join probe

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) department has arrested four persons for allegedly making false input tax credit (ITC) claims causing loss to the exchequer to the tune of at least Rs 400 crore, sources said. While one person was remanded to departmental custody of the CGST office for seven days, the rest were sent to judicial custody for as many days.

ED sources told PTI, "We will study the case and if required, we will look into the money laundering aspect." Sources in the department said that the mastermind Pankaj Bagla acted as a broker for creating false bills for enterprises helping them to avail ITC claims. The enterprises would benefit after getting the ITC claims as it would reduce their output tax liability to be paid in cash to the government. Another arrested person B Singhan, who is a CA, acted as a conduit and enabled various enterprises to avail false ITC.

# With shattered dreams, deportees return home from US



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Their American dream shattered and huge savings wasted, nearly 150 Indians returned home broke on Wednesday after being deported for either violating visa norms or illegally entering the United States.

As they stepped outside the airport, one after the other, they appeared sad. Some said they felt dejected that they could not realise their American dream even after several attempts.

"This was the fourth time I have been deported," said Singh Jabarjung, 24, from Punjab's Bhatinda. "I boarded a flight on May 15 and reached Mexico via Moscow and Paris. From there, I tried to enter California on May 16 but was caught by police and deported from Arizona," he said.

He said he has spent Rs 24 lakh in the four attempts and Rs 40 lakh on advocacy.

Lakshwinder Singh, another deportee, said he had given Rs 25 lakh to an Amritsar-based agent to help him enter the US.

"He sent me to Mexico on May 2 via Moscow and Paris. They caught me while I was trying to cross the border and deported me from Arizona in US," he said. "The special aircraft carrying the deportees landed at the T3 terminal of the Delhi airport at 6am, an airport official said. The aircraft reached India via Bangladesh. Following paper work with the immigration department, the deportees have started coming out of the airport. These 150 Indians have either violated their visa norms or were illegal immigrants, the officials said."

# Pawar meets PM Modi over farmers' distress in Maha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Wednesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament here and apprised him about farmers' distress in Maharashtra and sought his urgent intervention in the wake of the crop damage and rising agrarian crisis in the state. The meeting at the prime minister's chamber in Parliament comes amid uncertainty over the government formation in the Maharashtra where talks are on between the NCP, the Congress and the Shiv Sena for an alliance.

In a three-page memorandum, Pawar said in Nashik district crops like soyabean, paddy, finger millet, corns, bajra and vegetables like tomato and onion were at the harvesting stage but incessant and unseasonable rains completely ruined them. He said 44 farmers from Nashik have committed suicide in the face of the crisis in the last 10 months. In Nagpur, cotton crops over 35,000 hectares have been damaged due to unseasonal rains, Pawar said.

"Due to President's rule in the state, your urgent intervention is highly necessitated. I shall be grateful if you could take immediate steps to initiate massive relief measures to ameliorate distressed farmers," the memorandum said.

The duo is meeting two days after the prime minister



**The duo is meeting two days after the prime minister praised the NCP lawmakers in Parliament over their decision against entering the Well during the proceedings**

## CONGRESS UNHAPPY WITH MEET

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress seems to be unhappy with NCP chief Sharad Pawar meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue of farmers' distress in Maharashtra. Home Minister Amit Shah was also present in the meeting. The Congress sources say the meeting is sending wrong signals when negotiation for an alliance with the Sena is going on. The Congress has already expressed apprehension on a tie up with the Sena. The NCP-Congress high level committee is to meet to finalise the common minimum program (CMP). Sena MP Sanjay Raut has also claimed that there will be Sena-led government in the state soon. The Shiv Sena has also raised the issue of changing of seats in the upper house. Sanjay Raut has shot off a letter to the Rajya Sabha Chairman saying, "when they have not parted ways from NDA officially, why their seats have been changed arbitrarily". The two developments of Pawar-PM meet and Sena writing letter to Venkaiah Naidu are giving mixed signals, said a senior congress leader. However, a top source said on Tuesday that at this point too, there is no commitment, and matters will move according to the talks, and Congress is "not in a hurry". On Monday, NCP leader Sharad Pawar had met Sonia Gandhi and discussed the possibility of a tie-up. After the meeting, Pawar said, "I have briefed Sonia Gandhi about the political situation in the state and leaders of NCP. Congress will meet to discuss the issues and then will report to Sonia Gandhi." The Congress has also kept the window open, party chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said. Pawar has however ruled out any tie-up with the BJP, but said that during the meeting, supporting the Shiv Sena was not discussed.

praised the NCP lawmakers in Parliament over their decision against entering the Well during the proceedings. NCP and Congress leaders

will meet in the evening to discuss how to partner with the Shiv Sena, a long-term BJP ally that recently ended its alliance with the ruling party over a

power tussle in Maharashtra. When asked about the government formation in Maharashtra, the NCP chief refused to comment.

## Internet in Kashmir after green light from local admn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said in Rajya Sabha that the government will restore Internet connection in Kashmir as soon as the local administration feels it is fit to do so.

Responding to a series of questions on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir during Question Hour, Shah also asserted that not a single person has died in police firing after August 5 when the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir was scrapped.

He also said all newspapers and TV channels are functioning in Kashmir and there is no decline in circulation of newspapers. "The situation there was always normal. There were many notions spread all over the world.

There is total normalcy prevailing. After August 5, not a single person has died in police firing although many feared there would be bloodshed and more number of killings," the Home Minister said.

## Trouble for Medha Patkar as passport office issues notice

■ 'Failure to disclose info regarding pending cases'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Regional Passport Office, Mumbai, has issued a show cause notice to Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) activist Medha Patkar as to why her passport should not be impounded for failing to disclose information regarding pendency of cases against her.

The RPO Mumbai has noted that nine criminal cases have been registered against her — three are in Barwani, one in Alirajpur and five in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh — and are still pending adjudication. "While obtaining passport bearing no...dated March 30, 2017 you have not disclosed the fact regarding pendency of above cases and obtained passport by suppression of material information.

"In view of the same it is proposed to impound your passport bearing and any other passport if issued subsequently under section 10(3)(e) of the Passports Act 1967. You are requested to state why action should not be



**The RPO Mumbai has noted that nine criminal cases have been registered against her — three are in Barwani, one in Alirajpur and five in Khandwa district of MP — and are still pending adjudication**

taken under section 12(1) of the Passports Act 1967," the notice issued by the passport office on October 18 said. The passport officials have sought her explanation within 10 days from the date of this communication failing which action would be taken.

A complaint was filed against the activist in June this year by a journalist stating that Patkar had obtained her passport by concealing and suppressing material facts from the RPO Mumbai.

According to the sources, Patkar has till date not sub-

mitted any reply despite the lapse of more than 30 days. Patkar had earlier contested Mumbai North-East Parliament seat in 2014 on the AAP ticket but lost the election. Section 10(3) of the passport act states that "the passport authority may impound or cause to be impounded or revoke a passport or travel document Section(e) if proceedings in respect of an offence alleged to have been committed by the holder of the passport or travel document are pending before a criminal court in India".

## BHU students continue protest, Muslim prof feels 'insulted'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The students' protest against the appointment of a Muslim professor in the Sanskrit Vidya Dharma Vigyan in the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) entered its 14th day on Wednesday with the students refusing to give up on their demand. The BHU administration continues to maintain that the appointment of professor Feroz Khan is in accordance with the prescribed norms and there is no question of his removal.

The BHU administration has issued a statement, saying, "The idea behind the establishment of the university was to contribute in nation-building by providing equal opportunity of study and teaching to all deserving people without any discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, gender and sect."

The statement also said that Khan's appointment was a unanimous decision made by a selection committee under a transparent process.

The Muslim professor Feroz Kahn, meanwhile, said that he felt 'insulted' by the incident and added that he would have never applied for the job if the university had mentioned in the advertisement that they did not want a Muslim.

Students sitting on dharna, on the other hand, have started reciting Hanuman Chalisa to underline their opposition to a Muslim faculty member.



## Pareesh Rawal: Stunned by the protests against professor

NEW DELHI: Actor and former BJP MP Pareesh Rawal has condemned the ongoing lockdown by students at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) over the appointment of a Muslim professor in the Sanskrit faculty, saying he is 'stunned by the protest' against Feroze Khan.

"Stunned by the protest against professor Feroze Khan. What has language to do with religion? Irony is professor Feroze has done his masters and PhD in Sanskrit (sic)," Pareesh Rawal tweeted. A group of 30-odd students of Sanskrit literature have been sitting outside the office of BHU vice-chancellor Rakesh Bhatnagar for 12 days, protesting the appointment of Feroze Khan as an assistant professor. Outside his office, students have been reciting hymns and even carried out a yagna, saying they would not budge till their demands are met. The university administration has rallied behind Professor Khan, saying he is the most suitable candidate for the job and that all procedures were followed during the appointment. The university has issued statements twice in the last week, saying it is "committed to achieving the objectives of the BHU in providing equal educational and teaching opportunities to everyone irrespective of religion".



Chakrapani Ojha, a student leader leading the protest since November 7, said: "The appointment of a Muslim faculty member has hurt the sentiments of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya who established the BHU. This appointment has been made as part of a conspiracy.

Guj: Lioness found dead at Gir sanctuary

**VADODARA:** A lioness was found dead in the sanctuary area of Gujarat's Gir Somnath district, a forest official said on Wednesday. Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is home to more than 500 Asiatic lions. A nine to 12-year-old lioness was found dead during a joint patrol of Hadala and Jasadhhar border rounds staff on Tuesday night, chief conservator forests (wildlife) D T Vasavada said. A team comprising a forest official, two range forest officers and veterinarians, who examined the carcass, didn't find anything suspicious, he added. The lioness may have been responsible for attacking a 'malldhar' or tribal herdsman in Dodihi Ness area four days ago, Vasavada said. Doctors have collected required samples during post-mortem to ascertain the exact cause of death, the senior official added.

Man, two children run over by speeding bus

**SURAT:** Three members of a family, including two children, were killed after getting hit by a city bus on Dindoli bridge here in the early hours of Wednesday, police said. Yashwant Ponikar, his son Bhavesh (7) and nephew Bhupendra (11) were killed when the motorcycle they were travelling in was hit by a speeding city bus on Dindoli bridge in Gujarat's Surat city, an official said. Another man, who was injured in the mishap, was rushed to a government hospital, where he is currently undergoing treatment, he said.

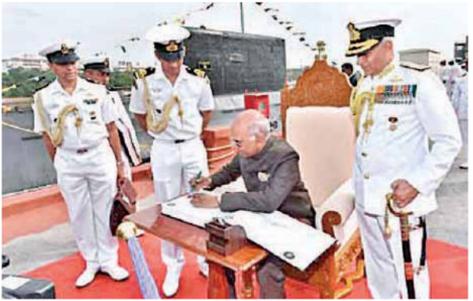
## Navy is inducting large number of state-of-the-art assets

PNS ■ KANNUR

Indian Navy is inducting a large number of highly capable and state-of-the-art assets and equipment, President Ram Nath Kovind said on Wednesday as he highlighted the strategic importance of the seas in the well being of people of the country.

Addressing the Naval cadets after awarding the President's Colour to the Indian Naval Academy, the President said that India is a maritime nation and highlighted the strategic values of its long coastline and several islands which are acting as the country's "national outposts".

"A significant proportion of India's trade and energy needs are met through the medium of the oceans. Safety of the seas and maritime commons, therefore, remains a critical requirement to ensure the economic and infrastructure development on land, as also to ensure well-being of its people," he said at the function organised at the Ezhimala Naval Academy in the district. Underscoring the security challenges — both in the con-



ventional and asymmetric domains — facing the country today, Kovind said, "The country looks upon you to deliver, each and every time, whether it is a full fledged conflict, natural calamity, law and order challenge or our diplomatic mission."

Hailing the Indian Navy as the country's prime instrument to ensure maritime security, Kovind said, "you will be pleased to know that our Navy is inducting a large number of highly capable and state-of-the-art assets and equipment". "We live in a digital age and the battles of tomorrow will

also be fought in the domain of information and technology.

You, as technical graduates, would be expected to stay ahead of the technology curve to be better prepared to respond when required," the President said.

The President complimented the commandants, all instructors and officers involved in training at the academy for producing multifaceted officers for Indian Navy.

"I am sure that you will never let your country down," he said.

## LS member seeks relook at national security definition

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"I am unable to repair my house" due to restrictions on building construction in the vicinity of defence establishments, a Shiv Sena member said in Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

During the Question Hour, Rahul Shewale also demanded that the definition of national security should be relooked at.

"I am an MP and my father was a Naval officer... but I am unable to repair my own house," Shewale said.

The House was discussing a question about defence establishments and restrictions on buildings in their vicinity. Shiv Sena, a long time ally, parted ways with the NDA recently in the wake of differences with the ruling BJP over formation of government in Maharashtra.

About the issue, Finance Minister and former Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the situation is not that no permissions have been given for projects.

## UP HOME GUARD SALARY FRAUD

# Divisional commandant among five arrested

PNS ■ NOIDA

Five Home Guard officials, including a divisional commandant, have been arrested for their alleged role in the fraudulent withdrawal of salaries of the force personnel, police said on Wednesday.

Their arrest comes a day after muster rolls (attendance logs) of all home guard personnel were found burnt in a box inside the office of the Gautam Buddha Nagar district commandant of the Home Guard in Greater Noida.

Attendance logs of all the personnel since 2014 in the district



were found destroyed in the fire amid an ongoing investigation into the salary fraud, prompting Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to intervene.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Vaibhav Krishna said five accused have been arrested for their suspected role in the salary

scam. "Home Guards' present Divisional Commandant Ram Narayan Chaurasia, who has earlier served as district commandant in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Assistant Company Commander Satish, and Platoon commanders Montu, Satveer and Shailendra have been arrested in the salary scam case," he said.

— VAIBHAV KRISHNA, Senior Superintendent of Police

scam. "Home Guards' present Divisional Commandant Ram Narayan Chaurasia, who has earlier served as district commandant in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Assistant Company Commander Satish, and Platoon commanders Montu,

Satveer and Shailendra have been arrested in the salary scam case," he said.

Krishna said the five suspects have detailed the modus operandi of the fraud to police and further details will be made public later on Wednesday.

## Vulnerability detected in WhatsApp; CERT-In issues advisory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



An Indian cyber security agency has warned WhatsApp users against a "vulnerability" that can attack this popular social media messaging app and compromise individual system without seeking permissions.

The Computer Emergency Response Team-India (CERT-In) has issued an advisory in this context calling the severity of the threat, being spread by an MP4 file, as 'high.'

The advisory comes in the backdrop of recent develop-

ments where WhatsApp had informed the Indian government in September that over hundred Indian users were targeted by the Israeli spyware Pegasus. "A vulnerability has been reported in WhatsApp which could be exploited by a remote

attacker to execute arbitrary code on the target system," the latest advisory said.

The CERT-In is the nodal agency to combat hacking, phishing and to fortify security-related defences of the Indian internet domain.

The agency's advisory suggested "upgrading" to the latest version of WhatsApp to combat or tide over the problem.

Describing the malicious action of the vulnerability in the popular social messaging app (application), it said, "A stack-based buffer overflow vulnerability exists in WhatsApp due to improper parsing of elementary stream metadata of an MP4 file. A remote attacker could exploit this vulnerability by sending a specially crafted MP4 file to the target system."

It added that this could trigger a buffer overflow condition leading to execution of arbitrary code by the attacker.

"The exploitation does not require any form of authentication from the victim end and executes on downloading of malicious crafted mp4 file on victim's system," it said. Successful exploitation of this vulnerability, it said, could allow the remote attacker to cause remote code execution (RCE) or denial of service (DoS) condition, which could lead to further compromise of the system.

People belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir," Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

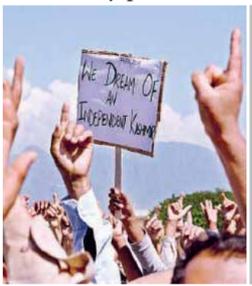
After revocation of Article 370, 'The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004' is applicable to the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh with certain amendments, as mentioned in 'The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019', he said.

People belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes in the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh would continue to get the benefit of reservation in jobs, the Centre said on Wednesday.

"Before the revocation of Article 370 and 35A, 'The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004' was in force to provide reservation in jobs to the scheduled castes,

# Myths about Kashmir

Facts and figures on J&K tabled in the House may paint a rosy picture but won't change ground realities



**K**ashmir's smokescreen becomes so dense by the day that in the end, it solidifies as the only truth, or a picture of it, so relentlessly it is pushed down our throats. And with stories of the non-cooperative Kashmiri and the Western media bias drowning out the validity of the ugly truth that does make it to the surface, the myth takes hold of the mindscape as it is easier to digest narratives that operate within simplistic binaries than raise complex questions. Like the response the Government has tabled in the Rajya Sabha, that

stone-pelting has subsided ever since the abolition of Article 370 in Kashmir and that tourist footfalls have increased, apparently generating an additional ₹25 crore as revenue since August. The first claim gets negated by the government's own admission that 700 plus people have been detained during the same period. And the bubble of a thriving tourist economy has been burst by a Kashmiri traders' association claim that the former State has suffered a ₹12,000 crore loss since the lockdown. Home Minister Amit Shah, too, painted a picture of normalcy, telling the Rajya Sabha how schools and colleges were open, the apple industry was recovering, any preventive curfew was only intended to disable Pakistan-sponsored militancy and that there has been no bloodshed since Kashmir became a Union Territory. As if alienation has been the sole byproduct of exported terrorism. He also defended the blockade of internet corridors, saying the fight against terror propaganda meant that security is prioritised over everything else. Yet, even going by the sanitised reportage from the Valley, communication remains a challenge with landlines operating in fits and starts and patchy internet even at media centres. Yes, the Centre through its agencies is picking up apples but trucks from the plains are being attacked randomly and crates are full of some bad apples, literally, with separatist messages imprinted on them. The entire economy is gasping with the lockdown affecting logistics and supply chain management. Existing small and medium-scale businesses are floundering, delivery service start-ups are on the verge of a meltdown with suspended services, the flight of labour and the absence of internet. No tourist, foreign or domestic, is knowingly planning a visit to Kashmir. Violence, either by militant groups, hitbacks of angry citizens or punitive strikes by security forces, makes for a bigger picture when one joins the dots. And the silence is deceptive in the absence of middle ground between polarities. With citizens also resorting to civil disobedience, refusing to open businesses or keeping their children away from school, it could be the proverbial lull before the storm, a fear psychosis or a siege mentality.

Facts and figures can be tweaked but the truth lies elsewhere as a figment, and that is costing us our credibility. While the world and even much of the domestic opinion, in principle, accepted the withdrawal of Article 370 as operable, the never-ending lockdown is raising more questions about our militaristic ambitions than democratic propriety. The Government's continued detention of politically elected representatives, who it says had done nothing to control militancy and played the Indo-Pakistan dynamic for their continued relevance, has stifled the only voice of the locals. Nothing explains why the most pro-India voice among them and somebody who has been the BJP's blue-eyed boy, Omar Abdullah, or even Sajjad Lone continue to be detained. Or why they are being psychologically worn out in dehumanised conditions. If the Government wants to peddle normalcy, then it has to prioritise civil and political engagement, no matter how chaotic or negative the result may be. Restoring civil rights is a must if it wants its governance agenda to not sound like a fable but intended action. A big move always generates big reactions but muzzling them won't help in a political economy called Kashmir. Egoism must make way for reasoned pragmatism and a majoritarian Government should have the strength to stomach the pitfalls than fogging out reality. The world could soon turn intolerant of us.

# Turmoil in telecom

How long can companies overlook unsustainable charges? The Government must intervene on taxes



**B**ritish telecom giant Vodafone's threat to quit India seems to have jolted a few officials in the Government. After all, if such a famous corporate name could be jolted by policies and unfair tax demands, how would smaller, less famous foreign investors fare in the country? There has been a degree of damage control exercise by both Vodafone and the Government after the first stories emerged in London newspapers but the single best thing that seems to have happened since then is that Indian telecom companies across the board

have realised that their current charges are unsustainable. They are now speaking of increasing tariffs next month onwards. This is on expected lines for, in real-money terms, telecom charges have been declining year after year even if data is excluded. Data charges per megabyte transmitted today are barely a per cent of what they were a decade ago. Low charges have helped put data in the hands of virtually every Indian but good times were never going to last forever.

While the quantum of the increase remains to be seen, after years of unsustainably low charges, coupled with the constant need to invest in new infrastructure, most telecom operators in India are bleeding. The desperation to be seen as the largest player in a huge market led to unsustainable rates, first for voice communications and later for data after the entry of Reliance Industries' Jio, which benefitted from several aspects of a late entry. It was able to invest in better and cheaper infrastructure, not needing to carry the can for low revenue consumers. Surely, the Supreme Court's ruling on taxes being applicable to "annual gross revenues" for telecom operators rather than for "revenues" must be seen as a harsh one. The Government should do something to mitigate the extent of the payment but an increase in call and data rates is much needed now. Complaints about call quality and lack of network connectivity have become far too common and networks need investment to improve services. For that, India needs a sustainable telecom industry. It is almost certain that with the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) being taken up in droves by Government-owned telecom operators BSNL and MTNL, the State might be exiting the telecom space once and for all, keeping just a secure communications backbone for intelligence and military purposes. If that indeed is the case, the Government must ensure that all telecom operators are in good financial health. At the same time, the coming years will see next-generation 5G networks, with the Government expecting to make thousands of crores in the spectrum auctions, something that appears to be more of a pipedream than anything else right now. The Government runs the risk of killing the golden goose and finding a hollowed out shell inside. That means allowing operators to raise prices and most importantly, refute allegations of favouritism that tend to stick when it comes to Mukesh Ambani.

# Neighbour's border envy

While China has undertaken multiple development projects near the Indian border, Delhi has been very slow and remains hesitant to see tourists in restricted areas



CLAUDE ARPI

**R**ecently, the Indian media was agog with news about the latest deployment of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) close to the Indian borders. One website, the *Indian Defence News*, affirmed: "China strengthening military base near Uttarakhand's Lipulekh Pass," which is located near the tri-junction between Nepal, Tibet and India. It explained: "The new base has 20 parking hangars and also maintenance hangars. Medium-lift helicopters for the local Army aviation brigade have also been spotted... There are signs of a military build-up opposite Lipulekh Pass on the northeastern tip of Uttarakhand." It cited some intelligence sources saying that the PLA had built a helipad close to the pass and also "installed two surveillance cameras, a Long Range Reconnaissance and Observation System (LORROS) and a solar panel."

Some other reports mentioned model villages being built by Beijing near the Indian border. This is not new, though the scale should worry New Delhi. The information about Lipulekh Pass is probably linked to the new airport coming up near Purang (Taklakot); it will serve the Kailash/Manasarovar area.

On June 9, 2018, the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the Tibetan Autonomous Region's (TAR) provincial government announced that Tibet would soon have three new airports. An official communiqué stated: "Construction of the three airports, all above the altitude of 3,900 metres, should begin in 2019." The new airports are to be located in Lhunthe county in Lhoka (called Shannan by the Chinese) area, north of the Upper Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh; the second will be between Tingri and Lhatse counties of Shigatse City, north of Zangmu, the border post with Nepal, and the last in Purang, near Lipulekh.

It was then announced: "The airports should be completed in 2021; by then, there will be eight airports in TAR." The news agency added: "At present, the preparatory work for the three airports is under way. The preferred sites have been determined," the idea is "to consolidate the border and to promote the deep integration of the military and the people." While tourism and "cultural" industries remain the pillars of the so-called stabilisation, defence is also vital for the Chinese authorities — one of Chinese President Xi Jinping's pet projects is the Military Civilian Integration (or "fusion").

Another of Xi's favourite schemes is to make "patriotic" Tibetans "the protectors of their sacred homeland." The last two years have seen the mushrooming of model villages near the Indian border; they are known as "Xiaogang" or "moderately well-off villages." The pretext for building more than 100 such border villages is "poverty alleviation." Tibetans need to be pulled out of poverty (incidentally, is it not strange that 70 years after the arrival of the communists on the plateau



and the so-called liberation of Tibet, the populations still lives in such pitiable conditions?).

But "poverty" is not the only motivation. Xi once famously declared: "Govern the nation by governing the borders; govern the borders by first stabilising Tibet; ensure social harmony and stability in Tibet and strengthen the development of border regions." These villages are following the "double-support model city", which translates into full military and civilian integration.

The authorities have started implementing the theory of their boss by providing decent housing to the villagers and enticing the local recalcitrant Tibetan population to their side. Local satraps have a new leitmotif, the inhabitants of China's borders (with India) should be "the protectors of the sacred homeland and the builders of happy homes." The construction of "model" villages on the Tibetan side of the Indian border, mainly north of Arunachal Pradesh and also in Himachal and Ladakh, is the outcome of this. Several senior communist leaders have visited these new villages, either north of Kibithu in the Lohit valley; in Metok, north of Upper Siang district; in Yume (also written Yumai), north of Takshing in Upper Subansiri or in Lepo, Marmang and Tsona, north of Khenzimane and Tawang.

Take Metok County, for example. *China Tibet News* reported that there are 46 administrative villages (including one

multi-ethnic inhabitation area consisting of Monpa, Lhopa, Tibetan or Han) with a total population of 13,725. "In 2018, the county's GDP has reached 606 million yuan (\$99 million); farmers and herdsman per capita disposable income and cash income have reached 10,380 yuan (\$1,687) and 8,833 yuan (\$1,486) respectively."

In October, 133 villagers belonging to 29 households moved into their new houses. Reports said how "all the township's residents are living in free houses provided by the Government" in Puma Changthang township, north of the Bhutan border. "Sharing a 25-km border with Bhutan, where the average altitude tops 5,300 metres above sea level, the Puma Changthang township is in Nagartse county; it is renowned as the world's highest township."

The report explained: "Resettlement in new housing provided by the Government is part of its efforts to ensure the entire population lives comfortably in border areas... Project construction includes villagers' houses, party's committee offices, village clinics, water supply and roads" and, of course, these "multi-ethnic" villages will welcome Han Chinese.

Take another example. It was reported that Tibetans in Bayi village of Nyingchi City, north of Arunachal Pradesh, have come together and jointly "built a beautiful hometown as well as a better life." Incidentally,

places called Bayi (or 8-1 for August 1, the PLA anniversary) are usually under the Army's management.

The article said that by the end of 2016, 16 impoverished villagers were lifted out of poverty through pairing assistance (ie, with the support of a mainland province), through participation in the collective economy and self-employment: "Bayi Village improved farmers and herdsman's cultural living standards, supported the construction of a "cultural" square, a village library and also organised various cultural and sports activities such as Tibetan circle dance, tug of war, lifting stones or archery."

But at the same time, a review committee in Tsona county warned: "All townships and villages must come together to improve the village rules and regulations [of the party], standardise the daily behaviour of the villagers and strengthen the rural revitalisation strategy goals."

"Standardise the daily behavior" is ominous. On the Indian side, everything moves slowly as usual. A welcome exception is the Sisseri River bridge in the Lower Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, recently inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. It will cut down travel time from Pasighat to Roing by about five hours. But the Government remains hesitant to see tourists in "restricted" areas. China does not have this problem.

(The writer is an expert on India-China relations)

**“** WHILE TOURISM AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES REMAIN THE PILLARS OF THE SO-CALLED STABILISATION, DEFENCE IS ALSO VITAL FOR THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES — ONE OF CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S PET PROJECTS IS THE MILITARY CIVILIAN INTEGRATION (OR FUSION) **”**

## SOUNDBITE

The BJP had promised to build the country but it is working to make India's best organisations hollow and sell them. Sad.



**Congress leader** —Priyanka Gandhi

We should use cinema to implant the thought of normalcy in people's mind, especially those who are not well-versed with the topic of homosexuality.



**Actor** —Zareen Khan

The terror-crime nexus is an existential global threat. In order to combat this menace, the international community must keep ahead of new trends and technologies



**Indian envoy** —Syed Akbaruddin

It was astonishing that my seating position in the Rajya Sabha was changed. This was done intentionally to humiliate me and my party's status in the House.



**Shiv Sena leader** — Sanjay Raut

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Welcoming change

**Sir** — This refers to the article, "What lies ahead for Sri Lankan Tamils?" (November 20) by Kalyani Shankar. It is an intriguing story as to how the newly-elected Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaska, former Defence Minister and brother of former President of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaska, led a brutal crackdown on Tamil Tiger separatists, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and cornered it during the Eelam War IV. This culminated in the elimination of LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran.

This is why Gotabaya came to be known as the "terminator" despite the fact that he carried the infamy of alleged staged killings of Tamil separatists as well as journalists in the civil war during his regime as the Defence Minister. The Lankan President's administrative strategy fructified at the end of the day and ended Sri Lanka's nearly 30-year civil war with the LTTE. His present election as the President is again a manifestation of his political sagacity. The writer's plea about appre-

### Make JNU a success model

**T**his refers to the editorial, "Student uprising" (November 20). It is a truth that in today's polarised times, we have to pay through the nose for subsidising comforts and facilities enjoyed by our politicians. Even poor people have to share this burden in the form of indirect taxes that constitute a major part of our tax regime. But in return, can't we expect subsidy in education for our own children? It was unfortunate that the Delhi Police used brutal force against a number of students from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), who participated in the protest march to Parliament, demanding a total rollback of the hostel fee hike. Students are of the view that two in five boarders cannot afford the hiked fees and as a result, this would hamper the aspirations of the young. This will further make education a commodity only for the rich and higher middle class people.

JNU's fee structure was designed in a way to provide low-cost, high quality education to all — cutting across caste, class and economic divisions — and, thus, make the country's education system a model of plurality. While it must be accepted that a reasonable fee hike is needed, it must also be ensured that the once highly-reputed university is not divested of its original pur-

hensions being harboured by the Tamil minorities in Lanka, who did not cast votes in Gotabaya's favour, carries weight.

But now, as President, Gotabaya must think differently, keeping in mind the holistic



pose. A country cannot prosper if the right of a large section of its population to education gets hijacked. Education is indeed the only way to break the vicious cycle of poverty. Now that a committee has been formed by the Centre to look into the impasse over fee hike, a noble way should be found to address the concerns of those students who are financially not able to pay their fees.

**Sujit De**  
Kolkata

### Television day

**Sir** — Though digital platforms have increased their presence in today's times, television is still the most important and the greatest

tool for entertainment.

It was in December 1996 that the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed November 21 as World Television Day. This day recognises the role and importance of television in our day-to-day lives. It has been at the core of the information revolution, driving reliable visuals, news and entertainment from across the globe at people's doorstep.

**Falguni Aswani**  
Ujjain

### Come to the rescue

**Sir** — It is unfortunate that a number of telecom giants have been registering eye-popping losses in the last quarter. This, coupled with intense competition and bitter disputes over policy compliance, has compelled them to raise tariffs. With no clarity over how they will pay their accumulated dues, the Government, which is examining this issue, must waive off penalties and interest against telcos.

**Suchitra**  
Via email

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



**FIRST COLUMN**

# No bad soldiers, only bad bosses

If thousands of policemen take to the streets to express their displeasure, it simply amounts to complete failure of command



ABHIJIT BHATTACHARYYA

Today, I am on cause of action, or lack of it, if any, pertaining to national interest. Not on prescribed judicial process or procedure, except to recall the universally accepted dictum: Justice is blind. Blind, because it cannot see and must never try to see colour, creed, caste, class, community, character, or distinguish/discriminate between either an erring cop or a roving counsel. Law punishes, after following due process thereof, the culprit. I am concerned over the nasty clash of November 2019 between policemen and counsels on the streets of Delhi, Capital of India's 1.3 billion people.

To start with, I don't belong to the Indian Police Service. Yet, I have had the rare privilege as junior "subaltern", to work directly with two legends of the Indian police, K Sankaran Nair in IX Asian Games 1982 and with RN Kao, for short stint, thereafter. Both of them were amazing and extraordinary professionals of superior, rare quality. Both were workaholics, who knew how to command and also demand in a stentorian manner, mission success. Both told a junior non-IPS officer like me at first sight: "There are no bad soldiers; there are only bad commanders." Their crisp advice: "Carry out the assigned task. I am with you always. In success or failure, don't worry." It was an unprecedented reassurance from two superiors in a span of two years. In retrospect, I see the success of my two commanders owing to their inherent ability to command, control, communicate with conviction, objectivity and fairness, and, yet with guts, to demand the impossible to turn defeat into victory; à la Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, General JN Chaudhuri and Lieutenant-General Zorawar Chand Bakshi. Not everyone, therefore, can command simply by wearing a commander's uniform. That's a harsh reality. Hence, recalling my 38-year-old experience, I froze seeing at least 7,000 police personnel taking to the streets, to express their grievances, defying their top brass, on live TV.

If thousands of subordinates of uniformed service take to the streets to express their displeasure and fury, it simply amounts to complete failure of command and the posting and deployment of the entire top brass of the force need a close re-look. It's time to transfer, re-train and reform. It reflects a complete disconnect between command and the corps. It's an abominable state of affairs for an aspiring superpower status-seeking State.

That the police rank and file is treated like doormats by all political hues is a reality too stark not to be noticed. One instance will suffice. On December 3, 2004, I was driving back to my office after attending the All India Revenue Sports Meet Zonal inauguration by Viren Shah, Governor West Bengal. At a traffic signal, there was a commotion owing to a brazen red light violation in the busy Dalhousie Square of Kolkata, adjacent to Writer's Building, the seat of the State Government. The traffic sergeant on duty showed exemplary promptness to flag down the errant cab driver and impose a fine. But the dutiful cop was pounced upon by the law-violating driver and five more cabbies. I just couldn't take the sight of the cop's bloodied face. I, as Commissioner Customs, went back and promptly wrote a demi-official letter to Kolkata Police Commissioner suggesting that the officer assaulted should be recognised at once and law violators be booked. A fortnight later in my office came three unknown visitors and one of them virtually fell at my feet to say thanks and broke down. I was dazed. It transpired that my letter to the Police Commissioner not only lifted the traffic sergeant's instant suspension "for gross dereliction of duty and rioting" but also brought him a reward and recognition. I felt happy that my letter gave justice to an honest professional in uniform.

I can go on. My four-decade-long diary has some real-life stories for the future. Nevertheless, the narrative would remain incomplete without one of the most macabre cases of murder of a 1971-batch West Bengal-cadre IPS officer Vinod Mehta that was masterminded, instigated, executed by the political class of this country. It was Sunday, March 18, 1984, a Holi holiday. Deputy Commissioner Port, Mehta was "on-call", along with two more Deputy Commissioners, with armed forces, in the vicinity to thwart anticipated trouble. Despite advance inputs, preparation and deployment, Mehta was lynched by a fanatic mob and none of his IPS colleagues came to his rescue. The Communist Chief Minister of West Bengal and his cohorts were busy scheming and manoeuvring the next move. Nothing happened in that murder case. No politician lost his chair. No criminal was punished. Only the words of my two legendary police bosses of yesteryears ricocheted and haunted me: "There are no bad soldiers; there are only bad commanders." The political bosses are commanders of India. They haunt me even today. Every day.

(The writer, alumnus of National Defence College, is the author of *China in India*)

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

FIVE YEARS AGO THE CHIEF MINISTER OF DELHI USED TO BE THE ONLY ONE COUGHING, BUT NOW THE WHOLE CITY AND HOUSE IS COUGHING.

—BJP LOK SABHA MP  
**PARVESH VERMA**



THIS SHOWS BJP'S INTELLECTUAL BANKRUPTCY. IF THEY THINK PERSONAL ATTACKS ON CM'S HEALTH WILL END POLLUTION, THEN DO SO DAY AND NIGHT.

—AAP SPOKESPERSON  
**RAGHAV CHADHA**

# Not a RECiPe for disaster

India's perennial inward focus emerges across trade discussions. This is counter-intuitive, since the country has benefitted greatly from globalisation and liberalised market access



MOHIT KALAWATIA RAGHAV PRIYADARSHI

At the recently-concluded Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that despite seven years of negotiations, his Government had decided not to join this plurilateral regional trade bloc that was launched by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders and six other countries during the 21st ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh in November 2012.

The objective of launching RCEP negotiations was to achieve a modern, comprehensive, high-quality and mutually beneficial economic partnership agreement among the ASEAN member States and its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) partners.

Announcing the country's decision to stay out, Modi said, "India stands for greater regional integration, as well as for freer trade and adherence to a rule-based international order. India has been pro-actively, constructively and meaningfully engaged in the RCEP negotiations since inception. India has worked for the cherished objective of striking a balance, in the spirit of give and take. Today, when we look around we see during seven years of RCEP negotiations, many things, including the global economic and trade scenarios, have changed. We cannot overlook these changes."

Modi's decision came in the backdrop of intense domestic pressure from various stakeholders, including political parties, State Governments and various industry lobbies. Indian decision-makers were persuaded to shun the free trade partnership due to shrill concerns that India would become a dumping ground for Chinese products, adversely impacting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and also cripple its dairy industry due to the presence of majors such as Australia and New Zealand in this trade grouping.

Interestingly, India's decision to withdraw from the RCEP came despite the Ministry of Commerce's High-Level Advisory Group (HLAG) recommending that the country adopt an optimistic outlook towards RCEP. The HLAG, constituted under the chairmanship of Surjit Bhalla — Executive Director for India at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and former member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council — comprised other high-ranking members such as Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and former Commerce Secretary Rajeev Kher. The HLAG was tasked with recommending steps to boost the country's share in global merchandise and services trade, and formally came out with its recommendations only days before the Prime Minister announced India's withdrawal from RCEP. Since then, the Commerce Minister has clarified that India may still join the partnership if its concerns are addressed, though such an eventuality seems unlikely in the near future.

To an extent, India's decision to withdraw was also influenced by the perceived negative outcomes of earlier trade pacts it had entered into with Japan, Korea and the ASEAN. A central theme which emerges across trade discussions, of which India is a part, is the country's perennial inward focus. This stance is counter-intu-

“ TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS COHERENCE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD EXPLORE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NODAL BODY, ON THE LINES OF THE ERSTWHILE TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET. SUCH A BODY CAN ENABLE CONSULTATIVE DECISION-MAKING, EFFICIENT INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION AND BETTER DEFINITION OF THE COUNTRY'S TRADE PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES ”



itive since India has benefitted greatly from globalisation and liberalised market access, evidenced not only in its services exports but also through import of primary and intermediate goods for domestic value-addition and re-export.

Further, the impending stalemate at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), precipitated by the US's efforts to render the WTO appellate body comatose, necessitates an exploration of other routes for trade enhancement. Bilateral and plurilateral trade arrangements such as the RCEP have thus emerged as a preferred alternative. Since the beginning of the Doha Round of trade negotiations at the WTO in 2001, the number of such arrangements in force globally has grown more than three-fold. During the same period, India inked trade agreements with the ASEAN, Japan, South Korea and Singapore. However, since 2011, India has not signed any further bilateral or plurilateral trade agreements, primarily due to a growing perception that opening up of trade borders has not served the country well.

Contrary to this perception, such agreements have contributed immensely towards trade creation. For instance, India currently has a trade surplus of \$2.5 billion with Singapore. Similarly, India's trade deficit with ASEAN vis-à-vis its total trade deficit witnessed a continuous decrease from 9.9 per cent in 2007 to 6.6 per cent in 2017; despite the fact that ASEAN's share in India's total trade has remained more or less constant. Meanwhile, India's deficit with China, a non-FTA partner country, increased from 18 per cent of the total trade deficit in 2007, to 40 per cent in 2017. Even within the aegis of the WTO, the concept of flexible multilat-

eralism has found several supporters. Flexible multilateralism allows WTO members to advance and conclude plurilateral agreements where full consensus is not yet possible. Examples of such plurilateral arrangements include the Information Technology Agreements (ITA-I and II) — while India is a signatory to ITA-I, it has refrained from adopting the second iteration. More recently, taking forward the approach of flexible multilateralism, 76 countries decided to initiate discussions on trade related aspects of electronic commerce. India has so far not joined the discussion, citing the erosion of policy space and the digital gap between member countries among other reasons, for not doing so.

Looking ahead, if India wants to achieve its target of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2024, then considerable efforts and resources are required to push its exports. More importantly, the country will have to review its frozen approach towards bilateral and plurilateral arrangements. Indeed, along with other like-minded countries, the country should continue to ensure that the relevance of a multilateral trading system is maintained. However, it is also important that in light of changing global trade dynamics characterised by forward and backward linkages, it cannot afford to ignore preferential agreements, or even limited trade deals like the one it is currently exploring with the US.

Given India's political-economy compulsions, it is understandable that the country remains wary of entering into far-reaching trade agreements proposed by advanced jurisdictions. But India must nevertheless adopt an alternative strategy to advance its self-

interest. It is better to sit in the negotiating room and disagree than to leave the room altogether.

Going forward, the Indian leadership must resist the temptation of abstaining from decisions due to perceived costs in the short-run. To begin with, there is an urgent need to fix internal decision-making mechanisms. A more concerted and coordinated effort across Government departments in evaluating trade partnerships should be the way forward, instead of convening inter-ministerial discussions as a reactionary measure. Government departments should engage with the industry on a more frequent basis on issues of market access and to determine sub-sectoral competitiveness.

Further, the country's relative strengths and domestic industry participation in specific value chains should inform prioritisation of trade partner negotiations. At present, the Commerce Ministry reaches out to the industry for inputs only after the country has initiated trade discussions — this mechanism largely remains ineffective as it fails to solicit detailed and usable submissions within predefined timelines.

To ensure that there is coherence in the decision-making process, the Government should explore the establishment of a nodal body, on the lines of the erstwhile Trade and Economic Relations Committee (TERC) of the Cabinet. Such a body can enable consultative decision-making, efficient inter-ministerial coordination and better definition of the country's trade priorities and strategies.

(Kalawatia and Priyadarshi work at Koan Advisory Group, New Delhi. The views expressed here are personal.)

# The creeping death that we must fight

All sources of NOx and NO<sub>2</sub>, be it transport, industries and power generation, should be tackled keeping in view the health emergency that the country faces today



KOTA SRIRAJ

At a time when air pollution levels are becoming a constant threat in India and across the world, we need to deal with two most damaging gases, nitrogen oxides (NOx) and nitrogen dioxides (NO<sub>2</sub>). NOx and NO<sub>2</sub> are produced from the reaction of nitrogen and oxygen gases in the air during combustion, especially at high temperatures. Hence, in areas with high vehicular traffic, especially large cities, the amount of NOx and NO<sub>2</sub> emitted into the atmosphere as air pollution can be significant.

NOx and NO<sub>2</sub> gases react to form smog and acid rain as well as being central to the formation of fine

particles (PM) and ground level ozone, both of which are associated with adverse health effects. Exposure to PM pollution and deadly ozone, even for a short duration, can worsen respiratory conditions and asthma and lead to emergency hospital admission, especially for those with pre-existing heart or lung disease and in the elderly and children.

India, too, is in the crosshairs of spiralling NOx and NO<sub>2</sub> levels. The *Air Pollution Global Cities Ranking Report* released by Greenpeace found that 15 of the 20 most polluted cities in the world are located in India, highlighting the country's air pollution crisis.

The organisation analysed the satellite data generated using the methodology of Tropospheric Monitoring Instrument (TROPOMI), which monitors vertically integrated amount of several atmospheric trace gases, including NOx and NO<sub>2</sub>. Based on the analysis of this satellite data, Greenpeace India put the culpability of rising NOx and NO<sub>2</sub> levels on transport and indus-



trial clusters which are creating India's worst nitrogen dioxide hotspots such as Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad, given the fact that these cities have high vehicular population and petrol/diesel consumption.

According to the satellite data collected between February 2018 and May 2019, coal consumption and industrial clusters like Sonbhadra-Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh, Korba

in Chhattisgarh, Talcher in Odisha, Chandrapur in Maharashtra, Mundra in Gujarat and Durgapur in West Bengal were also found to be equally polluting when it comes to NOx and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

In January 2019, *Airpocalypse III*, another report by Greenpeace India, identified 139 cities where air pollution levels exceeded national standards but were not included in the National Clean Air Programme

(NCAAP) that was recently released by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

The report states that even if we are optimistic and assume that air pollution across India can be reduced by 30 per cent by 2024, 153 cities will be left with pollution levels exceeding the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and only 12 cities will comply with World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

To highlight the severity of the crisis, even after a 30 per cent reduction, PM10 levels in Delhi will still be about 168 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, almost three times the national standard of 60µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

India is already paying a price for the current nitrogen dioxide levels with increasing cases of asthma, lung damage, heart attacks and lung cancer. NO<sub>2</sub> also contributes to the formation of PM2.5, a dangerous air pollutant.

It is estimated that air pollution, ambient PM2.5, household and ozone air pollution collectively caused 3.4 million deaths worldwide

in 2017 and over 1.2 million in India. PM2.5 alone resulted in more than 6.7 lakh deaths in India in 2017.

The proliferation of NO<sub>2</sub> levels and the consequent increase in PM2.5 levels require urgent intervention and action from the Government. All sources of NO<sub>2</sub>, be it transport, industries and power generation, should be tackled keeping in view the health emergency India faces today.

Additionally, the emission standard deadlines for coal-based power plants and industries must be strictly adhered to, even as the industrial and electricity sectors' transition to cleaner alternatives for power generation must be speeded up.

In fact, according to a 2015 report by IIT-Kanpur, a 90 per cent reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> from power plants in a radius of 300km from Delhi can reduce nitrates by 45 per cent, which will effectively reduce PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations in Delhi and help us breathe better.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



## BRING OUR KIDS BACK FROM SYRIA

Those who joined IS should be punished. Their children should not. It shames the UK that IS' downfall, the closure of a vicious chapter which should have heralded progress, appears instead to have hardened attitudes in such a way as to place civilised values in doubt. It is one of the UK Government's first duties to protect blameless British children from harm. Those trapped in Syria must be repatriated without delay.

(The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



Hyundai's new sedan Aura has BS VI compliant engines

**NEW DELHI:** Hyundai Motor India on Wednesday said its upcoming sedan Aura will be powered by BS VI compliant petrol and diesel engines. The new powertrains offer low vibrations, superior performance and high fuel efficiency offering cleaner emissions and efficient performance, the company said in a statement. The model would come with a BS VI turbo charged petrol engine, it added. Aura would come with both manual as well as automatic transmissions, Hyundai said. "Keeping in mind the need of new age customers and future emission norms in India, various amalgamations of petrol and diesel engines with manual and AMT transmission powertrains have been devised for customers to choose from," Hyundai said.



Kalpataru sells its entire stake in Satpura Transco

**NEW DELHI:** Kalpataru Power Transmission Ltd (KPTL) on Wednesday said it has completed sale of its entire stake in Kalpataru Satpura Transco Pvt Ltd to CLP India. As a result of this stake sale, Kalpataru Satpura Transco is no longer a subsidiary of KPTL from Wednesday. "The company has completed the sale of its entire stake in one of the subsidiaries viz. Kalpataru Satpura Transco Private Limited today on November 20, 2019, (Wednesday) after obtaining the requisite regulatory and other approvals and compliance with condition precedents," according to a BSE filing.

'CIL to develop 55 new coal mines in next 5 yrs'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL will develop 55 new coal mines and expand 193 existing ones in the next five years, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

The company is also undertaking portal-based monitoring of ongoing projects to ensure their timely completion.

"Coal India has taken... steps to boost its coal production, (including) opening of 55 greenfield projects having capacity of 92 MTPA (million tonne per annum) and expansion of 193 brownfield projects having capacity of about 310 MTPA in next five years," Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said in a reply to the Lok Sabha.

A new project on an unused land is called a greenfield project while the existing one that is modified or upgraded is called a brownfield project.



Coal India has taken... steps to boost its coal production, (including) opening of 55 greenfield projects having capacity of 92 MTPA (million tonne per annum) and expansion of 193 brownfield projects having capacity of about 310 MTPA in next five years

—PRALHAD JOSHI, Coal Minister

Besides, CIL has introduced technology "to improve its work efficiency with high capacity Heavy Earth Moving Machinery, like 42 cum Shovel and 240 T Rear Dumpers in Gevra Expansion, Dipka & Kusmunda open cast mines (and) introduction of surface miners in opencast mines to improve operational efficiency and to cater to environmental needs."

During 2018-19, around 50 per cent of the opencast coal production in CIL was through surface miners. Further, in order to reduce import of coal, CIL is taking up source rationalisation with part supply from higher grade coal sources. More coal from various sources was offered through e-auction schemes, particularly special forward e-auction, for power consumers, not having fuel supply agreement with CIL sources.



'No move to waive penalty, int on telcos' licence fee dues'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is no proposal before the government at present on waiver of penalties and interest on outstanding licence fee payments based on adjusted gross revenue (AGR), or on extending the timelines for telcos to pay up their statutory dues, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

"No such proposal is under consideration of the government as on date," Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

He was responding to specific questions on whether the government proposes to provide a waiver for penalties and interest on the non-payment of licence fee on adjusted gross revenue (AGRs) by telecom operators and also on whether it is considering extending the time limit for the payment of licence fee, penalty, interest and other dues.

The minister said the Committee of Secretaries under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary had held meetings to discuss the issues relating to the stress in the telecom sector. The total debt of the telecom industry, service providers and tower companies combined, stood at Rs 7.87 lakh crore as on August 2017, he noted.

The provisional outstanding of the 16 telecom service providers on account of licence fee stood at a cumulative Rs 92,642 crore, Prasad said, adding that the amounts are provisional and subject to revision in light of the Supreme



3.26 lakh complaints of unsolicited telemarketing calls during Jul-Sep

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 3.26 lakh complaints relating to unsolicited telemarketing calls have been lodged by consumers with their telecom service providers during July-September, the Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

The Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 have prescribed default timeline from 10.00 am to 9.00 pm for marketing calls to mobile users. Consumers also have an option to choose any time

band for receiving communications as per their preference for any category/categories of communications.

"As per the details of complaints lodged by consumers with the service providers and uploaded by the service providers on TRAI portal www.ncpcprai.gov.in, 3,26,264 numbers of complaints relating to voice UCC have been lodged by consumers with their service providers during the period 1.07.2019 to 30.09.2019," Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

Court ruling on AGR matter on October 24, 2019.

As per the information provided by the minister, the licence fee dues of Vodafone

Group (along with Idea Cellular) stood at Rs 28,309 crore, while that of Bharti Airtel Group of companies was at Rs 21,682 crore (and that of

Task force for converting IPPB into small finance bank

**NEW DELHI:** The possibility of converting India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) into a small finance bank is being explored to further the goal of financial inclusion, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. A task force has been set up for studying the logistics and feasibility of converting IPPB into a small finance bank, Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha. "Yes sir, expansion of IPPB and possibilities of converting it into Small Finance Bank is being explored. In this regard, a task force has been set up for studying the logistics and feasibility of conversion of IPPB into a small finance bank," Prasad said. This step will further the goal of financial inclusion by allowing all citizens greater access to enhanced savings and credit, he added.

Telenor and Tata Group of companies at Rs 1,950 crore and Rs 9,987 crore respectively).

"The Government has directed the TSPs (teleco service providers) to make the payment in accordance with the order of the Supreme Court dated October 24, 2019 and submit the requisite documents to ensure the compliance within the stipulated timeframe," the minister said.

'Revise mode for setting up industries in polluted areas'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to revise its mechanism for setting up of new industrial units as also expansion activities in critically polluted areas.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel also warned that it will "coercive action" against the heads of State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) for failing to take concrete action against violators.

It said the CPCB data shows increasing air, water and soil pollution and violators of law cannot be allowed to have a free run at the cost of environment and public health.

The tribunal reiterated that "meaningful action" has to be taken by the SPCBs and a report on that should show the number of identified polluters, extent of closure of polluting activities, environmental compensation recovered, cost of restoration of the damage to the environment otherwise



It said the CPCB data shows increasing air, water and soil pollution and violators of law cannot be allowed to have a free run at the cost of environment and public health

there will be no meaningful environmental governance.

"This may be failure of rule of law and breach of trust reposed in statutory authorities rendering their existence useless and burden on the society. "On default, the tribunal will

have no option except to proceed against the Chairman and the member secretaries of the SPCBs by way of coercive action under Section 25 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 read with Section 51 CPC," the bench said in a recent order.

Yellow metal rises Rs 296 on weaker rupee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold on Wednesday rose by Rs 296 to Rs 39,194 per 10 gram in the national capital on weaker rupee and rally in international prices, as per HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had closed at Rs 38,898 per 10 gram on Tuesday. "Spot gold prices for 24 Karat in Delhi rallied by Rs 296 on weaker rupee and rally in international gold prices," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said.

The spot rupee was trading around 20 paise weaker against the dollar during the day, he added.

The rupee opened on a weak note and fell 9 paise to 71.80 against the US dollar in opening trade as US-China trade deal concerns weighed on investors.



Silver prices also jumped Rs 331 to Rs 46,103 per kg from Rs 45,772 per kg in the previous trade.

"Gold prices traded higher on Wednesday, gaining for the third consecutive day on US-China political spat and worries over trade deal," he said.

In the global market, gold prices were trading higher at USD 1,478 per ounce, while silver was quoting at USD 17.17 an ounce.

BS VI norms to create headwinds for CV sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rating agency India Ratings and Research on Wednesday said the implementation of the BS VI emission norms from April 1, 2020 could create short-term headwinds for the commercial vehicle (CV) segment.

Considering the sharp year-on-year fall in the sales volumes of CVs, especially since May 2019, the underwhelming pace of industrial activity and the higher cost of ownership of a BS-VI compliant commercial vehicle (CV), the implementation of BS-VI could add to the sector's woes, India Ratings and Research said in a statement.

Pramit, who brought scale to Citi, quits

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Pramit Jhaveri, the former country head of Citi India, has quit for unspecified reasons, sources said on Wednesday.

The 56-year-old Jhaveri had joined the Wall Street major as a management associate in 1987, and had a steady rise to become vice-chairman of banking, capital markets and advisory for Asia Pacific earlier this year, after heading the India operations for almost a decade between 2010 and 2019.

His resignation was announced by the Citi Asia Pacific chief executive Peter Babej over email to the employees, the sources said. Babej's mail lists out the key milestones in Jhaveri's 32-year-long association with Citi, including his leadership of India operations.

"Jhaveri's leadership, partnership and friendship will be missed across our firm," the memo, which was reviewed by PTI, said. A Citi spokesperson confirmed the development but without offering details.



A Citi spokesperson confirmed the development but without offering details

"Jhaveri has decided to retire from Citi. During his tenure, he built a strong team and established Citi as a market leader," the spokesperson said.

Under his helm, Citi India's total assets almost doubled (95.48 percent to be precise) between FY10 and FY19, to Rs 1.86 lakh crore, while gross non-performing assets improved to 1.37 percent in March 2019 from 3.43 percent in March 2010.

Traders' body demands 'ban' on Amazon, Flipkart

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trade associations observed "National Protest Day" on Wednesday and held protest dharnas against "unethical trade practices" of leading e-commerce firms like Amazon and Flipkart in over 700 cities across the country, CAIT said.

The traders' body, which has been alleging that these e-commerce firms were adopt-



ing unethical trade practices and are openly violating the government's FDI policy, claimed the protests were attended by lakhs of traders.

IBM platform to speed response to cyber threats

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Technology giant IBM on Wednesday launched 'Cloud Pak for Security', featuring innovations to connect with any security tool, cloud or on-premise system, without moving data from its original source.

The platform includes open-source technology for hunting threats, automation capabilities to help speed response to cyberattacks, and the ability to run in any environment, the company said in a statement.

It is the first platform to leverage new open-source technology pioneered by IBM, which can search and translate security data from a variety of sources, bringing together critical security insights from across a company's multi-cloud IT environment, the company claimed.

The platform is extensible, so that additional tools and applications can be added over time, the statement said.

As businesses move further into cloud maturity, applica-



tions and data are frequently spread across multiple private and public clouds and on-

premise resources, IBM noted.

Attempts to protect this fragmented IT environment often require security teams to undertake complex integrations and continuously switch between different screens and point products.

General Manager, IBM Security, Mary O'Brien was quoted as saying, "With Cloud Pak for Security, we're helping to lay the foundation for a more connected security ecosystem designed for the hybrid, multicloud world."

Starting flights to Ras Al Khaimah, airline next: Ajay

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SpiceJet will first start flight operations between India and Ras Al Khaimah by early next year and after that establish a new airline in the UAE city, said its Chairman and Managing Director Ajay Singh on Wednesday.

"Just like we operate flights to Dubai, we can operate flight to Ras Al Khaimah," he said, adding that while bilateral rights between Indian cities and Ras Al Khaimah are thin, "let us start the flight operations first, let us explore the market, because we believe there are good possibilities".

"From Ras Al Khaimah, there are onward (flight) pos-



sibilities to Eastern Europe," he added.

When asked how many air-

craft there will be in the new airline, he replied, "We have no idea yet. We are first applying,

We have no idea yet. We are first applying. We are studying the market. At this time, the focus is really on first (starting) the flight into Ras Al Khaimah from India. So that flight we are hoping we can start soon, hopefully by the beginning of next year

—AJAY SINGH, Chairman and Managing Director SpiceJet

We are studying the market. At this time, the focus is really on first (starting) the flight into Ras Al Khaimah from India. So that flight we are hoping we can start soon, hopefully by the beginning of next year.

On the question if starting a new airline will stretch SpiceJet's balance sheet

too thin, he said, "Not at all. There are no huge investments.

What are the investments in an airline? It's aircraft. That we have here. We are going to put some aircraft over there."

"These guys (foreign airlines) are coming



and trying to set up an airline in our country. Why shouldn't we try it the other way around? We should give it a shot," Singh told reporters.

Asked what kind of partners it will have in the new airline, he said, "It will have to be a local partner from Ras Al Khaimah. We are talking to authorities in Ras Al Khaimah."

"No airline anywhere in the world can be owned by a foreign carrier," he said.

He explained, "There is a significant amount of paperwork. It is like applying for an airline in India. You need to show capability, safety. You need to look after a lot of issues."

Swiggy cloud kitchens in 12 more cities by Mar 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Food ordering platform Swiggy on Wednesday said it has set up over 1,000 cloud kitchens for its restaurant partners and plans to have more such facilities in 12 new cities by March next year.

In a span of just two years, the company has invested in over a million square feet of real estate space across 14 cities to help large, medium and small restaurant partners expand to more locations both within their city and across new cities through cloud kitchens, Swiggy said in a statement.

"Swiggy has always maintained that cloud kitchens will be the future of food delivery. Very soon, India will have the second-highest number of cloud kitchens in the world, only next to China," Swiggy New Supply CEO Vishal Bhatia said.

The milestone of Swiggy successfully creating over 1,000 partner kitchens shows the faith the restaurant partners have in the concept and bolsters company's pioneering efforts in enabling more success stories in the restaurant ecosystem, he added.



In a cloud kitchen concept, operators prepare, package and deliver food without providing any dine-in facility to end-consumers

In a cloud kitchen concept, operators prepare, package and deliver food without providing any dine-in facility to end-consumers.

"Over the last two years, Swiggy has invested over Rs 175 crore towards setting up and running these kitchens. This success has encouraged us to invest an additional Rs 75 crore to bring more partner cloud kitchens in 12 new cities by March 2020," Bhatia said

To mark the World Television Day today, *The Pioneer* has reached out to a few small screen actors to gauge the condition of the industry in the era of OTT platforms and how they cope with the competition, writes K RAMYA SREE

## STREAMING OR CABLE, CONTENT TRUMPS ALL

The times are a changing and so is the content. Gone are the days when soap operas were considered family dramas with lots of emotional sequences where mother-in-laws play the vamp and other unrealistic characters. With the arrival of new channels and the OTT platforms booming, the receptivity of the audience to TV has changed through time.

Speaking of the same, Nirupam Paritala of *Karthikadeepam* fame says, "In those days there was only one channel, with limited programmes and very less entertainment. Currently, we have so many channels and programmes and the source of entertainment has increased with it. In today's households, we rarely see everyone watching the same show."

Seconding Nirupam, Meghna Raami of *Zee Telugu*, says, "We did not have these soap operas, but had a finite series for entertainment. Those shows focused on education and spread social messages which people followed in their lives. Around 30 years ago, we used to wait enthusiastically for a whole week to know what will happen in the next episode. Now, people's engagement with television has increased greatly and people watch it every day. This is the reason why the approach towards TV has changed."



MEGHNA RAAMI



VJ SUNNY



SHEELA SINGH



NIRUPAM PARITALA

From weekly entertainment it has become daily entertainment."

Speaking about the needs of mainstream audiences today in terms of entertainment, Sheela Singh, a senior actor says, "Audience like to see the modern society in serials. If any show comes up with a new concept, the audience welcomes it with open arms. Content is more important these days to retain audiences."

Television has always

been a medium to address social issues on a public platform. Nirupam, who feels that a new transformation can take place if digital platforms and television come together said, "TV has a lot of scope to bring about social awareness among large groups. If booming OTT platforms and TV join hands, it would be no less than any hardcore film in spreading a social message." Nirupam says TV is the most power-

ful medium to bring social issues to light.

*Satyameva Jayathe* is one such exemplary show, where many issues were solved.

But, Raami has a different view about the same. She says, "TV has the efficiency and capability to talk about social issues, but we are not using it for the right purposes. Programmes coming up to speak about social problems is a very recent phenomenon. We

need more such programmes to create awareness."

"People have lots of expectations from us, which is why, we need to send out a positive message through our roles. Maybe because of this reason, I cannot connect to negative roles in the serials. I feel by playing positive roles, if I'm changing into a better person, then when people who watch our shows, they will change to some extent,"

Raami adds.

On the other hand, the youngster VJ Sunny who claims not to relate to the black and white content on TV feels that there are a set of dedicated audience who enjoy the folklore fantasy. He says, "No matter how quickly the technology advances, a set of audience will always be loyal to the technology they are used to. Adoption of online media is primarily among the urban youth, which is not compa-

able to the television audience, but will surely catch up some day. Changes in television happen at their own pace. The format of television is likely to stay the same, however, the quality of television production will improve. I think online content will see more changes than television medium to draw more people."

In a concluding note, Sunny said, "Acting has never been a financially

lucrative field, but it is the passion of actors that drives the competition. One doesn't seek to become a part of the industry. One can be motivated by other people, but they have to be naturally excited to be in front of the camera and perform for a good output. Planning to become an actor for fame and money never works out. Only hard work and dedication pays off in the end. I would like to advise people coming into this field in the future to be prepared for failures, but not let the passion die out. In the Telugu industry, there is a need for male and female talent. There are a lot of opportunities available and it is up to us to find the right door and decide why we want to enter it."

Telugu serials and the channels are evolving to catch up to Bollywood. In recent times there has been an increase in the number of get-togethers and award functions that TV stars and crew celebrate to showcase the immense amount of talent that has been limited to TV sets so far.

**MANY ACTORS FEEL MORE TV SHOWS, LIKE SATYAMEVA JAYATHE, SHOULD BE MADE TO SPREAD IMPORTANT SOCIAL MESSAGES**

## Vegans stranded in the land of meat?

Vegan food is one of the most misunderstood new age cuisine. ANUSHKA PRADEEP tries to find out how hard it is to run a vegan restaurant in the city of Nawabs



Hyderabad was recently declared as 'India's most vegan-friendly city'. Although this came as a surprise to many as the cuisine, the city is famous for, is miles away from being vegan, the question that comes next is: how hard it is to run a vegan outlet in a city that is known for its multi-flavoured biryani and Mughlai delicacies? "In Hyderabad particularly, we found that there are two types of barriers when reaching out to non-vegans about vegan food. Firstly, many, despite predominantly eating vegetarian at home, prefer to eat non-vegetarian food when they go out to dine. Secondly, many vegetarians, whose diet preferences stem from their culture or community, don't know about veganism or have a slightly pejorative view of the same. So there is definitely some level of ignorance or a lack of

open-mindedness to experiment with new food," says Mansi Virmani, co-founder and partner of Smart Alec Alternative Deli.

"Procurement and sourcing of ingredients is also difficult since hospitality-related logistics and resources don't necessarily cater to minimalist vegan outlets like ours. So finding distributors for specialty goods like tofu, plant milk, mock meat, certain types of flours and vegetables is a challenge which also reflects on the price of these dishes. We still, to this day, buy a lot of things from specific stores elsewhere in the country or online as they are not available in the city," she added.

A 2018 Oxford University study found that the single biggest way to reduce your environmental impact is to avoid animal products. This is mainly because more than 80 per cent of farmland is dedicated to livestock raised

for meat and dairy, yet these food products only account for about 18 per cent of calories and 37 per cent of protein consumption.

But how can the good folk of Hyderabad who have got used to the Nawabi delicacies — heavily endowed with ghee, butter, curd, and so forth — forget their age-old rich culture of non-vegetarian food and choose vegan food?

"There is a notion associated with being vegan that is almost like a turn off for people. Even today, the moment when one talks about vegan food, the first image that comes to mind for them is some bland food with tasteless raw veggies. Vegan outlets are often not the first resort for people to visit when the plan to eat outside," says Sandhya Dittakavi, partner of the Smart Alec Alternative Deli.

"One of the reasons for coming up with a vegan

restaurant is to change the prevailing notion of its food among people," she added.

Despite growth in the number of vegan outlets, the entire city may only have about a maximum of six to seven prominent vegan restaurants and the rest are yet to gain familiarity. Ideally, apart from contributing to a healthier environment, these food restaurants intend to cater to people who want to eat healthy while being tasty at the same time.

This raises another question about the accessibility of these purely vegan restaurants to the general population.

"In order to focus more on my fitness, I turned towards a vegan diet and so I came to know how hard it is to find exclusive vegan restaurants in the city. The only ones I can think of are Plantarium, Smart Alec, Frozera and a few others," says Harshith Vedumala a student aspiring



DHANESH SHARMA  
OWNER OF  
TERRASSEN CAFE



MANSI VIRMANI  
CO-FOUNDER OF  
SMART ALEC ALTERNATIVE DELI

There's actually a good scope for vegan restaurants in Hyderabad but it is definitely a challenge to run a vegan restaurant in a city that is well known for its non-vegetarian menu across the world

to pursue Masters in Cybersecurity.

Hyderabadis have begun to warm up to the vegan scenario says Dhanesh Sharma, owner of Terrassen Cafe. "We started our cafe in 2015 and there has definitely been a rise in the number of customers. We have about 50 to 60 people visiting our cafe on weekdays, which increases to more than 100 customers on weekends," he says.

**The entire city may only have about a maximum of six to seven prominent vegan restaurants**

Many vegetarians don't know about veganism or have a slightly pejorative view of the same. So, there is definitely some level of ignorance or lack of open-mindedness to experiment with new food

"There's actually a good scope for vegan restaurants in the city but it is definitely a challenge to run a vegan restaurant in a city that is well known for its non-vegetarian menu across the world. The high prices of the ingredients involved to prepare vegan food also pose a hurdle. But, restaurants have a certain responsibility towards their customers. They have to cater to people's demands while ensuring that they serve a delicious yet healthy meal. Both taste and health must go hand in hand. This was my idea behind starting Terrassen Cafe. To offer the customers a unique experience by making vegan food delicious and healthy," says Dhanesh.



## A TRENDY WAY TO STAY FIT

The latest technological development and nature of jobs in India have forced a sedentary lifestyle on the people. According to a research, India topped in the world with highest number of diabetes patients (31.7 million) which is expected to rise to 79.4 million people by 2030. Lack of physical activity also causes anxiety and depression.

Exercise is one of the primary ways to avoid catastrophes from of sedentary lifestyle. Heavy workout, strength training and other fitness activities which were concentrated to elite class earlier are becoming popular within the people of all hues. Running, as a trendy way

to stay fit, is gradually emerging as one of the most popular fitness activities.

The 10K Run concept is gaining spotlight because of the numerous benefits and discipline that it inculcates.

The 10K foundation in Hyderabad is a prominent NGO and it will be organising its 17th edition of the Hyderabad 10K run at the Necklace road on November 24.

"Have proper gear such as running shoes and bands. Running on a proper surface is also advised. Training plans should be strictly followed and people should focus on gradually increasing the distance covered. The last week before the race is critical," the organisation advised in a release.

## KATRINA BAGS REEBOK'S NEW FITNESS CAMPAIGN

**F**itness brand Reebok unveiled its latest campaign on the relentless pursuit of fitness, featuring its brand ambassador, actor Katrina Kaif, in a short film.

As per the sportswear giant, the campaign *She Got Ree* is a celebration of fitness. With its catchy music and impactful lyrics, the video, has Katrina unleashing her energy in a free-spirited routine that's a combination of running, spinning, flexing, dancing and boxing.

campaign encourages everyone to find their *Ree* which is the joy and spirit of being fit," said the *Bharat* lead protagonist.

Commenting on the association, Sunil Gupta, brand director, Reebok India said, "This isn't just a sweat-dripping world of straining muscles, it's a place in which the natural joy of movement finds expression through avenues such as the gym, the outdoors, and everywhere in between. The campaign would inspire women to find their very own expression of fitness."



## Gigi Hadid is back "in touch" with ZAYN MALIK

**M**odel Gigi Hadid, who was previously romantically linked with *Bachelorette* star Tyler Cameron, is reportedly reconnecting with her former boyfriend and singer Zayn Malik.

A source told *E! News* that the model "has always had a soft spot for Zayn and they have a lot of history together."

Hadid and the former One Direction member first sparked dating rumours in November 2015 and publicly announced that they were ending their relationship via Twitter in March last year.

However, the duo was spotted multiple times together in the following months and the last time they were reportedly spend-

ing time together was earlier in January of this year.

"They went through a phase where they took time apart and weren't communicating at all, but they have been in touch recently," the source added.

"She is supportive of him. They chat here and there but it's been casual."

This comes after Hadid's recent split with Cameron.

According to one fan account, Hadid has started to like Malik's posts on Instagram and Twitter.

According to a source, however, "they are definitely not getting back together but are on good terms right now."



## POST 'GOT', EMILIA CLARKE SAYS "NO" TO NUDE SCENES

**A**ctress Emilia Clarke said she has been pressured and coaxed to say 'yes' to nude scenes on projects following her role as Daenerys Targaryen on the *Game of Thrones*, where she was occasionally seen nude.

Clarke has, however, been quick to shut down producers who won't respect her boundaries, reports *variety.com*.

"I'm a lot savvier with what I'm comfortable with, and what I am okay with doing," Clarke said in a recent episode of Dax Shepard's *Armchair Expert* podcast.

She added: "I've had fights on set before where I'm like, 'No, the sheet stays up,' and they're like,

"You don't wanna disappoint your *Game of Thrones* fans". And I'm like, "F-you". I feel like I've seen enough now to know what is actually needed."

Clarke recalled filming intimate scenes on the *Game of Thrones* set, saying that she found nude scenes "terrifying". She said how former co-

star Jason Momoa acted as her mentor during the filming of season 1.

"It's only now that I realise how fortunate I was with that, because that could have gone many, many different ways. Because Jason had experience, he had done a bunch of stuff before coming on to this, he was like, 'Sweetie, this is how it's meant to be and this is how it's not meant to be, and I'm going to make sure that's the way it goes,' Clarke said.

She added that Momoa would always be

sure she received a robe during the filming of nude scenes.

"He was so kind and considerate and cared about me as a human being. He took care of me, he really did. In an environment where I didn't know I needed to be taken care of."

Clarke, who was on *Game of Thrones* for 10 years, explained how she felt first receiving the role and learning how much nudity was expected of her.

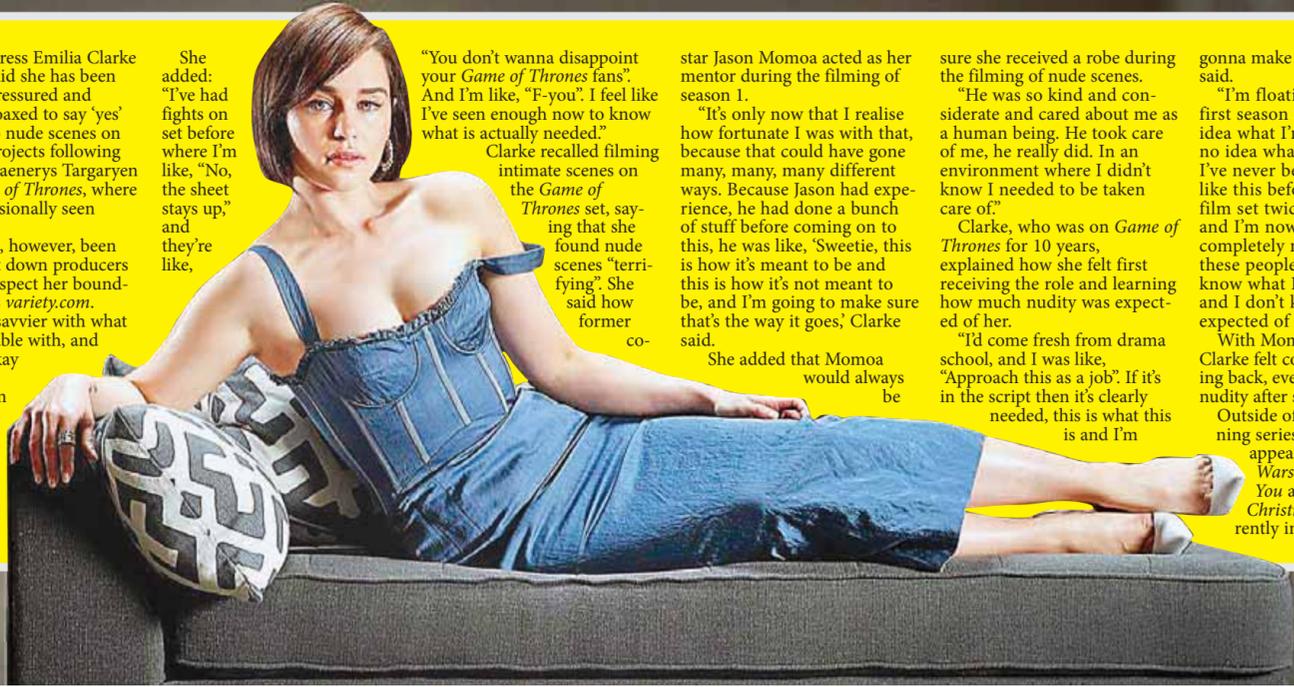
"I'd come fresh from drama school, and I was like, 'Approach this as a job'. If it's in the script then it's clearly needed, this is what this is and I'm

gonna make sense of it," Clarke said.

"I'm floating through this first season and I have no idea what I'm doing, I have no idea what any of this is. I've never been on a film set like this before, I'd been on a film set twice before then, and I'm now on a film set completely naked with all of these people, and I don't know what I'm meant to do and I don't know what's expected of me."

With Momoa's guidance, Clarke felt comfortable pushing back, even requesting less nudity after season 1.

Outside of the Emmy-winning series, Clarke has appeared in *Solo: A Star Wars Story*, *Me Before You* and *Last Christmas*, which is currently in theatres.



## FUN TIME

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



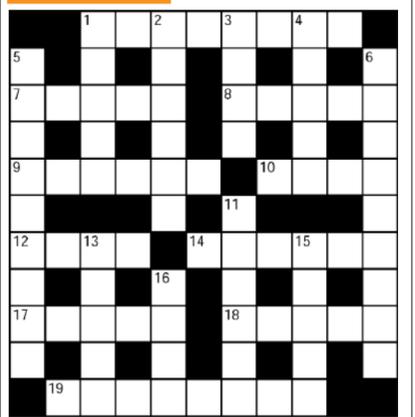
### REALITY CHECK



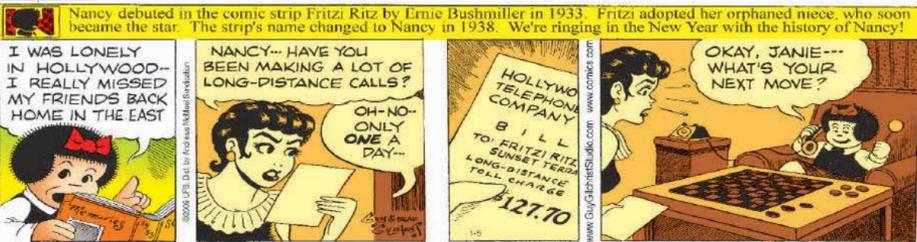
### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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

**Yesterday's solution**

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

- 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

- Fish tank
- Fewest
- Narrow shelf
- Ottawa is the capital of this country
- Journey
- Slightly hot
- Thief
- Sweeten a drink with this
- A feeling of rage
- Obstinate
- Beneath
- A watch's hands move in this direction
- Not permanent
- A red fruit used in salads
- Correct
- Start
- A creature with nippers

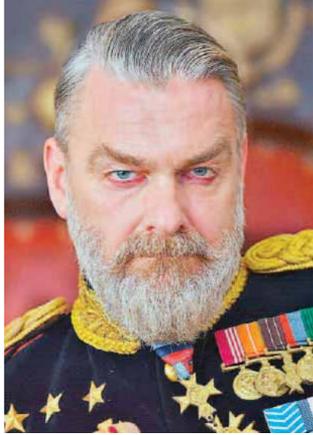
### DOWN

- Once more
- Messy, disorganised
- Tumble over and over



The standards that Rajamouli has set with his films have gone beyond state and national lines, evident from the international acclaim his movies have garnered. The director took his time with the international cast of *RRR* and the ideas are finally taking shape, reports NAGARAJ GOUD

# RRR GETS INTERNATIONAL ADDITIONS



Music and Drama, Cardiff, UK. She will join the sets shortly and we hear that her role of Jennifer falls more in the supporting actress category rather than of the leading lady. Already, Alia Bhatt is on board to play opposite Charan in the film.

The film's team has also announced that 53-year-old Irish actress Alison Doody, who is known for her role as Nazi-sympathising archaeologist Elsa Schneider, in Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), will be playing one of the film's antagonists, Lady Scott, with the other being played by Ray Stevenson, another Irish actor. Ray Stevenson is best remembered for playing Titus Pullo in the BBC/HBO television series *Rome* (2005-2007) and as Dagonet in the film *King Arthur* (2004). He also played Volstagg in Marvel's *Thor* and its sequels *Thor: The*



*Dark World* and *Thor: Ragnarok*. He will be seen as Scott in *RRR*.

Being made on a budget of Rs 400 crore, *RRR*, set in early 1920s, is a fictional story based on two real-life heroes and freedom fighters — Alluri Seetharama Raju and Komaram Bheem.

Tarak is playing the younger Bheem, while Charan will be seen as younger Ramaraju.

The likes of Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt and P. Samuthirankani are essaying significant roles in the film. The film, one of the hotly anticipated ventures, has a July 30, 2020 release date but with the shooting set to continue till May, the date might just be postponed, although the makers continue to maintain silence around it. Besides Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi, the makers are planning to release it in six other languages simultaneously.



It has been more than a year since S.S. Rajamouli's *RRR*, starring Jr NTR and Ram Charan, went to floors in Hyderabad. The latest piece of information trickling in indicates that despite witnessing multiple delays on the shooting front, a good 70 per cent of the movie's shooting has been wrapped up. The casting issue, about finding a foreign actress alongside NTR has been attended to, as Rajamouli has picked a little known English actress Olivia Morris. She has recently graduated from the Royal Welsh College of



## Cinema will co-exist with OTT services: Allu Aravind

Producer Allu Aravind, who will make entry into the Over-the-top (OTT) media services with a soon-to-be launched channel, said the giants are gradually getting to know about the OTT platform as it hasn't fully evolved yet. "I've been in the film line for 35 years and I'm scared of taking my baby steps onto the OTT service. I usually finish my business activities and retire to my home by 8 pm. I get time to play with my grandchildren for a while before hitting the bed. But, over the past two to three years, I've been tuning into Netflix, HBO, Hotstar regularly. Consequently, my reading habit has disappeared. As I started consuming content on such services, doubts about whether they will eat away my cinema have crept in. I remember binge watching *Game of Thrones* one night, only for my wife to wake up and shut the TV at 5 am. At this age, my binge watching habit has surprised me. Suddenly, the OTT platform has made me go mad," he said. He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of India Joy Event in the city.

He spoke about what he discussed with a Bengali friend, who runs a regional OTT platform, to determine whether the platform is a giant in technology or content. "He said technology plays a key role but the content is the heart. This warmed my heart. Later, I got to know that Telugu people consume these videos the highest. Soon, I decided to start an OTT platform. My investor friends were enthusiastic about it and my family also said that it is the future. There's a demand for honest and bold content and some platforms have already received great reception. I've engaged a bunch of youngsters for our shows," he said.

"After the advent of streaming, many have asked whether cinema will survive. Cinema withstood competition from colour TV in the '80s and cable onslaught in the '90s. I believe it will co-exist with this lovely giant called OTT," he added.

# tollywood

## SREE VISHNU shifts focus to Hasith Goli

Sree Vishnu, who was supposed to start his yet-to-be-titled cop story with new director Pradeep Varma later this month, has decided against it. Instead, he will first begin working on Hasith Goli's film, complete it and then move on to Pradeep's action-drama. Sources say that the dull reception to his recent release, *Thipparamesam*, made Vishnu change his mind. "The actor wants to do a light-hearted film first — which is what Hasith's film is about — and then move to Pradeep's gritty drama. Pre-production for Hasith's film is in full-swing and the team will take the film to floors in January. The casting will be

finalised by the mid of next month. Vivek Sagar is on board to render tunes," said a source close to the unit.

Hasith, an engineering graduate from BITS Pilani, has associated with Vivek Athreya for his two films, *Mental Madhilo* and *Brochevarevaruraa*. His film with Vishnu will be a satirical comedy, where the actor will be playing his age. It will be completely shot in Hyderabad. T.G. Vishwa Prasad and Abhishek Agarwal are jointly producing the film. — NG



## PRABHU DEVA AS Krishnamanohar IPS

Prabhu Deva who made his mark in Bollywood with the remake of *Pokiri* is busy shooting for big projects. The dancing sensation is currently shooting for a Tamil movie that will be released in Telugu as well as *Krishnamanohar IPS*. The action entertainer, being produced by R. Sitaramaraju under the Pavanaputra banner, is scheduled to hit theatres in the first week of December.

While Niveda Pethurath of *Ala Vaikuntapuramlo* will be cast alongside Prabhu Deva, the likes of *Baahubali* Prabhakar, Suresh Menen will be seen

playing key roles.

Prabhu Deva, who has been entertaining audience with romantic comedies as a lover boy, will now be seen as a rebel fighting various societal issues in the film, directed by Mukhil Chellappan, said producer Sitaramaraju. — K Ramya Sree



## Rajini's DARBAR to arrive a day early

The release of superstar Rajinikanth-starrer *Darbar*, directed by A.R. Murugadoss, has been advanced by a day. Instead of the earlier date of January 10, the film will now hit theatres on January 9.

We hear that the rescheduling has a Tollywood connect. With news that films like *Sarileru Neekevvaru* and *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo* are likely to be released on January 12, Telugu producers of *Darbar* have asked Lyca Productions if the film can arrive early to get a

two-day head start. With the film wrapped up more than a month ago and currently in post-production, Lyca obliged the request of Telugu producers. Also, we hear that *Sarileru Neekevvaru* and *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo* will not be clashing on the same date — January 12. Trade sources pointed out that Mahesh Babu-starrer will most likely be released on January 11, while the Allu Arjun-starrer will open on January 12.

An action-drama with an underlying social message,

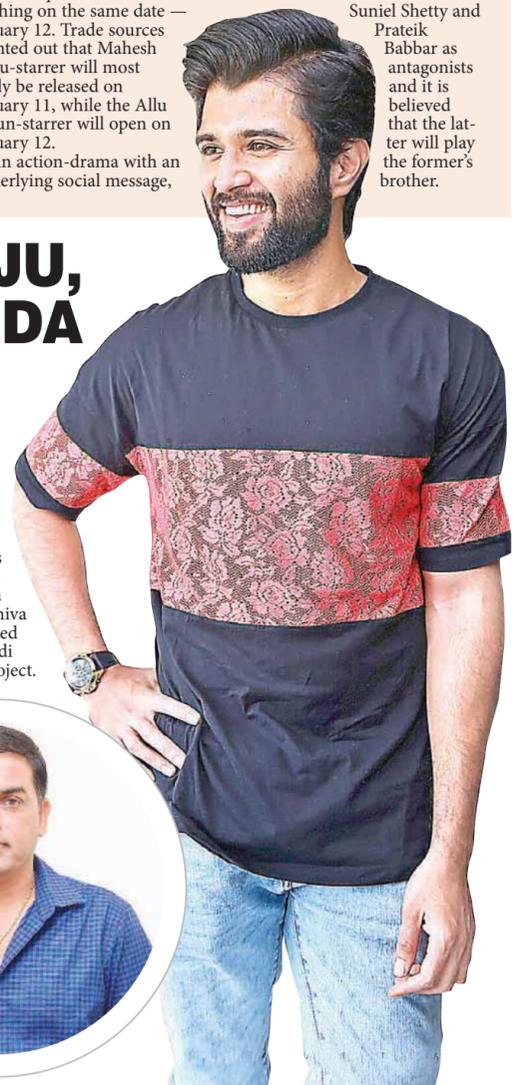
*Darbar* sees Rajini donning the cop uniform after more than 25 years. His last cop act was in the 1992 release *Pandian*.

Nayanthara, Nivetha Thomas, Dalip Tahil, Soori and Harish Uthaman are playing important roles. It also features Suniel Shetty and Prateik Babbar as antagonists and it is believed that the latter will play the former's brother.



## DIL RAJU, DEVERAKONDA combo in the offing

Leading producer Dil Raju is attached to produce Vijay Deverakonda's next with *Ninnu Kori* director Shiva Nirvana. The film was announced by Deverakonda when he was promoting his production venture, *Meeku Maathrame Cheptha*. Shiva will first complete his next with a reputed hero for Sahu Garapati and Harish Peddi and then move on to Deverakonda's project. "Dil Raju has been waiting to do a film with Deverakonda for past one year and he is glad that film with Nirvana is taking shape. It remains to be seen whether the actor will move to this film after he wraps up *Fighter* with Puri Jagannadh, as he also in line to finish *Hero* with Anand Annamalai," said a source.



# Shami deadly on any surface: Saha



Indian pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav pose with the pink ball during team's first practice session at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Wednesday BCCI/Twitter

PTI ■ KOLKATA

India wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha on Wednesday brushed aside concerns about pink ball being a challenge for bowlers like Mohammed Shami who, according to him, can be trusted to come good irrespective of the ball's colour or the nature of the surface.

Shami had a match-haul of seven wickets among the Indian pace attack's collective haul of 14 scalps in the home team's innings and 130-run victory over Bangladesh in the first Test in Indore.

"With the form they (Shami, Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav) are in, the pink ball is not a factor. Especially (Mohammed) Shami, he can be deadly on any wicket. He has pace and is able to extract reverse swing," Saha said when asked whether colour of the ball will make more difference.

Saha said that they haven't yet checked how much movement is on offer as far as pink ball is concerned.

"We are yet to see the movement of the pink ball. But the colour of the ball won't matter with the current form of our pacers," Saha added.

A handful of Indian players,

## Star will telecast India's training today

IANS ■ KOLKATA

The excitement in the City of Joy is clearly visible and while the first four days of pink ball Test is already sold out, fans have also been coming to the Eden Gardens to watch the Indian and Bangladeshi players train for the Test which starts tomorrow. And for those who cannot make it to watch Virat Kohli and boys train on the eve of the game today can witness

including Bengal's Shami and Saha, have pink ball experience in domestic cricket but the wicketkeeper pointed out that it was a Kookaburra.

"The only change is the colour of the ball. It's made differently. There's also a change in the timing and picking the ball a bit difficult in twilight. It may help the pacers but will be challenging for the batsmen," Saha said.

### NEW BEGINNING

Senior Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin feels Day/Night

the practice live.

A Star official confirmed that this will be the first time that the training session on the eve of the game will be telecast by the host broadcasters.

"Yes, we will be telecasting Kohli and boys' training on Thursday (today) as we wish to give the fans a feel of what goes on hours before the two teams actually walk out to play their maiden Day-Night Test," the official said.

Tests will mark a new beginning for the traditional format in the country as the spectator count will improve drastically owing to the match timings.

The daily proceedings in the match will start at 1pm and wind up by 8pm.

"I just hope this marks the beginning of where we get huge crowds coming into the stadium and Test cricket gets its credit and obviously with the change in timings people can afford to finish their work and come into the game, watch it and enjoy it," Ashwin

"The pitch looks good. I am very excited. When have you last seen a Test match where first four days' tickets have been sold out."  
—SOURAV GANGULY

said on Star Sports. His teammate Mohammed Shami is focussed on the challenges that await him in the game.

"The middle session should be the main focus for batsman while using the pink ball unlike the morning session that is usually considered the most important in a test match as it will have more of a swing in Eden Gardens," he said.

Shami said the bowlers will have to work very hard to extract any assistance from the pink ball.

"...The pink ball is only useful when there a hard and grassy wicket because the ball goes straight.

"Pink ball is a very different ball and doesn't work like the white or red ball at all so there is a very low possibility that in the last session we get a swing or reverse so we will have to work very hard," he said.

## Finest cricketers to grace pink ball Test



Sourav Ganguly inspects the ground with other officials AP

**KOLKATA:** India's finest cricketers including Sachin Tendulkar, Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev will assemble during the country's first-ever day-night Test against Bangladesh, starting in Eden Gardens tomorrow.

The iconic Eden Gardens is all set to witness a musical extravaganza in the presence of former cricketers, celebrities and politicians during India and Bangladesh's first-ever pink ball Test.

According to BCCI President Sourav Ganguly, the second Test of the two-match series will be one to remember.

"Sachin (Tendulkar), (Sunil) Gavaskar, Kapil (Dev), Rahul (Dravid), Anil (Kumble) everyone will be there. In tea time, there will be carts going around the stadium with former captains in them," Ganguly said on Wednesday.

"There is a musical performance at tea time and at the end of the day there is a felicitation. Both the teams, former captains, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Chief Minister will be there.

"Runa Laila will be performing, Jeet Ganguly will be performing. I am very excited. Just see the excitement, four days are already sold out in a Test match," he added.

The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) and BCCI have put in place several plans to mark India's maiden pink ball Test.

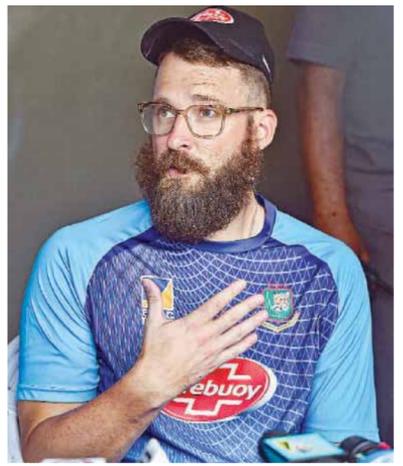
Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to ring the 'Eden Bell' along with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the first day of the match.

Besides, a host of sporting stars, including star shuttler P V Sindhu, chess ace Viswanathan Anand and tennis sensation Sania Mirza are expected to grace the occasion.

As per plans, paratroopers are expected to fly into Eden to hand a pink ball each to captains Virat Kohli and Mominul Haque just before the toss.

The CAB has also organised a talk show featuring the 'Fabulous Five' of Indian cricket — Sourav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble and V V S Laxman during the 40-minute dinner break. They will talk about the historic 2001 Test win against Australia at the Eden.

The CAB also plans to felicitate sporting stars, including Olympic champion Abhinav Bindra, Sania Mirza, Sindhu and six-time boxing world champion MC Mary Kom. PTI



Daniel Vettori speaks during press conference on Wednesday PTI

## Tigers wary of early sunset

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bangladesh's spin bowling consultant Daniel Vettori is done dwelling on the "negatives" and wants his team to feel excited about competing in its maiden Day/Night Test even though it happens to be against an incomparably formidable at-home India.

"We are excited to play rather than think about the negatives," Vettori told reporters ahead of the Test.

"Visibility is fine, but the only anecdotal conversation I have heard is around being a little bit hard to pick up from point and square-leg. It will be interesting to find out if slips, gully and umpire is picking it up well. They say there's a small halo effect," he pointed out.

While a handful of players from India have played a pink-ball game in domestic cricket, Bangladesh's only experience with that was a one-off Day/Night four-day match in 2013 but none of the current team players were a part of that fixture.

Vettori conceded that early sunset in Kolkata could pose a massive challenge for his team's batsmen during the twilight hours.

"Pink ball plays normal at this time of the day, and in this light. I think the challenge will be when the Test is under lights. Sunset is quite early here — I think 4:30 pm. I think that'll be the time when we see the pink ball come into play," the former New Zealand captain said.

Vettori has not been a part of any Day/Night Test but he feels batting during the twilight period will be challenging.

"The twilight hour, dusk is when it seems to do a little bit more. My experience is only from watching on TV. It will be the period of the Test match when tactically things might do a few different things," he said.

"The wicket will be pretty good and that last session will be very interesting with the pink ball."

With the pink ball expected to help seamers more, Vettori said Bangladesh pacers are equally excited.

"The four fast bowlers are very excited. It is a nice thing. Bangladeshi fast bowlers don't get to be excited a lot. I think they are coming to grips with a slightly different ball. It is the SG pink ball."

"I think most guys have limited experience with the Kookaburra one. But I think there's real optimism," he said.

The former New Zealand spinner is also hopeful that tweakers would come into play, especially in the first two sessions each day.

## Saif out of Eden Test

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bangladesh's reserve opener Saif Hassan was on Wednesday ruled out of the Day/Night Test against India owing to a finger injury.

The 21-year-old Hassan split the webbing of his finger while coming in as a substitute fielder during the first Test in Indore.

"The injury has not yet healed and the medical team is of the opinion that he will benefit from being rested to full recovery. Taking the state of injury into consideration, Saif has been ruled out of the second Test," the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said in a release.

The batsman was in line to make his debut in the historic pink-ball Test at the Eden Gardens, with regular openers Shadman Islam and Imrul Kayes failing to impress in the opener.

Hassan's injury means the embattled visitors will have to continue with the duo of Islam and Kayes, who managed all of 24 runs across two innings at Indore.

## Team for WI series to be announced today



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Vice-captain Rohit Sharma's workload management and opener Shikhar Dhawan's poor form are expected to dominate the deliberations when the national selection committee meets here today to decide on India's limited-overs squads for the home series against the West Indies.

If all goes well, Rohit may get some well-deserved rest during the three-match ODI series against the Caribbean team so that he is fresh and rejuvenated for the tough tour of New Zealand next year where India will play five T20 Internationals, three ODIs and two Test matches.

Rohit's workload will be the prominent point of discussion as he has played close to 60 competitive matches (including IPL) this year.

While the onus will also be on Rohit to give his viewpoint, the possibility of him being given a break in at least one of the two formats looks strong.

The other person, who might feel the heat is senior opener Shikhar Dhawan. Dhawan hasn't been in the best of forms since he returned to cricket after sustaining an injury during the World Cup.

Mayank Agarwal's stupendous form in Test cricket and a very good List A career average of

50-plus and an above 100 strike-rate makes him a good choice to partner KL Rahul in case the selectors think of looking at the third opener's option.

The soon-to-be 34 Dhawan is also not expected to be around for a long time.

Ditto for Rishabh Pant, who will don the big gloves with Sanju Samson close on his heels.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni has already started training and if Pant can't seal it during the upcoming series, he might face stiff competition from the 38-year-old legend once IPL comes calling.

With Hardik Pandya (stress fracture), Jasprit Bumrah (back surgery), Navdeep Saini and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (side strain) still recovering from their respective injuries, Shivam Dube and Shardul Thakur are expected to continue in the squad.

Spin bowling all-rounders Washington Sundar and Krunal Pandya — are also under the scanner due to their underwhelming performances.

With Yuzvendra Chahal doing well and if Ravindra Jadeja is not given another break, one among the two could get the axe.

India's new T20 sensation Deepak Chahar is expected lead the pace attack but Khaleel Ahmed's economy rate has been a problem.

## 'Ashwin deserves limited overs comeback'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spin great Harbhajan Singh feels Ravichandran Ashwin deserves a comeback in India's limited overs set-up as a reward for his recent exploits with the red ball.

With the management and selectors exploring options ahead of the T20 World Cup next year, opportunities have been given to the likes of Washington Sundar and Rahul Chahal.

As the selectors meet to pick the ODI and T20 squads for the West Indies series next month, Harbhajan said Ashwin should get another chance in the shorter versions of the game.

"This is what I feel, if you are looking to bowl a spinner upfront (which Sundar has been doing in T20s), you rather have a wicket-taker which Ashwin is. Why not (give him a chance)? He has also done a good job with the red ball



R Ashwin bowls at nets in Kolkata PTI

recently," Harbhajan said on Tuesday.

"Ashwin spins the ball, he has got more variations. Someone like a Sundar needs to learn. I want him to do well. I am all for blooding in youngsters but they must learn else they will be replaced, considering the stiff competition," said the 39-year-old.

Ashwin last played a limited overs game for India in July 2017, following which he and Ravindra Jadeja were overlooked for the shorter formats with wrist-spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Chahal replacing the finger-spinners. Jadeja was able to make a comeback but Ashwin hasn't.

Harbhajan, though, also believed that both Chahal and Kuldeep remain India's best bet for providing breakthroughs.

"They are your wicket-takers. People who are wicket-takers will always be in the game, be it Kuldeep or Chahal or whoever."

"You need to ask the management (if they should be playing every game). They (management) probably want to see what combination works well for them but good to see Chahal back and hopefully Kuldeep will be back too. In my opinion, they are your two best options," he said.

## Malinga does u-turn on retirement

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka captain and veteran pacer Lasith Malinga has had a rethink on his decision to retire after next year's Twenty20 World Cup, saying he can carry on for another two years.

Malinga, in March, had stated that he wanted to retire after the Twenty20 World Cup scheduled in October-November in Australia next year. But the 36-year-old, who captains Sri Lanka in the shortest format, now says he can play on beyond that.

"T20 is four overs and I feel with my skill, I can manage T20 as a bowler. As a captain, because I've played so many T20s around the world that I feel I can manage that period for maybe another two years," Malinga told 'ESPNCricinfo'.

## Naseem to make Test debut Focus on Dhawan, Shaw in Super League stage

BRISBANE:

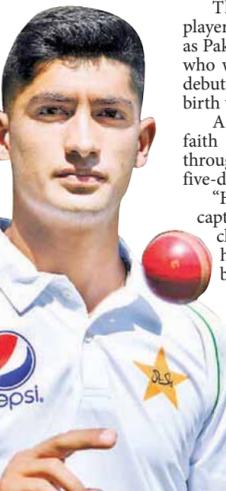
Teenage bowling sensation Naseem Shah will become one of the youngest cricketers to play a Test after Pakistan captain Azhar Ali confirmed on Wednesday the 16-year-old will make his debut at the Gabba.

Shah, who opted to remain on tour after his mother died, made the grade for today's first Test after impressing with an eight-over spell against Australia A in Perth.

"We are definitely looking to play him — he is bowling really well," Azhar said.

Only handful of players have made their

Australia vs Pakistan  
Live from 5:30am IST  
SONY SIX NETWORK



debut aged 16, including Sachin Tendulkar who went on to become an Indian batting legend.

The youngest Test player is listed by Cricinfo as Pakistan's Hasan Raza, who was 14 on his 1996 debut, though his date of birth was later disputed.

Azhar said he had faith in Shah's abilities through a high-pressure five-day game.

"He's very fit, I have captained him in first-class matches and he has overs under his belt," he said.

"I'm sure that he can do that in Tests as well, I have no doubts in his fitness and his bowling skills." AFP

PTI ■ SURAT

The spotlight would firmly be on the likes of Shikhar Dhawan and young Prithvi Shaw when the Super League stage of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament begins here today.

The focus will be on Dhawan, who has not had a great run in recent times as well as Shaw, who recently returned to competitive cricket after serving an eight month retrospective ban.

Dhawan is currently going through a rough patch. The Delhi batsman had scores of 0(9) against Jammu & Kashmir, 9(6) against Jharkhand, 19(18) against Sikkim and 35(33) against Odisha in the league stage of the national T20 championship and he would be more than keen to turn things around.

Syed Mushtaq Ali T20  
Live from 2:20pm IST  
STAR SPORTS 2 NETWORK



Mumbai opener Prithvi Shaw in action against Assam PTI

Another promising opener who would want to make most of the opportunity is Shaw, who returned with a bang from a doping ban, slamming a half-century against Assam in the last game of the league stage for Mumbai.

Twenty-year old Shaw will have to make optimum use of the Super League stage if he has to impress the national selectors and make a comeback to the national team.

In all probability, Shaw will open for Mumbai, replacing an informal Jay Bista, with senior pro Aditya Tare.

His teammates — three India players — Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube and Shardul Thakur — also have an opportunity to cement their places in the Indian T20 squad with good outings.