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VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 23, 2019; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



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Crucial Jagan-KCR meet today

HYDERABAD: Chief Ministers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh - K Chandrasekhar Rao and YS Jaganmohan Reddy - will meet at Pragati Bhavan here on Monday to discuss various issues, including bringing of Godavari waters to Srisailem project and pending issues post-bifurcation.

The CMs will lead official and ministerial delegations and of engineering officials for the crucial meeting. The meeting will mainly discuss bringing of Godavari waters to Srisailem project, which also featured prominently when the two met earlier.

Various proposals have been formulated and examined on the issue. The proposals of the two states have been taken to the notice of the CMs.

Naidu wants CM to cancel VS exam

VIJAYAWADA: TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu has written a letter to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy demanding cancellation of the exam conducted for Village Secretariat jobs on Sunday. He said that it is the responsibility of the government to do justice to the 19 lakh candidates who appeared for the exam.

Naidu alleged that the people of the State are facing problems due to the inexperience of Jaganmohan Reddy. A leader should have decision-making power after a thorough study of any situation. He alleged that relatives of employees working in APPSC obtained top ranks and jobs in the Village Secretariats.

Ketamine worth Rs 300 cr seized

NEW DELHI: The Indian Coast Guard has seized a huge cache of ketamine drug worth Rs. 300 crore from a Myanmar ship, the agency said on Saturday.

The Coast Guard, in a coordinated sea-air operation on Thursday, apprehended the ship off the Car Nicobar islands. On rummaging the vessel, 57 suspicious gunny bundles were found aboard, the Coast Guard said. The gunny bags were then transferred to Indian Coast Guard Ship Rajveer, which has apprehended the ship.

In a joint investigation by the Narcotics Control Bureau and the local police, it was revealed that suspicious substance in the gunny bags was ketamine, a psychotropic substance, and there were 1,160 packets of 1 kg each.

Three Maoists killed in Vizag Agency encounter

Two women among those gunned down
Encounter continuing: Greyhounds

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Three Maoists were killed in an exchange of fire with security forces in the reserve forest area near Madimalli area under Gummarevula Panchayat of GK Veedhi Mandal, close to Darakonda in Vizag Agency on Sunday. The region comes under Sileru police station limits.

Three members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist), including two women, were gunned down when the elite anti-naxal squad Greyhounds of the AP Police encountered the Maoists, Visakhapatnam district Superintendent of Police Babujee Attada said.

There could be some injuries but the police are yet to confirm. Intensive combing has been launched in the area after the firing incident.

The incident took place when the CPI (Maoist) Party was celebrating the 15th formation day of the outfit from September 21. It also coincides with the completion of exactly one year of the killing of the then Araku Valley MLA Kidari Sarveswara Rao and the former Araku Valley MLA Siveri Soma by the Maoists near Livitput under Dumbriguda Mandal in Vizag



It also coincides with the completion of exactly one year of the killing of the then Araku Valley MLA Kidari Sarveswara Rao and the former Araku Valley MLA Siveri Soma by the Maoists near Livitput under Dumbriguda Mandal in Vizag Agency on September 23, 2018.

The police said that based on intelligence reports on the presence of the Maoists in Vizag Agency, they intensified the combing operations. The exchange of fire lasted for over 30 minutes before some Maoists escaped into the forest, police said.

Vizag Rural SP Babujee Attada confirmed the death of three Maoists in the exchange

of fire and said that the exchange of fire was going on when reports last came in. The police are yet to establish the identity of the deceased.

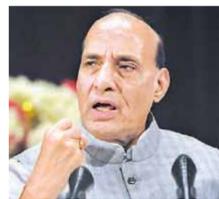
Police officials said one self-loading rifle and two .303 rifles were seized from the Maoists. There were no reports of any casualties on the police side. The banned outfit had announced anniversary celebrations from September 21 to 28.

Pak may split into pieces: Rajnath Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

No power would be able to save Pakistan from getting divided into pieces, if human rights violations against Balochs and Pashtuns continued, said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday. "You can see they're getting discouraged. Pakistan PM comes to PoK and says 'countrymen don't go to India-Pak border'. I say it's good because if they do, they would not be able to return to Pakistan. They should not commit the mistake of repeating 1965 and 1971," Rajnath said at a "Jan Jagran Sabha" (public awareness meet), organised by BJP in Patna.

"If they (Pakistan) repeat it, they would have to think what would become of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Human rights violations are committed against Balochs and Pashtuns there. If it continues, no power will be able to protect Pakistan from getting further divided into pieces," he said.



Rajnath Singh



Union Minister of State for Home G Kishen Reddy addressing Jan Jagran Sabha themed 'One Nation One Constitution' at JNTU-K in Kakinada on Sunday

Behave or get wiped out, Kishen Reddy warns Pak

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishen Reddy on Sunday said that the Pak Occupied Kashmir (POK) issue would be taken up at an appropriate time and strongly warned that if war breaks out with Pakistan, the neighbouring country would be wiped out.

Addressing Jan Jagran Sabha at JNTU-K, under 'One Nation one Constitution' as part of National Unity Campaign, the Minister narrated in detail about Article 370 and why it was scrapped by the NDA government.

He held Shaik Abdullah and

former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru responsible for continuation of this 'one nation two flags' system for several years. He also expressed concern that the Indian Constitution written by Baba Saheb Ambedkar was not being implemented in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister deplored that there were no reservations or efforts for women education in the valley. Nor was there an industrial activity in the region, he lamented.

The Kashmiri Pundits had to take shelter at different cities because of the policies adopted and ones that were detrimental to their well-being.

'Had Sardar Vallabhai Patel, been the prime minister things would have been different,' the Minister felt.

Kishen Reddy criticised Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan for trying to instigate violence in POK by impersonating some terrorists as Indian soldiers. Reddy disclosed that action would be initiated in POK at an appropriate time and warned Pak rulers not to create a war-like atmosphere if it hopes to survive. Earlier, BJP leaders Somu Veerajai, Y Malakondayya, and JNTU-Anantapur Vice-Chancellor Prof. S. Srinivas Kumar also addressed the Sabha.



MEIL is lone bidder for Polavaram project

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Of the eight companies that had taken part in the pre-bid meetings for the prestigious Rs 4987-crore Polavaram project, seven companies have shied away with only Megha Engineering Infrastructures Limited (MEGA) alone participating in the bids.

The State Government, which hoped that the contracting firms would compete with one another to bag the prestigious project works, found its hopes evaporating with only MEIL making a bid. It may be recalled that Water Resources Minister Anil Kumar Yadav went on record stating that it could save Rs 58 crore in one of the packages of works for Polavaram.

The Government invited bids to execute works worth Rs 4,987 crore towards the main dam works and also the hydel power project works. But, to their dismay, barring MEIL none evinced an interest.

Senior officials held nego-

tiations with several top-notch engineering firms and assured them that they would not have to pay a single rupee towards kickbacks to anyone. They encouraged the engineering firms to take part in the bidding process without fear. But, out of the eight companies that attended the pre-bid meetings, seven opted out.

According to a highly placed government official, who wished to remain anonymous, ever since the government cancelled the PPAs and Polavaram contracts, the credibility of the government was at stake given the lackadaisical approach of the engineering firms. A general presumption is that they developed cold feet and were averse to being dragged into avoidable controversies.

The MEIL is known for its speedy completion of works without compromising the quality. On Monday, the government will announce name of the successful bidder.

MP women colleges to have police outposts

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Police posts will come up at women's colleges across Madhya Pradesh to ensure the safety of students and teachers, it was announced on Sunday.

The decision, taken by the Higher Education Department, is being communicated to the Superintendents of Police in all districts.

In the letter, the Department has asked the police to identify educational institutions for women and areas where women work for setting up police posts there and arranging patrols by women constables.

It has also asked to set up committees of students to suggest security measures. The authorities have also sought CCTVs be set up at the entrance and exit gates and common areas of women's colleges - so as to safeguard privacy. The institutions have also been asked to compile a list of any serious incidents in the last two years and the action taken against the perpetrators and give it to the district Collector and Superintendent of Police concerned.

Naidu's rented house headed for demolition?

G RAVI KIRAN
■ VIJAYAWADA

The latest notice served by CRDA on Lingamaneni Ramesh, owner of the house rented by TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, indicates that the structure would be demolished.

Unless Lingamaneni Ramesh obtains a stay order from the High Court, the demolition will be just a formality next week. Now the question is whether Naidu will vacate the house silently or will he try to protest against demolition.

Ramesh claimed that he had permission of Undavalli pan-

AREA OF THE PLACE

1.318 acres

SURVEY NUMBERS

272/A, 272/Z, & 274

of Undavalli Village



N Chandrababu Naidu

chayat and that he had paid the plan approval fee accordingly. But, CRDA, quoting from the letter of the Panchayat Secretary, had claimed that it was a lie. CRDA made it clear that it was a resolution passed

by the Panchayat and it was not valid. CRDA officials refuted the argument of Ramesh that the authority did not exist at the time of construction. Citing the CRDA Act, they men-

tioned a clause that allows them to correct the previous authorities' acts.

Mangalagiri MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy said, "I don't understand why Naidu is hesitating to vacate the building. He has clearly mentioned that it's a rented house. Rules were violated by its owner. If Naidu wants, the State Government will provide him a suitable house."

According to sources, TDP leaders are against Naidu vacating the building. It appears they want to create a sympathy wave for Naidu by highlighting the demolition, which now looks imminent.

PM's gesture at Houston airport wins hearts

PNS ■ HOUSTON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who arrived in Houston on Saturday ahead of the mega "Howdy, Modi!" event, received a warm welcome at the airport where several Indian and US officials met him. A gesture by the Prime Minister left many on social media inspired and impressed.

Christopher Olson, Director of Trade and International Affairs, US Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster and Indian Ambassador to the US Harsh Vardhan Shringla were at the airport to receive PM Modi.



In visuals, PM Modi is seen coming out of the plane, walking up to the officials and exchanging greetings with them. When he is handed a

bouquet and some flowers fall on the carpet, he promptly picks them up and gives them to one of his security personnel.

Petrol price rise highest in 2 years

NEW DELHI: Petrol prices have been increased by Rs. 1.59 a litre and diesel by Rs. 1.31 in the last six days — the most since the current system of daily price reviews was introduced in 2017. Petrol price on Sunday was hiked by 27 paise to Rs. 73.62 a litre in Delhi. The rate of diesel was increased by 18 paise to Rs. 66.74 per litre in Delhi. This is the sixth straight daily increase and has taken the cumulative price hike since September 17.

TS stares at Rs 1.43L cr public debt: CAG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's total debt stood at nearly Rs 1.43 lakh crore by the end of 2017-18, an 18 per cent increase over the preceding year, the CAG said in its report tabled on Sunday in the state assembly.

The Comptroller and Auditor General also expressed concern that the interest payments by the government, relative to revenues, were higher at 12.19 per cent against the target of 8.31 per cent fixed by the 14th Finance Commission.

"Outstanding public debt (Rs 1.42,918 crore) increased by 18 per cent in 2017-18 over the preceding year at a higher place than growth of GSDP (Gross State Domestic



Product). Interest payments are increasingly consuming revenue receipts. The interest payments relative to revenue receipts were much higher at 12 per cent against the target of 8.31 per cent fixed by the 14th Finance Commission," the CAG said. The ratio of debt repayment to tax revenue also increased from six per cent in 2015-16 to 8.05 per

The Comptroller and Auditor General also expressed concern that the interest payments by the government, relative to revenues, were higher at 12.19 per cent against the target of 8.31 per cent fixed by the 14th Finance Commission

cent 2017-18, it said. The maturity profile of outstanding public debt as on March 2018 showed that Rs 65,740 crore, 48 per cent of total outstanding debt, is to be repaid over the next seven years, the auditor said in the report.

"The state government may undertake a study supported by future projections to measure its total physical commitments that the ability to meet them. Inform the risk assess-

ment on its future borrowing," CAG said in its recommendations.

The CAG report said the government had ensured decrease in the cost of collection in the past three years prior to fiscal 2018, indicating greater efficiency measured as cost of tax collection as a percentage of tax collection.

The state government did not disclose financial results of any of the irrigation projects, it said.

Woman killed as chunk falls off Hyd Metro station ceiling

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a freak mishap, a 24-year-old woman died after chunks of concrete fell from the ceiling of the pedestrian area under the Ameerpet Metro station fall on her head from a height of nine metres on Sunday. She was rushed to a nearby private hospital, but succumbed to the injuries en route.

The woman identified as Mounika, a homemaker from Kukatpally and wife of TCS employee Harikanth, was standing in the pedestrian zone of the station while taking cover from heavy rains in the evening.

Hyderabad Metro Rail



authorities said the mishap took place when some "small pieces of plaster" fell off from a "surface wall" of the station. The sharp edge of the piece fell on Mounika's head from about nine meters height, and she unfortunately succumbed to the head injury while being taken to a nearby hospital by

L&T personnel," said HMRL managing director NVS Reddy. Sources said Mounika, along with her cousin, had come to Ameerpet in a Metro train from Kukatpally.

They were there to look for a hostel for her cousin, who was moving to the city for higher studies.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Bhadrapada & Krishna Paksha Panchangam
Tithi: Navami : 06:37 pm
Nakshatram: Ardra: 11:30 am
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 07:38 am - 09:08 am
Yamagandam: 10:38 am - 12:08 pm
Varjyam: 11:01 pm - 12:33 am
Gulika: 01:38 pm - 03:08 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: NIL
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:44 am - 12:32 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Isolated Thunderstorms
Temp: 32/25
Humidity: 88%
Sunrise: 06:05
Sunset: 06:11
Current Weather Conditions Updated September 22, 2019 5:00 PM

CAPSULE

BOOK ON 'BOTANY AND BEYOND' TO BE RELEASED TODAY

VIJAYAWADA: A book titled 'Botany and Beyond' written by Dasari Lakshmana Rao will be released by AP High Court Chief Justice C Praveen Kumar here on Monday. The book will contain botanical nomenclature of various plants and their uses. Vice-Chancellor of Dr B R Ambedkar University Dr K Ramji will be the special invitee. Velagapudi Siddhartha Law College Principal Ch Diwakar Babu, SVVU Dean of Veterinary Sciences T S Chandrasekhara Rao, Andhra Loyola College Botany Department HoD Rose Mary, Neel Kamal Publications Private Limited MD Suresh Chandra Sharma will be the guests.



STATE GETS AWARDS FOR WATER CONSERVATION

VIJAYAWADA: The Andhra Pradesh government has won two awards for water conservation and water management from the Union government's National Water Mission. Horticulture department of the State has won the award for conservation techniques used for drip irrigation in Kumool district. Similarly, Hindustan Coca Cola Beverages Private Limited in Guntur district has won the award in water management category. Union Minister for Jal Sakthi Gajendra Singh Sekhawat will present the awards to the State government on September 25.

Banks merger to hit job aspirants

G RAVI KIRAN
VIJAYAWADA

Unemployed youth, preparing for bank jobs, is disappointed now with the number of opportunities in the sector will be on the wane following the merger of several banks announced recently by the Union government. The Centre's decision has dampened even the spirits of engineering graduates, who have been aspiring for bank jobs, of late.

Normally, graduates and post-graduates of traditional courses prefer bank jobs. Earlier, Banking Service Recruitment Board India (BSRB) used to conduct exams for the posts in all public sector banks regularly.

Private banks and insurance companies have provided many jobs in the marketing sector for youngsters, who are not lucky enough to find a government job.

Due to the entry of corporate banks, public sector banks have stepped back a little unable to match their aggressive business techniques. Barring a few banks like the State Bank of India (SBI), most of the public sector banks shied away from expansion.



Many jobless engineering students are focusing on bank jobs after failing to get software jobs.

But now, the worldwide recession has influenced the Union government to take the initiative to merge the banks. Due to this step, now the banks have to adjust the existing staff, rather than recruiting newcomers. This has given a

lot to youngsters. S Venu Gopal, B Tech, said, "I have not got a job in campus recruitment. Hence, I have chosen to prepare for a bank job. For that, I have joined a coaching centre recently. Now, all the people are saying opportunities will be very less in the banking sector also. I am upset with this."

Even coaching centre managements are in trouble. G Ramachandra Rao, a faculty, said "Now, many have not believed that the entire situation will change because of the Union government's decision on merger of public sector banks. After knowing about the reality, bank job-aspirants will become fewer in the course of

time. This will definitely affect the institutes and we will also be in the soup along with the unemployed youth.

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'Not just kids, adults too love animated content'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A new study from India's animated news creator Bisbo, on Sunday, revealed that 80 per cent of their 10 million strong users are adults between the age of 18 and 44.

According to Bisbo, the content industry also includes mixed medium industries like mobile-based short news creators and animation.

While mainstream news has been giving space to scripted toons for long, a few have used these as the main, storytelling medium.

From left-side cartoon boxes in newspapers to 2-min, 3-D political capsules - these cartoons have a curio value in newspapers and news channels.

"There is an increasing amount of 2D animation content for adults - one where the chosen topics resonate with them and their lives. Our chosen type of content is animated news, the merging of current affairs with a friendly format."

"People today don't have time for repetitive footage on TV, or the patience to read column in newspapers. Bisbo's solution for that is to present news and current affairs in the animated format in such a way that viewers never get bored watching the videos and end up learning about something new every time they watch a video on Bisbo's channel," said Shakir Ebrahim, Founder of GoBisbo Broadcasting Network Private Limited.

"News is created every day, as videos for Bisbo are based on the topics for the day, they have a steady source of information. The team takes topics from the events of the day, researches them and then prepares a script that is visually compelling, yet easily understandable



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ally compelling, yet easily understandable. The network is capturing a lot of users' attention on YouTube. It regularly clocks a watch time of over 50 million minutes a month, on just 50 minutes of original animated content created in the same period.

Wipro techies, kith & kin run in 110 cities

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Celebrating the spirit of camaraderie, thousands of global software major Wipro's techies, their families, friends, alumni, customers, partners and suppliers ran for fun in 110 cities across 34 countries, said the IT behemoth on Sunday.

"The Spirit of Wipro run

with a 'Further Together' as the theme for the 14th consecutive year reinforced our core values to treat each person with respect, be global and responsible, and integrity in everything we do," said the city-based software vendor in a statement here. The annual global event has brought people together as a community to bring change in

society. "The marathon is our annual, global tradition to remind that everyone can achieve if they apply their mind to it. We celebrate the spirit of Wiproites the world over on this special day," Chief Executive Abidali Z Neemuchwala said in a statement.

As one of the largest employee engagement events the world

over, the run has brought all stakeholders together for a common cause.

"The run is a testament of what the spirit of togetherness and collaboration can achieve," said Wipro chief HR officer Saurabh Govil. The run was organised in 25 global cities and 15 Indian cities, including Vijayawada and Vizag.

Cull out boat drivers' call data: Jyotula Nehru

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA Jyotula Nehru alleged a huge scam behind the recently boat tragedy near Devipatnam and demanded the police to cull out boat drivers' call data.

Addressing the media here on Sunday, he said that the culling out of call data would throw more light on the circumstances leading to the boat tragedy.

He alleged that there was no transparency in filling the Village Secretariat posts and demanded that the YSRCP government go in for reverse exams procedure on the lines of reverse tendering of the Polavaram project works.

The storage capacity of the Polavaram project was reduced by 60 tmc feet from the previous 196 tmc feet, he alleged.

He appealed to Jagannathan Reddy not to mortgage interests of the State to sustain friendship with his Telangana counterpart K Chandrasekhar Rao.

Gold remains buoyant, closes at \$ 1,519.14

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amidst simmering hostilities between the US and Iran, oil prices have zoomed all over the world. However, due to successful diplomacy of our leadership, oil-supply to India is likely to remain uninterrupted, albeit within higher price-bracket.

Gold remained buoyant and closed at US \$ 1,519.14 (per ounce) while silver, followed suit and closed at \$ 18.06 (per ounce). Platinum and Palladium also marched forward and closed at \$ 948.60 (per 10 gms) and \$ 1,645.75 (per 10 gms) respectively.

Other economic parameters too moved northward. Brent closed at US\$ 63.82 (per barrel), while Crude oil was quoted at Rs.4,178 (per barrel). Gold MCX stood at Rs.37,697 (per 10 gms). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 38,014.62 and 11,274.20 points respectively.

Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were: US \$: Rs.71.27, British Pound: Rs. 88.79, Euro : Rs. 78.42, Singapore \$: Rs.51.86, Swiss Franc : Rs.72.30, Australian \$: Rs.48.19, Saudi Rial : Rs. 19.03, New Zealand Dollar : 44.63, Kuwaiti Dinar : Rs.234.40, Omani Rial : Rs. 184.93 and UAE Dinar : Rs.19.41.

At home, due to on-going Sraddhapaksh, trading was dull. As such, both the precious metals remained divergent. Standard gold (24 carats) declined by Rs.180 and closed at Rs.37,700 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too, moved in tandem and was quoted in the range of Rs.35,760 - 35,860 on the closing day. On the other hand, Silver (0.999) appreciated by Rs.700 and closed at Rs.46,500 (per kg). The divergent trend is likely to continue till the beginning of Navaratri festival.

COMMODITIES

The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities was mod-

Standard gold declined by Rs.180 and closed at Rs.37,700. Ornamental gold too, moved in tandem and was quoted in the range of Rs.35,760 - 35,860 on the closing day

erate. At Rythu Bazars and in the various commodity markets located in Begum Bazar, Kishangunj, Mukthyargunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir Alam Mandi, Dilsukhnagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally and General Bazar, it oscillated between moderate and strong.

The inflow of agro-goods supplies from other states, particularly Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, has been obstructed due to heavy rains and flood situation in these states.

During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, moong dal, urad dal, chickpeas, turmeric and masoor dal recorded marginal appreciation, while staple food grains and common edible oils remained steady at the previous week's closing levels. With lower crop estimates for soyabeans, its price is expected to go up in the near future. Coriander remained divergent within narrow margins.

The prices of common vegetables rose considerably during the week. Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed gourd, snake gourd, lady fingers, cucumber, potatoes, onions, tomatoes and French beans, along with other leafy vegetables, recorded an increase in the range of 30 per cent to 45 per cent.

In Hyderabad, the NECC wholesale egg price appreciated by Rs.34 and closed at Rs.378 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.438 was recorded at Kolkata, while Hospet closed at the lowest price of Rs.370.

Huge response to free eye camp

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Maxi Vision Super Specialty Eye Hospital in association with Telugu Association of North America (TANA) and Free Cataract Operation Association organised a mega free eye camp at the Zilla Parishad High School in Nidamanuru village of Vijayawada rural on Sunday.

The eye camp was started at 9 am and continued till 3 pm. Eye camp received a huge response as people made a beeline for the screening. More than 750 patients underwent screening.

Dr Madhavilatha from Maxi Vision Eye Hospitals carried out the screening of the patients. Over 550 plus spec-



Venkat Rao, Senior Vice-President of Maxi Vision Super Specialty Eye Hospital, inaugurating the mega eye camp at Nidamanuru village on Sunday

tacles were distributed to the poor patients by Venkat Rao, Senior Vice -President and Arjun, Vice-President of Maxi Vision Super Specialty Eye

Hospital. Medicines distributed to 350 patients for free. Yugender, Sagar, Ravi Kumar from TANA participated in the eye camp.

Justice in sight over Ram temple issue

HC UPADHYAY
HYDERABAD

Finally, curtains will fall on the much-prolonged legal battle on the contentious issue of Lord Ram's birthplace in Ayodhya, going by the Supreme Court's decision to conclude the hearing of petitions on the subject matter on October 18. Thereafter, hopefully before the retirement of the Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, the verdict will be delivered. If that happens, and should happen under any circumstances, the people of the country would heave a sigh of relief.

Call it travesty of circumstances, sinister planning by anti-Hindu forces or sheer misfortune, the fact is that over four-fifths of 132 crore population has been forced to silently suffer onslaughts on their faith for several generations!

No provision for consolidation of cheque bouncing cases in law: SC

The Supreme Court, in a recent judgment in Vani Agro Enterprises vs State of Gujarat & anr observed that "there is no provision of consolidation of cases in the Code of Criminal Procedure" with regard to the cases filed under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act.

The appellant had issued four cheques to the respondent No.2 which subsequently bounced. The respondent no.2 sent one notice in terms of Section 138 of

Call it travesty of circumstances, sinister planning by anti-Hindu forces or sheer misfortune, the fact is that over four-fifths of 132 crore population has been forced to silently suffer onslaughts on their faith for several generations!

NI Act with regard to bouncing of all the four cheques. Thereafter, complaints were filed in the year 1999 and these complaints have dragged on for 20 years, only on the application of the appellant that all the four complaints should be consolidated and heard together.

"The main ground raised is that in terms of Section 219 of the Code of Criminal Procedure since the offences took place during period of one year, the cases should be dealt together. Even if Section 219 of the Code of Criminal Procedure was to apply, there have to be two trials because not more than three cases can be tried together even if they occurred in one year," the court observed. However, the court granted relief by directing the trial Magistrate to fix all the four cases on one date so that it is convenient to both the parties to attend the hearing of all the four cases on one date.

Kerala HC follows HRC-UN Following the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, the High Court of

Kerala on September 19 declared that right to access the internet is a Fundamental Right forming part of the Right to Privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Delivering the judgment on a petition filed by an undergraduate student, Faheema Shirin, Justice P V Asha accepted the petitioner's contention that the restriction placed on access to internet by her college hostel curtailing the use of mobile phones amounted to a violation of Fundamental Right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. The Judge also agreed with the petitioner that internet accessible through mobile phones or laptops, provided an avenue for the students to gather knowledge as well as to express themselves.

Housing society is not industry: HC

The Allahabad High Court, dealing with a petition filed by Arun Vihar Residents Welfare Association, a society regis-

tered under the Societies Registration Act 1860, has said that the said Society is not an industry within the Industrial Disputes Act, 1957 and its employees are not workmen.

Citing Som Vihar Apartment Owners Housing Maintenance Limited vs. Workmen (2002) 9 SCC 652, the court observed, "any ancillary activities which may be carried on by such a housing society would be treated to be merely adjunct and applying the 'dominant nature test', the same good not change the nature of the activity so as to bring it within the purview of the term "industry".

No online sale of liquor: HC The Karnataka High Court has held that online sale of liquor cannot be allowed as there is no provision for such sale in the Karnataka Excise Act.

HIP Bar Private Limited was offering a semi-closed prepaid payment instrument (mobile valet) to its customers after obtaining necessary permission from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). However,

the licence issued by the State government under FSS Act only enabled the company to carry on the business of distributor, supplier, transporter, wherein the petitioner is permitted to carry on food business relating to ready-to-eat savouries, beverages, excluding daily products.

Justice S. Sujatha, while dismissing the petition filed by the said company observed: "indisputably, liquor is deleterious to the health of mankind...younger generation, including children below the permissible age, succumbing to this temptation of liquor consumption may not be stringently regulated through online orders. The eligibility of age and sound mind to receive and consume liquor is difficult to monitor with the trade carried out by the petitioner."

Overhaul of criminal law on the cards

The Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, has expressed himself in favour of major changes in the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure to make the criminal justice delivery system more efficient. He has asked the state governments to suggest changes in the criminal law to ensure that the criminals do not go scot-free.

With the changing times, laws should also be modified to keep in tune. This augurs well for the streamlining efforts of the justice delivery system.



Vysakhi Natyashri award for Gaurie Dwivedi

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Gaurie Dwivedi, a renowned classical dancer in Odissi and Kathak, on Sunday received the prestigious Vysakhi Natyashri Award from the Nataraj Music and Dance Academy. She was here to participate in the three day national dance festival.

Gaurie Dwivedi travelled across the world to give performances and enthralled the audience with her lively and energetic performance that displayed perfection in all aspects of classical dance.

Trained in two dance styles, Gaurie Dwivedi has performed at all prestigious dance festivals in the country. Her most recent performance was at the world famous Swami Haridas Sangeet Avum Nritya Mahotsav in Vrindavan earlier this month where Swami Nrityagopal Das was the chief guest.

How often in the recent past have we seen Speakers in Assemblies and Chairpersons in Upper Houses instinctively favouring parties they've come from - whether it is ex-LS Speaker Sumitra Mahajan or current Rajya Sabha Chairman and V-P Venkaiah Naidu? The latest entrant in the club is Pocaharam Srinivas Reddy, Speaker of Telangana Assembly and ex-Agriculture minister of the state. On Saturday, the penultimate day of the Session, he happened to respond to protesting Congress MLAs stating: "We didn't pass the Bill when the Congress MLAs were outside of the House." That made it look he was defending the ruling TRS instead of being impartial as the Speaker. Not to be undone, CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka seized the opportunity to make the Speaker realise his faux pas with a stinging remark. "We are not attributing any motives to the Chair. We are ask-

House Speakers still dyed in party colours?

ing only Treasury Benches!" Bhatti shot back at Speaker Pocaharam Reddy.

Dengue extent not quantified

So, how bad is the dengue epidemic scene after all, and how many have fallen prey to the disease in the state so far? Fact is, there aren't any definitive answers. The Health Department admits that the number of dengue patients reported in Hyderabad this year is much higher than the season's average annual data. Officials have not measured the magnitude of dengue outbreak and so we might not be provided an exact figure any time soon. However, one can get a reliable estimate of the epidemic from doctors who are treating patients

currently. One of the doctors at Fever Hospital told us, "Of about 50 cases I see in a day, at least 12 are dengue positive. The Fever Hospital alone has assigned more than 50 doctors to especially tackle dengue. Most of them concur that at least 100 cases get detected at the hospital every day. This can serve as fair enough pointer of how widespread the epidemic is."

IT's control+Z -- back to Hyd from Amaravati

Hyderabad is seeing the return of IT experts, who had once gone all-out in marketing Amaravati under the Chandrababu Naidu regime. So much so that somebody no less than JA Chowdary, the IT advisor of Andhra Pradesh government himself, who at one point did all he



could to promote Sunrise State of AP, returned recently to set up the 'Hyderabad Fintech Forum' in the tech city. Chowdary, who in his previous role used to tom-tom 'Vishakapatnam Fintech Valley', 'Hackathons' and other initiatives of the AP government. But in the Hyderabad venture, there was no mention of Andhra Pradesh. Call it what you will - pressing 'reset' button, or backspace or control+Z - but the move is quite a turnaround for the IT czar. These days he is busy

networking and re-working all his old connections in the IT industry, and the Telangana government is all too happy about the turn of events.

Jagan taking cue from KCR?

There is nothing secret about the close friendship between AP CM Jaganmohan Reddy and Telangana CM KCR. Both leaders have openly exhibited their 'dosti' and even vowed to lend support to each other for better coordination between the Telugu states and progress of Telugu people. While the benefits of the two CMs' camaraderie are yet to accrue, Jagan has surely borrowed a leaf or two out of friend KCR's playbook. He recently banned two TV channels in AP, apparently after being miffed at those channels'

anti-government stance. KCR, for his part, had set the ball rolling first by showing the door to two channels in TS soon after he assumed power in the state. Okay, they are pals, but wonder if they are actually sharing the 'best practices' between them.

YSRCP MLAs in low spirits

Four-odd months into its fresh tenure, YSRCP's honeymoon should have been barely over if not still continuing. But its party MLAs' relationship with the electorate seems to have hit a rocky patch. The trouble is they are finding it difficult to convince people of anything meaningful being done in AP. The masses had a lot of expectations from the Jaganmohan Reddy government, but it has hardly done

anything to speak of in terms of tangible change for the better. Frustrated MLAs vented their discomfort in front of Ministers M Srinivasa Rao and Mopidevi Venkataramana at a review meeting held in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. One MLA said revenue officials were just not listening to party leaders, while another one said they were feeling hamstrung because the police were behaving like they were the actual bosses. Minister Srinivasa Rao tried lift spirits by saying all will fall in place with time. But the MLAs weren't buying the Minister's word much like the voters who are beginning to shrug off the MLAs themselves.

((Contributed by Kolihetty Venkateshwarlu, Mayank Tiwari, Naveena Ghanate, Deepthi Nandan, KMP Patnaik))

CAPSULE

'BABA' CLAIMING TO BE EXORCIST HELD

Hyderabad: A man who claimed to be a 'Baba', an exorcist who could rid people of evil spirits that possessed them, was arrested on Saturday night. The man had thousands of subscribers on his YouTube channel containing videos which showed him performing rituals. The accused, identified as Sayyed Tipu Sultan alias Tipu Baba, 26, a resident of Kinara Galli in the city, used to shoot videos of himself 'healing' people afflicted of ailments. A complaint was filed by Jawed Khan, 42, a videographer, with the Hussaini Alam police station stating that Tipu Baba had accused him of performing black magic on his employee Mohd Irfan, making him fall ill. The Baba convinced Irfan that Jawed has done black magic on him which made him fall sick.

Dy CMs fire a fresh salvo at Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

"Are you feeling jealous of creation of 1.25 lakh government jobs within three months?" Deputy Chief Ministers - Pili Subhash Chandrabose, Alla Nani, Pushpa Sri Vani, Narayana Swamy and Amjad Basha - asked TDP chief Naidu.

In a letter to Naidu in response to the letter by him to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Sunday, they said Naidu is unable to digest the truth that candidates belonging to SC, ST, BC and Minority communities had found jobs in their own villages. Agreeing that the majority of volunteers recruited are YSRCP cadre, they said the followers of TDP are habituated to easy money. "The YSRCP cadre are ready to accept the low paid jobs," they added. The Deputy Chief Ministers



Pili Subhash Chandrabose



Alla Nani



Pushpa Sri Vani

Deputy Chief Ministers questioned the credibility of Naidu as the people of Andhra Pradesh had rejected his party

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● They clarified that the exams for Village Secretariat jobs have been conducted in a very transparent manner and asked the TDP to stop making false allegations, which are insulting backward communities, who secured jobs

questioned the credibility of Naidu. They said the people of Andhra Pradesh had rejected the useless experience of Naidu, which had looted the public.

They clarified that the exams for Village Secretariat jobs have been conducted in a very transparent manner and asked the TDP to stop making false allegations, which are insulting backward communities, who secured jobs.

VILLAGE SECRETARIAT RECRUITMENT TEST

Lokesh alleges paper leak, demands CBI probe

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Minister Nara Lokesh on Sunday levelled allegations against the YSRCP government charging some of the ministers in the Cabinet with deliberately leaking question papers for the recent Village Secretariat jobs recruitment test.

He demanded that the senior leaders in the government resign owning moral responsibility for the paper leak. Because of the paper leak, YSRCP followers' family members secured good ranks.

In a tweet, he charged the ruling party leaders with selling each job for Rs 5 lakh. He accused the State government of holding secret parleys to put the question paper leak issue under the carpet.

Referring to YSRCP making a hue over the question paper leak that never happened when the TDP was in power, he said that a probe ordered by the TDP government into the alleged leak proved that there was no leak at all.

Referring to Sakshi, what he said the mouth piece of the YSRCP, spewed venom on the issue, he said. He recalled how the YSRCP leaders went for the scalps of senior lead-



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ers in the government and demanded a CBI probe into the leak of SSC papers. Referring to the incident, Lokesh demanded when the YSRCP leaders are going to step down and order a CBI probe into the incident.

Delhi-Vja AI flight hit by turbulence, probe ordered

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Hit by turbulence, an Air India flight from New Delhi to Vijayawada suffered a partial damage and its crew members were injured on September 17. No passenger has been injured in the incident. The incident came to light only on Saturday. Air India has ordered a probe into the incident as none of the members of the crew reported the incident to the safety department.



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According to sources, Air India flight No 467 departed from Delhi at 7.28 pm on September 17. It was scheduled to land at 9.40 pm in Vijayawada. Turbulence after takeoff caused minor damage to the interior of the Airbus 320. A few members of the crew were also injured. First-

aid was administered to the injured in the flight immediately. The authorities are inquiring into the incident from all angles.

Aarogyasri: Enhancement of treatment costs demanded

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Members of the Aarogyasri Network Hospitals Association of Navyandhra demanded that the government enhance the treatment cost of various diseases covered under the scheme. The first executive body meeting of the newly-formed association was held here on Sunday.

Addressing the media, president of the association Dr Busireddy Nagendra Reddy



Aarogyasri payments of about Rs 650 crore and EHS payments of Rs 130 crore are pending, says Busireddy Nagendra Reddy

said hospitals cannot survive if payments are kept pending for a long time by the State government. If the government delays the payments for more

than a year, the hospital managements will run into debts. The government has to clear them within 60 to 90 days after discharge of the patient.

He said Aarogyasri payments of about Rs 650 crore and Employee Health Scheme (EHS) payments of about Rs 130 crore are pending. About five lakh people apart from doctors are dependent on the Aarogyasri scheme, he added.

Secretary Dr PB Kameswara Rao, treasurer Dr Vijay Kumar, Vice-Presidents Dr Madala Narendra Kumar, Dr Ketireddy Mohan Reddy, Dr Ramana Murthy and executive members participated.

TS police to get training in AP



K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

TS Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao has said that about 4,000 constables will get police training in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh state. He further said that the police recruitment results would come within a week. The Chief Minister said that

he had already discussed with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to extend training to about 4,000 constables in Andhra Pradesh. KCR said that the AP CM accepted his request.

While giving reply to the House on Appropriation Bill on Sunday in Legislative Assembly, the Chief Minister said that it is not proper to the Congress to criticise the

TRS government saying that it was not filling the jobs.

The Telangana government is filling jobs but the Congress is filing cases in Courts time and again to stop the recruitment process. He alleged that the Congress filed about 900 cases against recruitments. "It is not proper on the part of Congress to approach courts, while on other side

demanding the government to fill up jobs," he pointed out.

He said that the Police Recruitment Board would announce the results of nearly 18,000 police jobs within a week. He said that no government filled police vacancies in such a massive manner. He said that the Telangana has the chance to extend training to around 14,000 at a time and so that he requested the Andhra Pradesh government to extend police training to 4,000 candidates in Andhra.



Sasibhushan gets addl charge as CS of GAD

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Principal Secretary of Water Resources Sasibhushan Kumar has been given an additional charge of Chief Secretary of GAD (General Administration) and Kona Sasidhar, Commissioner of Civil Supplies Department, has been given an additional charge as Secretary of RTGS and Secretary of IT, relieving Anup Singh. The government has issued orders in this regard on Sunday.

Six IAS Officers of 2017 batch, who completed their training, got postings on Sunday. The State government posted HM Dhyana Chandra as Vijayawada Sub-Collector, R Gopala Krishna as Gudur Sub-Collector, T Nisanthi as Penukonda Sub-Collector, K Dinesh Kumar as Tenali Sub-Collector, KS Viswanathan as Narasapuram Sub-Collector and CP Praveen Aditya as Rampachodavaram Sub-Collector. In another move, the government has promoted 140 Inspectors of Police as DSPs.

ARRANGEMENTS UNDERWAY FOR BRAHMOTSAVAMS

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

With just less than a week left for the mega religious festival of annual Brahmotsavams in Tirumala, elaborate arrangements by various departments for the big event reached pinnacle stage. The TTD has rolled out massive arrangements to ensure that lakhs of devotees, who throng Tirumala during the Srivari annual Brahmotsavams won't face inconvenience.

On the directive of TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Officer AV Dharma Reddy took measures to coordinate all departments and provide devotees a comfortable darshan of Vahana Sevas in mada streets and also the darshan of Mula Virat in Srivari temple.



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set up near Alipiri as well. The Rangoli works are under progress to give enhanced look the hill town in and outside the temple.



ELECTRICAL WING
The TTD's electrical wing is putting up colourful LED light decorations and electrical cut-outs at vital places in Tirumala and Tirupati. Nearly, 37 (34 in Tirumala and three in Tirupati) huge display screens were installed. The hill town is decked up with 41 huge electrical themes, 15 arches giving a grand look for the annual event.



VIGILANCE
To provide theft-free and stampede-free environment to millions of devotees coming for



Brahmotsavams about 6,000 security personnel, including 1,200 TTD cops, 3,500 Srivari Sevaku, 1,000 Scouts and Guides will be deployed at vital points while 1,650 CCTV cameras will be installed. In view of huge crowd for Garuda Seva on

employees of Srivari temple, Anna Prasadam, accommodation, Kalyana Katta, medical, health and PR departments with additional staff. Staff from each of this department will function 24x7 in Command Control Centre at Tirumala during Brahmotsavams. Devotees can call to an exclusive toll-free number 1800 425 4242 during Brahmotsavams for any queries.

ANNAPRASADAM AND HEALTH

While annaprasadam and health wings are gearing up for the big festival with their arrangements of the different menu at different point of time during Vahana Sevas especially on Garuda Seva day and also at Vaikuntham queue complex and outside lines. The health department also deployed additional manpower to keep Tirumala clean and hygienic in spite of the anticipated heavy influx of pilgrims.

EXHIBITION

The TTD has put up grand exhibition stalls at Kalyana Vedika with a display of colourful flowers and fruits, museum, ayurveda, sculpture, TTD forest and garden departments. Arrangements have been completed for artists, who arrive from 14 States to display their culture and art forms, under the aegis of HDPP and other cultural projects of TTD.

(Left) Workers painting a rangoli on the premises of Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple at Tirumala (top and bottom) Finishing touches are being given to renovation works ahead of Brahmotsavams, which are slated from September 29

October 4, the TTD has banned plying of two-wheelers on ghat roads from midnight of October 3 to the morning of October 5. The TTD has prepared an action plan for providing maximum facilities to devotees with well-knit coordination between

CAPSULE

NEW FORUM LAUNCHED FOR SELECTING LIFE PARTNERS

Visakhapatnam: An Ahmedabad-based NGO launched a new forum for people to select their life partners, who otherwise have been browsing matrimonial sites. Anubandh Foundation organised a swayamvar sabha for more than 200 people, all above 50 years of age here on Sunday. The unique event took place in three rounds. In the first round candidates introduced themselves to one another and selected a partner. In the second round, candidates were given a chance to have a one on one interaction with their selected partners and in the last round organisers counselled the candidates. Speaking to the reporters, founder of Anubandh Foundation Natubhai Patel said "It's not that they have to get married today itself. Now, they can meet each other for a while before taking the final steps." The initiative was launched in 2002 after the devastating Gujarat earthquake a year earlier.

ONE MORE BOAT MISHAP VICTIM'S BODY FOUND

Kakinada: The East Godavari police, in association with New India Assurance Company, started helpdesk at Rajamahendravaram government general hospital on Sunday. The help desk will help the needy in registering the names of deceased in prescribed format for insurance claims. Police CI S Rambabu, New India Assurance Company zonal manager B G K Mohan Rao, branch manager Parked Kumar and others participated. Mean while, one more body of a deceased surfaced in Godavari river waters on Sunday making the total of deceased in the tourism boat mishap to 37. Out of 75 in the boat, 26 were rescued on the day of incident on 15 of this month. Still 12 more are missing in the mishap.



Andhra University students at a beach walk to create awareness on Ozone layer in Visakhapatnam on Sunday

AU students take beach walk for Ozone layer

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Students of Environmental Sciences of Andhra University took out a beach walk here on Sunday to create awareness on the importance of Ozone layer. Joint chief engineer of AP Pollution Control Board R Lakshminarayana spoke on the occasion.

He extended the talk by adding the ozone layer is mainly found in the lower portion of the stratosphere, from approximately 15 to 35 kilometers above Earth. The thickness of the ozone layer varies worldwide and is generally thinner near the equator and thicker near the poles. If all of the ozone were compressed to the pressure of the air at sea level, it would be only 3 millimeters thick. The evolution of photosynthesis allowed the Sun's energy to be harvested directly by life forms. The resultant

Man murders wife and kid, ends life in Odisha

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A 35-year-old man from Odisha killed his wife and four-year-old daughter in Madhuravada area in the city and subsequently reportedly committed suicide by jumping in front of a running train in Odisha on Saturday.

Reports said Sakrajit Bhanjeo alias Sujith, a native of Rourkela, and employee of Food Corporation of India (FCI) was living with his wife Shukla and daughter Alina in a flat at Jhahnavi Enclave, Madhuravada for the past four years.

Sujith made a call to his mother on Saturday evening and informed that he killed his wife and daughter in the flat and was going to end his life. Sujith's mother alerted Odisha police and her relatives in Vizag immediately and Odisha police called up PM Palem Police in Vizag city.

The PM Palem police with the support of Sujith's relatives reached Jhahnavi Enclave and entered the flat by breaking open the door. The police



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found Shukla in a pool of blood in the bedroom while Alia was lying dead in the bathroom.

Inspector A Ravi Kumar said that Sujith murdered his

wife by slitting her throat and smothered his daughter to death.

"We are suspecting that Sujith might have committed the crime on Thursday as the

bodies were partially decomposed," he said.

The Odisha police found the body of Sujith near the railway track at Rourkela on Saturday night.

Investigations have revealed that the disputes between Sujith and Shukla have led to the murders and suicide. Their neighbours told media that Sujith used to pick up fights with his wife on a regular basis suspecting her fidelity.

The watchman of the apartment said that he had seen Sujith last on Thursday morning. The police are suspecting that after killing his wife and daughter, Sujith left for Rourkela where he committed suicide after informing his mother.

The police are examining the CCTV footage at the apartment and also the call data of the accused to ascertain the reason behind the crime. They shifted the bodies to King George Hospital for autopsy after registering a case, said Assistant Commissioner of Police, North Zone, Ravi Shankar Reddy.

City businessmen face threat from a gang

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A gang has been threatening business persons in the city to make a quick money. Such threats are not known to the city and when an industrialist brought it to the notice of police and minister for tourism minister M Srinivasa Rao, they were shocked. The police sought the names of the people who threatened the businessman so that they could take action. The local BJP leaders who came to know about the incident said they would inform the union home minister Amit Shah.

According to reports, the CEO of Symbiosys O Naresh Kumar's brother in law Lalitesh owned five acres of land in Madhavadhara and 200 square yards went into a dispute. Subsequently it was solved and the occupants vacated the land. Prior to that Lalitesh obtained a GO from the government in favour of the gang, not aware of the Go and comprise, tried to threaten Naresh Kumar at his house in East Point Colony demanding money for a settlement. When Naresh became aggressive and shouted back, they quietly left the place.

He later went to collectorate where MP V Vijaysai Reddy and ministers Srinivasa Rao and Mopidevi Venkataramana were in a review meet and informed Vijaysai Reddy



Naresh Kumar told a section of media that when he shared the threat with his friends, they too revealed that they had faced such threats recently.

He later went to collectorate where MP V Vijaysai Reddy and ministers Srinivasa Rao and Mopidevi Venkataramana were in a review meet and informed Vijaysai Reddy.

Both Reddy and Minister Srinivasa Rao assured Naresh Kumar that the government would not spare such elements in the State. They asked him to collect their names and basic details so that then police would swing into action.

Sources said Naresh Kumar told the police that one of them claimed as ZTPC from Kadapa and close to YS Jagan Mohan Reddy family and another as MPTC from the same district.

Naresh also showed the CCTV footage of the visitors to his home to the minister and the commissioner of police. Meanwhile, former MP Dr K Haribabu and other leaders told Naresh Kumar that they would take the issue to the notice to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah so that such activities were put to stop in the beginning itself.

VMRDA to widen roads in Vizianagram

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Regional Development Authority has taken up two road widening projects under Vizianagaram Municipal Corporation.

The first is the 600-metre long Gumchi-Rythubazaar road and the other is the 950-metre long R&B Junction to Duppada Y-Junction road.

VMRDA Commissioner P Koteswara Rao urged the special officer of the Corporation and District Collector M Hari Jawahar Lal to take measures in a manner that would not draw public criticism.

For the Gumchi-Rythu bazaar road, a temple and six buildings will have to be demolished for the road widening work, while for the R&B-Duppada Junction road, work had come to a standstill because of high tension electric wires.



VMRDA Commissioner P Koteswara Rao urged the special officer of the Corporation and Collector M Hari Jawahar Lal to take measures

Hari Jawahar Lal urged municipal authorities, VMRDA and electricity

department to coordinate and ensure that stalled projects were completed. The Collector added, "These two roads are key junction points taking commuters to different parts of the city. Widening works have to be taken up."

He also urged local MLA, K Veerabhadra Swami, to ensure cooperation from the locals.

He wanted officials of the civic body to plant aromatic, herbal and oxygen-generating plants around tanks that have been cleaned.

A visual treat for dance connoisseurs

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The second day of Vysakhi Nrityotsav 2019, the 12th All India Dance Festival, organised under the aegis of Nataraj Music and Dance Academy, captivated the audiences at Kalabharathi Auditorium here Sunday evening.

The three-day festival, held under the supervision of BR Vikram Kumar, founder-President of NMDA and Editor of The Dance India, saw delightful Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Odissi renditions.

Mohini Attam exponent Dr Kanak Rele held saw with her scintillating performance, while coming up with equally vibrant showings were Gauri Dwivedi from New Delhi with her Odissi and Dr Ratheesh Babu and group from Chhattisgarh with their



Bharatanatyam.

D Sathyanarayana Raju, additional Commissioner of Income Tax; Mavuri Venkata Ramana, CMD of Chandana Brothers and O Naresh Kumar, CEO of Symbiosys Technologies and chief patron of Vysakhi Nrityotsav opened the day's proceedings by lighting the traditional lamp.

Later in the evening, they presented Padma Bhushan awardee Dr Rele with 'Vysakhi Lifetime Achievement Award' for her contribution elevating Mohini Attam.

The eight-member troupe of Dr Ratheesh Babu's 'Pibare Rama Rasam' in raga Bhairavi and tala Adi, emphatically captured the transformation of

Mohini Attam exponent Dr Kanak Rele held saw with her scintillating performance

thief Ratnakara to sage Valmiki upon meeting Narada.

As a second item, the troupe presented 'Sapta Tandava Malika' of Lord Siva that was set in Ragamalika and Talamalika. Gauri Dwivedi excelled in her performance. Each presentation lasted for 45 minutes, much to the delight of the audience.

Compère Dr Perala Balamurali Krishna was at his usual best. Connoisseurs of Indian dance filled the auditorium to rafters.

KTR's fillip to handlooms sees dearth of supply

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

IT Minister KT Rama Rao since he took oath as the Minister, vowed to promote handlooms. But the machinery is unable to cater to the demand which the Minister is trying to create. KT Rama Rao's first post after swearing as the Minister for second time was with #HandloomSunday. While he tried to spread the word online, the TSCO website, where people can buy clothes is an eyecore.

There are just about 100 sarees and about 10 dupattas. The website, which was glorified last year, became a victim at the whims of the contractor who used to run it. According to a senior official of Department of Handlooms and Textiles, "The website was handled by a one contractor Siva Reddy, who found hand-



loom business lucrative and left our website in limbo in most unethical way. We will have the website updated in another 2 months. We are trying to get our handlooms on shopify."

For months, the website has been showing the same sarees without any changes resembling a dummy website. It has 38 gadwal silk, 19 gadwal silk sarees, 13 spun silk sarees, 12 Narayapat silk sarees, 9 gollabama sarees, 8 pochampally cotton, 6 pochampally ikat, 6 Gadwal cotton and 10 dupattas. About 13 of these 100 are

sold out, so evidently government can provide only 87 sarees online. Official said that when the website was functional, it was generating higher sales and lot of traction. For handloom enthusiasts, the TSCO possesses 9 outlets located in Northern India and 37 outlets situated in Telangana State.

Meanwhile the TS government is also exploring alternate modes of promoting handloom. The government has partnered with Amazon to promote its handloom products and crafts. However, when it comes to textiles, the government is following the approach of one step forward and two steps backwards. With Amazon currently only cherialy masks, Nirmal paintings and other crafts are being shipped. When it comes to clothing, officials point that supply from our weavers is unable to meet the demand.

Ramadugu project reaches FRL

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

After four years, the Ramadugu medium irrigation project in the district reached its full reservoir limit. With the project full to the brim, the farmers belonging to 11 villages would benefit, as it would provide irrigation to 5,000 acres.

The project was constructed across Ramadugu Vagu at Ramadugu village of Dharpally mandal in 1964. On Friday and Saturday the project received heavy inflows and reached FRL level, after obtaining inflows of over 1,000 cusecs.

The project has left and right canals, with the left canal extending to a length of 9.60 km and cultivating 1,400 acres, while the right canal has length of 18.80 km and cultivates 3,601 acres. Ramadugu benefits 11 villages of Dichpally and Dharpally mandals whose farmers grow kharif and rabi crops under an ayacut of 5,000 acres. North Telangana's boon, Sri Ram Sagar Project, is getting heavy inflows since the last two days and on Saturday evening, the project received 57,820 cusecs inflows and water in the project level was 45,700 TMC.

SRSP capacity is 90 TMC and FRL level is 1,091 feet. On Saturday evening, the project's water level reached 1,077.40 feet, and of 90 TMC the project now has 45,700 TMC of water.

All this is due to heavy inflows into Vishnupuri and Jayakwadi projects, which reached FRL level, and excess water being released into river Godavari. On Friday evening, Maharashtra irrigation officials released flood waters from Vishnupuri project by lifting two gates. Thanks to these inflows and local catchment recording good rainfall, the SRSP is receiving 57,820 cusecs inflows and until night they may go up.

Rly stadium goes online

Visakhapatnam: East Coast Railways Sports Association developed state of the art designed web site under the guidance of Sports Officer Sakkeer Hussain to have self reliant website to put all the railway sports related information on-line. Now with tag line on Think railways...think sports the web page www.waltairrailwaystadium.com. All Updates, Subscriptions, Coaching Academy, Sports events of Waltair Railway Sports Stadium will be available in this site. This web portal was commissioned today by Divisional Railway Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava in the presence of Sakkeer Hussain, ADRM infra Akshay Saxena and ADRM, operations P Ramachandra Rao and other officials.

FLASH MOB ON SWACHHTA

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Waltair Division is observing 'Swachhta Hi Sewa Pakhwada' across its entire network from September 21 to October 2 to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. As a part of this fortnight various programmes such as intensive awareness campaigns were organized using social media, Nukkad Natak, audio/video clips to motivate and involve passengers, students, families, pensioners, SHGs and other stakeholders to also participate in the various activities of the "Swachhta-Hi-Sewa Pakhwada."

On Sunday, Bharat Scouts and Guides wing of Waltair District comprising wards of railway employees organized awareness campaigns over the Division. At Visakhapatnam Railway Station more than 100



Members of Scouts and Guides performing a flash mob at Visakhapatnam railway station on Swachhta-Hi-Sewa Pakhwada on Sunday

cadets of Scouts and Guides took part in the flash mob and street plays to create awareness on cleanliness and avoid usage of plastic in railway premises.

Apart from this rallies were organized at Visakhapatnam,

Vizianagaram, Srikakulam Road to propagate the message on ban on single use plastic and its ill effects.

Speaking to the media district commissioner, Scouts and Guides of Waltair District K

Narasimha Rao said that the campaign will continue even after the conclusion of this Pakhwada till the end of this menace and the cadets will spread the message every corner of this division.

SHORT READS

Mumbai man drowns in Nagpur lake

NAGPUR: A Mumbai resident drowned in Ambhajari Lake in Nagpur on Sunday morning, police said. Anand Dwivedi, who hails from Matunga in Mumbai, was working in an Information Technology company here, an official said. "He had gone to the lake with 6-7 friends. He did not know to swim and drowned soon after he entered the water. The incident happened at 7 am. His body was brought out later by people who were swimming nearby," the Ambhajari police station official said.

Policeman's son electrocuted in UP's Bareilly

BAREILLY: A son of a police personnel was electrocuted here on Sunday morning as he pressed the door bell of a police outpost, where his father was posted. According to Superintendent of Police (City) Abhinandan Singh, the incident took place at the Biharipur police outpost in the city. Singh said, "It was raining when Saurabh (20), son of outpost in-charge Devendra Singh, pressed the door bell. He got an electric shock and died." He said at the time of the incident, the police outpost was filled with water. "The fire brigade was called to pump out the accumulated water," the SP said, adding that the incident would be probed. He said the body had been sent for a post-mortem examination.

Now Mulayam set to lose his Mercedes SUV

LUCKNOW: After losing the plush bungalow allotted to him as former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and then the sprawling Lohia Trust office, Samajwadi Party (SP) patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav is now set to lose his swanky Mercedes SUV. The Mercedes, according to Estate Department sources, has developed some technical fault and some Rs 26 lakhs is required for the repairs. "Our budget does not allow us to undertake the expensive repairs so we will give another suitable car, probably a Prado, to Mulayam Singh," said an estate department official. SP leaders, meanwhile, see this as yet another attempt by the state's BJP government to target the party leaders. "The government can spend crores of rupees in publicity and advertising but cannot afford a mere Rs 26 lakhs for a car repair. This proves that the BJP is pursuing the politics of vendetta," said an SP leader. Mulayam Singh and his son Akhilesh Yadav were made to vacate their official bungalows, allotted to them as former Chief Ministers, after a Supreme Court order. Earlier this month, the state government also got the Lohia Trust office vacated as per the direction of the apex court.

PRACTICE IN UK

Doctors, nurses need not take TOEFL, IELTS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Doctors, nurses, dentists and mid-wives who wish to practice in the UK will no longer have to appear for English language tests like TOEFL and IELTS as the country will now accept scores of Occupational English Test (OET) which the candidates have to anyway clear for registering with the relevant healthcare regulator.

The OET is an international English language test that assesses the language communication skills of healthcare professionals, who seek to register and practise in an English-speaking environment.

The candidates had to earlier take OET to register with Nursing and Midwifery Council and the General Medical Council, which are the two healthcare boards in the UK, as well as TOEFL or IELTS like exam to apply for visa.

"The UK Home Office has streamlined English language testing ensuring that doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives,



who have already passed an English language test accepted by the relevant professional body, do not have to sit another test before entry to the UK on a Tier 2 visa," said Sujata Stead, CEO, Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment, which conducts the OET.

"This change which was announced last week will make sure that hospitals and medical practices across the country will be able to access the staff they need more quickly," she added. The change will apply

to all Tier 2 (General) visa applications submitted from October 1. The Occupational English Test (OET) is designed to meet the specific English language needs of the healthcare sector. It assesses the language proficiency of healthcare professionals who wish to register and practise in an English-speaking environment.

OET is conducted by Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment (CBLA), a venture between Cambridge Assessment English and Box

The Occupational English Test (OET) is designed to meet the specific English language needs of the healthcare sector

Hill Institute. Cambridge Assessment English is a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge.

The test is recognised as proof of English proficiency for registration purposes by major healthcare boards and councils in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Dubai, Singapore, Namibia and Ukraine. It is also accepted in Australia and New Zealand for visa and immigration purposes.

OET is used as an entry or exit test for healthcare courses by educators and as recruitment criterion for employment of healthcare professionals.

On daughter's day, Priyanka Gandhi's note on 16-yr-old Miraya



Miraya Vadra and her elder brother Raihan Vadra, 18, are usually kept away from the public eye

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra posted a picture of her daughter this morning on Twitter on the occasion of Daughter's Day. In the picture, Miraya Vadra, her 16-year-old daughter, is seen enjoying the snow. The Congress general secretary tweeted, "Who knew there was a #Daughtersday I thought it was every day." Miraya Vadra and her elder brother Raihan Vadra, 18, are usually kept away from the public eye. However, they were seen posing for a selfie with their mother in April when their uncle Rahul Gandhi filed his nomination for the Lok Sabha election from Uttar Pradesh's Amethi.

Happy Daughter's Day: Priyanka Gandhi Vadra posts photo of her daughter Miraya on Daughter's Day



Hamirpur bypoll: Four-cornered contest

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The September 23 bypoll to the Hamirpur Assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh will witness a four-cornered contest, with the BJP, BSP, Samajwadi Party and the Congress fielding their candidates.

According to office of the Chief Electoral Officer, UP, voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm while counting of votes will take place on September 27.

The by-election, the first to be held after the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, has been necessitated due to the disqualification of sitting Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Ashok Kumar Singh Chandel following his conviction in a murder case.

Nine candidates are in the poll fray. Prominent among them are Yuvraj Singh (BJP), Hardeepak Nishad (Congress), Manoj Kumar Prajapati (SP), Naushad Ali (BSP) and Jamal Alam Mansoori (Communist Party of India).

The Election Commission on Saturday had announced polling for 11 Assembly seats in the state mostly belonging to MLAs who had won the Lok Sabha elections and resigned as members of state assembly will be held on October 21. Assembly constituencies which will vote in bypolls are Gangoh, Rampur, Iglas (SC), Lucknow Cantonment, Govindnagar, Manikpur, Pratapgarh, Zaidpur (SC), Jalalpur, Balha (SC) and Ghosi.

Many CRPF companies were pushed into the Valley ahead of the Centre's decision of August 5 to withdraw special status to Jammu and Kashmir and also bifurcate it into two Union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The Union territories will come into being from October 31. Apprehending a backlash following the move, the Centre

Phishing email in garb of I-T dept lurking in cyberspace

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An information stealing computer malware by masking as a message from the Income Tax Department has been found prowling in the Indian cyberspace, a federal cyber security agency has warned in a recent advisory.

"A phishing and malware campaign is active since at least September 12 and is targeting individuals as well as financial organisations. The campaign involves fake emails purporting to be sent from Indian Income Tax Department," the CERT-In said its latest advisory accessed by PTI.

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is the national agency to combat hacking, phishing incidents and to fortify security-related defences of the Indian Internet domain. While phishing denotes to a category of cyber crime where a person's personal vital information like banking, credit card details and passwords are stolen, malware is an e-virus.

A senior tax official said fraud links faking the I-T department are often used by fraudsters as people are very concerned and serious about their tax filing, refunds and other businesses with the department.

"It is very important to guard against any malicious email that talks about your I-T records or banking issues. The department has run many awareness



A senior tax official said fraud links faking the I-T department are often used by fraudsters as people are very concerned and serious about their tax filing, refunds and other businesses with the department

series to educate people and taxpayers against these frauds," the official said.

The advisory said at least two variants of the latest malware emails have been observed.

First variant includes an attachment with extension ".img" which contains a malicious ".pif" file while the second variant lures the users to download a malicious ".pif" file hosted on a sharepoint page via a link of fraudulent domain incometaxindia.jinfo, it said.

This domain, it said, has now been disabled.

"The malware samples add persistence by modifying the Windows registry and have been observed to have information stealing capabilities," it said. It issued some samples of

fraud emails being sent with subject line stating: "Important: Income Tax Outstanding Statements A.Y 2017-2018"; "Income Tax Statement XML PAN XXX895X.pif"; "Income Tax Statement XML.img; Income Tax Statement XXX8957X.pif among others."

The agency also suggested some counter-measures:

Do not to open documents from untrusted sources and should disable running macros in MS Office by default; don't open attachments in unsolicited e-mails, even if they come from people in your contact lists and never click on a URL contained in an unsolicited e-mail, even if the link seems benign, it said.

Dalit beaten to death for theft

PNS ■ KOTA (RAJ)

A 40-year-old Dalit man was beaten to death for allegedly stealing a water pump in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place in Ghatoli area on Saturday morning, when a 60-year-old man, his two sons, and some other unidentified people thrashed Dhulichand Meena of Mewakheda village, alleging that he stole a water pump from their fields, Station House Officer (SHO) Nainuram Meena said.

When Dhulichand was on his way to a nearby village, Purilal Tanwar, his sons, Devi Singh (23) and Mohan (20) and the other men confronted him, the SHO said.

He said a heated exchange between Dhulichand and the group of men over the stolen hand pump soon turned violent and he was beaten up badly. Dhulichand's father reached the spot and took his injured son home.

Later, Dhulichand's condition deteriorated and he was rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead, the SHO said.

He said preliminary investigation revealed that Tanwar and his sons had on Friday complained about the theft to Dhulichand's father, who reprimanded his son and asked Tanwar to lodge a police complaint against him.

A case under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act has been registered against Tanwar, his sons and seven unidentified men, the SHO said.

PUF insulated shelters for forces

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Ahead of winters, the Centre has sanctioned setting up of over 40 pre-fabricated huts for paramilitary forces in the Kashmir valley, besides improving infrastructure in existing private house and hotels to keep its troops comfortable during the snow period, officials said here.

The move, which is indicative of a longer haul for paramilitary forces in the Valley, is likely to be implemented in the next few weeks as the winter season is expected to settle by the end of next month in Kashmir.

The prefabricated shelters would be insulated with Poly Urethane Foam (PUF) and priority would be given to those troops who are stationed in areas that get more snow, the officials said.

Many CRPF companies were pushed into the Valley ahead of the Centre's decision of August 5 to withdraw special status to Jammu and Kashmir and also bifurcate it into two Union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

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The prefabricated shelters would be insulated with Poly Urethane Foam (PUF) and priority would be given to those troops who are stationed in areas that get more snow, the officials said

had withdrawn paramilitary forces, especially the Central Reserve Police Force, from other areas and airlifted them to the Kashmir valley. However, there have been minor skirmishes since the withdrawal of special status to the state.

The PUF hut, according to the officials, will have a special foam layer to insulate the interiors from the winter chill. Besides this, for the first time the CRPF has managed to secure a sanction for purchase of over two lakh coir mattresses which will be used by the jawans of the paramilitary force deployed in the Valley.

Depression off Guj coast, may become storm

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

A depression formed over east-central and north-east Arabian Sea was now around 170 kilometres west-southwest off Veraval in Gujarat, the India Meteorological Department said on Sunday.

It is likely to intensify into a deep depression and subsequently convert into a cyclonic storm in 24 hours and move



west-northwest towards Oman coast over the next 72 hours, the IMD added.

The cyclonic storm will cause light to moderate rains in several places in the Saurashtra-

Kutch region of Gujarat, and heavy rainfall in isolated places in the coastal districts during the next 24 hours, the IMD informed.

Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the east-central and adjoining north-east Arabian Sea along and off Gujarat coast during next 48 hours as the condition of the sea would be very rough with winds with speeds of 45-55 kmph to 65

kmph, the IMD informed. The depression over east-central and adjoining north-east Arabian sea off Gujarat coast moved west-northwest with a speed of 15 kilometres per hour and lay centred, at 11:30 am on Sunday, around 170 km west-southwest of Veraval in Gujarat, 570 km south-southeast of Karachi in Pakistan, and 1170 km east-southeast of Muscat in Oman, the IMD said.

PM deserves respect when he represents India abroad: Tharoor

PNS ■ PUNE

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, who is a strong critic of the Modi-led government, on Sunday said the prime minister deserves respect when he visits foreign countries as India's representative, but when he is in the country, people have the right to question him.

On the row over a common language for India, the Lok Sabha MP from Kerala said he was in favour of a three-language formula (promoting multilingual communicative abilities).

He was speaking at a session organised by the All India Professional Congress in Pune district of Maharashtra. "The prime minister



Shashi Tharoor



Narendra Modi

deserves respect in foreign countries as (there) he is a representative of our nation. But when he is in India, we have the right to ask him questions," Tharoor said.

On the issue of one common language in the country, he said the BJP's ideology of promoting Hindi, Hinduism and Hindustani is "dangerous" for our country.

"We need to carry on the three-language formula," he

said.

Amid a heated debate over his remark that Hindi should be a common language, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said he has never asked for imposition of Hindi over native languages in the country but advocated its use as the second language. He criticised the ruling BJP over incidents of mob lynching, saying they are an "insult to Hinduism and Lord Ram".

'Suriname working on Ayurveda Chair'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to deepen its cooperation with India, Suriname is currently working on establishing a collaborative Ayurveda Chair at a university in its capital and direct air connectivity between the two countries, Vice President Michael Ashwin Adhin has said.

In an interview to PTI, the senior leader from Suriname also said, Bollywood will be "most welcome" to shoot films in his country.

"The two countries share cultural ties that go back to nearly 150 years, when people from India had arrived in Suriname in search for a better future... Of the total Surinami population of nearly 600,000, around 30 per cent are of Indian-origin," Adhin said.



The Suriname vice president said his country is seeking to "diversify relationship" with India to deepen bilateral cooperation in a number of fields. "Tourism and agriculture are the two main areas of cooperation. But, we are diversifying our strategy to include other areas like bauxite, gold and oil. In 2024, we will start

In an interview, the senior leader from Suriname also said, Bollywood will be "most welcome" to shoot films in his country

the second cycle of bauxite at the University of Suriname. These are new opportunities for the Indian government to invest," Adhin said.

The 39-year-old leader, a scholar of Sanskrit and Indian scriptures, including the Upanishads, Vedas and Puranas, visited India last week to attend programmes at the

very good international certification, with all the botanical details.

"We are working on it and an MoU is to be signed between the governments of Indian and Suriname to set up the Chair," he told PTI in the interview.

Adhin's roots are in Uttar Pradesh as his great-great-grandfather had left the country to reach Suriname over 140 years ago.

"We can boost cooperation in tourism and we are planning to open the airspace so that families from India whose ancestors had migrated to Suriname, can visit and see the country today," he said.

Asked if a direct flight is being planned, Adhin said, "Yes, we are working on it". Suriname aerially connects to other countries through its international airport at Paramaribo.

PAPER WITH PASSION

A dose of adrenaline

The Indian economy needed a booster shot. Was Nirmala Sitharaman's corporate tax cut the way to do it?



On the face of it, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement to cut the corporate tax rates in India from 30 to 25 per cent, making for an effective slab of 25.17 per cent for all companies in India that do not use incentives, is a smart move, both for the corporate sector and the optics of politics. This avoids any potential conflict with sector-specific reductions in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates, which would have led to a showdown in the GST Council. By cutting a Central tax, a decision solely of the Central

Government, days of headache have been avoided. Of course, Opposition politicians will make a fuss about these rates but the smarter among them will understand that not only did something need to be done but that the private sector was essential for creating employment and the challenges thereof might potentially be reduced. Now, how the tax cuts will be utilised could determine how they benefit the economy. Companies could use the extra cash to fund expansion, pare debt or even not reduce their workforces in what has been a difficult year. That said, the reduction in corporate tax rates would also be extremely beneficial for potential foreign investors who might have shied away from India due to higher rates and could, therefore, give a boost to the 'Make in India' initiative. This shows that the Government is not just taking half-hearted selective measures to revive the economy but is actually taking matters seriously.

The prime disappointment though has been felt by middle-class income tax payers, who were also hoping for some adjustments in personal income tax rates that remain relatively high. While the after-effect of demonetisation and the GST rollout, both of which brought in a lot of the informal economy into the formal scheme, was an increase in the overall tax base, there have been no commensurate rate reductions. The investing classes are still peeved about long-term capital gains tax on money market investments and any reduction in these will excite the markets once again. The problem is that while this might have given the bourses a booster shot, it could take several quarters for the effects to really start taking hold of the economy. In the short-term, consumer sentiment might take a while to recover. And that is worrisome. With companies already stressed, some feel that the rate cut will be absorbed in the near-term by firms balancing their books. While there could be some concerns and some cribs, there should be no doubt that the measures taken by the Government are on the whole an extremely positive given the overall state of the economy, and could even improve collections in the long-run once investments increase. If companies pare their debts, it could encourage the banks to start lending more. Increased investments could spur job creation as well. Yes, the Government has huge social responsibilities but the best way to help people is to create jobs and India's challenge on that front is unparalleled. This will help. However, this looks more like a distress management module rather than embodying a vision of either long-term goals, structural or big bang reforms that will take us to the next level irrespective of market trends and crisis. If only, this gives credence to the idea that no Government really changes the status quo unless it is forced to by the scale of an economic crisis. This is a repeat of the scenario in 1991 when the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh liberalised the economy in the face of an unprecedented crisis. India's economy cannot afford to be reactive anymore, it has to be proactive.

Role model

Greta Thunberg's call is reverberating in India where school kids in metros are missing classes for a climate strike



Youth leadership is certainly changing the world. And the greatest impact among activist leaders has been achieved by 16-year-old Greta Thunberg from Sweden, who has taken upon herself the task of awakening the consciousness of the world community to the only issue that will matter to us — climate change. From launching a protest outside her country's Parliament on August 2018, till a little more than a year now, the teenager has indeed caught the attention of not just the intended audience, the lawmakers across the world, but gathered traction among the youth. Her message has been plain and simple: Stop talking, start acting. And she is leading by example, taking the road and sailing the waters in solar-powered rides while strictly not flying. Now her call for "climate strikes" till the end of the month has ensured the largest student demonstration on planet earth till now. Millions of youth, predominantly school-going, are giving their classrooms a miss to take part in peaceful street protests demanding world leaders to take concrete actions and avert environmental catastrophes. Her echoes have been heard here, too, as millennials in Delhi launched a march from the city centre that snaked past Lodhi Garden and ended at the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. The students even submitted a memorandum to the powers that be. In the spirit of the freedom movement and a display of our vibrant culture, brightly dressed students held up placards that read, "The show must go on" and "if the weather can change, so can you." Young people in other metro cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai and Kolkata followed suit, setting aside their weekday pursuits.

Ahead of the 2019 Climate Action Summit, while speaking to the members of Congress in the House Ways and Means Committee last week, Greta said, "This is the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced, you cannot solve a crisis without treating it as one. Stop telling people that everything will be fine. As it looks now, everything won't be fine." Bluntly, she told the US lawmakers, "Listen to the scientists, unite behind the science, then take real action." Echoing her words, even the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres could not afford to remain a mute spectator and asked member nations to bring a plan and not plain speeches to slash greenhouse gas emissions. Greta's success and freshness have been that as a disruptor, she is being heard more and as a representative of a generation we will be bequeathing the earth to, is stirring up enough guilt within us. Besides, her passionate campaigns and demonstrable actions of how to re-orient modern living in a sustainable manner have given everybody an individual goal that is easier to meet than effecting a policy change. Climate scientists had for long warned that the world is running out of time to avert the worst effects of global heating. They had alerted about the consequences — food scarcity, water stress, deaths due to high temperatures, forest fires, and mass displacements — all of which have become a reality. Youth leaders are more aware in a knowledge society, more user-oriented and practical. It's time we go by their blueprint. For a child is indeed the father of man.

the corporate tax rate. This means that the effective tax rate for firms who do not avail exemptions will fall from 34.94 per cent presently to 25.17 per cent. However, for new domestic manufacturing companies, incorporated after October 1, the tax rate will be as low as 15 per cent. Due to high corporate tax rates, investments had remained at the lowest ebb. The present move will encourage private investment. It may also give a boost to foreign investments given that global value chains

What's a degree worth?

As graduates and class VIII dropouts are forced into the same career stream, India's joblessness is leading to desperate choices

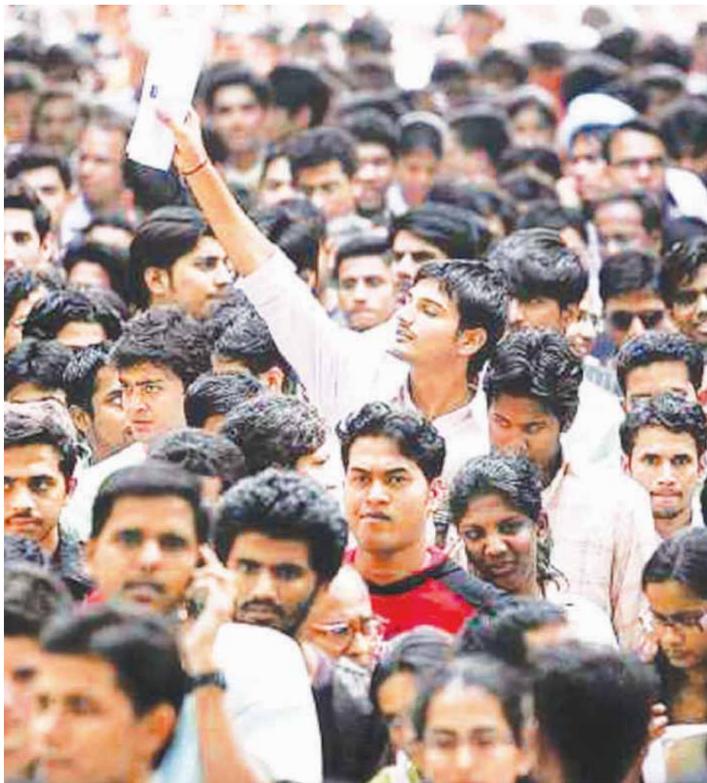


RINKU GHOSH

They say the story of India is found in its people, its complexity unravelling in everyday life. And so it is that I chanced upon Ankit, who is an owner-driver of a Hyundai Xcent with taxi aggregator Uber and makes anything about ₹40,000-50,000 a month. That's not new or surprising. But Ankit was a verification officer at Barclay's bank, who found himself jobless at a time when he was expecting his first child and his family deep in a financial trough for other reasons. Maternity meant his wife, too, was hived off from her firm that justified job cuts in the name of smart-sizing. Another job with his qualifications was difficult to come by and the offers that came guaranteed him nothing more than ₹35,000 a month. With mounting debts, he invested his severance package in a car and drove around the city, 17 hours on normal days, 22 hours over the weekend, so that he could earn the high points and incentives that Uber guarantees. Despite the inhumanity of sleep deprivation that such trips entail, Ankit's biodata on the company's app flashes the only thing that has become his calling card; that he is healthy and ever-ready to run. Now a father of a one-and-a-half month daughter, a fan of Adele whose songs motivate him on each ride, he has invested in a second car which he uses for inter-city tours. Some day, he hopes to grow his tourist car business, may be even set up his own agency. But a job he is not going back to, even if it means devaluing his education or explaining to neighbours in the Ghaziabad condominium he lives in why he scours the city at night. "Whatever gives me money, there is no shame. My education isn't working anymore."

Many like Ankit, young graduates and with middling incomes that are on freeze in a sputtering economy, are signing up with taxi aggregators to make ends meet across the country. A very infrequent user, over the last couple of months I have chanced upon at least six graduates who believe in dignity of labour provided it ensures the right price. There was Sandeep, who was a junior sales executive at a company and a people's person but once retrenched, chose the graveyard shift to rush people to their destinations. There was Vikas, who junked a job of ₹25,000 simply because it involved gruelling long hours and he realised he could make more money in the same time period. "Now I can pace out my work on my own terms, be my boss and take home everything," he had told me. "What social embarrassment, I am my own company and I can vary my workflow depending on my needs. Which job will give me this flexibility? This is my choice." There was a young woman too, Suman, who is funding her vocational course by driving around women professionals in a WagonR owned by the family. "I drive select hours, am on GPS, so safety isn't an issue. This is good supplementary income for me."

The fact that I found all these drivers in



Noida's one-time booming SEZ area also presents a sordid tale of a slowdown and shutdown that's forcing our young people to find their own means of survival. With taxi aggregators like Uber and Ola finding the third largest ride-sharing market in India after the US and China, a driving partnership has now become a viable self-entrepreneurial option. Yet others are signing up with food and other service aggregators. Some are even relooking at their passions and acquired skills as there is a shop for every kind of service, utilitarian and entertainment, online.

If a report released by the Azim Premji University's Centre for Sustainable Employment is to be believed, then people with a graduate degree are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than the national average. The same study also found that women are more likely to fall by the wayside. Not only that. Even if graduates decide to take up low-skill work, they have to face intense competition from those who apply to such categories normally. This trend was echoed by a Kotak Institutional Equities report too, which cited data from the Government's periodic labour force survey (PLFS). The unemployment rate among male job seekers with secondary-

level education far exceeds joblessness among illiterates in both rural and urban areas: "The unemployment rate is highest among youth with education until diploma (37 per cent), graduate (36 per cent) and post-graduate and above (36 per cent), suggesting the lack of opportunities for a higher skilled workforce." The crisis was found to be more acute in urban areas (7.8 per cent) than in rural (5.3 per cent). A report by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) had also found that qualified youth — those with bachelor's degrees and above — faced the highest unemployment.

There have been alarming news reports about how graduates and post-graduates are applying for Class IV services in Maharashtra and how nearly a third of the 93,000 applicants for 62 police courier jobs in Uttar Pradesh had doctorates. With more people moving away from agriculture sector jobs to services, the pool of applicants is now an ocean of missed opportunities. There's a big rush for any kind of Government jobs as they provide what has become elusive today — job security, salaries that are routinely revised and a relatively good beginners' package. The minimum Government salary is now ₹18,000 per month, higher than what 70 per cent employed people make in this country in desolate times. No data encapsulates this better than the Hindi film *Dream Girl*, where Ayushmann Khurrana plays an educated young man from Mathura, who has pursued the conventional path of BA, MA and MPhil but finds himself without a job. Out of sheer desperation, he signs up for a phone-sex call centre simply because it promises an income that his degrees cannot give him.

Undoubtedly, this trend is setting off a socio-economic transformation. At one level, it is offering recourse to students who are not academically brilliant and won't make the cut in higher institutions, just plain regulars who, however, make up the bulk of our educated workforce. At another level, it also means we are diluting their core competence, productivity and belief that education and knowledge are tools for an elevated life. We are teaching them the art of compromise, building values numerically but holistically. In fact, if basic skills like driving and cooking can earn people the moolah, then our young may just give up the idea of "becoming a graduate", still an aspiration that

parents sacrifice their earnings for across the vast hinterland of India. If that benchmark is seen as a redundancy, then it is another challenge in a country where literacy is often mistaken to be good enough as an education, compromising the overarching process of evolution of the mind. Let's not forget the last Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) which found that one out of every four Class VII students in rural India is unable to read even a Class II text and over one in two Class VIII students cannot solve a problem that involves basic division.

In the end, there is the socio-psychological impact of levelling out to a bare median, of a graduate and a class VIII dropout being forced into the same bloodstream. Is a compromise ever happy when you are told that excellence should be your only pursuit? Besides crushed expectations can have ramifications in the form of increased manifestation of disturbing and deviant behaviour among the youth.

How then can we customise higher education for a segmented job market rather than dumping a one-size-fits-all formula on sectors that can hire but need specific domain knowledge? How can we make our graduates job-ready? As a recent skill research has shown, employers found 80 per cent of Indian engineering graduates failing to meet minimum requirements for a hire. Many such firms say prospective candidates lack sufficient industry experience because our courses are too theoretical and not application-oriented. There must be an industry-aided skill requirement map so that the problem of over-qualification, as evidenced by the latest job rush queues in Maharashtra, does not dash hopes. Besides, there must be a provision for career-long skill upgradation given that the economic paradigm can change due to technological breakthroughs and fluidity of the economy. There should be enough start-up incentives for engineers to set up small units that are viable. Yes, use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) may kill some traditional jobs but as seen with the IT revolution, they also encourage an allied layer of human services and talent. That spinoff is often overlooked in umbrella decisions. The jobs crisis is severely threatening our demographic dividend, given that half our population is below the age of 25. But a potential asset could become our biggest liability if we don't look at the bigger picture now.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

The Government has initiated a major exercise to formulate a National Education Policy that will aim to fulfil the aspiration of the youth.



HRD Minister —Ramesh Pokhriyal

I cried the day Article 377 was abolished in India. The next step is gay marriages are allowed in our country. I hope that happens very soon.



Filmmaker —Karan Johar

India is an important actor in climate action. Obviously, part of the dialogue was also related to our own efforts and the need to green the UN.



UN chief —Antonio Guterres

The people of the country have been divided into black and white and there is no shade in between which is called tolerance.



Congress leader —Shashi Tharoor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A wake-up call

Sir — The world's largest oil facilities in Saudi Arabia have faced massive damages in the recent drone attacks. Various conspiracy theories have been doing the rounds regarding the culprits and the US President, Donald Trump, has as usual pointed a finger at Iran. But it must be remembered that Saudi Arabia has for long been threatened by internal conflicts by fringe elements and other radical groups. Further, the dependence of the world on Saudi Arabia for fuel makes it crucial for any strife there to be solved at once. This incident goes on to show how such attacks can impact world economics and politics.

P Senthil
Via email

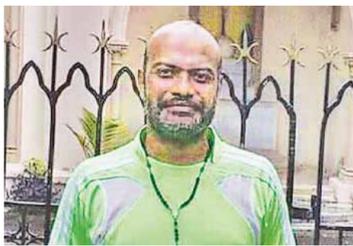
Boosting the economy

Sir — This refers to the report, "Corporate tax slashed to 25% to rev up economy" (September 21). In a bold move to revive the economy, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an eight percentage points cut in

Apathy towards a football player

Stories about celebrities falling on bad times are not rare. Managing whatever fortune they amassed during their heydays, many are known to have had pitiable existence thereafter, passing the rest of their lives in near anonymity. But some sagas are known to have their own share of shocks and surprises. The story of ace footballer Uday Konar from Mumbai is a case in point. Harassed by local goons, backed by influential people who are on the lookout to evict him from his hawking space at the Colaba Causeway, Konar is at the risk of losing his only means of livelihood. Apart from the space from where his father used to run a newspaper stall since the 1960s, the land mafia is intent on grabbing control of all spots allotted to his family in the close vicinity. One can very well understand his desperation.

The very fact that Konar has not been able to elicit any response from Government officials speaks volumes about a powerful nexus with powerful lobbies. His situation is that of a typical ordeal of a street vendor who gets targeted by powerful lobbies who use force and bullying tactics to evict them. But how can the administration be silent to the plight of the star player who has brought many laurels to the State?



Besides playing for Mumbai's top outfits, Konar was also part of the Maharashtra squad that won the gold medal in football at the 1999 National Games as well as the 2000 Santosh Trophy. Such indifference towards one of India's sporting heroes does not behove well. When it comes to matters of livelihood, it is essential that the administration takes a stringent view of the matter and ensures that the Konar family is allowed to operate from its ancestral hawking spots.

Pachu Menon
Margao

stand disrupted due to the tariff war between China and the US. While the present rate cut bodes well for the overall economy, largely, the corporate sector must not falter now.

Srishti Mathur
Ujjain

Timely action

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Missing woods for trees" (September 20). With more than 100 million adult smokers, India has a huge market for both electronic and conventional cigarettes. Although few Indians vape at present, the Indian ban cuts off a vast potential market of 1.3 billion consumers for makers of e-cigarettes. In particular, the e-cigarette market is acquiring 'epidemic' proportions among the youth and children. Given their attractive appearances and the availability in a number of flavors, teenagers are likely to be more prone to such devices.

In this backdrop, the Government's comprehensive ban on these battery-operated devices is welcome. The perception that e-cigarettes are a less-harmful alternative to cigarettes is entirely wrong. In fact, youngsters who use ENDS are more likely to start smoking conventional cigarettes.

Bal Govind
Noida

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Unsung hero of the downtrodden

Though Bhola Paswan Shastri worked tirelessly for the benefit of the underprivileged, he was never credited for his socio-political work



RAJ PARASHAR

The name, Bhola Paswan Shastri, might have a different meaning for different sections of society, but his contributions and accomplishments in the social and political arena speak for themselves. It is unfortunate that Shastri's endeavours have not been accommodated in the political history of India. Though he worked tirelessly for the benefit of the underprivileged and the oppressed, and for the freedom of the country from colonial rule, Shastri has never been duly credited for his socio-political work.

Simple living and high thinking was a way of life for the three-time Chief Minister of Bihar, who not just dedicated his whole life for the uplift of the marginalised sections of society but also followed a righteous path in the murky world of politics.

Not one to believe in politics of opportunism, nepotism, favouritism, glorification and cashing in on his following by bargaining for political posts, Shastri chartered his own course in life and was always guided by political ethics and constitutional morality.

Born in 1914 in Bairgachhi, Purnea district, Bihar, in a family that belonged to the Pasi community (considered untouchables) Bhola Paswan, as he was known at that time, faced intense discrimination and atrocities. However, rising above that, he charted his way forward and was a brilliant student. He gained a respectable position in society by studying from the renowned Kashi University and the title of Shastri was conferred on him due to his keen intellect. Using his education as a means to fight for the emancipation of his people, Shastri began raising his voice against the caste system and the atrocities inflicted on members of the Dalit community. He participated in many of the struggles launched for the betterment of Dalits and later on joined active politics to make their voice heard as their representative.

Being a follower of Gandhi, he strongly advocated the Mahatma's ideas during the days of freedom struggle and reiterated that political independence could not be achieved unless one was socially equal and liberated. Realising the important role education had played in his life, Shastri always stressed on the need for learning and urged Dalits to pursue higher education for an overall and holistic development. His keen understanding of socio-political dynamics allowed Shastri to ignite the minds of the oppressed and encourage them to break the shackles of poverty and social stigma attached to the caste-system.

Later Shastri, who also had a nationalistic bent of mind, was to jump into the struggle for India's independence as a revolutionary and play a significant role in it. Shastri's dynamic personality and love for the country, politics and social issues resulted in him becoming the first Dalit Chief Minister of Bihar in 1968. He was to occupy that post twice more. Shastri was also a member of the Rajya Sabha and a vocal advocate for his community and the progressive plans he had for them.

Shastri's unmatched wit and intellect came through in an interview he gave in 1978 in his capacity as the Chairman of the then newly-founded Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission. When asked about caste-based discrimination in the country, he said, "With more people from different communities becoming educated, the discrimination against Harijans is slowly becoming less. But then, you also have rigid Hindus, like the ones who washed with Ganga water a statue that Jagjivan Ram had unveiled at Varanasi, in order to 'purify' it."

He mobilised the Harijan community to enter the national mainstream and join hands with other landless peasants to change their lives for the better. Shastri supported affirmative action and termed it as a way to rectify the history of injustice dating back thousands of years. A proponent of the reservation policy, Shastri often pointed out that Harijans have a double impediment, poverty and social discrimination, to overcome and quota would help them beat this.

Shastri was one of the unsung leaders and visionaries of yesterday who contributed a lot to the nation but never took advantage of their capacity and position. He always gave priority to society over his family and was against amalgamation of wealth, which is why Shastri was left with just a few clothes, a pair of shoes and a meagre bank account at the time of his death. Socialism and egalitarianism were the inalienable attributes of Shastri's personality which is evident from the journey of his life.

It will be an injustice to let his name be erased from the annals of history, especially whenever we remember frontline social reformers and Dalit ideologues. In an era where politics of vendetta and nepotism is being used as a means to further personal agendas or decimate rivals, his simple lifestyle and brand of selfless politics can prove to be the guiding light for modern-day politicians and inspire many budding leaders.

(The writer is a Research Scholar at Patna University.)

BJP SHOULD STAGE A SIT-IN AT DELHI FOR RELEASE OF FLOOD RELIEF FUNDS INSTEAD OF INDULGING IN TONGUE WAGGING AGAINST MY GOVERNMENT.

—MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

KAMAL NATH



KAMAL NATH SHOULD GO TO DELHI HIMSELF AND ASK FOR HELP. HAVE I EVER TOLD THE OPPOSITION TO GET HELP FROM DELHI WHEN I WAS CM?

—FORMER MP CHIEF MINISTER AND BJP LEADER

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

Beating desertification

At the COP14 held in India, 196 countries and the EU adopted voluntary land degradation neutrality targets that include their restoration by 2030



VK BAHUGUNA

At the just-concluded Conference of Parties (COP) 14 hosted by India under the aegis of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), 196 participating countries and the European Union adopted the 'New Delhi Declaration' wherein they agreed that land degradation is a major economic, social and environmental problem, and welcomed strengthening of the adoption of voluntary "land degradation neutrality" targets that include restoration of degraded land by 2030.

The UNCCD, one of the three environmental conventions running after the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992, (the other two being The United Framework Convention Climate Change and Convention on Biological Diversity) was established in 1994 as a legally-binding international agreement within the parameters of the UN and connects the environment and development with sustainable land management. The conventions deal with most vulnerable ecosystems in arid, semi-arid and dry lands areas. The basic aim of the convention is to work for improving the livelihoods of the people in these ecosystems through restoration of soil and land and combat draught conditions.

Under the UNCCD, the developed countries are supposed to transfer technologies to the developing countries for sustainable land development. The UNCCD had adopted a strategic framework for the period 2018-2030, which among other things, primarily focusses on improving the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification, land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality. It also aims to mitigate, adapt to and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems; mobilise resources for implementation of the convention and improve the living conditions of the people residing in dry land ecosystems. By far this is the most important convention and the success of two other conventions' objectives depends upon the success of the UNCCD. The secretariat of the convention had taken lot of programmes to achieve its mandate and some excellent work has already been achieved by India though almost one-third of country's landmass remains degraded and prone to desertification.

China, which became the president of the convention in 2017, passed on the baton to India at the programme held in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Prakash Javadekar, now has the mammoth task of steering the mandate of the convention for the next two years. The four issues discussed during COP14 were land and draught; land and human security; land and climate change and land and sustainable development goals.

Signatories to the New Delhi Declaration endorsed 35 decisions, including commitments to combat land degradation, desertification and drought. In the resolutions, the conference agreed to make the Sustainable Development Goal target of achieving "land degradation neutrality" (LDN), a national target for action. Besides the LDN agreement, whereby countries have pledged to halt the degradation of land to the point where ecosystems and land use can no longer be supported, there was a landmark decision to boost



global efforts to mitigate and manage the risks of crippling drought.

Countries will now be expected to address insecurity of land tenure, including gender inequality; promote land restoration to reduce carbon emissions and mobilise innovative sources of finance from public and private sources to support the implementation of these decisions at a national level.

All countries recognised that desertification undermines health, development and prosperity in all regions and were deeply concerned that the impacts would be felt most keenly by vulnerable people. They were also convinced that participation from civil society organisations, local governments and the private sector would be crucial to achieving the objectives of UNCCD.

The document laid special emphasis on community-driven transformative projects that are gender-sensitive at local, national and regional levels to drive implementation.

While the declaration is a statement of consensus, the 35 decisions are legally binding on each of the 197 signatories. Activities carried out over the next two years would be monitored by India.

The resolutions adopted in the New Delhi Declaration are vital for India and the world, which is grappling with the ever-increasing effects of climate change and faces a major desertification threat.

Around 30 per cent of the world's populations live in dry areas, which cover more than 40 per cent of Earth's land surface. Countries like Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Afghanistan, China and Pakistan are prone to repeated draught and in fact, 40 per cent of the world is now facing draught-like conditions due to climatic vagaries.

In India, around 20 per cent (63.8 million hectares) of the land is categorised as waste lands and most of this is in dry areas. Latest statistics shows that 42 per cent of the Indian land mass faces draughts where more than 600 million people live.

In the light of these findings, the COP14 is vital for the entire world and its recommendations need to be implemented in all seriousness. The people and the institutions of governance must focus on physical structure of land and quality of soil; improve the availability of water; control landslides, floods and movement of soil and conserve

COUNTRIES WILL NOW BE EXPECTED TO ADDRESS INSECURITY OF LAND TENURE, INCLUDING GENDER INEQUALITY; PROMOTE LAND RESTORATION TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS AND MOBILISE INNOVATIVE SOURCES OF FINANCE FROM PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SOURCES TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE DECISIONS AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

the bio-diversity and use of land for sustainable development of the people living in these areas.

India must gear up its diplomatic channels to ensure creation of fund and technology for tackling the threat by all countries. As for India, an action plan must be prepared to deal with deforestation, water conservation and land degradation for forest and non-forest lands. The degraded forests below 40 per cent crown density have increased from 24 million hectares in 1985 to 30 million hectares in 2017 and regeneration of natural forests needs to be backed up.

The recent proposal of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to bring private investments in forest areas of less than 10 per cent crown density should be started on pilot basis after taking the local people into confidence. If it succeeds, it will give a big fillip to forest conservation and enhancement of land productivity. The land vested with tribals under Forest Right Act should also be taken up for investment for productive use and livelihoods.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who addressed the ministerial segment of the convention, outlined the success achieved by India in implementation of the objectives of the convention in checking desertification and land degradation as well as help in saving the livelihoods of the people residing in dry areas. Modi asserted that India was looking forward to making an effective contribution at the global level as it took over the chairmanship for the next two years.

He called for concerted attempts as two-third of the countries are affected by desertification and are in the grip of severe water crisis. He exhorted the delegates to create a Global Water Action Agenda and offered Indian expertise to other countries in land degradation and raised the target of its land restoration from 21 million hectares to 26 million hectares by 2030.

Pointing out that India was on course to achieve its Paris climate change targets, Modi announced setting up of a Centre of Excellence at the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education to facilitate scientific and technological collaboration between South-South Cooperation and with those who wish to access knowledge and training of manpower so that land degradation is addressed effectively.

(The writer is a retired civil servant)

The rise of conspiracy theories and fantasies

Complex political, economic, demographic shifts and the mushrooming of social media sites have all contributed in making fantastical explanations, that were once relegated to the lunatic fringe, migrate to the mainstream



NADEEM PARACHA

In 2005, an independent filmmaker, Dylan Avery, made a documentary called *Loose Change*. The film explores the many conspiracy theories which began to emerge after the 9/11 attacks in New York. The documentary does not discuss the theories as much as it actually promulgates them in a rather dramatic manner. The film claims that it has enough evidence to prove the conspiratorial notion that the 9/11 attacks were an "inside job," meaning they were organised by the US Government.

In 2006, Avery and the film's producers released a second edition of the film, claiming that this one included some new evidence. But,

actually, this one left out certain claims made in the first edition of the film after they were debunked.

A year later in 2007, a third version of the documentary emerged called *Loose Change: Final Cut*. This edition almost entirely edited out the many speculative claims of the previous editions. This left the film looking more like a compilation of reports on the attacks because, by then, *Loose Change* had been systematically debunked through a series of articles in various newspapers in the US and the UK.

Ironically, the American business tycoon, Mark Cuban, who had bought the rights to distribute the last edition of the film — which, unlike the first two editions, was not released online for free — was quoted as saying that he entirely disagreed with the contents of the film. One of the film's producers, Mathew Brown, echoed the sentiment but added that he had financed the film because he believed in freedom of speech.

The first edition was a sloppy and amateur attempt to cynically draw traction from online fans of conspir-

acy theories. However, it became a huge online hit, encouraging the makers of the film to turn it into a lucrative franchise of sorts.

The first edition cost just \$2,000, the second \$6,000 and the third \$200,000, after the rights of the film were sold to a major DVD distribution company. Translated versions of the film were also screened on TV channels in various countries, including Pakistan.

Geo TV ran it with an Urdu commentary, even though, by then, the film had been significantly discredited. Influenced by the successful manner in which it had managed to draw a large audience, another local TV channel, *Indus TV*, began to run a series of translated documentaries funded by the wealthy Turkish 'Islamic creationist' and cult figure Harun Yahya. These films explained Darwinism, secularism, democracy, 'Western modernity', and so on, as the real reasons behind the misery in the Muslim world and on Earth in general.

In 2009, *ARY News* jumped on the bandwagon by adapting another

Yahya-funded documentary *End of Time*. Commentary in the Urdu version was provided by a talk-show host, who faithfully replicated the film's sombre tone, pointing out the 'signs' foretold by the holy scriptures of the coming apocalypse.

As I mentioned in a previous column two in-depth studies, conducted in 2018 and published in the *Journal of Individual Differences*, identified 'schizotypy' as a prominent reason behind the growth in the acceptance of fantastical claims and conspiracy theories in recent years. People with schizotypy have an elevated need to feel unique, but at the same time take refuge in a community of like-minded individuals. Such an individual or community are more likely to judge nonsensical statements as profound.

They often believe in things for which there is no empirical evidence. The higher this schizotypy is in a person, the more likely he or she is to believe in conspiracy theories.

There is also the fact that the complex political, economic, climatic and demographic shifts and

changes occurring in the post-9/11 world and the mushrooming of social media sites, have all contributed in making fantastical explanations — that were once relegated to the lunatic fringe — migrate to the mainstream.

Confusion and polarisation in this context allows people to latch on to theoretical concoctions connecting disparate dots to complete an (often diabolic) explanatory whole. Nothing new about this, as such. In 1902 a tome appeared in Russia titled *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

The book reports how a group of powerful Jews got together to plan a sinister takeover of the world's economic, political and media institutions. The book is also a hotchpotch of segments plagiarised from certain 19th-century anti-Semitic literature. Russian scholar and professor Cesare G. De Michelis writes in his book *The Non-Existent Manuscript* that *The Protocols* was an anti-Semitic satire on a seminar organised by Russian Zionists. Anti-Semitism was peaking in Russia at the time, and this is why this satire was then published more

widely, but this time as fact, according to Michelis.

After doing the rounds in Russia, *The Protocols* reached the US in 1917. In 1921, US car manufacturer Henry Ford financed the publishing of 50,000 copies of the tome. He also published a series of articles inspired by the book in a newspaper that he owned. The articles all appeared under the title *The International Jew*. Everything from the communist revolution in Russia to the creation of trade unions and inter-racial marriages in the West was blamed on the Jews. In 1922, the book and the articles were translated into German and became popular in Germany. It would go on to influence the ideology of Nazism in that country. It didn't matter that the British daily *The Times* had already thoroughly exposed the book as a hoax and a forgery. At the end of World War II, when facts about the Holocaust began to emerge, the book lost mainstream traction and readership in Europe and the US, and was relegated to the Right-wing fringe.

But it rebounded by finding a

brand new audience in the Arab world after the creation of Israel in 1948. Its first Arabic translation appeared in 1951 in Egypt. It soon made its way into the non-Arab Muslim world as well.

I am not sure when it appeared in Pakistan as an Urdu translation, but I once found a 1968 Urdu edition of it in a second-hand book store in Islamabad in 2005. In 1987, when the Palestinian Islamist outfit Hamas was formed, its first charter (published in 1988) heavily referenced *The Protocols*. But by then the book had already begun to lose purchase in the Muslim world as well, until it returned with a bang a decade or so later due to the internet explosion.

Uploaded by Neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups and by various Islamist outfits, *The Protocols* once again managed to migrate from the fringes to the mainstream. Its readers again outnumber those who are more interested in reading the many exposés that completely debunked the book as a vicious fraud.

(Courtesy, *The Dawn*)

CAPSULE



BSNL pays August salaries to staff: CMD

NEW DELHI: Ending days of agonising wait for employees, crisis-ridden Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has made salary payment to its staff for August, according to a top official. BSNL Chairman and Managing Director P K Purwar confirmed to PTI that the corporation transferred the funds and made August salary payment to its employees, last week. "Employees have got their salary now. The salary requirements were met internally," Purwar said. State-owned distressed telecom firms Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL) and BSNL have been incurring losses and have been facing problems in clearing staff salaries in the recent past. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for some time now has been working on a rescue plan for the two companies in the form of a revival package that entails components such as voluntary retirement scheme, asset monetisation and allocation of 4G spectrum.



Torrent Pharma expands recall of hypertension drug

NEW DELHI: Drug firm Torrent Pharmaceuticals is expanding its voluntary recall for tablets used to control hypertension in the US due to detection of traces of N-Methylnitrosobutyric acid, according to health regulator USFDA. The company is expanding recall for Losartan potassium tablets USP and Losartan potassium / hydrochlorothiazide tablets to the consumer level due to the detection of trace amounts of an unexpected impurity while testing some finished product batches manufactured utilising active pharmaceutical ingredient manufactured by Hetero Labs, Torrent Pharmaceuticals said in an announcement posted on the website of USFDA.



Amway aims 12% of India biz from consumer durables

NEW DELHI: Amway India is expecting its consumer durables business to contribute around 12 per cent to the company's overall turnover in the next two to three years as the direct selling firm carrying portfolio expansion plans in the segment, a top company official has said. Amway India, as part of expansion of its product portfolio, also announced foray into emerging home air purifier segment and aims to clock sales of around Rs 100 crore in the next 12 to 18 months. Besides, the company is planning to enter the water purifier segment and working on the project.

Top 1,000 listed firms may see Rs 37,000 cr savings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

CRISIL Research on Sunday said top 1,000 listed companies could see tax savings of Rs 37,000 crore on account of the corporate tax cut. "Over the past few days, a slew of measures have been introduced to address the slowdown in the Indian economy. Friday's announcement, however, is the most material...Our analysis indicates these 1,000 companies could see tax savings of Rs 37,000 crore, or nearly a fourth of the total savings anticipated by the government," it said in a statement. The drop in tax rate would now bring India at par with most Asian economies, it added. "CRISIL Research's analysis of nearly 1,000 companies -- spread across 80+ sectors such that they cover more than 70



per cent of NSE's market capitalisation -- indicates that effective tax rates had risen over the past 5 years," it said. These companies, including oil & gas and financial services, account for nearly a third of the tax paid by India Inc. "These estimates are based on profit before tax for fiscal 2019. Given that we expect 5-6 per cent growth in India Inc revenues and Ebitda (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) for this fiscal, the savings could end up a tad higher," it added. In a major fiscal booster, the government on Friday slashed effective corporate tax to 25.17 per cent, inclusive of all cess and surcharges for domestic companies.

Given that we expect 5-6 per cent growth in India Inc revenues and Ebitda (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) for this fiscal, the savings could end up a tad higher," it added

CENTRE MULLS IMPOSING STOCK LIMITS

Onion prices shoot up

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is mulling imposing stock limits on onion traders as the retail prices of the key kitchen staple have shot up to Rs 70-80 per kg in the national capital and other parts of the country owing to supply disruption in the wake of excess monsoon rains in the major growing states, according to sources. As per the data maintained by the consumer affairs ministry, retail onion prices rose to Rs 57/kg in Delhi, Rs 56/kg in Mumbai, Rs 48/kg in Kolkata and Rs 34/kg in Chennai last week. The prices were quoted at Rs 60/kg in Gurgaon and Jammu during the same period. However, trade data showed retail onion prices skyrocketing to Rs 70-80 per kg towards the end of the last week from Rs 50-60/kg in the previous week. Onion prices are on the rise despite several measures taken by the central government to boost supply. "The government has taken several measures in the last few weeks to improve the domestic supply and check further increase in prices of onion. However, retail prices have suddenly shot up in the last 2-3 days because of supply disruption due to excess rains in the growing states," a source told PTI. It is a short-term supply disruption and if the situation does not normalise in the next 2-3 days and prices rise, then the government may consider seriously imposing stock holding limits on onion traders, the source said. According to the Met Department, main onion producing regions especially Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, eastern Rajasthan and western Madhya Pradesh have received excess monsoon rainfalls in the last two days. Right now, stored onions are sold in most parts of the country as fresh kharif (summer) crop will hit the market from November onwards, traders said. Traders further said that there is enough supply of stored onion of the previous year's crop in the country but its transportation has been affected because of heavy rains. Much of the onion is stored in Maharashtra, where rains disrupted the transport of the kitchen staple to other parts of the country, said a wholesale trader from Lasalgaon in Maharashtra, Asia's largest onion market. At wholesale market of Lasalgaon, onion prices rose to Rs 45/kg last week, when compared with less than Rs 10/kg in the year-ago period. The Centre has taken several measures to arrest the prices of onion in Delhi and other parts of the country. It is offloading onion from its buffer stock through agencies like Nafed



It is a short-term supply disruption and if the situation does not normalise in the next 2-3 days and prices rise, then the government may consider seriously imposing stock holding limits on onion traders, the source said

'Markets may take a breather, sentiment to remain upbeat'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity markets may take a breather following the massive run up on Friday after the government announced a slew of economy-boosting measures, while the overall sentiment is likely to stay upbeat, analysts said. The Sensex posted its biggest single-day jump in over a decade at 1,921 points on Friday after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman delivered a surprise cut in corporate tax rates. She also clarified that enhanced tax surcharge will not to apply on capital gains arising from sale of any security including derivatives in the hands of FPIs. Besides, the all-powerful GST Council slashed tax rates on hotel tariffs and some goods with a view to addressing sectoral concerns and spur growth.



Market will take a breather after a massive run up on Friday by witnessing some correction. It is important to see when FPIs will resume their buying spree and how they are taking the tax rate cut

—JIMEET MODI
Founder & CEO, SAMCO Securities & StockNote.

"Market will take a breather after a massive run up on Friday by witnessing some correction. It is important to see when FPIs will resume their buying spree and how they are taking the tax rate cut," said Jimeet Modi, Founder & CEO, SAMCO Securities & StockNote. The base corporate tax for existing companies has been

slashed to 22 per cent from 30 per cent; and for new manufacturing firms, incorporated after October 1, 2019, to 15 per cent from 25 per cent. The reduction in corporate tax, which India Inc hailed as the one which will revive growth and investment, is the single biggest cut in tax rates since India opened up its economy in 1991.

India's coal import declines about 4%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import declined by 3.7 per cent to 18.93 million tonnes (MT) in July this year from 19.67 MT in the same month a year ago. Of the total coal imports in July 2019, non-coking coal shipment was at 12.66 MT, coking coal's was at 4.17 MT, among others, according to a provisional compilation by mjunction services based on monitoring of vessels' positions and data received from shipping companies.



US seeks India's tariffs WTO dispute panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The US has sought establishment of a dispute panel by the World Trade Organization's (WTO) in a case against India's import duties on certain ICT products, including mobile phones. The US sought consultations in July under the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism over imposition of import duties by India on certain information and communication (ICT) products, alleging breach of global trade norms. As both the countries failed to resolve the dispute through the consultation process, the US has sought setting up of the dispute panel. Bilateral consultation is the first step towards resolution of a trade dispute under the WTO norms. "The US held consultations with India on August 1, 2019. Unfortunately, these consultations did not resolve the dispute," according to a communication of the US to the WTO. Several countries including the European Union, Singapore, Canada, China,



Bilateral consultation is the first step towards resolution of a trade dispute under the WTO norms

Taiwan and Thailand have sought to join in the dispute as they have claimed significant trade interest in the ICT products over which India has imposed import duties. The EU has challenged introduction of import duties on a wide range of ICT products, for instance, mobile phones and components, base stations, integrated circuits and optical instruments.

Non-life insurers register 17 pc rise in Aug

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

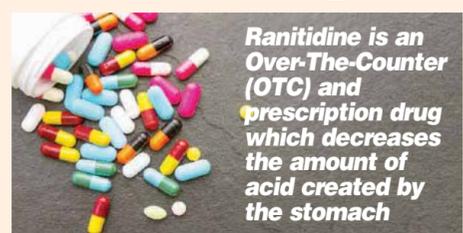
India's non-life insurance companies registered a rise of 17 per cent in their combined new premium collection at Rs 15,964 crore in August, Irdai data showed. The 34 insurers' gross premium collection stood at Rs 13,657.11 crore in the same month a year ago. Among these, the 25 general insurance providers had a combined premium of Rs 12,447.10 crore during the month, up by 12 per cent from same period of 2018.

CANCER FEARS

Dr.Reddys halts worldwide supply of Ranitidine until FDA probe over

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Dr Reddy's Laboratories Limited on Sunday said that it is suspending supply of its drug Ranitidine worldwide as a precautionary measure, following the ongoing probe by the US Food and Drug Administration into the reported impurity N-nitrosodimethylamine in it at low levels. Ranitidine is an Over-The-Counter (OTC) and pre-prescription drug which decreases the amount of acid created by the stomach. "Dr.Reddys is still evaluating potential impact of the



Ranitidine is an Over-The-Counter (OTC) and prescription drug which decreases the amount of acid created by the stomach

regulators and industry partners to determine the source of this impurity in Ranitidine being manufactured by several companies RPT being manufactured by several companies and examining levels of NDMA in Ranitidine and evaluating any possible risk to patients. Though the FDA is not calling for individuals at stop taking Ranitidine at this time, however, patients taking the prescription and wishing to discontinue its use should talk to their health care professionals about other treatment options, the US drug regulator said. And an over-the-counter portfolio of the product," Dr Reddys spokesperson told PTI in an email reply. The FDA in a statement on September 13 had said it is working with international regulators and industry partners to determine the source of this impurity in Ranitidine being manufactured by several companies RPT being manufactured by several companies and examining levels of NDMA in Ranitidine and evaluating any possible risk to patients. Though the FDA is not calling for individuals at stop taking Ranitidine at this time, however, patients taking the prescription and wishing to discontinue its use should talk to their health care professionals about other treatment options, the US drug regulator said.

'SHE LOVES TECH'

Indian researcher wins accolade at global startup contest

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An Indian startup mentored and curated by the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) for the 'She Loves Tech Global Startup Competition-2019' in Beijing has won accolades at the meet. Odisha based researcher and entrepreneur Dr Nusrat J M Sanghamitra was honoured at the meet for the path-breaking cancer drug delivery device developed by CyCa OncoSolutions founded by her. The molecular drilling device that can inject directly and precisely anti-cancer drugs to the affected cells, developed by the Odisha-based research and technology startup, has been hailed as a breakthrough in cancer treatment, a



She Loves Tech' is a global platform committed to building an ecosystem for technology, entrepreneurship and innovation that creates opportunities for women

Cyca OncoSolutions bagged the third prize at the summit, held to identify and encourage innovative and successful technological ventures promoted by women. Startups from Germany and US bagged the first two prizes at the summit, which had lined up 15 women led enterprises from around the world for the final round to present their imaginative and trail-blazing projects and ideas. Cyca OncoSolutions has

developed an efficient, non-toxic invitro and in vivo delivery method for various clinical applications, especially for cancer therapeutics, the release said. Since the nano technology based molecular drilling device has proved effective in delivering anti-cancer medicines to the affected cells directly, it is expected to cause minimum harm to the unaffected cells and to reduce the side-effects. A method that can radically improve the quality of lives of nearly 15 million cancer patients worldwide, it reduces the quantum of drugs substantially due to its precision method, besides being able to skip their side effects and making cancer manageable. "This technology can also sharply bring down the economic and social cost of managing cancer, which especially is a major issue with public healthcare systems the world-over," Dr Nusrat said. "Entrepreneurship is not just a career option. It is a way of life. It's a mindset that strives to make a difference in people's life and to make a positive impact on society by ones professional and personal endeavours", Dr Nusrat added.

Petrol price jumps Rs 1.59/ltr, diesel Rs 1.31/ltr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol prices have soared by Rs 1.59 a litre and diesel by Rs 1.31 in the last six days -- the most since daily price revision was introduced in 2017, as a massive strike at Saudi Arabian oil facilities jolted oil markets. Petrol price was on Sunday hiked by 27 paise to Rs 73.62 a litre in the Delhi market -- the benchmark for national rates, according to a price notification by state-owned oil firms. Price of diesel was increased by 18 paise to Rs 66.74 per litre in Delhi. This is the sixth straight daily increase and has taken the cumulative price hike since September 17 to Rs 1.59 per litre in case of petrol and Rs 1.31 for diesel. Global oil prices shot up the most since the Gulf war in the immediate aftermath of the unprecedented drone missile strikes on key oil facilities in Saudi Arabia that disabled 5 per cent of the global supply. Oil prices have cooled since the spike on September 16 but remain on the edge. Attackers using low-flying drones and cruise missiles knocked out 5.7 million barrels of production, or about 60 per cent of what Saudi Arabia currently produces. It was the largest supply disruption in



Oil prices have cooled since the spike on September 16 but remain on the edge

history. On Monday, Brent oil futures soared 15 per cent. Analysts have warned that the style of the attacks on Saudi Aramco's Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities may add a permanent risk premium to oil and gasoline prices. While Saudi Arabia is saying it can quickly bring supply back online, experts say the shock to the global oil market will be felt for years. India depends on Saudi Arabia for a fifth of its oil imports and has been in constant touch with Kingdom officials on securing its supplies.

GOING GREEN: WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR KIDS TO TRAVEL BY SCHOOL BUS

As the government is keen on spreading awareness about environment by promoting travel via Metro and public transport, it should also educate schools to provide buses for students and encourage them to use the same, reports ANUSHKA PRADEEP

The morning school run has turned into a nightmare as every family drops their kids in their personal vehicles. But there are steps a family can take to tackle pollution and congestion by being selective about the use of private vehicles to drop and pick up children from schools and colleges.

Despite several private and international schools offering transportation, the proportion of students going to schools in cars and bikes is much higher than the number of students attending government schools.

Although the government promotes using public transport, most state-run schools and Central government schools do not provide transportation facilities in schools.

Around 41 per cent of students attending private schools arrive in motorised vehicles as compared 24 per cent attending government schools, according to an article published by BMC public health on the NCBI website.

While some parents sight the lack of basic safety as a major deterrent for not using school buses, others feel the time taken to travel via a school bus and a common pick up and drop point for an area is an extra hassle for working parents.

Speaking about the same, actor Navdeep Pallapolu, who had recently commented on this issue on his Twitter handle said, "Chirec Public school has a rule that its students have to commute by school bus and in a country like ours with such a large population, we cannot expect the government to educate everyone. Hence, it is better to impose a rule on the students in various schools and colleges about making usage of buses mandatory keeping in

mind the students' needs. For example, students coming from far off areas or students with physical disability can be the exceptions. I'm aware that several parents find that the price for school transportation is pretty high and this is where I believe the schools should come in. They must try to regulate the fee amount they charge for transportation in order to encourage the parents to consider the school bus as an option."

The actor feels that using school buses as the mode of transport might reduce carbon footprint along with fuel consumption as several groups of these students travel together. Also, another very important aspect of this move is that the parents would be able to teach their children about being environment-friendly. A sense of responsibility towards the environment is planted in the minds of the next generation at a very young age."

Escorting children to schools in private vehicles every day is known to account for a large population of household travel and in most cities peak traffic density coincides with the beginning and the end of the normal working days of schools. Curious about the opinion of parents on the issue, we approached Prasoona who is a mother of two kids. She has firsthand experience of being a parent who sends their kids in both private vehicles as well as buses. When asked about her opinion she clearly stated, "I prefer my kids travelling in school buses than any other means of transportation. The school my son was going to provided bus facility for its students. And compared to any other means of transport we have provided for him in the consecutive years I still feel that using school bus was convenient for children and par-

ents alike." P Navya, another parent says, "Although public transport reduces pollution, we prefer private transport as we get to know the whereabouts of the child. Also, most school buses lack basic safety features and hire inexperienced drivers, leading to an increase in accidents involving them."

"If schools and governments impose stringent action against errant bus drivers and mandate basic safety rules, parents would eventually veer towards public transport," she concludes.

According to a source at a higher-level at Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, under the condition of anonymity, has revealed that several state and central government schools do not really provide transportation facilities. "The government ensures that the fees they charge from the students is considerably less so that the students are not burdened by the fee structure and can avail education which is ideal, but at the same time it leads to a dearth of funds when it comes to providing transportation to the students. Therefore the government must try to come up with initiatives towards the promotion of school buses, because more than anything else they provide the children with safe travel which would be the primary concern of any parent," he says. Since the government is keen on encouraging people to adopt an eco-friendly lifestyle, initiatives such as making school buses mandatory at all state and central schools would yield great benefits. And more importantly it would bring down the traffic congestion to a considerable degree.

Narasimha Reddy, Principal HPS Ramanthapur said, "We prefer public transport. In

fact, our school hires public transport exclusively for our students. Once the bus has picked up and dropped the students the bus becomes another normal RTC bus, which benefits both us as well as the RTC authorities. Out of 1,200 students approximately 200 of them travel by these buses provided."

"The reason we are having a hard time to convince students to use school buses is that these buses that we hire cannot go door to door unlike autos or vans or their private vehicles. Children have to walk up to the bus stops. And for working parents, a transport which picks up their kid from their doorstep is way more convenient than having their kids walk a bit further. We understand this, but the benefits of travelling in a bus are greater compared to that of private transports, when we look at the bigger picture here. Thus, in order to encourage students to travel via buses provided by the school we personally took certain measures such as organising talks and sessions with members of the traffic police, training older students to take care of younger ones on the buses and so forth. We do wish more students would come forward to opt for buses as their daily mode of commute." Mr Reddy said.



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— PRASOONA
A PARENT



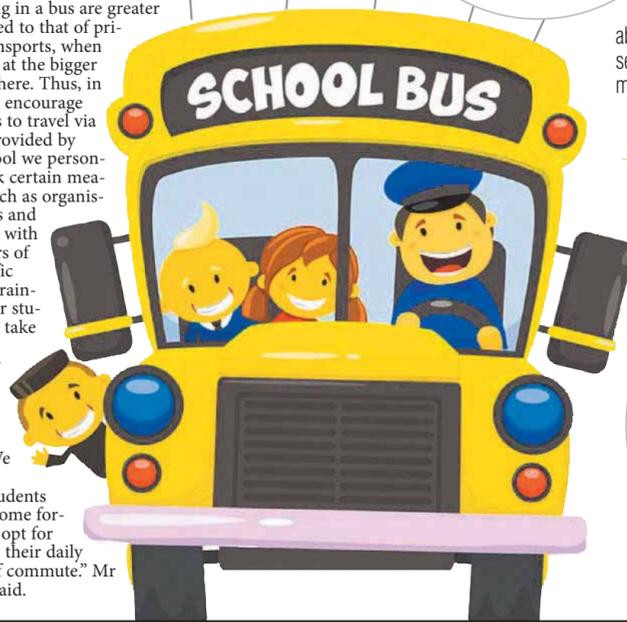
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ACTOR



The reason we are having a hard time to convince students to use school buses is that these buses that we hire cannot go door to door unlike autos or vans or their private vehicles. Children have to walk up to the bus stops. And for working parents, a transport which picks up their kid from their doorstep is way more convenient than having their kids walk a bit further.

— NARASIMHA REDDY
PRINCIPAL, HPS RAMANTHAPUR



STANDING UP FOR ONESELF

At some point of time in your life - maybe you were walking through a dark alley at night or being shoved indiscriminately the mid-afternoon rush on the railway platform - the need for defending oneself might have occurred to you. Many working women are vocal about the need for classes that teach self defense techniques to adults and children alike.

Recently, a three-hour workshop on self defense for girls using Hapkido at the Guidance High School in Old Malakpet, witnessed a turnout of 100 girls from classes 6 to 10. Md. Zaheeruddin,

President of Hapkido Association Telangana shared and demonstrated techniques of Hapkido - a Korean martial art that focuses on locking joints, grappling and throwing techniques in combat. The moves are meant to weaken the assailant and give you enough time to get away.

The Central government and many state governments, in tie up with various private agencies, have organised self defense classes in government schools for the students. The students are witnessing the benefits of attending such classes through the way they are able to handle themselves with confidence in daily routine.



A chance for young football talent to shine

There are many young kids who are interested in football but are without the financial means to pursue their passion. Keeping this in mind, Fateh Hyderabad AFC announced the second season of the Hyderabad Baby League which will be held in mid October at Hyderabad Riding and Polo Club Baby League.

Yogesh Maurya, Technical and Sporting Director of

Fateh Hyderabad AFC, shed more light on how the Hyderabad Baby League would function. "The League will be held for the Under 6, Under 8, Under 10 and Under 12 age groups. The cost of the league shall be borne entirely by Fateh Hyderabad AFC. Kids from local teams and schools are more than welcome to come and participate. The matches will be held on Sunday and will be geared towards making the participants enjoy themselves. We will be scout-

ing the league for talent that can go into Fateh Hyderabad AFC's U-13, U15 and U-18 teams. This chapter of the initiative is more advanced in terms of venue and sponsors."

Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, Ministry of IT, Telangana and Andrew Fleming, the British Deputy Commissioner for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh expressed their support for the event and hoped that more will come forward to conduct such events.





ANUSHKA IN FORTUNE INDIA'S LIST OF MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

Actress Anushka Sharma has been named in the Fortune India's top 50 list of Most Powerful Women of 2019.

The actress, who ventured into Bollywood in 2008 with the film *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi*, is the youngest woman on the list and ranks at 39.

Fortune India wrote about the actress, "Sharma is not only the face of her clothing line Nush and several other brands such as Nivea, Elle 18, Myntra and Lavie, but also a producer. Clean Slate Films, which Sharma set up when she was 25, has produced three small-budget Hindi films *NH10*, *Phillauri*, and *Pari*.

"They made around Rs 40 crore each at the box office. Moving beyond Bollywood, Clean Slate Films has tied up with Netflix to produce a feature film titled *Bulbul* and a web-series called *Mai*. It is also developing and producing a web-series for Amazon Prime Video.

Fortune's annual ranking of India's most powerful women in business is chosen for making an impact by virtue of their business acumen and social and cultural influence.



IT'S SPLITSVILLE FOR MILEY CYRUS, KAITLYNN CARTER

Singer Miley Cyrus and Kaitlynn Carter have gone their separate ways a little over a month after they started dating.

"Miley and Kaitlyn broke up. They're still friends," *people.com* quoted a source as saying.

The split came as Miley headed to Las Vegas on Saturday with her mother Tish and sister Brandi to attend the iHeartRadio Music Festival. Carter remained at her home here.

"They've been friends forever and were there for each other when they were both getting separated, but they're just not in a romantic relationship anymore," the source added.

The two had been spending quality time together since announcing their splits from their respective husbands. They were first linked in early August, when they were spotted kissing on vacation in Italy.



VARUN TO STAR IN MUSIC VIDEO WITH BUDDING HIP-HOP ARTISTES

Street Dancer 3D actor Varun Dhawan will shake a leg with budding hip-hop artistes in a music video.

The artistes are winners of a hip-hop dance festival.

After touring 10 cities across the country and with an international round in Bangkok, hip-hop dance festival, Breezer Vivid Shuffle, concluded Season 3 with a finale on Saturday here.

Varun, Breezer Vivid Shuffle's Ambassador,

announced Bfab Crew as the winner of the Crew Showcase category of Season 3, along with winners Eshwar Tiwari AKA Bboy Wild Child (Breaking category) and Neeraj (popping category).

The winners bagged a cash prize, the chance to go to an international dance festival, the opportunity to feature in a music video alongside Varun, and the chance to perform at BACARDI NH7 Weekender.

"It feels amazing to have been part of India's ultimate

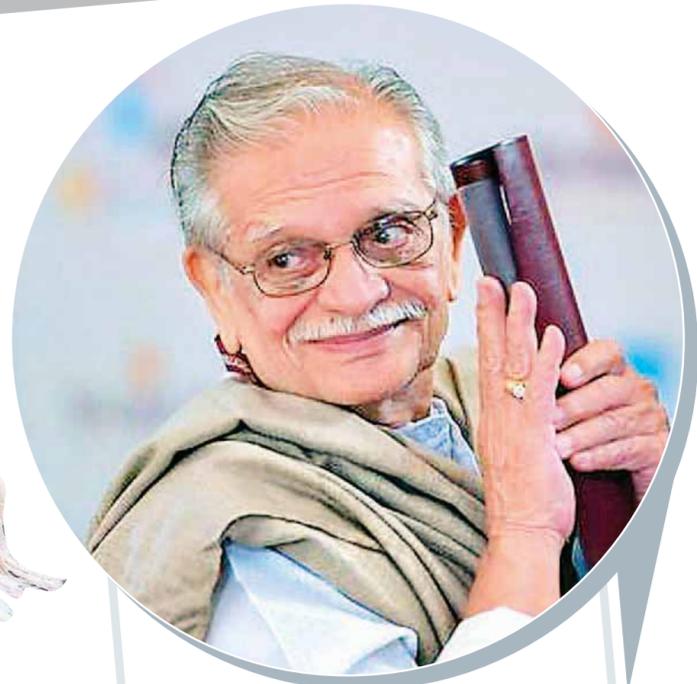
hip-hop dance platform for the third time. There is so much talent out there which often goes unrecognised. This is a platform where they can express themselves and live their passion in colour, with their crazy and fun moves," said Varun.

This year, the festival witnessed participation from nearly 1,500 dancers.

"Three years ago, when we started out, our objective was to help provide recognition to budding hip-hop artistes in the country. The festival went international

this year and we look forward to expanding it more with the future editions," said Anshuman Goenka, Marketing Head, Bacardi India.

Raashi Sanghavi, Festival Director, Breezer Vivid Shuffle, OML, added: "Sending out a lot of respect to the dancers/artists who have been a part of the fest over the last three years. I've seen massive growth in the community and we will continue to develop more talent to make a mark in the global hip hop scene."



GULZAR RETURNS TO PEN SONG IN THE SKY IS PINK

Bollywood's poet-lyricist par excellence Gulzar remains active as ever at 85. Although he has grown selective with time, he is still penning songs as diverse as the sprightly *Hello hello in Pataakha* and the lilting *Dilbaro in Raaz*.

While every new Gulzar track is eagerly awaited by fans, he returns with a new song in Shonali Bose's upcoming film, *The Sky Is Pink*.

The lyricist has collaborated with composer Pritam after a hiatus to create the number *Dil hi toh hai* in Bose's film, which stars Priyanka Chopra, Farhan Akhtar and Zaira Wasim. Arijit Singh has sung the song along with Antara Mitra and Nikhil D'Souza.

"It was an honour to work with Gulzar Saab for the music of this film. *Dil hi toh hai* is a very special song and it was also an amazing experience to work with Shonali (Bose)," said Pritam.

The Sky Is Pink recently had its world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival. The October 11 release is a bittersweet drama about a couple, played by Priyanka and Farhan, over 25 years, by their daughter (Zaira Wasim), who is afflicted by the deadly disease pulmonary fibrosis.



HILARY DUFF'S HAS MOM GUILT

Actress Hilary Duff, who is battling "very contagious" strep throat, has opened up about feeling mom guilt.

The actress took to Instagram stories about how she was battling a "very contagious" case of strep throat. Although Duff, 31, felt terrible, she said her mom guilt was making her feel even worse because she is currently unable to spend time with her children — son Luca Cruz, 7, and daughter Banks Violet, 10 months — as she recovers from the illness, reports *people.com*.

"I'm super sick — I think I have strep throat - and I'm in bed... I'm getting an IV to hopefully feel better," Duff explained, before asking her followers, "As a parent, why does it feel so horrible to be sick? Like, the guilt of being in bed."

"There's obviously times when I've had to be with my kids all day long, sick and feeling horrible, with no help. But today, I have help and I should be resting and the guilt is crazy."

"My head is spinning, and I feel like I should be doing a million things and being with my kids every minute when really I'm very contagious," she added.

"It's just the hard part of being a parent. It s**ks." Since she is unable to do anything or go anywhere, Duff said she was using her time in bed wisely — to prepare for the upcoming *Lizzie McGuire* reboot.

"I'm going to take this opportunity to watch *Lizzie McGuire*, like, start to finish," she shared. "I'm going to do all my research and get it all fresh in my mind."



FROM NOVELS TO SHORT FILMS TO SILVER SCREEN

Shammeer Sultan, the director of *Meeku Maathrame Cheptha*, never expected that happening faces like Vijay Deverakonda and Tharun Bhascker would associate with his maiden film as a producer and as an actor respectively. "Moreover, our entire team is from Chennai and we don't know Telugu. Turns out, we've made a Telugu film and with utmost satisfaction," the 33-year-old lad from Chennai says in an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*.

Sultan started off his creative journey by penning a novel in 2010-11. In a first-of-its-kind, he attached an audio CD to the book, as he wanted people to listen to the songs while reading the book, so that they can connect to it at a deeper emotional level. After writing a couple of novels, he decided to switch to visual medium. Shammeer who was an engineer by profession quit his corporate job and started making short films along with his friends Madan (cinematographer) and Arjun (co-director). "I wouldn't have made shorts films and a web series, *Weekend Machan*, with Gautham Menon if it wasn't for them," he adds.

One of the first short films he made was part of an anthology drama *Aviyal* compiled by *Jigarthanda* director Karthik Subbaraj. It even got a theatrical release. "The last short film *Naan 8* travelled to various national and international festival film circuits,

ending up bagging eight awards," he exults.

The success of *Naan 8* meant that he landed opportunities at feature film direction but his maiden project couldn't get going in Tamil. Luckily for him and his team, Vijay Deverakonda was mighty impressed with *Naan 8* and soon a meeting followed in Hyderabad. This happened before *Arjun Reddy* released. "He really liked the script of *Meeku Maathrame Cheptha*, but there was this debate whether we should do it in Tamil or Telugu as we were handicapped when it came to the latter. After *Arjun Reddy* released, equations changed overnight for him and we understood it. Our film is more of a screenplay-based content driven comedy and didn't demand any star as such. But he was kind enough to tell us that

he will produce it," Sultan reminisces fondly.

It was Vijay's father Vardhan Deverakonda who proposed the name of Tharun Bhascker to be the film's lead. The *Pellich-oopulu* helmer, who is fluent in Tamil as well, helped Sultan and team to translate and adapt the Tamil script of *Meeku Maathrame Cheptha* into Telugu but was disinclined to act. "He was like, 'Why are you asking me to act? I'm writing the script for my next'. After the narration, he got excited and said he would do it. He felt the role was close to his real self," Sultan avers, adding that Tharun's reservations went on after saying ok. "We had a few workshops, where we practiced some scenes. There itself we discovered a hidden actor in him and his comic timing was spot on, helping the scenes to come alive more. Even if

he wasn't a director we would've still cast him."

During the film's pre-production, which went on for almost five months, Sultan, a fan of Martin Scorsese, David Fincher and Edgar Wright, and his team figured out that language barrier wasn't as tough as they predicted it to be.

"Tharun helped us to overcome our barrier. Abhinav Gomatam who is playing another lead knows Tamil as much as he knows Telugu. Vani Bhojan who is cast opposite Tharun in the film is a Chennai-based actress, so it was kind of easy to communicate with our lead actors," he explains, adding that once Tharun was on sets, the director in him took a backseat. "He didn't interfere much in writing or direction on sets. Only when we needed his help, he was there."

Shot completely in and around Hyderabad in 44 days spread over four schedules, the film is a tragic comedy of sorts, a rare genre for Telugu audience.

"The title is relevant to the theme of the film 'my best friend's secret'. The screenplay follows the journey of an embarrassing secret and how it turns into a different story altogether, putting the concerned friend's life in a spot of bother. We wanted to generate curiosity about the film in the title itself, which is why we've named it *Meeku Maathrame Cheptha*. In fact, it gets repeated multiple times by different characters in the film," he concludes.

Starting his journey with novels, Shammeer Sultan has now evolved to become a director who is backed by stars like Vijay Deverakonda and Tharun Bhascker. He talks about his rise to recognition with NAGARAJ GOUD.

ONE OF THE FIRST SHORT FILMS MADE BY SHAMMEER SULTAN WAS PART OF AN ANTHOLOGY DRAMA AVIYAL COMPILED BY JIGARTHANDA DIRECTOR KARTHIK SUBBARAJ. IT EVEN GOT A THEATRICAL RELEASE



GETUP SREENU is NAGA BABU's favourite

Ram Prasad, Sudheer and Getup Sreenu, noted comedians from the TV show *Jabardasth*, have teamed up for a film called *3 Monkeys*. Directed by G. Anil Kumar and producer by G. Nagesh, the film's title logo was unveiled by actor Naga Babu in Hyderabad on Sunday.

Speaking later, Naga Babu expressed his happiness on *Jabardasth* helping film industry discover new comic talents. "There's a still lot of potential which can be tapped from the show," he told, addressing the industry.

He said that in the group, Getup Sreenu is his favourite. "Ram Prasad is good at writing funny skits, while Sudheer can easily be the leading face of a film. Sreenu is my favourite and he can perform on an international platform too. He must've played closed to 90 roles in the show now and every role had a different diction and body language. It's not an easy task for any comedian. Telugu industry will lose a gem of talent if it doesn't use his potential to its full effect," he said.

Sudheer said the film is a comic caper which will make the audience laugh and teary-eyed at the same time as it culminates into a climax.



Ala Vaikunthapuramlo release advanced

Although it wasn't officially announced, Allu Arjun-starrer *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo* was expected to release on January 14 — four days after Mahesh Babu-starrer *Sarileru Neekevvaru* opens. But in a latest development, we've now learnt that the film has been advanced by two days to January 12. While reasons regarding the change are unknown, January 12 happens to be a Sunday but



since it's the Sankranti season, producers Allu Aravind and S. Radha Krishna seem to be fine.

Meanwhile, the shooting of the family entertainer is in full-swing in Kompally, Hyderabad. The major cast, including Allu Arjun and Tabu are participating in the schedule which will go on till the month ends. Featuring an ensemble cast consisting of Sushanth, Navdeep, Nivetha Pethuraj, Jayaram, Sathyaraj, Sunil, Rajendra Prasad, Rahul Ramakrishna, Brahmaji, Harsha Vardhan and Vennela Kishore, the makers are planning to complete the shoot by November-end.

NIHARIKA bets big on digital front

Her film career might not have been as successful as she would've expected it to be, but Niharika Konidela has been a success story on the digital front, having produced and featured in successful web series like *Muddapappu Avakai* and *Nanna Koochi* in the past. Scaling her production further, she has now produced a 100-episode comedy series called *Mad House* under her Pink Elephant Pictures. Debutant Mahesh Uppala has directed the series which will

stream on YouTube from October first week. Niharika says, "Except for *Amrutham* not many sitcoms have been made in Telugu. Our show follows the same pattern as *Amrutham* but it is different in its own way. It explores the problems faced by millennials and how they go about solving it. Sometimes the problems get the better of them. The chain of events, however, is dealt in an entertaining way. Each episode will be of 15-20 minutes and the series will go on for almost 18 months. A new episode will be uploaded every week."

KALYANRAM's next to have boat fight sequence

The filming of Nandamuri Kalyanram-starrer *Entha Manchi Vadavu Ra*, directed by Satish Vegesna, has been going on in Rajahmundry and its surrounding areas for the past 20 days. The schedule will go on till this Wednesday. Producer Sivalenka Krishna Prasad says, "A jathara set worth Rs 35 lakh has been erected at Thorredu where an item song has been shot on Kalyanram and Natasha Doshi. Around 50 dancers and 500 junior artistes participated in it. We've even shot a thrilling climax action

sequence in Godavari with 16 boats. The film will be releasing on January 15."

The next schedule will commence from October 9 in Hyderabad and will go on till October 22. The final schedule will take place in Kerala and Karnataka. A joint production venture between Umesh Gupta of Aditya Music and Sivalenka Prasad of Sridevi Movies, *Entha Manchi Vadavu Ra* sees the likes of V.K. Naresh, Suhasini Mani Ratnam, Tanikella Bharani, Pavitra Lokesh, Vennela Kishore, Praveen and Prabhas Sreenu in supporting roles, while Mehreen is the film's leading lady.



Rahul clinches bronze

PTI ■ NUR-SULTAN (KAZAKHSTAN)

Rahul Aware won the biggest medal of his career by bagging a Bronze while an injured Deepak Punia settled for a Silver after pulling out of the final as India celebrated its best-ever performance at the World Wrestling Championship here on Sunday.

Aware outclassed Tyler Lee Graff, the 2017 Pan-America champion, 11-4 in the 61kg bronze play-off to take India's tally to five medals.

Deepak, the reigning junior world champion did not take part against Iranian great Hasan Yazdani due to an ankle injury, sustained during the semi-final.

The other medal winners in this edition are Bajrang Punia, Ravi Dahiya and Vinesh Phogat.

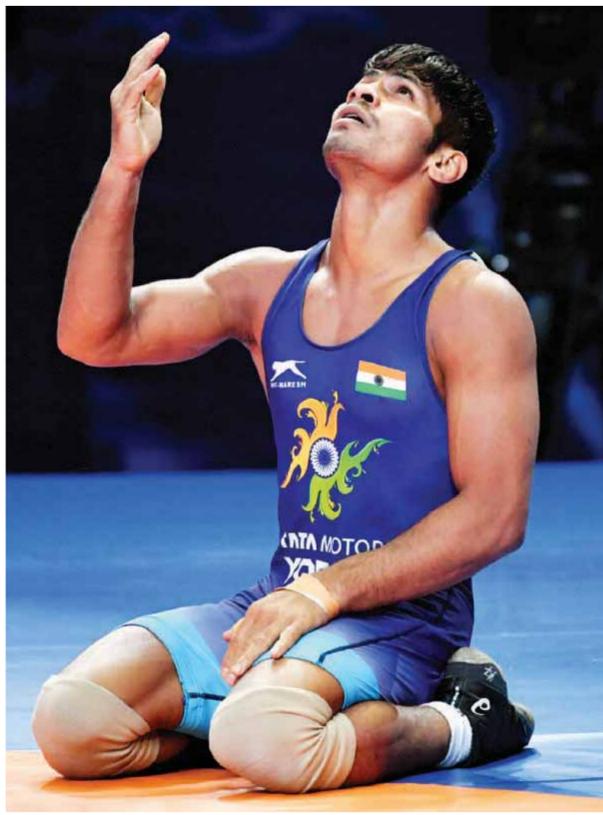
India's previous best show was at the 2013 edition, when the country had won three medals through Amit Dahiya (Silver), Bajrang Punia (Bronze) and Sandeep Tulsy Yadav (Bronze in Greco-Roman).

Winning Gold medal at the 2018 Commonwealth Games was 27-year-old Aware's best performance before.

"I could have won a Gold. It was within my reach. I could have won that semi-final (against Beka Lomtadze). I botched it up in the first period," Aware told PTI.

Aware had shown early promise when he won Bronze medals at the Asian Championships in 2009 and 2011 but suddenly vanished from the scene after that.

"The injuries pegged me back. I was ready in 2014 but then there were no trials for the CWG or the Asian Games. So



I could have won a Gold. It was within my reach. I could have won that semi-final (against Beka Lomtadze). I botched it up in the first period

I did not get a chance to prove my worth," he argued.

"I feared for losing this chance. After a long time, something good was waiting for me and I was really scared to lose it. I am glad I pulled it off," Aware heaved a sigh of relief.

Wrestling of late has been a sport dominated by grapplers from Haryana and Aware is first from Maharashtra to win a senior World medal.

"But Maratha sports history will remember me for winning this medal. I am first from that region to do this," he said adding that he would dedicate his medal to his first coach, late Harichander Brajdar.

For the record, the greatest ever Maharashtrian wrestler undoubtedly is late KD Jadhav, who won independent India's first individual medal, a bronze in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics.

Aware, who now trains under Kaka Pawar in Pune, said he was under a lot of self-imposed pressure going into the bout. The American surprised Aware with a double leg attack, the moment the bout started and earned two points with a takedown.

However, he became alert and twice

wriggled out of Graff's right leg attacks. He also scored consecutive takedown points to lead 4-2 at the break.

In the second period too, Graff got hold of Aware's right leg but the Indian got himself out of trouble in an impressive manner.

He then pulled the bout away from the American with a flurry of moves - the takedowns and expose - taking a commanding 10-2 lead. It consolidated further when the American lost a challenge. Eventually he won 11-4.

The morning of the final day of the championships brought with it the news that Deepak will not be able to compete in Sunday's final.

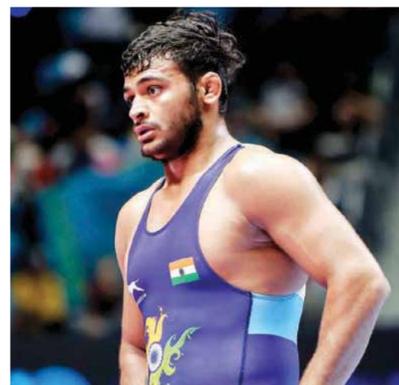
"The left foot is not taking the load. It's difficult to fight in this condition and could have aggravated the injury. I know it was a big chance to fight against Yazdani but I can't help it," Deepak told PTI.

Deepak had come out of the mat limping and a swollen right eye after his semifinal against Switzerland's Stefan Reichmuth.

It was a good draw for Deepak and he exploited it to get the biggest medal of his career.

In a dream run, Deepak reached the final with wins over Reichmuth, Colombia's Carlos Arturo Mendez and Kazakhstan's Adilet Davlumbayev. He became only the fifth Indian ever to reach the World Championship final after Bishamber Singh (1967) Sushil Kumar (2010), Amit Dahiya (2013) and Bajrang Punia (2018). Only last year he had won the junior world championship.

Sushil Kumar remains India's only World Champion. He had won a Gold in 2010 in Moscow



Lure of job brought Deepak to wrestling

PTI ■ NUR-SULTAN (KAZAKHSTAN)

Wrestling was just a route which Deepak Punia hoped would find him a good job to help sustain his family.

He wanted a job and was even offered the post of a sepoy in the Indian Army back in 2016.

But he was told to dream big and not settle for little things in life by none other than Sushil Kumar.

"Keep wrestling as your priority, jobs will chase you later," Sushil, India's most successful wrestler with two Olympic medals and a world title, had told him, besides arranging for a sponsorship.

He became a World Cadet champion in 2016 and only last month won the junior World title, only the fourth Indian ever to do so and first in 18 years.

Within one month of that feat in Estonia, he found himself face-to-face with his idol and Iranian great Hasan Yazdani for a clash, the winner of which would be crowned the senior world champion.

It is a pity that the bout did not happen because of the ankle injury he sustained during the semifinal against Switzerland's Stefan Reichmuth and he settled for a silver.

He missed out on a great opportunity to wrestle with one of the best of the sport has seen in his history.

But the last three years in Deepak Punia's life still sounds like a dream.

So, what is it that makes Deepak India's best in heavyweight category in recent times. The results have come thick and fast.

"It's a combination of a lot of things. Everything has come together," said India's former foreign coach Vladimir Mestvirishvili, who has played a key role in Deepak's progress as a world-class grappler.

"You need four things — brain, power, luck and flexibility on the mat. Deepak has all. He is a disciplined wrestler and that he gets from his father.

"Boys usually get bored with the repetition process when they are told to learn a new technique but Deepak would do it for two, three, four days unless he gets it. It comes from family."

It's true.

His father Subash has been coming to his training centre every morning to deliver milk and fruits to him since 2015 despite the fact their Chhara village in Jhajar district in Haryana is at a distance of 60km.

That Deepak has immense appetite for milk was known from his childhood when he was a four-year-old kid and even it has a role in him getting the moniker 'Ketli pehalwan'.

The Sarpanch of his village once offered him milk which was kept in a 'ketli' (kettle). He drank that in one gulp. He was offered a second, a third and a fourth and he finished all.

From then onwards, people started calling him 'ketli pehalwan'. Deepak said staying disciplined has been a big reason for his success.

"I like hanging out with friends, going to malls and doing some shopping. But we are not allowed to go out of the training centre. I like buying shoes, shirts and jeans, though I don't get to wear them because I am always in a tracksuit," he said.

"Whenever I get a chance, like after the tournaments, I go out and eat even junk food. But once the break is over, I don't think about anything else. Wrestling and training is life then."

The sponsorship he got from OGQ took away a bit of worry and he began to concentrate on honing his skills.

From bad to worse (Barcelona suffer shocking defeat against Granada)

AFP ■ MADRID

Barcelona threw on their stars of the present and the future but neither Lionel Messi nor Ansu Fati could save them from a dismal 2-0 defeat away at Granada.

Messi was still not deemed fit enough to start at Los Carmenes while Fati, the 16-year-old who has lit up La Liga in recent weeks, also began the game on the bench on Saturday.

But while both came on at half-time with Barca trailing to Ramon Azeez's opener, it was Granada that scored again, Alvaro Vadillo converting a penalty after Arturo Vidal was found guilty of a handball.

Barcelona have now won only two of their opening five league games and none away from Camp Nou, this their second loss already, just one fewer than the three they suffered during the entirety of last season.

With seven points on the board, this is their worst start to a season since 1994.

"Obviously I am worried," said coach Ernesto Valverde.

"Because we are not getting good results and when that happens in two or three games, it means we are not playing well"



Instead, Granada go top of the table after capitalising on Atletico Madrid's goalless draw at home to Celta Vigo a few hours before.

They will stay there until Sunday, when Sevilla, Real Madrid or Athletic Bilbao could overtake them.

Barcelona are sixth, grasping onto the consolation of Messi's second substitute appearance in five days that now sug-

gests he has finally recovered from the niggling calf injury sustained at the start of August.

Their problems though are unlikely to be solved simply by their captain's return. Junior Firpo's error two minutes into his first start for the club gifted Granada their opening goal and set the tone for a chaotic night in defence.

And up front, Antoine Griezmann was quiet again,

with little in any of the combinations to suggest Ernesto Valverde has yet worked out who will form his best attacking trio and in what positions.

"In the end, the coach is responsible and I feel responsible," Valverde said.

"I always think you can win or lose but at least you have to deserve to win when you lose, and today it hasn't been like that.

MESSI IMPACT LIMITED

With Firpo on the floor, Gerard Pique scrambled across but Pueras' shot only looped up off the defender to the back post where Azeez headed in.

Granada seemed hungrier than Barca and their dominance persuaded Valverde to make two changes at half-time, Messi and Fati replacing Carles Perez and Firpo.

Messi won a free-kick 30 yards out but hit it straight at the wall while Marc-Andre ter Stegen fumbled a cross and had to react quickly to claw it back off his own line.

Any hopes of a Barca comeback were dashed in the 66th minute as Vidal handballed at the end of a scramble in the box and Vadillo made no mistake with the spot-kick.

Milan belongs to Inter

AFP ■ MILAN

Romelu Lukaku fired Inter Milan back top of Serie A with the second goal of a 2-0 derby win that extended their perfect start to the season at the expense of city rivals AC Milan.

Belgium striker Lukaku and Marcelo Brozovic's second half strikes gave Inter their fourth win in as many games, putting them two points ahead of Juventus after the champions' came back from a goal down beat Verona 2-1 thanks to Aaron Ramsey's first Serie A goal and a Cristiano Ronaldo penalty.

Antonio Conte's Inter were looking for a boost after their dismal 1-1 draw in their Champions League draw against Czech outsiders Slavia Prague.

And they hit back in a fiery Milan derby with Belgian striker Lukaku heading in his third goal in four games with 12 minutes remaining after Brozovic's 49th-minute opener.

"At 26 years old, I needed and wanted a coach like this, one who motivates me every day," said Lukaku of Conte.

"My relationship with Conte is very strong, he's a really good coach because he's someone who helps players to develop a lot.

"I'm really happy to be here and to be wearing this shirt."

Milan could thank Gianluigi Donnarumma for keeping the match goalless in the first half after



he denied Lautaro Martinez, Lukaku and Danilo D'Ambrosio. Lautaro had a goal ruled out after 35 minutes for being marginally offside.

But the breakthrough came four minutes after the break when Stefano Sensi set up Brozovic, whose deflected shot beat Donnarumma and was confirmed after consultation with VAR.

Lukaku sealed the win and a perfect 12 points from four games when he guided Nicolo Barella's cross home with a glancing header, as AC Milan slip to ninth place with six points.

"We came from a performance in the Champions League that left us with a bitter taste, but gave us more impetus to face the derby in the best way," said Conte.

"It is a deserved victory, I am happy for our fans, because the derby is always the derby."

Ole's veering off road

AFP ■ LONDON

West Ham inflicted more away-day pain on a poor Manchester United side on Sunday, lifting themselves to fourth in the Premier League with a comfortable 2-0 win at the London Stadium.

Andriy Yarmolenko's goal shortly before half-time and a wonderful late Aaron Cresswell free-kick extended United's barren run on the road.

United, who started the season by thumping Chelsea 4-0, have lost twice already in their opening six league games and lie seventh, without an away win in any competition since March.

Injury-hit United were without midfielder Paul Pogba and forward Anthony Martial and huffed and puffed but failed to break down their dogged opponents.

West Ham are riding high under Manuel Pellegrini, unbeaten since a 5-0 drubbing in the first match of the season and this victory followed a home win last season against United at the London Stadium.

But it was a chastening day for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men, just a day after champions Manchester City came close to matching United's Premier League record for margin of victory -- 9-0 against Ipswich in 1995.

Solskjaer played the same side that triumphed against Leicester last week while Pablo Fornals came in for the injured Manuel Lanzini for the home side. Both sides were cagey at the start of the match, with neither side able to create clear-cut chances.

West Ham looked the more inventive team when they broke forward



while United looked ponderous in attack and lacking in ideas, with Marcus Rashford isolated up front.

The match was drifting towards the interval before Felipe Anderson and Yarmolenko combined to sap United's confidence with a goal in the 44th minute.

United went close to an equaliser early in the second half as the rain came down in London, with Juan Mata missing from close range after an Andreas Pereira cross.

Already short of options up front and missing creators in midfield, they lost Rashford just before the hour mark, replaced by the out-of-form Jesse Lingard. West Ham went close to doubling their lead shortly afterwards but David de Gea got down low to keep out an Anderson shot from a tight angle.

United upped the pressure and West Ham had goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski to thank for keeping out a Harry Maguire strike from close range.

But West Ham continued to look more dangerous on the break and made United pay when Ashley Young brought down Mark Noble on the edge of the penalty area.

Sock, Kyrgios keep World in touch

AFP ■ GENEVA

Jack Sock and Nick Kyrgios paired up to defeat Rafael Nadal and Stefanos Tsitsipas as Team World cut Europe's lead to 7-5 heading into the final day of the Laver Cup in Geneva.

Sock and Kyrgios won Saturday's doubles 6-4, 3-6, 10-6 after Nadal defeated Milos Raonic in his first match since his US Open triumph in the singles.

"There was a lot on the line there," said Sock. "We obviously wanted to keep the overall weekend close. Being down 9-3 is different than 7-5."



"We've had so many chances this weekend, it's been crazy, so I think the score could be the other way round."

"I thought it was a high quality match and we're definitely happy to get the win."

Nadal, who won his 19th Grand Slam title in New York, had earlier overcome Canada's Raonic 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) after defending eight break points in the first set.

"I feel very lucky," said Nadal.

"I think he deserved that first set for sure. Later in the match I think I started to play a little bit better."

Roger Federer, who won his

first match alongside Alexander Zverev in Friday's doubles tie, beat Australian Kyrgios 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 10-7 to the delight of his 17,000-strong home crowd.

"The crowd could feel it, I could feel it. I needed to get some energy going but you can't do that if you don't play any good shots and Nick was playing very well," said Federer, the 20-time Grand Slam champion.

"I was just trying to stay focused. If you can turn the momentum, the crowd gets back into it and I need some earplugs next time, it was just phenomenal."

Bjorn Borg's holders had seen

Team World draw level with John Isner's victory over Zverev.

Isner fought back from a set down to beat Zverev 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 10-1 and haul Team World level at 3-3 after Europe led by two points after the opening day.

The scoring system sees one point awarded for each win on the first day, two points given for each victory on the second day, and three points on offer in each match on Sunday's final day.

This year is the first time the tournament has been played since being added to the ATP Tour. Europe won the 2018 edition 13-8 in Chicago.

VENUS OUT OF WUHAN OPEN

AFP ■ WUHAN

Venus Williams' first visit to Asia since 2017 was cut short as she crashed out of the Wuhan Open first round on Sunday 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) to fellow American Danielle Collins.

The 39-year-old Williams, a 2015 Wuhan champion now 59th in the world rankings, squandered a lead in the first set before eventually losing to Collins, who recorded just the second match win of her career on Chinese soil.

The 35th-ranked Collins rallied back from 3-5 down in the opening set, winning a whopping nine games in a row to go up 7-5, 5-0.

Williams, a wildcard at Wuhan this year, finally stopped the bleeding, holding the serve to interrupt her opponent's momentum.

It was the start of a surprising five-game

run from Williams, who saved two match points along the way as she drew level at 5-5. In the decider, Williams got the first mini-break but it was Collins who eventually created a 6-4 gap, converting with an ace on her fourth match point to move into the second round.

It was Collins' second triumph over Williams, who had also stumbled against the 25-year-old during the Miami Open last year.

"This is my first tournament here in Asia, I was just happy to come out with a win, said Collins, who next takes on defending champion and ninth seed Aryna Sabalenka, a 6-1, 6-2 winner over Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

Former US Open champion Sloane Stephens battled past home favourite Zhang Shuai 7-5, 6-4 to take just her second win at Wuhan from four starts.

Stephens had lost her last two matches against Zhang, and was relieved to get through unscathed.

The American had won just one of her last seven matches on tour but said she wasn't concerned about her performance this year.

"I don't really dwell on things, just move on," the 14th-ranked Stephens said.

"The season is not fully behind me, I'm still playing, but when I'm done, it'll definitely be behind me. I'm just going to get in the best shape I can, have a great off-season, and get ready for next year."

TOP RANK RACE

Meanwhile, 2017 Wuhan runner-up Ashleigh Barty is making sure she has enough left in the tank for a busy closing stretch of the season, including her singles

debut at the WTA Finals in Shenzhen and a highly-anticipated Fed Cup final between Australia and France in Perth.

Barty is top seed at Wuhan and faces a stiff challenge in the fight for the year-end number one ranking from the likes of Karolina Pliskova, Simona Halep, Bianca Andreescu and Naomi Osaka. The 23-year-old Australian is first-ranked this week and would like to finish the year on top, but admitted that she has other priorities.

"I think it's a target without being a target," Barty told reporters.

"We've put ourselves in a position where it's a possibility. I plan my schedule, the last six months of this year, well in advance. I think I'm not going to change it to try and chase it," she added.