

ANALYSIS 7
SOCIAL CONTRACT OF
SOCIAL FORESTRY**MONEY 8**
'EXTENDED CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK
COULD LOWER OIL DEMAND, PRICES'**SPORTS 12**
SURYA TON LEADS
MUMBAI'S FIGHTBACK

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 7, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

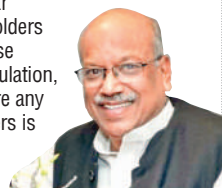
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I WANT TO
HAVE A FAMILY:
SAMANTHA

Page 11

**7 STATES HAVE MORE AADHAAR
HOLDERS THAN POPULATION: GOVT**

Seven states have more Aadhaar holders than their respective projected population as on December 31, 2019, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday. Minister of State for IT Sanjay Dhotre said this could not be attributed to deceased Aadhaar holders, as the number of deaths of Aadhaar holders has been accounted in Aadhaar saturation. These could be attributed to error in projection of population, migration of people, he added. Asked if there are any states where the number of Aadhaar card holders is greater than the population, he said yes.

**IN WAKE OF CORONAVIRUS, NO
VISAS FROM CHINA VALID: INDIA**

All existing electronic and normal visas are no longer valid for any foreign national travelling from China, in the wake of the Coronavirus, asserted Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday. China, the epicentre of the Coronavirus has till Thursday witnessed a death toll of 563 and a total of 28,018 confirmed cases. Coronavirus, which originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019, has since then spread to various cities around the world.

**GATES FOUNDATION COMMITS
\$100MN TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS**

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on Thursday announced that it will immediately commit up to \$100 million for the global response to the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). The funding will help strengthen detection, isolation and treatment efforts; protect at-risk populations; and develop vaccines, treatments and diagnostics. "Multilateral organisations, governments, private sector and philanthropies must work together to slow the pace of the outbreak," the foundation said.

**SCOTLAND'S FINANCE MINISTER QUILTS
OVER MESSAGES TO TEENAGER**

Scotland's finance minister has resigned, hours before he was due to deliver his annual budget, after he reportedly sent hundreds of messages to a 16-year-old boy on social media. Derek Mackay quit on Thursday, saying he had "behaved foolishly". The Scottish Sun newspaper reported that 42-year-old Mackay sent the teen more than 270 messages on Facebook and Instagram, telling the boy he was "cute" and offering to take him to a rugby match and to dinner. Mackay is not accused of breaking the law.

**Vijay quizzed
by I-T on day 2,
Rs 65 cr
recovered from
financier Anbu****RBI keeps
interest rates
unchanged on
uncertain
inflation
outlook****Modi rakes up controversy over
formation of Telangana again**NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has again raked up a controversy over the formation of Telangana.

Ignoring decades-long protests and multiple reports of

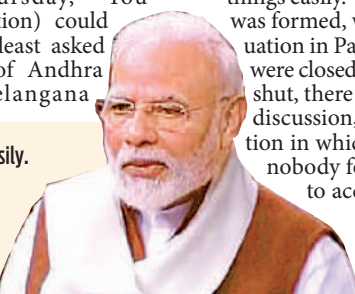
committees over the formation of Telangana, and notwithstanding Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's advice to BJP leaders on a previous occasion, asking them to "change their attitude" towards the formation of Telangana, Prime Minister Modi continues to

harp on how the AP Reorganization Bill was passed in Parliament.

Modi said in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, "You (Opposition) could have at least asked people of Andhra and Telangana

about their wishes."

He said, "I would like to refresh Azad saab's memory, people will not forget past things easily. When Telangana was formed, what was the situation in Parliament? Doors were closed, TV telecast was shut, there was no place for discussion, and the condition in which it was passed, nobody forgets. You need to accept truth."

Continued on
Page 4

— NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

**Hajipur rapist awarded
death sentence**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a landmark judgment, a special court in Nalgonda on Thursday convicted serial rapist-killer Marri Srinivas Reddy, whose spine-chilling crimes created a scare for months in and around Hajipur village of Bommalararamam mandal in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, and sentenced him to death.

Srinivas Reddy, 28, a lift mechanic, was convicted of rape and murder of three minor girls, aged 11, 13, and 17.

He had buried the victims' bodies in abandoned agricultural wells near the village.

Srinivas Reddy used to trap girls on the pretext of giving them a lift on his two-wheeler to their village as there were no buses plying to the village in the afternoon.

"The judgment shows that the arms of the judiciary are very long and no one can escape from the clutches of



law," said Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat, who had constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT), which provided crucial evidence before the court to nail the guilt of Srinivas Reddy.

The court examined 101 witnesses and took into account DNA evidence. The police had filed three different charge-sheets in the three cases.

Continued on Page 2

**Fearing family,
cousins in love
hang themselves**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two students, both paternal cousins in a relationship, allegedly committed suicide on Thursday out of fear that their families would not accept their love.

The incident took place in Kulkacharla mandal of Vikarabad. The deceased persons were identified as 20-year-old Mamatha and 19-year-old Prashanth.

Hailing from Kamunipally in Kulkacharla, Mamatha and Prashanth were related on their father's side. Mamatha was studying in a government college and Prashanth in a private college.

Continued on Page 4

**TALLEST JBS AND LARGEST MGBS METRO
STATIONS TO BE OPERATIONAL FROM TODAY**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station-Jubilee Bus Stand stretch of the



Metro line set to be inaugurated by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is very special for Hyderabad Metro Rail, considering that

it would make operational the tallest (JBS) and the largest (MGBS) stations of the Metro.

Continued on Page 4

Modi dubs Rahul 'tubelight'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday took repeated digs at opposition leaders, including Rahul

Gandhi of the Congress whom he dubbed as "tubelight" saying that it took him 30-40 minutes to respond to his speech in Lok Sabha.

Report in Page 5

Sri K Chandrashekar Rao
Hon'ble Chief Minister

Sri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister

SRI G KISHAN REDDY
Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, G.O.J

SRI K TARAKA RAMA RAO
Hon'ble Minister for MA & UD, Industries & IT & C

SRI MD MOHAMOOD ALI
Hon'ble Minister for Home, Prisons and Fire Services

SRI T SRINIVAS YADAV
Hon'ble Minister for Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Dairy Development & Cinematography

SRI T PADMA RAO GOUD
Hon'ble Dy. Speaker, TS Legislative Assembly

DR. SRI BONTHU RAMMOOHAN
H. W. MAYOR, GHMC

**L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Limited is proud, as
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Telangana State, Sri K. Chandrashekar Rao
dedicates Corridor II : Green Line - JBS to MGBS,
Hyderabad Metro Rail to the citizens of Hyderabad today!**

Highlights of the Hyderabad Metro Rail Project

- ✓ The world's largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project in the metro sector
- ✓ JBS - MGBS - 11 Kms - 9 stations - Corridor II - Green Line. The Hyderabad Metro Rail Project is dedicated to the citizens of Hyderabad
- ✓ 9 Stations - JBS, Secunderabad West, New Gandhi Hospital, Musheerabad, RTC X Roads, Chikkadpally, Narayanguda, Sultan Bazar and MG Bus Station
- ✓ JBS - Hyderabad's second largest bus terminus; Parade Ground Station, the tallest metro station with 5 levels
- ✓ 69.2 Km network will now be in operation with the inauguration of the JBS to MGBS stretch
- ✓ Best-in-class, eco-friendly urban mobility system for the people of Hyderabad
- ✓ Project utilises cutting edge technologies (Communication Based Train Control, Modern Regenerative Rolling Stocks, Ballast less Tracks, QR Code Ticketing, etc.)
- ✓ The project has already won 150 plus awards thus far

**The World's Largest PPP Metro Project
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Hyderabad

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HAIJIPUR CONVICTION

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE HELPED NAIL CULPRIT

NAVEEN KUMAR
■ HYDERABAD

Days after Srinivas Reddy's arrest in April, 2019, the investigating officials revealed shocking details, which made headlines across the country. The modus operandi was revealed by the Commissioner of Rachakonda police, Mahesh Bhagwat, stating that the three minor girls were ravished and brutally murdered by the accused Marri Srinivas Reddy and buried the dead bodies in two dried up agricultural wells 'Tette Bavi' & 'Marri Bavi' at Hajipur in order to conceal the evidence.

In April 2015, he first sexually assaulted and killed an 11-year-old school girl of a neighbouring village. Since there was no proper transportation to the villages from Hajipur Cross Roads, many would reach home hitchhiking. There was only one TSRTC bus that ran six times a day. He would keep track of young girls who sought lifts like this. He offered lift to the 11-year old when she was on her way home after meeting her aunt.

He knew that there were two empty wells in the area and took her there on some pretext. When the girl resisted his moves, he threw her in one of the wells, raped the unconscious and injured girl and strangled her to death. He then buried her along with her bag. The girl's parents had filed a missing complaint but the police could make no headway and three years later the case was considered closed. He used the similar method to rape and murder the other two minor girls, all of whom were reported missing.

"All these cases were investigated by N Bhujanga Rao, ACP Bhonegiri, and assisted by SOT of Rachakonda under the direct supervision and guidance of Narayana Reddy DCP Yadadri Bhongir Zone, G Sudhir Babu, IPS, Addl CP and me. Chargesheets in three cases were filed in record time of three months," said the official.

In all these cases, despite there being no direct evidence of eyewitnesses, we were able to collect perfect Scientific, Medical and technical evidence to prove the guilt of the accused. "All the oral and unimpeachable scientific, medical and technical evidence presented to this honourable

When accused denied all charges

HYDERABAD: Pleading not guilty even in the last minute, accused Srinivas Reddy gave numerous versions claiming his innocence to the court, including that he was an impotent and that he was not even present at the place of offence during the incident, blatantly denying all the charges leveled against him. Srinivas Reddy took the plea in the court that he was impotent and could not have been involved in the crime. He also alleged the DNA evidence against him was fabricated and that he was framed in the case by some people of the village with whom he had a dispute in a land case. He had asked the court to produce his parents and brother in the court as witnesses on his behalf but since he could not give their address, the police

The accused stuck to denials despite technical and forensic evidence being stacked against him. He told that police had forced him to confess to the crime

could not present them. The accused stated in the court that he does not know how to ride a bike, after he was accused of offering lifts to the victims and later assaulting them before murdering them in the wells at Hajipur.

The accused claimed denial despite technical and forensic evidence being stacked against him. He told the court that he was innocent and the police had forced him to confess to the three offences. According to sources, when the magistrate

asked the accused if he used to watch porn, he denied it saying he doesn't even have an android phone.

When the magistrate inquired with him about a murder case pending against him at Kurnool, he replied that he doesn't know the victim. Even regarding his profession, he denied that he was an air-conditioner mechanic. When the judge further asked him what he has to say about his semen and bloodstains found on the victim's dress, he told the court that police sprayed it after collecting samples from him. He further requested the court to add his family members as witnesses in the cases.



Rachakonda Police being congratulated after the Nalgonda Court delivered its verdict on Thursday

"The honourable court awarded fitting punishment for the crimes perpetrated by the accused and set an example which would deter the perpetrators of the crime in committing similar offences in future

— **MAHESH BHAGWAT**, CP Rachakonda.

court by our counsel K Chandrashekar is clearly established inhuman, barbaric, heinous and ghastly rape and murders of these three girls Kalpana, Maneesha and Sravani by Reddy. The honourable court, after hearing prosecution evidence of 101

witnesses and arguments of the prosecution and the defence, today pronounced its verdict convicting the accused Reddy death penalty. The death sentence awarded by this Court shall be executed subject to the confirmation by the High Court of Telangana,"

Despite there being no direct evidence of eyewitnesses, we were able to collect scientific technical evidence to prove the guilt of the accused, said cops

added the official. Mock trials were conducted to refresh the memory of witnesses and make them ready for the courtroom environment.

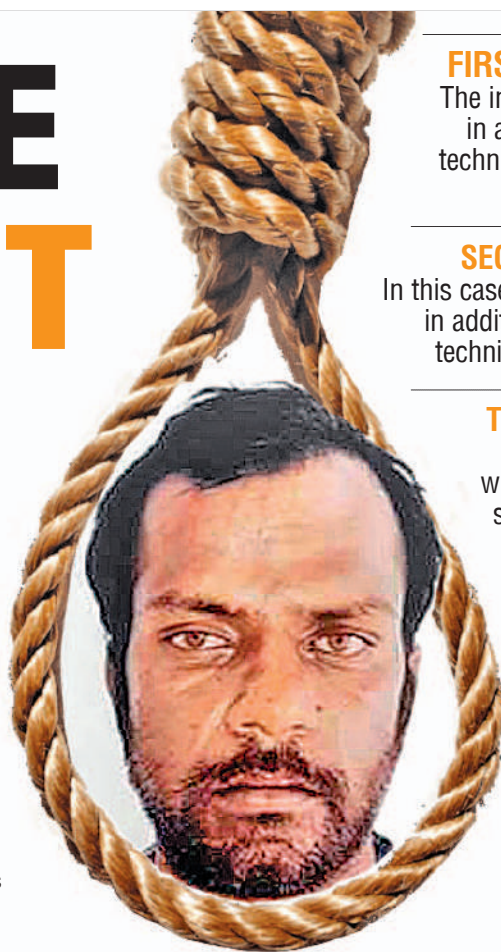
"I appreciate all the police officers who contributed their best in conducting the investigation and trial of all these cases in record time. I also thank all the officers/authorities of various departments of Forensic Science Lab, Revenue, Medical, Finger Print, Clues team Rachakonda, IT Cell Rachakonda, Schools of victim girls, cell phone service providers, Director of Prosecution who timely helped conducting and successful completion of the investigation of all these cases as well as Special counsel in professional conduct of trial" concluded Bhagwat.

Third death penalty in history of Nalgonda court

HYDERABAD: After 33 years, the Nalgonda Court has pronounced death penalty, making it the third such judgement in the history of the court. A lawyer of the bench present at the court hearing on Thursday during the trial of accused Srinivas Reddy said that the first death penalty was announced in 1964, second one in 1987 and the Hajipur case was the third one. "The court also announced that compensation will be granted to the families of the victims but has not announced when and other details," the lawyer said. Apart from the prime death verdict, he was also charged and fined for each case levied against him, including kidnap, threatening and assault.

'Punish accused immediately'

HYDERABAD: Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao expressed happiness over the verdict and said that justice has been rendered to the victims' in the serial rape and murder cases of Hajipur village. He demanded the accused should be punished immediately as the delay in executing death penalty would give a free hand to the accused to exploit all the legal remedies. It may be recalled that VH had waged a movement on behalf of families of Hajipur victims. He also visited Hajipur twice and extended financial help to the victims' families. He also met Rachakonda Police Commissioner in this regard.



FIRST CASE - (Victim: 11-year-old) : The investigators examined 36 witnesses in addition to collection of medical and technical evidence in this case and filed a charge sheet

SECOND CASE (Victim: 17-year-old): In this case, the IO has examined 34 witnesses in addition to the collection of medical and technical evidence and filed charge sheet

THIRD CASE (Victim 14-year-old): In this case, the IO examined 58 witnesses and also collected medical, scientific and technical evidence and filed charge sheet

DGP hails Rachakonda Police

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The DGP of Telangana Police, Mahender Reddy congratulated the Rachakonda Police saying that justice has been rendered to the victims' in the serial rape and murder cases of Hajipur village.

"The serial rapist and murderer has been awarded death penalty in two cases and life imprisonment in another case. We convey our gratitude to all the witnesses, family members of the victims and civil society for firmly standing behind the prosecution and depositing evidence in the court of law in the interest of justice" said the DGP, adding that the TS police expresses our gratitude to the Court for expeditiously completing the process of trial

"I congratulate Mahesh Bhagwat IPS, Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda, Narayana Reddy, DCP Yadadri, Bhujanga Rao, ACP Bhongir and their entire team of officers who worked relentlessly to collect evidence and complete the investigation in a professional manner and help the prosecution to complete the trial at the earliest in a record time. I also congratulate C Chandra Shekhar, Special Public Prosecutor appointed for this purpose for having done a meticulous job in presenting all the evidence cogently before the court of law. The Telangana Police stand committed to Women Safety," concluded the top cop.

ALL HAIL VERDICT

Happy that justice is served, I thank the court for this. Accused should be hanged within a week and we need to know that he died for sure, only then we will be satisfied.

— **MOTHER OF 11-YEAR-OLD VICTIM**

We were waiting for 10 months for this. Such accused should be hanged in the future also for these crimes to stop. I thank the govt for the verdict.

— **MOTHER OF 17-YEAR-OLD VICTIM**

It will be a festival day when he is actually hanged.

— **SARPANCH**

I thank the judge and Rachakonda Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat. It was a much-awaited news. The victim's soul will rest in peace now

— **FATHER OF 14-YEAR-OLD VICTIM**

Hajipur rapist awarded death...

Continued from Page 1

The I Additional District Judge of the Nalgonda District Court Sidda Venkata Viswanatha Reddy found him guilty in all the three cases.

Before pronouncing the verdict, the judge asked Srinivas Reddy if he had anything to say about the cases. Reddy then pleaded not guilty

and maintained that he had been framed. He told the judge that his elderly parents were dependent on him. However, when the judge asked him if he knew where his parents were, he said that he was not aware of it.

Srinivas Reddy was arrested on April 30, 2019, following which his parents and brother fled the village.

Reddy was previously arrested in a case relating to the murder of a woman in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh a few years ago and was out on bail.

With the Nalgonda Bar Association having decided not to represent Srinivas Reddy in the case, a legal counsel for him was provided by the court itself.

e-data to come in handy for banks to give loans

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The state government has fast-tracked the process of introducing the Revenue Act, which is aimed at bringing transparency in transaction of lands and simplifying the complicated land related matters, in the upcoming Budget session, which is likely to be held in the last week of February or first week of March. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has

been conducting review meetings with the officials for the last two days in this regard.

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has time and again stated that he will bring the strong Revenue Act, which reduces manual work in maintaining revenue records. He is of an opinion that there was an immediate need to completely revamp the Revenue laws that were

outdated. Earlier, the Chief Minister stated that the 'outdated Revenue laws' have caused immense losses to the farmers and people.

The government had already embarked upon comprehensive revenue record rectification, updation and purification process to put an end to land-related litigations and disputes once and for all, in the first term of the

TRS government. The same records will be uploaded on specially designed website, which will be linked to the banks.

This move will come in handy for farmers as they don't have to put their pattadar pass-books in the banks for years after availing loans. The Rythu Bandhu amount will be directly deposited in beneficiaries account based on the lands records available in the new website.

It is learnt that the Chief Minister has asked the concerned authorities to see that a farmer gets alert on his mobile if there are any changes in the e-records.

Also, the e-data will help farmers get no-dues certificate from all the banks located in his/her area. The Chief Minister will further take feedback from the Collectors in a meeting to be held at Pragathi Bhavan on February 11.

NEW REVENUE ACT

Learning made easy with MyLOFT

PNS ■ WARANGAL URBAN

Director of NIT-Warangal Prof N V Ramana Rao on Thursday launched MyLOFT (My Library on Finger Tips) and Koha-Integrated Library Management Software (ILMS) which are customised to the needs of the institute, as part of digitisation and automation of NIT-Warangal library.

MyLOFT - My Library on Finger Tips is a mobile and web app that enables the patron to discover, access, save and organise library subscribed eResources and digital contents of their personal and professional interests seamlessly across platforms anytime, anywhere. With the help of MyLOFT software/app, stu-



dents and faculty of NIT-Warangal can access the learning resources from anywhere in the world.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Ramana Rao said MyLOFT will empower the institution in systematically imbibing research values

among faculties, researchers and students and take the right steps in creating a personalised knowledge base. With the mobile app and WebApp & Chrome Extension, the users will get access to their desired eContents right on their fingertips and the handy features of

With the MyLOFT software/app, students and faculty of NIT-Warangal can access learning resources from anywhere in the world

MyLOFT will provide a friendly, easy-to-access platform for the users, which is surely to boost the digital content consumption among the scholarly community.

Registrar S Goverdhan Rao, librarian Dr K Veeranjanyulu, deans and HoDs are among the others who attended the programme.

RGUKT student who attempted suicide dies

PNS ■ NIRMAL

A student, who attempted suicide on Wednesday by jumping off one of the buildings of RGUKT following a tussle with a classmate over a girl, died while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Nizamabad on Thursday.

According to the management of the institution, Bondla Sanjay (16) was a student of Pre-University Course I year at the institution. He was a native of Jakranpally village in Nizamabad district. Sanjay succumbed to severe injuries he sustained when he leaped from the fourth floor of a building on the campus. He was immediately rushed to a private hospital where he died while undergoing treatment.

Sanjay decided to end his life since he was depressed after a fight with his classmate, Sai Varun, over the latter allegedly holding the hand of a fellow girl student during a games competition recently.

Superintendent of Police C Shashidhar Raju visited the campus and inquired into the background of the incident.

Oppn wiped out from state: Jagadish

PNS ■ YADADRI - BHONGIR

Energy Minister G Jagadish Reddy on Wednesday said that both the national parties - Congress and BJP were struggling for their existence in the State due to the TRS wave in all elections. He said the opposition parties had been wiped out from the State with the series of defeats in the elections. "Gandhi Bhavan and NTR Trust Bhavan, headquarters of the Congress and TDP, can be rented out by the leadership of the two parties soon," he ridiculed.

When the TRS party was floated at Jala Drushyam on April 27, 2001, the Congress and TDP dismissed it as transient as a bubble. "But, the Congress has almost lost its existence in the State in the aftermath of TRS emerging as a strong political force in Telangana State," he said, and attributed the situation to the public support to the TRS government due to its welfare



schemes and development programmes being implemented in the State. KCR had ensured that Telangana emerged as a model State in the country in implementation of welfare schemes, he added. The people of neighbouring State were also bringing pressure on their government to implement schemes on the lines of Telangana State. The Chief Minister has proved that there would be no anti-incumbency in the elections if the government was extended effective administration to the people.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT**
e-Procurement Notice No.22/17/DEE/DSE/SEW/2019-20 Dated : 05.02.2020
Nit No. 65/17/TS/DEE/DSE/SEW/2019-20 Dt : 05.02.2020, Name of Work : Periodical Renewals to Mulugu - Budhaharam Road from Km 0/0 to 1/0 Mulugu District (2nd Call).
Estimate Amounts (Rs. in Lakhs) 36.00. On-line tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for the above works. Tenderers can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e., www.eprocurement.gov.in from 07-02-2020 @ 3:00 PM onwards. The last date and time of receipt of tenders for the above works before 14-02-2020 upto 3:30PM
R.O.No.1323-DPIC-AGENCY/ADTV/2019-20 Dt: 06-02-2020
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, (R&B) Region, Warangal.

CRIME CORNER

Three inter-state chain snatchers get 3 yrs in jail

A local court at LB Nagar on Thursday sentenced three-year jail term to three interstate chain snatchers who were involved in several cases at LB Nagar and Meerpet Police Station limits. The convicts are identified as Chokha, 28, a native of Bulandshahr district in UP, who was previously involved in 30 property cases, M Valmiki, 30, from Noida, who was involved in 20 cases and Ch Praneth Chowdary, 25, from Kothapet, who was involved in five cases. According to the police, the three convicts on December 26, 2018 snatched gold chain weighing 2.7 tolas from a woman at Santoshi Mata Colony under Meerpet police station limits and fled away from the spot. Later they tried to snatch a chain from another woman at Indraprastha Colony under LB Nagar police station limits. When the victim raised an alarm for help they absconded from the spot. In another case on the same day they snatched gold chain weighing 3.5 tolas from a 60-year-old woman at vegetable market in Teacher's Colony. Police arrested the accused and filed charge sheets. During the trial on Wednesday the court sentenced them for three years' imprisonment and imposed fine of Rs 5,000 each in each case.

Woman hangs herself over property dispute

A 'depressed' homemaker committed suicide by hanging herself to a ceiling fan in her house in Budvel Railway Station Basti at Mailardevally Police Station on Wednesday. The victim was identified as Shobha. According to police, she had disputes with her brother over the common property. The police said that the victim's brother had recently sent her court notices over the property issue. Shobha's husband alleged that due to the court notices sent by her brother she slipped into depression and took the extreme step.

3 arrested for fish vendor's murder

The SR Nagar Police arrested three persons from AP on the charges of kidnapping and murder of the fish trader in Hyderabad. The fish trader, P Ramesh's body was found in a gunny bag in Jubilee Hills on Tuesday. Sources said that the main suspect Srinivas along with two women aides of his, were apprehended. According to police, the main suspect Srinivas, hatched a plan with two women and laid a honeytrap. Srinivas's aide made a call inviting Ramesh to her house and on January 1, where the victim's body was found. The trio later killed him and with his phone number sent a WhatsApp message to Ramesh's niece and demanded Rs 90 lakh ransom to release him from their clutches. After killing Ramesh, the three suspects paid rent to the house owner and absconded from the spot. Officials are investigating if any rivalry existed between Srinivas and Ramesh, or he was murdered only for money.

Extension of restructuring scheme for loans cheer real estate players

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

The announcement by the Reserve Bank of India on Thursday regarding extension of the restructuring period of certain project loans by a year has brought cheers to builders. Loans for projects that have been delayed due to reasons beyond the control of their promoters have been extended by another one year without downgrading the asset classification. This aligns with the treatment accorded to other project loans for the non-infrastructure sector.

The RBI made the announcement following a meeting of the monetary policy committee. Although this announcement may not make a significant difference to Hyderabad or Telangana at large as the sector has been booming, neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Mumbai, among other places, would benefit from this measure.

According to CREDAI Telangana unit president G Ram Reddy, "The extension is very helpful as there are

Industry observers opine that a rate cut would have been welcomed by the real estate sector as a sentiment-boosting factor, a meagre change in repo rates would have done little to significantly boost consumer sentiments



stressed assets and developers were not able progress. It won't have major impact in Hyderabad area, but for Mumbai, NCR, where people are really struggling to complete, it would benefit them. When it comes to Andhra, it might help some developers who have taken loans and rights, as already the situation is different with no sales, no receipts among others."

The apex bank also extended

the date of commencement of commercial operations of project loans for commercial real estate delayed for "reasons beyond the control of promoters" by another one year without downgrading the asset classification in line with treatment accorded to other project loans for non-infrastructure sector. This measure of the central bank will provide comfort to companies developing such projects as well as their lenders. The banks will also not

need to downgrade the asset classification.

C Shekar Reddy of CII-IGBC said, "For projects which are slowing moving in some cities, it will help and also in Tier2 cities where the demand was less. They are facing hardship and it is a big boost as developers can complete projects and give relief to customers. They'll also get GST apart from builders and developers benefitting."

1 held for selling diluted liquor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Excise Enforcement officials of Ranga Reddy, the State Task Force and the Saroonagar Police on Thursday, arrested a person during route check and seized duplicate alcohol bottles worth Rs 1 crore from his possession.

The accused has been identified as Paspula Mahendar, a resident of Bahadurguda in Shamshabad.

According to officials, a route watch was being conducted opposite Srihara Hospital in LB Nagar and a Skoda car transporting 30,000 whisky bottle (180 ML) metal caps, three litres of rectified spirit and three litres of diluted liquor from Mahendar.

Based on his confession, officials further seized 90,000 whisky bottle (180 ML) metal caps and 48 empty bottles at Ghansimiya of Shamshabad.



Mahendar confessed that he purchased the rectified spirit and metal caps from Karnataka at Rs 20,000 for 40 litres and Rs 6 per cap. He then procures empty bottles from scrap shops. With this he manufactures liquor at home and fills it in the 180

ML bottles, affixes the fake metal caps and sells them after the wine shops are closed. Mahendar said that he has been doing this business for the last two years. Two cases were registered previously against him, said the police.

Police book film director for obscene posters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The SR Nagar Police registered a case against the film-makers of a Telugu film, Degree College for displaying obscene posters of the movie at Maitrivanam Junction in Ameerpet.

Police officials said the obscene posters of the movie were put up at different locations around the junction which was causing inconvenience to the people, especially women.

Taking a suo moto cognisance, the SR Nagar Police registered a case and started investigation.

Officials summoned the director, producer and the crew of a telugu film, Degree College to the police station on Wednesday night for questioning.

Owaisi questions HMRL about Falaknuma-MGBS Metro line

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metro Rail Corridor II is scheduled to be inaugurated by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on February 7.

Reacting on the announcement, AIMIM President and MP of Hyderabad, Asaduddin Owaisi questioned Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) over metro rail service on MGBS to Falaknuma stretch.

Owaisi tweeted, "Amazing that you have funds for JBS & MGBS, when will @hmrgov start and complete MGBS to FALAKNUMA?"

MGBS to Falaknuma stretch has not even moved forward beyond markings.

HMRL or the official, who typically responds, remained as mute spectator to this tweet.

Sources indicate that the government needs money for



KTR launches TDR bank app

New Act will be citizen-centric: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To make the usage of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) citizen-friendly and foster transparency, Minister KT Rama Rao launched the TDR Bank application on Thursday.

The application will have features like issue, utilise and sale of TDR certificates and contains dynamic data of extent of available TDR certificates. The existing manual TDR certificate holders will be given an opportunity to convert their certificate into digital format. Only digital certificate holders can sell their

TDR certificates. The website <http://tdr.ghmc.telangana.gov.in>:8080 was officially launched.

This was done during a day-long session by the Minister, newly appointed Municipal Commissioners and Town Planning staff in the MA&UD Department. KTR gave an overview of the New Municipal Act and urged the officers to implement it with zeal and spirit. He stated that Municipal Commissioners should ensure proper drinking water supply, sanitation maintenance and an increase in green cover in Municipal Corporations.

Four held for robbing a trader posing as police

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police arrested a gang that assaulted and coerced money from a trader by claiming to be police on Thursday.

The accused have been identified as Saif Bin Ahmed Bashir, 24, from Charminar, Abdullah Bashir, 27, from Barkas, Mir Mohammad Mujthaba Ali, 22, from Talabkatta and Md Shahed Hussain, 19 from Balapur.

While the complainant was near Appa Junction with 16 bags of pan masala, a scorio car driver stopped his car in front of the complainant's car and threatened him by saying that he drove his car in a rash and negligent manner. However, the driver followed them and forced them to stop. The gang forced them into the scorio and forcibly took their cell phones. One of the accused persons



took the complainant's car and followed the Scorpio. After reaching Aramghar cross roads, they again beat them with their hands and stole Rs 40,000 from the complainant, forcibly took his ATM cards and transferred Rs 29,000 through their mobile phones.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered and investigated. On Thursday, the police nabbed the accused persons and seized the car, 16 bags of pan masala worth Rs 78,000 and cash from the accused.

2 Chinese nationals admitted to Gandhi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two Chinese nationals have been admitted to the isolation ward of the state-run Gandhi Hospital here as a precautionary measure after they approached it to be tested for presence of coronavirus, health officials said on Thursday.

Their samples have been sent for testing though they did not show any symptoms of the virus, they told PTI.

The two, said to be tourists, had first gone to the state-run Fever hospital here from the airport and from there, they reached the Gandhi hospital, they said.

Officials could not immediately provide other details, including the day of their arrival at Hyderabad airport.

Kidnapped toddler rescued within 3 hrs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Shamshabad Police rescued a 2-year-old girl who was allegedly kidnapped from her residence near Tondupally bridge, just three hours after the incident and arrested a trolley driver on Thursday. The toddler, identified as Shiply, stays with her parents in a temporary hut near the Tondupally Bridge. Her parents work in a brick kiln nearby.

The toddler was playing in front of the house, when she walked out of the site and reached the main road. There she was allegedly kidnapped by Sandeep, the driver, around 10 am on Thursday. Police said that Sandeep, a bachelor, took her to his house in his auto with the intention of raising her as

his own child.

The Shamshabad Police booked a kidnap case after the child's parents lodged a complaint. As soon as the kidnap was reported, the police formed special teams, swung into action and traced the child in less than three hours. The police launched a massive search operation with five special teams. Further analysis of CCTVs and other clues indicated that an auto driver picked the child and travelled towards Shamshabad town. The vehicle and the driver were traced and the child was also rescued. Police booked a kidnap case against the auto driver and detained him. Investigation is underway, they said. Sandeep will be produced before the court, police said.



Eastman opens global centre in Hyderabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Eastman inaugurated its Global Operations Center at The Skyview in Hitec City on Wednesday. The 93,000-square foot office is located in The Skyview was inaugurated by Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary of the Industries along with Eastman leaders.

Eastman opened its Hyderabad operations in 2014. More than 300 Eastman employees work there, supporting global teams in areas like finance, supply chain, procurement, engineering and information technology.

"We have seen success with our Global Operations Center," said Srinu Singamneni, site leader for Eastman's Hyderabad location. "The talent and capabilities we found in this community are helping support our global growth and innovation strategy. This new location gives us the flexibility to expand as the company grows," he said. Eastman is a global advanced materials and specialty additives company that produces a broad range of products found in items people use every day.

New fines for traffic violations shift to top gear

■ Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 to be implemented soon in city

GUIDELINES TO AVOID BEING PENALISED

■ Never encourage children to drive any vehicle.

■ Do not use mobile phones while driving.

■ Do not give your vehicle to unknown persons.

■ Follow lane discipline.

■ Observe sign boards along the road asking commuters not to honk and to maintain speed limit.

■ Check pending challans and clear them.



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Traffic Police are likely to enforce the new Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 soon in Hyderabad.

The police officials issued orders for the public to take notice and be aware of the newly furnished fine amounts under the MV Act.

The driving errors are going to make a huge dent in your monthly budget and some of them may cost you the same or more than your monthly fuel bill.

"We are awaiting orders from the Telangana state Transport Department about imposing the new rules in the city. For now, we are following the old ones," said the Traffic Dy Commissioner of Police of Cyberabad, SM Vijay Kumar.

As per the order, under the new rules, if one is caught driving without a seat belt, a fine of Rs 1,000 will be imposed (it was Rs 100 earlier). If one is caught driving while using a mobile phone, it will invite a fine of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000.

Drunk driving earlier used to invite a fine of Rs 2,000. Now, it has been hiked to Rs 10,000.

In another move, a driver can be fined Rs 10,000 for not giving way to emergency vehicles such as ambulances and fire brigade. Motorists in the state, at the moment, can expect fines below this benchmark to be implemented in the state.

"After this new Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 was passed by the parliament, immediately the

Hyderabad Traffic Police has also started the campaign to educate the public about different provisions of the act and accordingly we are conducting meetings with all the stakeholders," said an official.

We have released posters and highlighted the provisions of the new Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 at prominent places in Hyderabad, he added. Advising people to follow the traffic rules, he said, "We must keep in mind that these rules are for the benefit of society."

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had notified the provisions of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 and it was implemented in many states of India from September 1, 2019.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham:
Magha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi : Trayodashi: 06:31 pm
Nakshatram: Punarvasu: 12:00 am
(Next Day)
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 11:05 am - 12:30 pm
Yamagandam: 03:20 pm - 04:45 pm
Varjyam: 12:40 pm - 02:11 pm
Gulika: 08:15 am - 09:40 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 09:44 pm - 11:15 pm
Abhijit Muhurtam: 12:07 pm - 12:52 pm
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 33/20
Humidity: 41%
Sunrise: 06:46
Sunset: 06:14
Current Weather Conditions
Updated February 6, 2019 5:00 PM



R&B Minister Vernula Prashanth Reddy releasing Revenue Employees diary and calendar in the city on Thursday

Minister allays fears on Revenue Act

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government is introducing a new Revenue Act to provide better services to the people and it is not against to the revenue employees and they should not nurture any apprehensions about it, said Road and Buildings Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy.

After releasing the Revenue Employees diary and caller on Thursday, the Minister said that the new Act was aimed at correcting errors in land records upgradation programme (LRUP). He also inaugurated the TNGO's sports and games at Nizamabad. He said the Revenue Department is a nodal department for the government. "If the government faces any problem, the Chief Minister will consult the District Collector and Revenue officials to solve it. Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao has taken a brave decision to solve farmer problems and introduced LRUP programme with the support of Revenue Department," he said.

Revenue Department

The State government is introducing new Revenue Act to provide better services to people and it is not against to revenue employees, said Road and Buildings Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy

became a butt of criticism due to some employees in LRUP programme. "We should now correct all the errors. The Chief Minister is a broad-minded person and had never thought bad of the Revenue employees, he said. The Minister appreciated the Revenue employees for conducting blood donation camps and providing insurance to the employees.

He opined that the revenue is nodal department to the government. Stating that the farmers are facing several issues over purification of land records for the last 60 to 70 years, the Minister said, KCR has taken a bold step to clear those issues.

The Minister told the revenue employees to get ready to face the problems in near

future. He said that revenue employees are worked late at nights for purification of land records. However, the department got bad name due to some dishonest employees. There is no need for the other employees to rectify this mistake. The Minister also praised the revenue employees of Nizamabad district for conducting social service activities including blood donation camps, extending monetary help to poor students and providing insurance to the employees. The Zilla Parishad Chairman D Vittal Rao, MLC V G Goud, JC Venkateshwarlu, DRO Anjaiah, TNGO's State president Ravinder Reddy, Revenue employees district president Raman Reddy and employees from various districts participated.

Goddess Sannakka arrives at 'altar'

PNS ■ MULUGU

Unveiling the crucial phase in the Sannakka-Saralamma biennial tribal festival, Sannakka was brought to the consecrated 'Gadde', an elevated platform, from her abode in Chilakalagutta amidst traditional rituals on Thursday.

As mark of respect and indicating arrival of Sannakka, SP of Mulug Sangram Singh fired his Ak-47 in air. Hearing the rifle shots, the forest area reverberated with people chanting the name of Sannakka. As the Adivasi youth threw a security cordon around the deity, police forces armed with ropes provided security to priests from devotees.

Accompanied by lakhs of devotees, amidst dances by tribals, frenzied 'Siva Sattus' (women possessed by deities), hizzas paying their obeisance to deities, police firing in air, tight security by the police, Adivasis and priests brought Sannakka to the elevated platform. The devotees thronged Chilakalagutta in lakhs to witness the event of bringing the deity to the 'Gadde'. People were seen lining up on either side of one-and-half Km route from Chilakalagutta to Medaram.

In the programme to welcome deities, Ministers Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Satyavathi Rathode, Indrakaran Reddy, district Collector Karnan, MLAs Sitakka, Veeraiha took part. All along the route, the devotees were seen sacrificing chicken and goats.

Earlier on Wednesday, Saralamma was brought to the elevated platform from Kannepalli. Similarly, other deities Pagiddiraju from Punugondla in Kottaguda mandal and Govindarajulu from Kondayi village of Eturunagar mandal were brought to the 'Gadde' along with Saralamma. On Thursday, Talasani Srinivas Yadav visited Medaram along



ALL ROADS LEAD TO MEDARAM

KARIMNAGAR: Thousands of devotees thronged Sannakka-Saralamma jatara being celebrated at different places in erstwhile Karimnagar district. There was a spurt in devotee turnout on the second day since the main deity Sannakka was brought to the altars on Thursday. While Sarakka was brought to the altar on Wednesday evening, Sannakka was brought on Thursday evening. With both deities in place, pilgrims thronged jatara in large numbers. Besides tonsuring their heads as part of their vows, Bangaram (jaggery) equivalent to their weight was also offered to the presiding deities. Welfare Minister Koppula Eshwar offered Bangaram equivalent to his weight at Chilvakodur in Gollapalli mandal of Jagtial district. He, along with Zilla Parishad chairperson Dava Vasantha, performed pujas to goddesses at the Chilvakodur jatara. Later, the Minister also offered Bangaram at Rayapatnam jatara near Dharmapuri. Peddapalli Collector Sikta Patnaik visited the jatara at Nirukulla vagu, Sultanabad mandal, and examined arrangements. She instructed the officials to be alert during the tribal fair and take all possible steps for the convenience of pilgrims. She inspected health camp arranged at the jatara and instructed doctors to be available. She wanted the police officials to deploy huge force to avert any untoward incidents. She also advised devotees to the Golivada jatara of Anthargoon mandal.



with family members and offered jaggery equal to his weight to the deities.

Earlier in the day, all roads leading to the dense forests of the Tadwai and Eturunagar were abuzz with rush of devotees coming from various parts

of the state. The devotees have taken various modes of transport from bullock carts to helicopters to offer prayers and rituals to the tribal deities -- Sannakka and Saralamma.

The RTC operated almost all the services in the region to

Medaram Jatara and even for the mini jatara, the RTC roped in its services. Since Friday is regarded as the most auspicious day in the four-day festival, devotees include many VIPs among Medaram, the officials said.

AP govt denies report on Kia Motors shifting

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday denied reports in a section of media that South Korean auto major Kia Motors is planning to move out its car manufacturing plant out of the state.

The state government, in a brief statement, said that it is working together with Kia.

Rajath Bhargava, special chief secretary, industries, investments and commerce, said they strongly condemn the news. According to a report by Reuters, Kia Motors is discussing with Tamil Nadu the possibility of moving a \$1.1 billion plant out of Andhra Pradesh only months after it fully opened, due to policy changes last year. "The rumours being spread by some media outlets about Kia Motors shifting its plant out of AP are absolutely false. Our government shares an excellent relationship with Kia and we are carefully supportive of their growth plans in AP," tweeted YSR Congress MP V. Vijayasai Reddy.

The report quoted sources in Kia saying that the firm is facing problems in Andhra Pradesh due to a law on local hiring and the new state government wanting to review



the incentives given out by the previous administration to encourage the company to set up the plant.

It was only two months ago that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy formally inaugurated Kia Motors' manufacturing facility at Erramanchi village in Anantapur district.

Besides an investment of \$1.1 billion to set up the plant in the backward district, Kia Motors is providing direct employment to over 3000 people while its vendors are providing another 3500 jobs.

The company officials had said that the plant will soon reach its capacity of 300,000 units, employing about 18,000 people. The eighth largest automotive company with revenues of 50 billion dollars and sales

of over 2.8 million, set up the plant on a 536 acre site.

The company in August last year rolled out its first 'Made in India' car but Jagan Mohan Reddy could not attend the event.

The August 8 event for the launch of Seltos, an SUV, was marred by an unsavoury incident when Member of Parliament Gorantla Madhav of ruling YSR Congress Party wrote on the bonnet of the car "Car roll out - our youth ruled out here ..sorry". He was anguished over the company allegedly ignoring local youth in the employment at the plant.

A Bill passed in the state legislature in July for reserving 75 per cent jobs for locals in all industries had also kicked up the row.

Kia Motors harassed by YSRCP, alleges Naidu

VIJAYAWADA: Former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday said that Kia Motors was on the verge of relocating to Tamil Nadu from Anantapur because of YSRCP leaders threatening the company's CEO. Addressing the media here on Thursday, Naidu attributed the alleged shifting to a YSRCP MP threatening the CEO of Kia Motors unit to give jobs to his candidates for works and transport contracts.

He termed the company's reported decision to relocate as "atrocious". "Because of the Kia Motors, state attracted Rs 13,500-crore investments and over 12,000 job jobs," Naidu said. He reminded that sister concern of Kia Motors - Hyundai - was also located in Tamil Nadu. Earlier, the order of preference for Kia Motors was Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The project moved out of Tamil Nadu as the government allegedly demanded money to allot lands.



Maharashtra also wooed Kia Cars to the state citing availability of good market. "The TDP government cooperated with the Kia Motors excellently," Naidu claimed, quoting Kia as saying.

"Without Chandrababu, Kia Motors would not have been materialised at all," the TDP chief claimed.

The TDP govt moved with alacrity and provided water facility to the company from Gollapalli reservoir and got the land levelled with the help of the L&T and thereby won the confidence of the Kia Motors, he said. While the TDP succeeded bringing Kia Motors to the state, because of corruption by Botsa Satyanarayana, the then industry minister in YSR regime, AP lost Volkswagen project to Pune, Naidu said. He alleged that Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy was not revealing all the facts about Kia Motors project and was revealing only doctored information.

Tallest JBS and largest MGBS Metro...

Continued from Page 1

JBS Metro station is one of the tallest stations of Hyderabad Metro, encompassing five levels namely street, lower concourse, upper concourse, lower platform, and upper platform levels. The station is designed as portal frame type RCC structure with columns on either side of the road and one in the central median. One Entry/Exit connects to Corridor-III Parade Grounds Station (Interchange) through a skywalk.

Except for JBS Parade Grounds Station and MGBS, the rest of the stations of Metro are designed as typical ones. Spread over 3 lakh square feet, Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station Interchange in Hyderabad is the largest Metro station in the country. The station is built in a unique way, interchanging both corridors (Corridor-2-JBS to Falaknuma at higher level and Corridor 1-Miyapur to LB Nagar at lower level). There are three levels, with each level again split into two, as one corridor has to pass over the other.

There are total of 9 stations

Except for JBS Parade Grounds Station and MGBS, the rest of the stations of Metro are designed as typical ones

on this line viz., JBS-Parade Grounds, Secunderabad West, New Gandhi Hospital, Musheerabad, RTC X Roads, Chikidapally, Narayanguda, Sultan Bazar and MGBS, which are located at the prime traditional centres of the city that has many commercial and educational establishments.

With the opening of Green line, travel time along it is expected to reduce to 16 mins from one end to the other, compared to 45 mins via road.

The stations are built in an eco-friendly manner with natural light and ventilation from both ends. Stations are specially designed with tactile paths for blind. Wheelchairs and first-aid facilities are provided for passengers.

96.7% students clear Telangana Early Coders test

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Early Coders (TeC), a programme launched to expose government school students to coding skills, ended on a triumphant note with 96.7 per cent of the students qualifying in the online assessment test developed by UK-based Fusion Practices in collaboration with University of Texas, Dallas.

Announcing the results of the TEC at TITA (Telangana Information Technology Association) office here on Thursday, TITA global president Sundeeep Kumar Makthala said the high performance reflected the effort put in by the learners in learning coding skills. The TeC programme, an initiative of the State government and implemented by TITA, is part of the efforts to inculcate problem-solving skills and logical reasoning among students.

The programme was held in two phases in Amarchintha and Atmakur mandals under Makthal constituency of Wanaparthi district.

CORONAVIRUS IMPACT

Chilli business in TS, AP affected

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The novel coronavirus (nCoV2019) outbreak in China has adversely impacted prices of chillies in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, said KVP Ramachandra Rao in the Rajya Sabha. Raising the issue in the House on Thursday, Rao said that coronavirus is adversely affecting farmers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

He stated that Guntur in Andhra Pradesh is the biggest export market with 5,000 tonnes of Tejas variety of chilli which 60 per cent is imported by China annually. "China has suspended chilli imports, so the chilli farmers are badly hit and prices are going down. Due to slump in Tejas chilli exports, prices of other chilli varieties are also falling.



Farmers are resorting to distress selling," Rao added.

The Congress leader also urged the government to see that remunerative prices are ensured for chilli farmers and to the extent possible that Food Corporation of India (FCI) provides storage facility

under refrigeration, safekeeping till situation improves. Responding to the point, Rajya Sabha Chairperson M Venkaiah Naidu, while acknowledging that chilli prices are witnessing a slump, asked Rao to check the facts about coronavirus affecting

the prices.

Telugu states are major exporters of red chilli to China. In last November there was a sudden demand for red chilli from China. The farmers in Telugu states who stored their red chilli in cold storages for long for want of remunerative price took the spice out of the storage and started exporting it to China as it commanded a price of Rs 21,600 a quintal.

In fact, 30 per cent of the red chilli produced in Telugu states is exported to China. Because of the virus, the demand has come down leading to nosediving of the prices of the commodity in global market to Rs 12,000 a quintal. Following the outbreak of virus, China suspended import of red chilli from Telugu states leading to collapse of the prices.

Fearing family, cousins in love hang themselves

Continued from Page 1

"The duo were found hanging from the ceiling at their homes on Thursday morning. Preliminary investigations revealed that they had fallen in love a couple of years ago, but did not inform their families. Upset over the family's traditional ways and the problems involved in their marriage plans, they decided to end their lives," said Venkatesh, SI, Kulkacharla Police. No suicide notes were found at the spot, he added.

However, the members of both the families told police that they were not aware of the relationship between Mamatha and Prashanth. They expressed their shock when they heard about it.

Modi rakes up controversy over formation of Telangana again

Continued from Page 1

The Prime Minister contrasted Telangana's formation during UPA tenure with NDA's handling of the formation of three states - Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh - during the Atal Behari Vajpayee-led NDA government. He said, "This (formation of three states) was done in respect, (under) peace, (in) good faith; and these three states are contributing in their own way for the country's development."

Modi said, "After decades, you got a chance to create a new state. You could have done it with enthusiasm by taking along everyone together... You could have at least

asked people of Andhra and Telangana about their wishes. But what you did is history."

Modi recalled a statement made by former PM Manmohan Singh in the Lok Sabha then, "Democracy in India is being harmed as a result of the ongoing protests over the Telangana issue."

Pointing out that the decisions on Jammu and Kashmir had been taken only after extensive discussions in Parliament, Modi said, "(Ghulam Nabi) Azadi said the decisions on Jammu and Kashmir were taken without any discussion. This is not correct. The entire nation had witnessed the detailed discussions on the subject on TV, MPs have voted in favour of

the decisions. Country has seen that detailed discussions were held."

This did not go down well with TRS leaders who fumed at Modi and condemned his statements.

Agriculture Minister Niranjan Reddy said, "It is sad that Modi has made irresponsible remarks in the legislature about Telangana movement. Your comments on Telangana are proof of your ignorance. Telangana was formed by people's aspirations as a result of prolonged struggles. Hundreds of martyrs were killed in the Telangana movement, which has been going on for 60 years. To say that the Bill was passed without debate is to insult martyrdom."

SHORT READS



First batch of Kamov choppers to be rolled out by 2025

LUCKNOW: The first batch of Kamov military helicopters, to be manufactured in India under an Indo-Russia joint venture, is expected to be rolled out by 2025, a top official overseeing the project said on Thursday. In October 2016, India and Russia finalised a broad agreement for the joint venture between Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and two Russian defence majors for production of the helicopters in India. "The first batch of helicopters will come out of our production facility at Tumkur in Karnataka by 2025 if everything goes as per plan," Indo-Russian Helicopters Ltd CEO N M Srinath said. Under the joint venture, 200 Kamov 226T helicopters will be produced. Of these, 60 will be supplied to India in fly-away condition while 140 choppers will be manufactured in India under a USD 1 billion deal.

J-K: Suspect arrested in Lal Chowk grenade attack case

SRINAGAR: A man who allegedly hurled a grenade on CRPF personnel at Lal Chowk here was arrested on Thursday, official sources said. A grenade was hurled on CRPF personnel posted on duty near Pratap Park in busy Lal Chowk area of the city on Sunday, injuring two jawans and seven civilians. Naveed Lateef, a resident of Pulwama district, was arrested from the city in the early hours and he is being questioned, the official sources said. They said Naveed was preparing for the NEET at a coaching centre here. DGP Dilbagh Singh on Wednesday had told reporters that police had got clues in the Lal Chowk grenade attack case and a breakthrough was expected soon.

Jaishankar meets German Parliament delegation

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday met a delegation of the German Parliament and exchanged views on trade, development and governance. "Received the Indo-German Friendship Group from Bundestag (Parliament) #Germany. Exchanged views on development, governance, trade and global politics. Confident that they will have a better appreciation of the Indian view," he tweeted.

DGCA asks CEOs of all airlines to follow Vishakha guidelines

NEW DELHI: The DGCA has written to the CEOs of all airlines to strictly follow the Vishakha guidelines to deal with the cases of sexual harassment in their respective organisations. The aviation regulator said it has received "numerous" complaints from women working as pilots, cabin crew and in other technical areas regarding harassment by senior colleagues. The DGCA advised all airlines to ensure strict compliance of the Vishakha guidelines and ensure hassle-free reporting and disposal of the matter.

Rahul: PM talks of Nehru and Pak, but silent on jobs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday for not talking about the main issue of unemployment and "distracting" people by raising other things from Jawaharlal Nehru to Pakistan.

Hitting back at Modi after the prime minister replied to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address in Lok Sabha, Gandhi said both the prime minister and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman have given long speeches in Parliament but have failed to reply on providing employment to youth.

"All youngsters of this country want that after studies -- school, college university -- they get employment. We asked the prime minister repeatedly that you have given a one and a half hour speech and if for two minutes you can



tell the youth about employment and what your government has done about it," he said.

"Youngsters saw, that the PM could not give a reply," the former Congress president said while speaking to reporters outside Parliament.

The government earlier used to talk about economy, Make in India, USD 5 trillion, but the prime minister now does not talk about the biggest issue facing the country and is distracting the people by talking about other things, ranging from the Congress and Nehru to

We asked the prime minister repeatedly that you have given a one and a half hour speech and if for two minutes you can tell the youth about employment and what your government has done about it

RAHUL GANDHI
Congress leader

Pakistan and Bangladesh.

"His (Modi's) style is of distracting the country," the Congress leader said.

"Talk about the main issue prime minister ji. Tell the youth what you are doing about jobs...His style is to distract the country. He had said two crore jobs will be given to youngsters, but five and a half years have passed. Last year 1 crore youth lost jobs, he is unable to say a word," Gandhi said.

Singer Yesudas brother Justin found dead in Kochi backwaters

PNS ■ KOCHI

KJ Justin, a younger brother of singer KJ Yesudas, was found dead in the backwaters in Vallarpadam in Kochi on Wednesday. He was 62. Police suspect that he died by suicide.

Justin was reportedly struggling with depression since the death of his son. According to other reports, he was also in a severe financial crisis. However, the cause of his death is not yet confirmed.

Justin's body was taken to the mortuary at Ernakulam General Hospital and a post-mortem is underway. The police were informed on Wednesday morning that a body had been found floating in the water on Wednesday morning. Later that evening, Justin's family had filed a missing person's complaint after he did not return home on Tuesday night.



Justin's family told the police that he had been showing suicidal tendencies for that last few days due to financial reasons

On Wednesday evening, the police recovered the body from the backwaters in Vallarpadam and informed his family. The family went to the hospital and confirmed that it was Justin. The police have registered a case of unnatural death.

Justin's family told the police that he had been showing suicidal tendencies for that last few days due to financial reasons.

"His postmortem said death by drowning. Yesudas will arrive from Chennai on Friday," Sub-Inspector of the Mulavukad Police Station told TNM.

Justin is survived by his wife Jiji. He was the son of the late Augustine Joseph and Elizabeth. Justin had six siblings - KJ Yesudas, Anthappan, Mani, Jayamma, Babu (deceased) and Pushpa.



Vijay quizzed by I-T sleuths for 2nd day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Searches conducted by the Income Tax department in Tamil Nadu has led to the recovery of Rs 65 crore in cash from financier Anbu Chezhian's properties. Sources in the Income Tax department have confirmed to TNM that Rs 50 crore was recovered from Anbuezhian's property in Chennai and Rs 15 crore from his Madurai property. The ongoing searches are all linked to AGS's latest production Bigil, starring Vijay in dual roles as a don and a football coach. Since Wednesday,

I-T officials have been conducting searches in over 20 locations related to the AGS Group, which includes AGS Cinemas and AGS Entertainment.

Anbuezhian is a well known cinema financier, notorious for harassing his clients to pay back the money loaned to them. In November 2017, he was booked for abetment of suicide over the death of Tamil producer Ashok Kumar who had alleged harassment over debts. It is speculated that the financier may have given funds to AGS Cinemas.

Civil services recruitment lowest in past four years

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of civil services personnel recruited by the UPSC has declined in the last four years and reached its lowest of 2,352 in 2018-19, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday. A total of 3,750 candidates were recommended by the UPSC in 2015-16, 3,020 in 2016-17, 3,083 in 2017-18 and 2,352 in 2018-19, according to the data given by Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh in a written reply to the upper house.

As many as 3,750 vacancies were reported by the government for recruitment in 2015-16, 3,184 in 2016-17, 2,706 in 2017-18 and 2,353 in 2018-19, it said. UPSC conducts various examinations in accordance with the rules of examination notified by the nodal ministries or departments annually and recommends candidates keeping in view the number of vacancies intimated by the indenting ministries or departments, Singh said.

3 kids among 7 dead in carpet factory gas leak

PNS ■ SITAPUR

Seven people, including three children, were on Thursday killed after inhaling poisonous gas that leaked inside a carpet factory at Jalalpur village in Bisvan area, about 35 kms from here, police said.

Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Bisvan, Suresh Kumar said a team of experts has arrived for investigation from Lucknow and a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team is also present at the spot.

"The affected area has been evacuated. Any information about the tragedy would be given out after investigation. Some dogs were also found dead around the factory area," the SDM added.

Asked for details of the gas leak, he said, "A tanker of the adjoining acid factory was washed near this carpet factory. Possibly, gas leaked from that and caused the damage."

NPR was done in 2004, why is opposition fooling people: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today tore into the opposition in parliament for their protests against the citizenship law CAA and National Population Register (NPR).

"Those who carried out the NPR are now spreading misinformation. It was done in 2010, we came in 2014... we have all the records

Why are you lying? Why are you fooling people," PM Modi said in Rajya Sabha, replying to a debate on the President's speech.

He said the census and NPR were "normal administrative processes" which had been carried out previously as well, but were being demonized now for vote-bank politics.

The Prime Minister tackled criticism of new questions added to the NPR, like the language spoken by parents. It was essential for setting up schools, he said, explaining that it was needed because migration between states was prevalent now, not before. "If anyone is migrating from Odisha to Gujarat and say that their language is Odiya, then schools will be set up in Gujarat for them," he said.



'Issues I raised as Chief Minister...'

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday attacked the Congress for the delay in implementation of the Goods and Services Tax or GST, saying that it was only after he took office that the outstanding issues were resolved, paving the way for the rollout of the unified tax regime. "GST has seen a lot of changes. It is a big achievement for the country. If you had this much knowledge and a clear vision then why didn't you implement GST? Why did you keep it hanging?" PM Modi said in Rajya Sabha. "I had said that you should address the

manufacturing states issues in order to implement GST. (Arun) Jaitley ji addressed these issues. The issues that I raised as a CM (Chief Minister), I have worked on them as a PM (Prime Minister)," he added. The Prime Minister also launched a blistering attack on opposition parties on their attempt to "misguide and misinform" the nation on the new citizenship law, saying the Kerala chief minister was on one hand warning about extremist elements infiltrating protests and on the other his party was supporting them in Delhi.

CORONAVIRUS:

Forces on alert along China, Nepal borders

PNS ■ PUNE

The Indian armed forces are maintaining a tight vigil along the borders with China and Nepal in view of the coronavirus outbreak in China. Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) Director General Anup Banerji said on Thursday.

The government has sanctioned 10 research laboratories to screen and test samples of various pathogens, including the coronavirus, Lt Gen Banerji said.

He was talking to reporters during a conference at the



Armed Forces Medical College in Maharashtra's Pune city.

To a question, he said the armed forces were taking stringent and foolproof action to prevent the outbreak of coronavirus infection on the country's borders adjoining China and Nepal.

Modi fires salvos at oppn, dubs Rahul as tubelight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday took repeated digs at opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi of the Congress whom he dubbed as "tubelight" saying that it took him 30-40 minutes to respond to his speech in Lok Sabha. Without naming Rahul Gandhi, Modi in his reply to the discussion on the presidential address referred to the Congress leader's comments he had reportedly made about "youth beating Modi with sticks over the lack of jobs", and said he would increase the number of Surya Namaskars (a yoga exercise) so that his back can bear the sticks.

"In 70 years, no Congress leader has ever become self-sufficient. I heard one leader's manifesto yesterday. He said 'we will beat Modi with a stick in six months'. I can imagine that it is a difficult prospect, so it will take six months to prepare. "In these six

'I have been speaking for 30-40 minutes but it took this long for the current to reach. Many tubelights are like this,' Modi said prompting ruling NDA members to burst into laugh

months, I will do more surya namaskar so that my back is ready for the beating...I have been subjected to abuses in the past 20 years, I will make myself gaali-proof (abuse-proof) and also danda-proof (stick-proof)," Modi said. When Rahul Gandhi got up from his sit and questioned Modi on the issue of unemployment, Modi said he was waiting for the Congress leader's reaction but it took him 30-40 minutes. "I have been speaking for 30-40 minutes but it took this long for the current to reach. Many tubelights are like this," Modi said prompting ruling NDA members to burst into laugh.

Modi, who was in a witty

mood, took several digs at Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for frequently rising from his seat and interrupting him, saying that he is publicising 'Fit India' campaign of his government in Parliament. Responding to Chowdhury on the issue unemployment, Modi said he will resolve unemployment in the country but not his and of his party's.

As soon as Prime Minister Modi entered the Lok Sabha premises he was welcomed by the BJP members by raising slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram' to which Congress responded by 'Mahatma Gandhi Zindabad' and 'Mahatma Gandhi Amar Rahe'.

Congress in RS demands protection of tribal rights

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress members in Rajya Sabha on Thursday said there is a need to further tighten the existing laws or bring a new one in order to protect rights of tribals on their forest land.

Raising the matter during Zero Hour, Congress leader Madhusudan Mistry said over the years, there has been "tardy" implementation of a law that protects forest land of tribals and forest dwellers.

Many complaints of tribals are still unresolved and the government should set up a separate tribunal in this regard, he added.

Another Congress leader P

Bhattacharya said the existing law enables gram sabhas to protect rights of scheduled tribes (STs).

"Instead, Gram Sabhas are taking decision on eviction and giving lands to private parties," he said, and urged the government to make necessary changes to the law or bring a new one to protect rights of tribals.

Raising issues related to education sector, Manoj Kumar Jha (BJD) said the government should make appointment of teachers on a priority basis, while Harnath Singh Yadav (BJP) said teachers should not be given election and census duty.

AI has dues of over Rs 822 cr from VVIP charter flights

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cash-strapped Air India, which is being disinvested by the government, has outstanding dues of over Rs 822 crore towards VVIP charter flights, according to latest data provided by the national carrier to an RTI response.

In its RTI response provided on Wednesday to Commodore Lokesh Batra (ret'd), who sought to know the latest data on outstanding bills of Air India, the carrier said as on November 30, 2019, Rs 822 crore were pending towards VVIP charter flights.

It also said an additional Rs 9.67 crore towards evacuation operations and Rs 12.65 crore towards ferrying foreign dignitaries were also pending.



Under VVIP charter flights, Air India provides its aircraft to ferry-- the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister-- for which the bills are paid by the ministries.

If outstanding bills of VVIP charter flights were not enough, the carrier had also accrued bills of Rs 526.14 crore towards tickets taken on credit by government officials as on

Under VVIP charter flights, Air India provides its aircraft to ferry-- the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister-- for which the bills are paid by the ministries



March 31, 2019, according to the reply.

Out of Rs 526.14 crore, Rs 236.16 crore were pending for over three years, Air India said

India among other details.

The information under the RTI Act is defined as any record in any form held by or under the control of public authority which has to be furnished to an applicant within 30 days subject to exemptions under the law.

According to a response provided by the Civil Aviation ministry on December 5, 2019, a net loss of Rs 8,556.35 crore (provisional) was reported by Air India.

On Wednesday, the ministry said reasons for losses reported by Air India were --high interest burden, increase in competition especially from low cost carriers, adverse impact of exchange rate variation due to weakening of the Rupee, and high operating costs.

PAPER WITH PASSION

Policing lessons

EC raps Delhi cop for controversial remarks on shooter as the force stands trapped between its image and Govt mandate



The Delhi Police is indeed in a Catch-22 situation. At one end, it has to listen to its political masters and demonstrably act in a manner that suits their political narrative, as is its wont. On the other, its pliancy in handling protests and dissent — sometimes as an unsparing oppressor and sometimes as a silent observer — is costing its image. And that had been built over long years of professionalism, one that made it a force to be emulated and trusted. Today, in a polarised society, where there are daily encounters between

an aggressive establishment and an unrelenting dissent, its credibility has been the worst casualty. So it comes as no surprise that the Election Commission has been issuing demarches against it. On Sunday, the poll panel removed the deputy commissioner of police, South-East Delhi, Chinmoy Biswal, after two firing incidents were reported from Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Millia Islamia University amid protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). This was for allowing the situation to drift out of hand. Now it has ordered the Delhi Police not to assign officer Rajesh Deo any poll-related duty for making controversial statements that the shooter of Shaheen Bagh was a member of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a claim confidently run down by the boy's family, who said that he had sympathies for the BJP instead. Clearly, here the police found itself in a pickle for jumping the gun and, through selective briefings, appeared to take sides in a routine propaganda war. Sometimes, the forces themselves have not been too happy with the way they have been used as executors and even punished for doing their job. One is reminded of the thousands of personnel who held an unprecedented 11-hour protest at the gates of the police headquarters, demanding action against lawyers who allegedly attacked their colleagues at the Tis Hazari Court some time ago. The problem is that successive regimes have tried to mould the police to translate their authority on the ground and ensure mass subservience through fear. Still, there was some remnant of character in the institution's leadership. Now even that is not allowed or cut to size. The politicisation of the police is not new or peculiar to Delhi. The State police forces have been known to change colour with every regime change. In this respect, the UP police has acquired the distinction of being more loyal than the king over the years, a behavioural discipline that explains its current bias towards a particular faith and arresting its practitioners during the anti-CAA agitation. And if the political establishment gives an open-ended licence with vengeful rhetoric, then the consequent police action is but a corollary of this endorsement. Within the first one-and-a-half years of assuming power, the Yogi Adityanath Government had earned the dubious distinction of recording 67 deaths in 1,500 police encounters. The UP police, one of the most decorated and prized in the immediate years after Independence, is a classic case of how politics can ruin abilities and rectitude. Emergency did greater harm to the institution countrywide. Through regimes, a caste and communal orientation was also given to an institution born of a colonial legacy that taught compliance. This has completely lowered the status of the police.

Does that mean that the police forces are so compromised that they cannot ensure tenets of justice or do what they are mandated to do by the Constitution, namely maintain law and order and look after public interests? The job of the police is to prevent subversion of civic life, not abet conditions that challenge it. Policemen are trained to handle crowds, not mishandle the situation, ensure minimal use of force but maximum enforcement of discipline. Even when crowd behaviour goes out of hand, no authority or political master can hold personnel to account for containing an explosive situation, for they are empowered to prevent anarchy of any sort. Why do we need the police if not to stand apart with its split second judgment and sensitivity, one that knows how to deal with an angry people and grade responses as situations evolve? The job of the police is to restore normalcy. Neither should it try to colour its actions with political logic, as some remarks made by policemen during protests have shown, nor should it be seen as using force to teach protesters a lesson. That restraint and assessment make a force stand apart no matter who is in Government. Perhaps, we need to relearn lessons for enforcement of law and order.

An economic epidemic

The Coronavirus has not only dented the Chinese economy but has had a cascading impact everywhere



The world is a global village and our economies are inextricably and inexorably linked to each other. So make no mistake, the economic costs of a pandemic, like the one the world is facing right now due to the Coronavirus outbreak, are huge, not just for China but for the world economy at large. Economists have estimated the annual losses from outbreaks such as that of the Coronavirus to be around \$500 billion or 0.6 per cent of the global income, both in terms of lost income and the loss of human capital

due to large-scale fatalities. A 2016 study by the Commission on a Global Health Risk Framework for the Future estimated that disease outbreaks would cost the global economy over \$6 trillion in the 21st century, which comes to over \$60 billion per year. The scary part is that we are just getting started because the impact of the contagion is deepening. To begin with, global stock markets have taken a hit and are lower than they were two weeks ago with shares of industrial commodities plunging because China is a major buyer. Shares of airlines and hotels tanked over fears of travel disruptions as did those of luxury and consumer goods. Several overseas airlines have stopped flights, hotel chains have been offering refunds while global retailers like Ikea and Starbucks have shut shop.

Disruptions in international supply chains are set to deepen as China is an important supplier for the global motor industry, the electronics sector, mobile phones and computer firms. In fact, Hyundai has already suspended production because of problems with the supply of parts from China. Copper, an important material for the construction industry, is also cheaper by about 13 per cent, which will hit emerging and developing economies like India as they are its biggest supplier. Crude oil is also at its lowest level in more than a year and dropped by 15 per cent in the last two weeks due to the fall in demand from China. Not just this, the organisers of the Tokyo Olympics are a worried lot with just a few months to go and so are those of the Milan Fashion Week as Chinese fashion houses Angela Chen, Ricostru and Hui cancelled their runway turns. This is bad news as the Chinese are the world's biggest buyers of high-end luxury goods. On the bright side, shares of pharmaceutical firms and medical devices rose as did the prices of gold as a safe asset. The Chinese virus has already slowed down the global growth rate by 0.2 per cent. India's manufacturing sector, which is dependent on Chinese imports, needs to now really "make in India."

Far from Home

Of late, the Delhi police has come under a lot of criticism. But we must not forget that it takes orders from its captain, who has been spending all his energy campaigning



AJOY KUMAR

When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led NDA Government won the 2019 Lok Sabha election, there was an air of inevitability about who would occupy the Home Minister's chair. Rumours and reports were circulated weeks prior to the official announcement that the man in the hot seat would likely be Amit Shah, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-hand man, the one he often looks up to for guidance. This aspect was most visible during his first and only press conference last year. Therefore, it wasn't surprising that Prime Minister Modi gave such an important post to arguably his most trusted cadet.

On taking over the post of the Home Minister, Shah stated and projected his views that he wanted to establish a strong country during his tenure and that he intended to protect the citizens from threats — both external and internal. Indeed, this was a lovely thought: A strong India where citizens feel safe. The problem, however, is that this idea has all but been yet rhetoric of the Modi Government. Words were either left hanging in the air or were forgotten after being printed on a saffron pamphlet. The performance of the Home Minister ever since his appointment last year has been egregious, even by the most liberal benchmark. I would go so far as to say that it has been an unmitigated disaster.

The reasons for his unequivocal failure to fulfil his responsibilities can be attributed to "incompetence" or "negligence" bordering ineptness. In this week's article, I will highlight some of the major failings of the Home Minister ever since he took charge. I will also suggest some ideas and the possible causes of the prevailing situation on the ground.

The most obvious and visible example of Shah's failure has been on account of the performance and conduct of the Delhi Police, which falls under the Home Ministry. With elections in Delhi nearing, the police channelled itself in the most "irresponsible" manner. A perfect example of the police's shocking behaviour and the Home Ministry's inexplicable silence was the events that unfolded on December 15, 2019, when it forcefully entered the premises of the Jamia Millia Islamia university and allegedly assaulted students after a mob set several buses on fire near the college. The police alleged that they entered the university campus to identify the agitators. However, ground reports stated that the police forcibly entered the university campus without any permission from the administration and lobbed tear gas inside the campus even as the students were studying inside the library.

The Jamia incident was indeed shameful but at least the police forwarded an argument that they barged into the university to "identify the agitators." A few weeks later, even this pretence of impartiality and fair-



“THE BJP TRIED TO TILT THIS ELECTION BY INFLAMING PEOPLE RATHER THAN BY TALKING ABOUT ‘WORK’ (AS AAP HAS DONE). SHAH HAS BEEN TOO BUSY TO NOTICE THAT WHILE THE BJP HAS BEEN FLINGING LIT MATCHES TO CREATE A FIRE IN DELHI, IT IS HIS HOME — THE HOME MINISTRY— THAT HAS LOST THE MOST

the capital. All of these incidents do raise some uncomfortable questions for the Home Minister. However, what was all the more deplorable was that the videos and images that were circulated widely on social media showed visuals where the police stood by and just observed the shooter brandishing a gun as if it was a regular day in the park and the police wanted to bask in some sun. What was even more unbelievable was that the shooter featured a live video on Facebook moments before the incident. Loudly and proudly he claimed how he was going to take action against protesters.

How ironical it is that the police acted with alacrity while entering the Jamia university campus to identify miscreants but showed bamboozling levels of helplessness while dealing with the incidents of violence at JNU and then with the shooter. It boggles one's mind as to how the police can blow so hot and cold depending on the event. But then what can they do? After all, they take orders from the Home Ministry and, therefore, Shah is the captain of their ship. The police cannot act against the instructions of its captain or any other privileged deputies even if party members raise slogans like “Desh ke gadaaron ko, goli maaro saalo ko.” A free and fair police would

have registered an FIR against BJP MP Anurag Thakur for raising such disgusting and vile slogans. A competent Home Minister would have come down strongly against such statements, which have visibly deteriorated the law and order situation in Delhi for which the buck stops with Shah.

But we must not forget that we live in interesting times where the Home Minister of the country is actually the face of the BJP for the Delhi elections. All his time and effort has been spent on disparaging the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The Home Minister spent all his energy fighting this election on hatred, even if the consequence of this approach is that the safety of regular everyday citizens of Delhi has been put at risk.

The BJP tried to tilt this election by inflaming people rather than by talking about “work” (as AAP has done). Shah has been too busy to notice that while the BJP has been flinging lit matches to create a fire in Delhi, it is his home, ie, the Home Ministry, that has lost most. However, when all the din and noise finally settles on February 11, the damage done to his prestigious post will be lost on no one.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

SOUNDBITE

I say let's make more schools; they say Shaheen Bagh. I say, build hospitals; they say Shaheen Bagh. Is there no other issue in Delhi?

Delhi Chief Minister
—Arvind Kejriwal



The biggest issue today is unemployment and jobs, we asked PM Modi many times, but he did not say a word on this.

Congress leader
—Rahul Gandhi



No Indian — whether Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Sikh or Christian... — will lose citizenship because of this (CAA) law.

Prime Minister
—Narendra Modi



Spectacular batting. Only KL Rahul can make 360 degrees batting look orthodox and classical

Former cricketer
—Sanjay Manjrekar



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A David and Goliath fight

Sir — All eyes are on the Delhi election. The AAP and BJP are the key contenders and it looks like a David versus Goliath contest. The moment of decision has arrived for Delhi's voters. It all boils down to a vote for or against Arvind Kejriwal. The AAP seeks re-election on the basis of its performance during its first term in office and its promises for a hoped-for second term. The AAP stands to benefit from the tangible benefits provided to the *aam aadmi*. Its honest intentions and its commitment to politics of delivery enable people to identify themselves with the primarily Delhi-based regional party and give it an advantage over the mightier Hindutva-oriented Right-wing BJP.

Sadly, the BJP has run its election campaign on “religious hatred” and harped on the Shaheen Bagh protest to polarise the voters. The innumerable violations of the Model Code of Conduct by BJP's leaders have shown the party's scant regard for the sanctity of the election process at the heart of a representative democracy. This is a crying shame.

David Milton
Tamil Nadu

Modi trying to divert attention from real woes

Referring to the ongoing protest at Shaheen Bagh, during the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address in the Lok Sabha, BJP MP from Bengaluru South, Lakya Suryanarayana Tejasvi, said, “Unless the majority community remains vigilant, the days of Mughal raj may not be far.” Except for the BJP and RSS *bhakt*s, no one believes this, because in spite of 180 years of Mughal raj, Hinduism didn't lose its identity in the country and is still going strong around the world. It is only people like Tejasvi, who are spreading lies for the sake of votebank politics. Martin Luther King, Junior, rightly said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.” Whether the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a cause for worry is a matter that can be debated later but the way the Modi Government is using its young leaders from the NDA camp, particularly Tejasvi and the Lok Janshakti Party leader Chirag Paswan, to defend the CAA clearly indicates how the NDA Government is desperate to divide Indian society. Tejasvi's words reflect his attitude and thought process, which is dangerous to say the least.

Modi, while replying to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address in the Lok Sabha said, “India can no longer wait for problems to remain unsolved and that is why the Government is moving ahead with speed and scale, determination and decisiveness, sensitivity and solution on Article 370, the triple talaq issue, the Ayodhya dispute, Kartarpur corridor and the India-Bangladesh border dispute.”

This begs a larger question. What has the Modi Government accomplished though the virtual imprisonment of 7.5 lakh citizens, incarceration of its opponents



and alienation of the masses? Are the issues that Modi mentioned in his speech real issues for India? Or is this a slow and steady transformation of India into a Hindu State? If this is not the case, then why has the Modi Government failed to address real problems plaguing the common man, like inflation, the economic slowdown, unemployment and poverty? Are Modi's quick-fix methods not harming the GDP? Will we achieve our goal of a \$5 trillion economy or will these steps solve our economic woes? The fact remains that the Government wants the people of the country to remain confused and divided and not raise their voice against its basic failures. If this is not the case then why, when the country is on the boil over the CAA, is Modi not calling a meeting of all Chief Ministers and explaining the salient features of the CAA? It is just like Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said outside Parliament, “PM Modi's style is to distract the country from the core issues. He talks of Congress, of Jawaharlal Nehru, of Pakistan, but not of core issues.”

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

BJP has no answers

Sir — The BJP seems to be pulling all stops to win the forthcoming Delhi elections. Apart from communalising the political narrative just before the Assembly polls through “hate speeches” being spewed by its leaders on a regular basis, the party has hardly been playing by the rules. Isn't the Prime Minister Modi's announcement of a trust for temple construction in Ayodhya right now a violation of the Model Code of Conduct? Isn't the Enforcement Directorate's disclosure of Popular Front of India's role in the Shaheen Bagh protest in the nick of time not misuse of official machinery? Aren't all these last-ditch attempts to avoid coming a distant second to the AAP? It is to AAP's credit that it has refused to respond to BJP's politics of polarisation and perverse provocations and stuck to its narrative of making Delhi a better place to live in. The BJP has no answer to Kejriwal's argument that “better schools, not CAA, will build 21st century India.”

Ashmit Aaron
Jammu

Send your feedback to:
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FIRST COLUMN

Be reformist not protectionist

In view of the economic slowdown, populist, protectionist policy measures have to be discarded for a pro-market, pro-reforms mindset



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Union Budget 2020-21 came at one of the toughest times the Indian economy is facing in recent times. Domestic demand for goods and services, export order books, India's gross domestic product and growth projections, are depressed, if not taking a southern dive. Add to this the binary issues of inflationary pressure and burgeoning fiscal deficit. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman did a tight, long, rope walk on a burning coal pit on February 1, while having a truck load of complex policy decisions on her head. She did manage to put up a show but spectators to this annual mega policy ombudsman event weren't impressed.

The question is what went wrong and is there scope for course correction during the year? In a nutshell, markets, specially those players who have significant cross-border transactions, didn't seem to think that the trade and industrial policy direction announced in the Budget was progressive, bold and reformist. Many would agree that despite the current regime coming in with a promise of making India investment, business and trade-friendly, it has gone ahead and erected tall, if not taller, wall of tariffs around its companies, markets, products and small and medium-sector enterprises. Coupled with this are a steady stream of ambiguous to opaque, regulatory and policy frameworks which leave little space for businesses and trade to prosper.

The usual rhetoric heard in many Government circles is India's small and medium sector businesses need to be cushioned, indigenous manufacturing of products is mandatory and, with or without a life-threatening virus, China's march in domestic and regional markets has to be contained. Also, new-age data-driven economy is somehow a threat to, and against, national interests.

A brief pause here, and an assertion that many, and all of these narratives are global in nature, and India has simply caught on the winds, which may or may not be the best-fit solution for a recessionary world economic order.

However, an equally important policy document, which was drafted by the same Ministry officials and presented to the world a day prior to the Budget, the Economic Survey, somehow lies forgotten. Consider this edited excerpt, from the Economic Survey which makes a strong case for free trade, by stating "laser-like focus...as an India that harbours misplaced insecurity on the trade front is unlikely to grab this opportunity, our trade policy must be an enabler. In fact, contrary to recent fears, careful analysis that controls for all confounding factors shows that India has gained from trade agreements."

Even if one were to avoid getting into details of the Economic Survey, just reading the chapter headlines like *Undermining Markets: When Government intervention hurts more than it helps, Privatisation and wealth creation* and finally, *Wealth Creation: The invisible hand supported by hand of trust* are clear indicators of a reformist out-of-the-box, economic welfare path to prosperity.

Contrast this with the Budget document, which states that imports under Free Trade Agreements will be scrutinised for adherence to rules of origin clause. Similarly, import tariffs on countless items have been scaled up each year, without a status check on readiness of domestic producers to supply similar quality products at same, if not, cheaper rates. Add to this, the promise of reviewing all customs duty exemptions list by year end. The Budget speech punched with terms like, "imports through free trade agreements" pose a "threat to domestic industry" and many instances of "undue claims of benefits" have been found, harbingers to open a new bureaucratic line of checks and penalty, plus an additional delay at ports of entry. Coupled with this could be significant retaliatory tariffs from countries, whose goods are directly impacted and it gets into a spiraling trade tariff, mostly unfruitful solution finding exercise.

What do successful companies, especially those operating in multi regulatory regimes do when faced with problem of this stature? First, they assess the problem statement, skim out extra or avoidable flab, hold a cross-functional in some cases, cross-geography brainstorming session and perhaps create a war room. Finally, with a "Back to Market" strategy, they focus the best of talent to address key strategic issues within fixed timelines. If, the calibrated strategy fails, the cycle is repeated quickly to minimise loss of business and mostly get back on the growth path.

In the Government's case a similar policy goal has to be clearly chalked out with an inter-ministerial team headed by a Cabinet Minister. Policy experts and industry representatives have to be given a place on the table and their views counted. Political showmen of choicest bars have to be set aside while darting towards a new India with a \$5 trillion economy. Populist, protectionist policy measures have to be discarded for a pro-market pro-reforms mindset. Equal partnership responsibilities along with sweet rewards once a while will do a lot more towards millions of jobs and billions in investments than appearing nonchalant to large investors. Investor guarantee, more important with strategic trade partner companies, coming up with tailor-made solutions for each will be a game changer. Most important, creating India's economic ambassadors from the business community, if necessary, providing them delegation status, will reassure "the hand of trust, behind invisible hands of market."

(The writer is Country Manager, India, ITC Council)

THE YOUTH WILL BEAT HIM (MODI) WITH STICKS AND MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND THAT THIS COUNTRY CAN'T PROGRESS WITHOUT PROVIDING JOBS TO THE YOUTH.

—CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



I WILL INCREASE MY FREQUENCY OF SURYA NAMASKARS SO THAT MY BACK BECOMES SO STRONG THAT IT CAN BEAR THE BRUNT OF STICKS.

—PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Social contract of social forestry

Local problems require solutions based on different strategies. This is why the key person may or may not be a forester but one who links the community to the store of expertise and gets things done



BKP SINHA

There is an ongoing fierce debate in the country about successful strategies of natural resources management. At one end of the spectrum, we have the moral and political contract of Rousseau, where the Government has all the political legitimacy. Then there are views inspired by Hobbes, that individual actions are influenced only by their personal power and conscience. In the same vein today, we have staunch advocates of the predominant role of individuals vs the state in matters of management of forests, land, water bodies and other natural resources. The fact remains that poor forest governance can have significant negative impacts in development of outcomes on all the pillars of strategy, the environment, poverty-reduction and social development.

SD Richardson, late Chairman of Forest Education in the UN, once observed, "The greatest challenge in conservation is not the conservation of threatened or vanishing species or even biological diversity, it is the enhancement of soil fertility to enable sustainable development in a world reluctant to accept the steady state economics."

One would like to add that there is no better means to maintain, sustain or enhance the productivity of the soil but for trees or perennial vegetation. Proper trees at the proper place are the key to maintaining, sustaining and enhancing soil productivity. This is also the answer to job-creation, reducing the disparity of income and for maintaining, or decelerating the rate of climate change, due to their unique capacity to sequester carbon.

Land is a finite and fragile resource in India. It requires a careful husbandry. The cost of soil erosion and degradation is seldom perceived because it is in various scales and magnitude. On site and off site, the cost of soil erosion can be loss of productive potential, reduction of infiltration rates, reduction in water holding capacity, loss of nutrients, increased tillage operation cost, reduced storage capacity of dams, reduced water supply and depletion of wildlife and so on. In case of rivers, health of forest greatly determines the quality and quantity of water. Riparian vegetation impacts metabolic functioning of biota. Branches and twigs often work as debris dams and often serve as important habitat.

There are large areas in India where sustainable agriculture is only possible with the aid of trees, whether as a part of crop rotation, shade providers or as a fodder. Trees have an important part to play in land restoration/reclamation. There are large areas in the country, particularly the so-called dry lands which have been so badly misused in the past that they are no longer capable of growing food and fodder for people who live and depend on them. In all these critical situations, their contribution will be decisive. This is about the most important job that trees have to do in India today.

Technological innovation in agriculture is often advanced as an answer to deteriorating productivity. Most "agricultural innovation" theses fail to explain why in many parts of the country, completely different technologies are being applied on lands, which are similar but adjacent. Small, independent farmers may be applying a traditional technology to sustain themselves right next to an adjoining stretch of land where modern, sophisticated technology is producing cash crops.

Similarly, it is oversimplification to regard deforestation/degradation as a consequence of population. Any incisive study or analysis of history will show that deforestation is nothing but manifestation of unjust social relations. In such a scenario, an area which promises great hope but also requires careful scrutiny is social forestry.

This connotes many concepts to many people, forests for socio-economic development, agroforestry, urban forestry, recreation forestry and

“LAND IS A FINITE AND FRAGILE RESOURCE IN INDIA. IT REQUIRES CAREFUL HUSBANDRY. THE COST OF SOIL EROSION AND DEGRADATION IS SELDOM PERCEIVED BECAUSE IT IS IN VARIOUS SCALES AND MAGNITUDE. ON SITE AND OFF SITE, THE COST OF SOIL EROSION CAN BE LOSS OF PRODUCTIVE POTENTIAL, REDUCTION OF INFILTRATION RATES, REDUCTION IN WATER HOLDING CAPACITY, LOSS OF NUTRIENTS, INCREASED TILLAGE OPERATION COST, REDUCED STORAGE CAPACITY OF DAMS, REDUCED WATER SUPPLY, AND DEPLETION OF WILDLIFE AND SO ON”



forestry for rural development. These different names signify different functions of trees under different settings. But these reflect a growth of social consciousness about trees. But first what does social forestry mean? Though there is no clear or agreed meaning, it has come to cover any kind of forestry activity directed to social needs.

Agroforestry: A forester will often say that agroforestry has changed the landscapes in western UP, certain parts of Haryana and or Punjab. Yamunanagar in Haryana is a hub of forest-based industrial activity which served as a showcase of what agroforestry can do. The fact remains that the drylands of India constitute a unique challenge for development planning, observes economist Mihir Shah.

Biologists advanced various claims in favour of agroforestry like controlling soil erosion, maintaining organic matter, improving and maintaining the physical property of soil, addition of nitrogen, addition of mineral nutrition, reduction in soil acidity and alkalinity, addition biomass through tree root system, enhancement of mycorrhizal associations, imputed capture of rainfall and sunlight, control of damage from disease and so on. All can be true or untrue unless the choice of components, their arrangements and their management are optimised within an environmental conducive to it.

Agroforestry for sustainable agriculture: Agroforestry systems can provide several products, requiring different yardsticks for their measurements. They occur in different ways and on different scales of time and space. Different products may require different units of measurement. For example, crop per season, timber or poles after several years, non-timber forest products in different units; or tonnes of top soil saved, rainfall conserved. In short, both short and long-term benefits occur from different agroforestry systems (with tree-crop mixture). Short-term benefits occur in the shape of mulch and litter that affect root growth and the soil's physical properties. Farmers need to be exposed to the fact that to measure a lasting benefit in natural capital, we shall have to consider time and space scale. Agroforestry can add to both efficiency, stability and resilience for sustainable agriculture, provided the ben-

efits are considered in scale of time and space. Trees can influence beyond their immediate environment. Their roots may extend well outside their plots and trees on the upper side of the watershed affect downside farms, while trees in the valley affect the hydrology. Hence, while counting benefits of agroforestry, both goods and services need to be considered and there is no doubt that a right combination of trees and crops can be both efficient, resilient and sustainable. But agroforestry is not simply limited to a matter of solving technical problems. It is also necessary to understand the socio-economic and hence political context within which agriculture is practised. Research of this kind has become all the more important because day by day the area of land under traditional agriculture is dwindling and suitable use of trees can do so much to improve soil productivity. Such areas of research are just beginning to receive attention. Agroforestry at present is largely confined to the prosperous pockets of fertile land and the benefits are mostly accruing to rich farmers. How these benefits or gains get distributed among the landless, small farmers and contract labourers remain to be analysed with location-specific hard data.

There are various issues and innumerable location-specific problems and solutions that need to be addressed for which there is neither effective institution, nor capacity or proper policy instrument. The rural poor, who have either no land at all or insufficient land to support them, are increasing in number every year. The problem will not go away by ill-conceived schemes or absence of schemes. They can be mobilised to restore the land, water bodies or for the conservation of local biodiversity. City-trained extension purveying orders and advice to farmers often find their advice ignored. It makes more sense to convey new ideas through individuals chosen to represent them at their level of knowledge or literacy. What is required is total revamping or rejuvenation of the vanishing ecosystem.

Recreation forestry: This is another dimension of social forestry, which requires careful nurturing, because its users are by and large opinion makers of society. They are influential, with ability to mobilise pub-

lic/political opinion. The demand for outdoor recreation and social cohesion is catching speed and city dwellers love to get first-hand experience of forests. Forested landscapes in India are few and far from the reach of city and village dwellers. Hence, there is great demand for forested landscape for city dwellers like Kukrail in Lucknow, or other big cities. It requires skill, experience in anticipating the clear aim and the demands of the people or special interest groups, the finance to be put in and the returns.

Urban forestry: Is another conspicuous kind of social forestry, which has shown great potential and which is another pointer to social consciousness about trees. The main purpose of the urban forest is shade, screening and aesthetic. The composition of urban forested landscape is also often on socio-economic strata. Hardy and economically useful species are selected (such as moringa, neem, jamuns, eucalyptus) for slums or for low-income areas. People living in the slums are generally not bothered with trees except for a few species that provide fodder or shade for their temporary shops or homes. Urban forests of affluent areas generally have well-planted, well-tended trees. Urban trees are important for their benefits to city dwellers, climate amelioration and engineering, architectural and aesthetic uses. But except a few cities, management of urban areas generally reflects a lack of skill and experience, in addition to financing and proper monitoring and, of course, information, education and training of stakeholders.

Trees have manifold roles to play. Forest policy expert Bjorn Lundgren had rightly observed that there is a range of local problems that requires solutions based on different strategies. This is why the key person may or may not be a forester but the one who links the local community to the store of expertise and acts as a catalyst in getting things on the way. It matters little whether he/she is called an activist, village representative or what have you. It is through such people that foresters or others can gain an understanding of problems and suggest feasible solutions.

(The writer is former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, UP and Advisor, Amity)

Nations must act now to end STIs

Sexually transmitted infections pose a major public health problem in the region. All stakeholders must refocus attention, resources and energy in this direction



POORNAM KHETRAPAL

There are two things everyone should know about sexually transmitted infections (STIs). First, almost all STIs can be prevented through the use of a highly-effective technology — condoms. The four most common STIs — chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and trichomonas vaginalis — can be cured by antibiotics. Second, STIs don't always show symptoms. Untreated gonorrhea and chlamydia can cause infertility. Syphilis in a pregnant woman

can cause foetal and neonatal illness and death while human papillomavirus (HPV) can cause cervical cancer. When access to appropriate products and services is provided, they are greatly empowering: Practise safe sex, get tested and where necessary, use effective treatment. By working to ensure all people can access the products and services needed to prevent, detect and treat STIs, member states of the WHO South-East Asia Region have made significant progress against them. In the mid-'90s the region accounted for more than a third of all new STI infections globally. By 2012, it accounted for an estimated 11 per cent. In 2016, Thailand eliminated mother-to-child transmission of syphilis and HIV. In 2019, Maldives and Sri Lanka achieved the same. From Bangladesh to Indonesia and on to Myanmar, the region's member states have rolled out innovative policies to

tackle STIs. India in particular has made significant inroads against them, with strong success at the sub-national level. However, the region's battle against STIs continues as new challenges have emerged. As a recent WHO report outlines, several gaps and constraints — including inattention and a lack of resources — are undermining STI control and causing diseases to increase in specific areas and communities. This cannot continue. As health authorities and donors increasingly promote HIV services, it is imperative that STIs are given the attention, resources and energy required to sustain and accelerate the region's advances and promote health for all.

Our goals are clear. By 2030 we must reduce the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhea by 90 per cent based on the 2018 levels. Congenital syphilis should amount to no more than 50 cases

per 100,000 live births. All countries should achieve and sustain 90 per cent coverage of the HPV vaccine. To make the necessary progress, which will help end STIs as a major public health problem, several areas should be of focus.

To start with, STI control should be repositioned as a public health priority. Resources, staffing and planning should be allocated independent of HIV programmes. Public awareness, engagement and participation should be promoted. The common ground and potential synergies in STI and HIV control efforts should be better grasped and programmes should be integrated. A clear line should be drawn from where each country is, to where it needs to be. To help do that, we must share and learn from member state successes. All countries in the region have implemented successful policies aimed at a range of outcomes, from eliminating mother-to-

child transmission of syphilis and HIV to increasing STI testing among key populations. Each country has much to offer. Together we must leverage expertise to overcome barriers and drive down the STI burden. Crucially, all gaps in STI data must be filled. To that end, basic STI surveillance must be carried out, with all pregnant women and patients from key populations screened for STIs routinely. Standard case reporting procedures should be developed and followed, allowing authorities to track the efficacy of interventions and recalibrate them as and where needed.

To protect against HPV, which is a cause of cervical cancer in women, two doses of the HPV vaccine should reach all girls between the ages of nine and 14. To date, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Maldives have introduced the vaccine nationally, while in India, Sikkim is the only State to make it part of its rou-

tine schedule. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and several Indian States have conducted pilot projects. We must closely guard the region's progress against STIs. We cannot afford for it to be reversed. As together we strive to reduce the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhea by 90 per cent by 2030 and achieve and sustain 90 per cent coverage of the HPV vaccine, all stakeholders must refocus their attention, resources and energy on the task at hand. WHO will continue to support Member States in their efforts to do that, and to ensure all people are empowered to practise safe sex, get tested and, where necessary, use effective treatment. The end of STIs as a major public health problem is possible. Together we must act.

(The writer is Regional Director, WHO South East Asia. Views expressed are personal)



FOREIGN EYE



PROTECT THE OCEANS

Greenpeace had warned last year that 29 ocean-floor exploration licences had been issued, threatening to worsen the climate emergency by disrupting carbon stores in seafloor sediments, as well as destroying barely explored habitats. The UN must wrap up a tougher global ocean treaty this year to offer the kind of protection that is needed.

(The Guardian editorial)

Experts hail RBI measures to boost economy, improve supply of money

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Economists and financial experts have welcomed RBI's widely expected status quo on repo rate, and other announcements to spur economic growth and ensure money supplies effectively.

The RBI on Thursday kept the key policy rate unchanged at 5.15 per cent. This follows a cumulative 135 basis points (bps) cut in repo rate since February to December 2019.

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das unanimously decided to keep the repo rate unchanged.

Bank of India MD and CEO A K Das termed the RBI policy quite progressive and forward looking. "Notwithstanding unchanged policy rates, introduction of Term Repo opens up ways to transmit the signal rate changes," he said.

"Measures like DCCO extension for realty, MSME window expansion for restructuring and CRR exemption for incremental funding to key segments are growth oriented and promise to provide the much needed impetus to bank lending," Das said.

According to Rajni Thakur, Economist, RBL Bank, MPC's decision was on expected lines.

"The changes in development and regulatory policies however were a positive sur-



Measures like DCCO extension for realty, MSME window expansion for restructuring and CRR exemption for incremental funding to key segments are growth oriented and promise to provide the much needed impetus to bank lending
— A K DAS, Bank of India MD and CEO

prise and could potentially turn out to be a big support to the troubled sectors in the economy," Thakur said.

Specific announcements in terms of CRR relief or long-term durable liquidity for banks push the overall credit availability in the financial system.

Whether these steps manage to improve demand conditions is another question all together, she added.

The RBI has announced term repurchase agreements

(repos) of one-year and three-year tenors of appropriate sizes for a total amount of Rs 1 lakh crore at the policy repo rate, from the fortnight beginning February 15.

"It is an effort to ensure better monetary policy transmission. It will enable banks to reduce their lending rates," RBI Governor Das told reporters in the post policy conference.

Upasna Bhardwaj, Economist, Kotak Mahindra

Hike in deposit insurance won't hit bank balance sheets, says RBI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank deputy governor B P Kanungo on Thursday said the five-fold hike in deposit insurance to Rs 5 lakh will not have much impact on bank balance sheets.

Following the failure of a number of cooperative banks, with the city-based PMC Bank being the latest and the largest last year, the budget had permitted the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) to raise deposit insurance coverage to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 1 lakh.

"The revision insurance will not impact banks' balance sheets much," Kanungo said.

The crisis at the Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank has brought to the fore the need to increase deposit insurance coverage.

Bank said very aptly, MPC has addressed the growth concerns through pushing transmission via tweaking the liquidity framework, providing long term liquidity operations and incentivising credit to select sectors.

RBI keeps interest rates unchanged

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank on Thursday expectedly kept interest rates unchanged amid uncertain inflation outlook but left the door open for more easing in future even as it took steps to spur credit growth in an economy facing its worst slowdown in more than a decade.

With all six members of the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-led Monetary Policy Committee voting unanimously, the repurchase or repo rate was maintained at 5.15 per cent while retaining its accommodative stance. With food prices driving retail inflation to a more than five-year high of 7.35 per cent in December, the central bank raised its inflation projection for the six months to September to 5-5.4 per cent from 3.8-4 per cent previously while terming the outlook on price rise as "highly uncertain".

The RBI cut its policy rate by 135 basis points over five straight meetings last year, before hitting the pause button on inflationary concerns. The RBI stuck to its prediction of 5 per cent GDP growth in the current fiscal - the lowest in 11 years but lowered its growth forecast for the first half of the coming financial year to 5.5-6 per cent from its December projection of 5.9-6.3 per cent. For the full 2020-21 fiscal, it put the GDP growth at 6 per cent, which is at the lower end of the 6-6.5 per cent expansion projected by the Economic Survey.



To boost credit growth, it scrapped the mandatory requirement for banks to set aside cash of 4 per cent for every new loan extended to retail automobiles, residential housing, and small businesses till July 2020.

Also, in a major relief to the real estate sector, the RBI extended restructuring of project loans by a year. Loans for projects that have been delayed for reasons beyond the control of their promoters have been extended by another one year without downgrading asset classification.



Centre allots Rs 5.6k cr for bullet train

■ Maharashtra, Gujarat will also have to contribute

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Even as Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has questioned the high costs and feasibility of the bullet train project, it has now emerged that the Union government has allotted Rs 5,600 crore for the ambitious project for fiscal 2020-21.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to complete the project linking the country's financial capital Mumbai with Gujarat's biggest city Ahmedabad by 2022, to mark the 75th year of Independence.

Sources in the National High-Speed Rail Corporation said a provision of Rs 5,600 crore has been made for the 500-km rail project, modelled on the lines of the bullet train.

Apart from the Centre's contribution, there is also a move to get Rs 5,000 crore from Maharashtra and Gujarat, which own a fourth of equity in the project, in the

Sources in the National High-Speed Rail Corporation said a provision of Rs 5,600 crore has been made for the 500-km rail project, modelled on the lines of Japan's famous bullet train

form of extra budgetary resources (EBR), the Western Railway's 'Pink Book' said.

It can be noted that in FY20, the two states collectively contributed Rs 1,000 crore in EBR towards the project. The Japan International Cooperation Agency has made a soft loan commitment of Rs 1.10 lakh crore to execute the project.

CAPSULE



ArcelorMittal reports USD 1.9 bn net loss in Oct-Dec

NEW DELHI: Global steel giant ArcelorMittal on Thursday reported a net loss of loss of USD 1.9 billion for the quarter ended December. The world's largest steel maker had posted a net income of USD 1.2 billion in the year-ago quarter, the company said in a statement. The company reported a "net loss attributable to equity holders of the parent" of USD 1.9 billion in the fourth quarter. ArcelorMittal follows January to December fiscal year. For the whole year (2019), the company reported a net loss of USD 2.5 billion as against net income of USD 5.1 billion in 2018. Revenue in 2019 was at USD 70.6 billion as compared with USD 76 billion in the previous year. Its crude steel production stood at 89.8 million metric tonnes, while own iron ore production was at 57.1 million metric tonnes. ArcelorMittal Chairman and CEO Lakshmi N Mittal said, "2019 was a very tough year, clearly reflected in our significantly reduced profitability."



Bosch showcases mobility solutions for Indian market

NEW DELHI: With an eye to tap the domestic market, automobile component major Bosch Ltd on Thursday showcased a range of mobility and services products for the Indian automotive sector. The solutions showcased at a press conference here by company officials included electrified and powertrain solutions, integrated system for light electric vehicles, electronic engine management systems, hybridization solutions with 48V systems, among others. Bosch has collaborated with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and end customers to develop future ready mobility solutions to ensure smooth transition from BS-IV to BS-VI engines.

'Extended coronavirus outbreak could lower oil demand, prices'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global oil demand and prices will fall due to extended coronavirus outbreak, Moody's Investors Services said on Thursday.

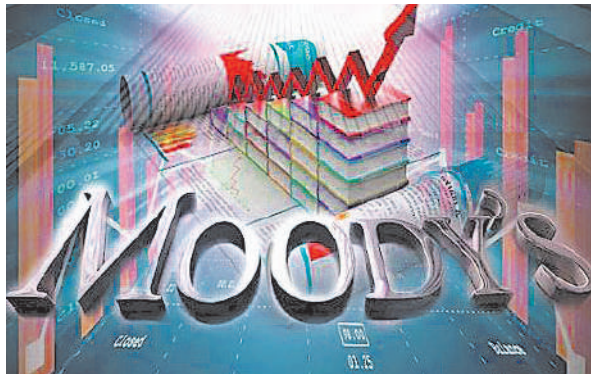
"The ongoing coronavirus outbreak has reduced economic activity in China, the world's largest oil importer," it said in a note. "Estimates of the short-term reduction in global oil demand have already proved deep enough to weaken crude prices in recent days"

Moody's said while a short-term demand shock in China will significantly increase oil price volatility, prices would likely rebound once the spread of coronavirus infection is contained.

"However, it is difficult to ascertain how pervasive, widespread and severe the contagion will be before it is contained," it said.

The outbreak of coronavirus has already led to suspended flight routes and quarantine of millions of people in China around its epicentre.

"An extended disruption of economic activity in China would also reverberate around the world given the size and interconnectedness of the



Chinese economy. This disruption, in turn, would have a significant impact on global oil markets," Moody's said.

"We would expect the rise in oil inventories to be potentially offset, at least to some degree, by cuts in supply."

Still, a period of several months of slowing activity is likely to dampen oil prices for

its duration, and perhaps beyond depending on the build-up in global inventories.

Weak commodity prices will reduce the profitability and credit metrics of exploration and production companies. Reduced activity levels will also hurt drillers and oilfield service companies, while reduced volumes will dampen midstream company earnings, it added.

China consumes about 14 million barrels of oil per day. Coronavirus also threatens a material impact on global natural gas prices.

"While we do not yet know the severity of the coronavirus outbreak, which is still largely contained within China, a substantial increase in its scope globally would have significant negative implications for the energy market," Moody's said.

Sebi issues performance benchmarking guidelines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets watchdog Sebi on Thursday came out with guidelines for compulsory performance benchmarking for Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) as part of efforts to streamline disclosure standards.

A template for Private Placement Memorandum (PPM) in the case of these funds, which have been classified into three categories, has also been issued.

The PPM would have two parts -- a section for minimum disclosures and a supplementary section to provide any additional information.

In a circular, the regulator said it has been decided to introduce the template for PPM, subject to certain exemptions, as well as put in place

A template for Private Placement Memorandum (PPM) in the case of these funds, which have been classified into three categories, has also been issued



mandatory performance benchmarking for AIFs. Besides, there are provisions for additional customised performance reporting requirements.

Sebi has also given operational guidelines for mandatory performance benchmarking of AIFs, including venture capital funds and the AIF industry.

Centre to look into safety of food delivered by eCommerce platforms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The issue of quality, safety and hygiene of food delivered via eCommerce platforms was raised in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, with Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan saying his ministry will look into the matter.

During Zero Hour, CPI-M leader K Somaprasad said, "There is every chance of adulteration and that badly affects the interest of customers. Sir, urgent interference of the government is inevitable."

Online food supply should be regulated and should be brought under the food safety regulator FSSAI, he said and again urged the government to take "adequate measures to ensure fair price, quality and food safety on all online food delivery service platforms."

Stating that the issue concerns the general public, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu asked the Consumer Affairs Minister to take note of the matter. "It is not related to one state but the entire country. On one side, you cannot stop it as this is a facility for people, on the other side, some regulation has to be there," Naidu said.

To which, Paswan said he will call a meeting on Friday and discuss the matter with the CPI-M leader as well as with officials.



eCommerce platforms was raised in Rajya Sabha, with Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan saying his ministry will look into the matter

Earlier the CPI-M member said eCommerce business in India was growing at a fast rate. Online food ordering and delivery services have witnessed spurt and this business is expected to reach USD 2.7 billion this year.

"The changing lifestyle, increasing affinity of families to dine out and quick house deliver model has accelerated the online food delivery. But this sector is facing several issues," he said.

Neither online food delivery service companies nor restaurants are ready to assume the responsibility related to quality, safety or hygiene standards of food, he said.

Data Bill: Centre wants 'widest discussions'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday said that Personal Data Protection Bill should go through widest discussions within the parliamentary process.

India is a democracy and deliberations on this Bill in Parliament will be beneficial, he added. "I am grateful to PM that when I went with this Bill to the Cabinet he told me regardless of all the consultation you have done, allow the further widest consultation also in the parliament process. We have given them time till April-May and we hope they do



I am grateful to PM that when I went with this Bill to the Cabinet he told me regardless of all the consultation you have done, allow the further widest consultation also in the parliament process
—RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD IT and Law Minister

it and next session we will bring it," the minister said at an event by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).

Responding to a specific question on the movement of

data protection legislation that was taking time, Prasad said time must be given for parliamentary deliberations and added that "what comes out, will be good". The Personal

e-calculator launched to compare tax rates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Income-Tax Department has launched an e-calculator for individuals to estimate their tax liability if they opt for the new tax slabs, without claiming deductions and exemptions, for ITR filing as announced in the recent Budget, officials said on Thursday.

The calculator, with a comparative table to compare taxes in the old and the new tax regime, for resident individuals (financial year 2020-21) has been hosted on the official e-filing website of the department -- <https://www.incometaxindiaefiling.gov.in>.

The web portal is used for filing of electronic income tax returns (ITRs) by individuals and various other categories of



taxpayers.

Taxpayers in three age categories of normal citizen (below 60 years), senior citizen (60-79 years) and super senior citizen (above 79 years) can punch in

their estimated annual income from all sources, total eligible deductions and exemptions to see what will be their total taxable income if they continue in the old regime or opt for the

The old or the existing I-T regime allows a standard deduction of Rs 50,000 and investment of Rs 1.5 lakh in saving schemes with a rate of 5%, 10% or 30% tax depending on various income levels

new one.

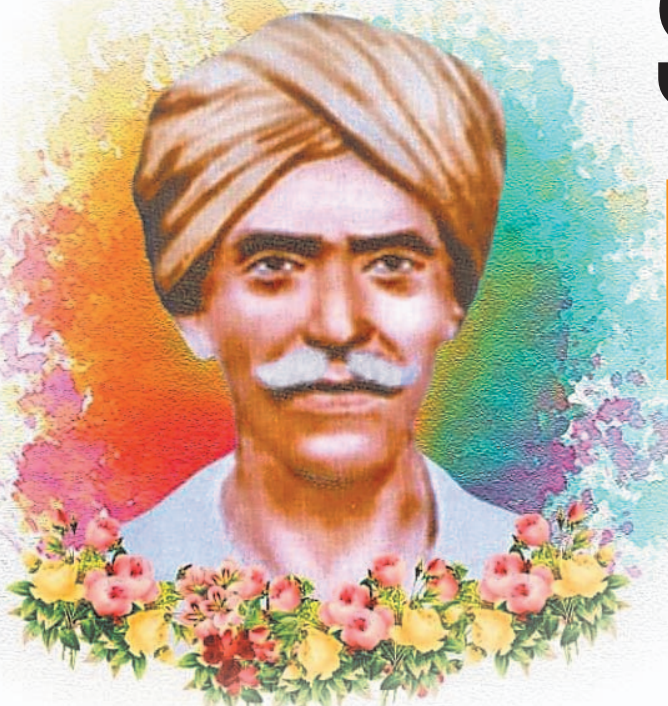
The calculator takes into account eligible exemptions and deductions, as proposed under the new regime, after being extracted from the Budget memorandum 2020.

In the new personal income tax regime, as proposed by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech on February 1, 5 per cent tax is levied on an annual income between Rs 2.5

lakh to Rs 5 lakh. The tax rate rises to 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent and 25 per cent for every Rs 2.5 lakh addition. A 30 per cent tax is charged for income over Rs 15 lakh.

The old or the existing income tax rate regime allows a standard deduction of Rs 50,000 and investment of Rs 1.5 lakh in saving schemes with a rate of 5 per cent, 10 per cent or 30 per cent tax depending on various income levels.

Staging life and times of KOMARAM BHEEM



Manch Theatre is staging two plays, a play on Komaram Bheem and *Khud Ki Khushi*, this weekend at Lamakaan. Bheem was a Telugu tribal leader who fought against the Asaf Jahi rulers for liberation of Hyderabad. It explains the life and times of Komaram Bheem. Another play, *Khud Ki Khushi* explains the problems that a woman faces in her life. Started by like-minded techies, Manch Theatre is known for staging plays on various societal issues.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Harsha Chakkilam, director of the play on Komaram Bheem, says, "Not many people know about the greatness of Komaram Bheem. We feel it was an honour to stage his life. The play revolves around Bheem fighting against the Nizams as they torture people for taxes. He had also fought for Jal Jangal Jameen as the basic right for people in forests. Eventually, story ends with Bheem defeating Nizam empire by his wits and leadership qualities."

He shares, "For the play, we went through glimpses of history made by Bheem. We got to know the history before Bheem that made him rise against the establishment. In the beginning,

Bheem is shown as a family man who never bows to persecution. But as circumstances lead him, he revolts against Nizams with the will and power of people behind him. From this play we want to tell people that standing against wrong doings is important."

Harsha's previous plays including *Sipahi Ki Maa* that describes the pain a mother goes through while she waits for her son come home from his Army duties. *Adhikar* explains how the basic rights of people are being violated. He said he would love to do more plays that revolve around societal issues.

Vamsi Ramachandruni, director of the play, *Khud Ki Khushi*, says, "The play revolves around a common girl, Khushi, who faces a lot of obstacles right from childhood through adolescence and marriage. Khushi endures all the pain only to give up one day when these hardships become unbearable. The plot is designed to show how Khushi travels through challenges in her life and emerges strong."

Reacting about the reason to choose this subject, Vamsi adds, "We discuss a lot about misfortunes that happen to a woman but do we understand how impactful and disastrous these



misfortunes could be to the individual? While unfortunate incidents are taking place around us in the form of Nirbhaya, Disha and many more, there is another type of cruelty women face in the form of domestic violence. This issue has led many women end their lives and it is time that we address this. This play will be a motivation to all the people who have been looked down upon

and give them courage to come out stronger by fighting oppression."

About Manch Theatre's previous plays, Vamsi shares, "Our group has always been excited to send a message to the audience through dramatic plays. In one of our street plays *Nukkad* called *Adhi-kaar* we tried to showcase the importance of fundamental rights and how they are abused."

Manch Theatre is all set to entertain theatre lovers this weekend by staging thought-provoking plays including one on the life of Komaram Bheem, finds V SATEESH REDDY

"Bheem is shown as a family man who never bows to persecution. But as circumstances lead him, he revolts against Nizams with the will and power of people behind him. From this play we want to tell people that standing against wrong doings is important

HARSHA CHAKKILAM



"*Khud Ki Khushi* will motivate all the people who have been looked down upon and give them courage to come out stronger by fighting oppression.

VAMSI RAMACHANDRUNI



Movies growing, but writing still LAGS: BOMAN

Boman Irani, a veteran actor known for his comedic roles infused with seriousness in *Munna Bhai MBBS*, *3 Idiots*, *Attarintiki Daredi* and many more, was in the city on Wednesday. As someone who has donned many hats, he spoke about Bollywood, Tollywood, changes in the industry and the art of writing, reports K RAMYA SREE

Boman Irani, 60, who has tried his hands at acting, photography, motivational speaking and dubbing for movies was in the city as an enabler of change for the CII. When asked about what he would like to change in Indian cinema, he said, "We are growing in all departments but lag behind in writing. When I launched my company last year, I flew in an Oscar winning writer and conducted a workshop for 300 writers. I strongly believe that without a good script a film can't be developed based just on one idea."

"You have to know the carpentry of writing before learning the artistry of writing," he suggested. "If a writer is the star, then the director can handle any scene. I am a strong believer in the philosophy that the writer is the star of any film," he reiterated.

The senior actor who has done over 50 films said the era of *masala* films is over. He said, "Pictures are not going to get you roles anymore. *Masala* films are gone. Today we need strong films like *Thappad* and Kangana keeps doing such films. Take for instance Ayushman Khurrana's *Bala* where a young Punjabi boy goes bald. Things have actually

changed in Indian cinema."

The actor, who played Virus, a college principal in *3 Idiots*, speaking about the current generation, said, "Every five years I see a whole new generation of youngsters who are younger and more aware of their career. Technology is not only driving maturity but also creating an air of acceptance among youth about the world around them. Technology has opened up many jobs too, mostly online."

On being asked about his experience with Tollywood and how he finds it different from Bollywood, he said, "Cinema in itself is a language. If I get the essence of the scene, the words just come to me despite not knowing the language. It was great to have worked with some amazing actors and directors."

Continuing about Tollywood he said, "Cinema here (in the South) is made with a lot of passion and zeal and its a happy set where delicious food is served everyday. I love working in Hyderabad."

On the work front, the actor was last seen in *Made in China* and *Drive* and is currently shooting for '83 and *Yuvarathna*.



Photo by SV Chary

Coding is child's play for these kids

Many educational institutions are encouraging children from a young age to take up coding in order to create modern solutions for age-old problems.

One such effort was a rural hackathon that was held recently to find workable solutions for problems in villages and communities with active participation from the students of government schools under the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TSWREIS).

This is a unique event as hackathons in government schools involving marginalised communities a rare sight to see.

The tech fest, organised by Secure Space, a city-based start-up engaged in tech content development, turned 29 government schools into idea hubs where 5,640 students (with 60 per cent of the participants being girl students) worked in teams to tackle problems faced by farmers and the agricultural community in general.

Nearly 25 per cent of the participants were proficient in writing 20 to 30 lines of code.

Most of the participants have learned around 30 programs which include Reverse of Numbers, Palindrome, Fibonacci Series, Multiplication of any Table, Fractional Numbers and so on.

Before the hackathon the students toured surrounding communities and villages and identified problems that needed to be solved such as finding means to increase productivity in agriculture, women's education, safety of children and more.

Project Mission Code, an initiative under the TSWREIS, encourages boys and girls to learn coding and leverage technology for problem solving.

Keeping in mind the importance of learning to code and computational thinking skills, the 5,000 and more students were given training in coding



BEFORE THE HACKATHON THE STUDENTS TOURED COMMUNITIES AND VILLAGES AND IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS THAT NEEDED TO BE SOLVED SUCH AS FINDING MEANS TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY IN AGRICULTURE

for 100 hours spread over 75 days. Nearly 120 trainers and experts were drawn from the corporate world to help with the project.

The children and the trainers both agree that after the training, digital technologies have become

part of the children's thought process. At the age of 11, these kids are learning to code in HTML and Java Script which even seasoned programmers struggle with. — PNS

SMART IRRIGATION

Many students showed great promise in becoming frontrunners for the next generation of innovators. One such student was Siddhu, at the TSWREIS Itikyal Village who developed a smart irrigation system. He developed a device which ensures better irrigation with minimum water and power usage and reduces human effort dramatically. "It is important to use available water resources efficiently. When the sensors in the device register dryness in the soil it pumps water automatically. Similarly, when there is sufficient moisture in the soil, it shuts the water supply. My device works on IoT (Internet of Things)," said Siddhu who is studying Class 8.

IDENTIFYING PESTS

Another innovation seen at the fest was Plantix. With this app, farmers can identify a pest on their crops by just taking a photo of it and running it through the app. The app will automatically identify the pest and prescribe remedial measures pictographically. This self-help app was created by Vignesh and Yaswanth of Class 8.

SMART SPECTACLES

Another Class 8 student Urukundu developed Smart Spectacles for the visually challenged. The frame of this spectacles is fixed with an ultrasonic sensor, a buzzer and battery alerts that that automatically warns the wearer when there is an object in front of them. "I managed to make it for just Rs 500," said Urukundu.





● Honey



● Shreya



● Ritu



● Sharon



● Shusila



● Niharika Konidela



● Lakshmi



● Anand Daga, Rakesh and Abhishek



● Prithi



● Suman



● Priyanka



● Vybhavi



● Jayash Ranjan



● Geethika

ONE STOP SHOP

Hi-Life Exhibitions, a signature fashion, lifestyle and luxury exhibition, was unveiled at HICC Novotel. The expo features work of top designers from across the country and offers an array of designer bridal wear, home furniture, accessories and more. Actress Niharika Konidela among others was present at the launch event.

YOUNG MINDS

Young Indians (YI), an Integral Part of Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), held its annual day celebrations at Taj Deccan, Banjara Hills, on Wednesday. Over 300 delegates from various sectors of industry, including Telangana IT Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan took part in the event.

CITY GUIDE

» EVENTS

BHEEM

● *Bheem* is a Telugu patriotic play written by Harsha Chaklam based on Telangana's freedom fighter Komaram Bheem who fought for his water, forest and land. The play is being organised by Manch Theatre at Lamakaan tomorrow at 7.30 pm.



MOSAMBI NARANGI

● Taher Ali Baig in association with Rage Production presents one-of-a-kind play about hopes and broken dreams, complete with odd ball characters, humour and emotion. The play is all set to be performed at Shilpkala Vedika on February 9 at 7 pm.



AN INSPECTOR CALLS

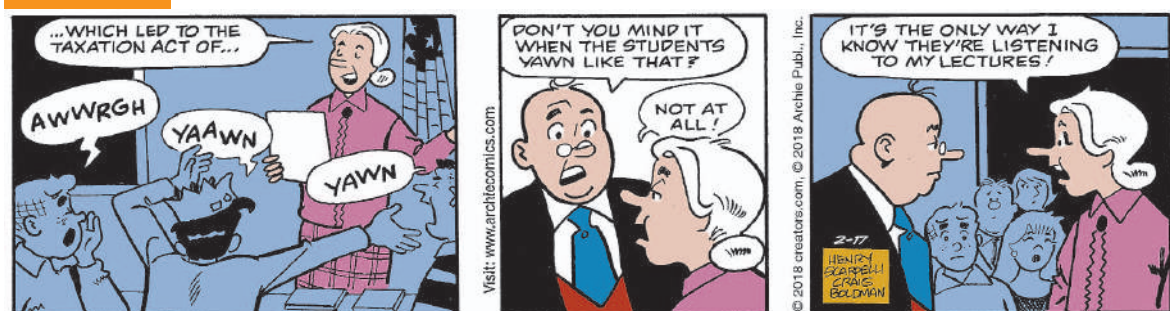


● *An Inspector Calls*, is the Telugu adaptation of the original English play by the same name by J B Priestly written in the year. The play revolves around the alleged suicide of a young woman named Shwetha and an unsuspecting family which is visited by a mysterious Inspector. The play will be held at Pheonix arena today at 7 pm.

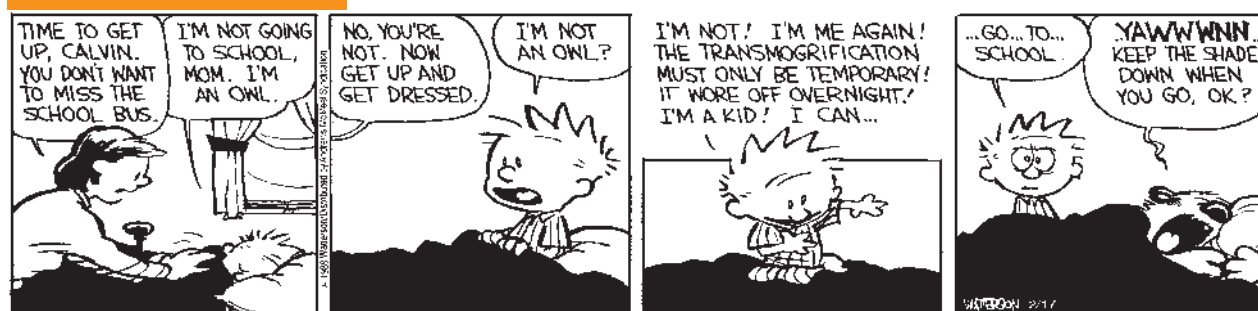
GET YOUR EVENT LISTED: To get your events listed, send your details along with a poster and contact number to pioneer.features@gmail.com

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



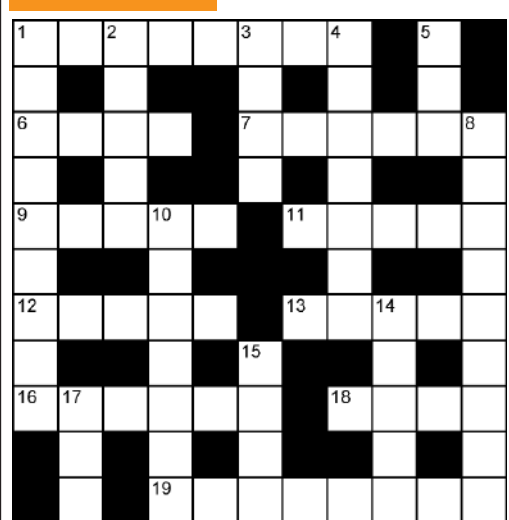
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Sick people in hospital
- A feeling that makes you scratch
- Ran after trying to catch
- One of your five senses
- Pimples on the face
- Requires
- Opposite of winner
- Attend classes here
- Young child
- Studied closely

- Wash your hair with this
- Frozen water
- Smashed to pieces
- This turns into a frog
- The country of the Spanish
- A biting insect
- A popular pet

SOLUTION



DOWN

- See these at an art gallery
- Small nails for carpets
- Pleasant

SUDOKU

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

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

Rules

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

I want to have a family: SAMANTHA



Shooting for *Jaanu* has been a new experience for Samantha Akkineni in her decade-old career. Samantha speaks about her experience working with Sharwa, her plans beyond cinema and more, writes
NAGARAJ GOUD

For someone who has been a part of films where she would have actors with her in the background and the foreground, shooting for *Jaanu*, Samantha Akkineni reckons, was an different experience altogether. “The film’s story unfolds mostly between the lead pair, so they had to be remarkable. Also, the film doesn’t boast of great locations and other talent. The pressure was very much on the director and us. It was a risk we took which we feel has paid off. I’ve had a great time shooting for it and every day after pack-up, there was a sense of satisfaction that I gave my 100 per cent,” she begins.

A heart-touching love story, *Jaanu* revolves around two childhood sweethearts who meet 20 years later at a school reunion and the events that follow. It is the remake of super hit Tamil film ‘96. Vijay Sethupathi and Trisha starred in the original and their performances were met with acclaim from critics and audience alike. This is the reason why Samantha was sure that she shouldn’t be aping Trisha.

“I saw the film only once and never went back to it. Trisha aced the role and I was confident that if I copy her, it wouldn’t work in the best interest of *Jaanu*. I had to

approach her in a different perspective. I asked Prem Kumar so many questions about her back story, about *Jaanu*’s husband and her behaviour with her daughter and more. I read the script for 10 days before shooting to prepare for the role. After the shoot, the director told my performance was different to that of Trisha,” she explains.

Samantha believes her performance depended a lot on how Sharwanand reacted to her shots. “If his intensity was down, it would’ve automatically reflected in mine. We pushed each other to give our best. After every scene, we would look at each other for approval. I was extremely happy with him just as I was with Ram Charan. If it was another actor, I don’t think the magic would’ve been recreated,” she rhapsodises.

For four years, Sam has consistently worked on content driven cinema, only picking roles that challenge her. “Challenges are what make an actor live in the heart of the audience for a long time. A heroine’s shelf life is small. I’ve been in the industry for a decade and I may continue for another couple of years. People should talk about me later, right? From the beginning of my career, I’ve always worked for fame than money. It’s another story that money followed me,” she states. Is she hinting at a retirement? “I haven’t thought about it. I will continue to associate with cinema but I want a family and it will happen,” she points out.

Does Samantha, like *Jaanu*, visit her college to go down the memory lane? “The Stella Maris College, where I’ve studied, was a strict college back then. Modeling was banned but I duped them acted in commercials. Nobody knew it because they couldn’t recognise me on TV. When I told my friends that I’ve got an invitation from them recently to attend an event, they all voted that I shouldn’t visit it,” she laughs.

She will be next seen in Raj-DK’s *The Family Man 2* series for Amazon Prime Video. It will mark her digital debut and she has completed shooting for it. It will also be the first time where she will kick some butt. “Shooting for the action sequences was hard and it was mostly hand-to-hand combat. I’ve sustained some bruises in the process but when I saw the output I was pleased. The role has a negative streak,” she signs off.



It’s official! *RRR* moves to Sankranti

The suspense surrounding the release date of S.S. Rajamouli’s *RRR*, starring Jr NTR and Ram Charan, has been cleared for once and all. Despite Charan’s recent assurance that it would arrive on the original date of July 30 later this year, whispers in the industry pointed otherwise as the film was more than two months behind schedule. On Wednesday evening, the film’s makers have issued a statement, saying that the film will now arrive on January 8, 2021.

“We understand this is a disappointment, but there’s going to be a lot to look forward to because this only gives us more time to bring the best to you. Your love and support have made all our hard work and hectic schedules worthwhile! We are working round the clock to give you a cinematic experience like never before. And with a huge worldwide release planned, we have had to postpone the date of release (sic),” the film’s official Twitter handle @RRRMovie posted on Twitter in a series of tweets.

While many expected the film, a fictional story based on two real-life heroes and freedom fighters — Alluri Seetharama Raju and Komaram Bheem — to arrive in October, the

While many expected the film, a fictional story based on Alluri Seetharama Raju and Komaram Bheem to arrive in October, the Sankranti date has come as a surprise

Sankranti date has come as a surprise. Sources say producer D.V.V. Danayya was adamant on the festive date. “He was astonished by the revenue *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo* and *Sarileru Neekevvaru* collected and wanted to capitalise on it next year with *RRR*. He is investing close to Rs 500 crores on the film and he felt the festive season is perfect not just in the Telugu states but in the whole of South,” said sources. Now, that leaves us the question as to which film will face off *RRR* for Sankranti next year.



ANUPAMA BOARDS HUSHARU DIRECTOR’S NEXT

Last seen in *Rakshasudu* opposite Bellamkonda Sreenivas, Anupama Parameswaran is in the final round of negotiations to be leading lady in *Husharu* director Sree Harsha Konuganti’s next venture, *Rowdy Boys* (tentative title).

A production venture of the Sri Venkateswara Creations, Dil Raju’s

nephew Ashish Reddy is being introduced as a leading man with the film, while Vikram Sahadev, son of producer Lagadapati Sridhar, is playing a crucial role.

“The makers did consider some other names for the female face part but they didn’t get a good response from them. Finally, they’ve approached Anupama. She liked her part and gave her in-

principle nod. She is more or less 80 per cent confirmed her part. She has lost of oodles of weight and is in the best shape of her career,” said a source close to the unit.

The film, a Hyderabad-set drama, is a feel-good youth entertainer that rolls later this month. The pre-production is in full swing right now and the makers intend to finish the film by May. — NG



Ram, Ravi Teja, in top 25 desired personalities list

Superstars Ram Charan and Ravi Teja have found place among top 25 desired personalities of the year with ranks 19 and 22 respectively. Superstar Rajinikanth has been ranked 15. Amitabh Bachchan aced the list to claim ‘India’s Most Desired Personality 2020’ title followed by Salman Khan and Akshay Kumar in second and third positions.

This list was prepared by the TRA, a company that works on building brands, for the top 25 ‘Desired Personalities’ in the country. National cricket team captain, Virat Kohli, was ranked fourth and is the ‘Most Desired Cricketer’ this year. Virat was followed by actor Aamir Khan in a close fifth. The TRA arrived at this list through primary research based on TRA’s proprietary 36-attribute based ‘Desire Matrix’ through face-to-face interviews with 1,454 viewer-influencers across 14 Indian cities.

N Chandramouli, CEO, TRA Research, said, “TRA’s Desire Matrix measures 36 attributes of desire that get deeply embedded into the subconscious of the audiences over time. It measures the aspirational, emotional, rational and the communication aspects of desire that audience relate to.”

“Desire is the most fundamental of human expressions and is generated due to subliminally embedded psycho-socio-cultural inputs that audiences. This list of personalities is a precursor to the soon-to-be released TRA’s ‘Most Desired Brands 2020’ which lists India’s 1,000 top brands measured on TRA’s Desire Matrix,” he added.



New titles registered at Film Chamber

While producer Dil Raju has promised to reveal the title of Pawan Kalyan comeback film, the Telugu remake of Hindi film *Pink*, during Ugadi, it seems that he has already registered a title at the Telugu film chamber of commerce.

According to sources from the chamber, he has chosen *Vakeel Saab* as the title for the *Pink* remake which has gone to floors last month. Being directed by Venu Sreeram, the film, scheduled to release on May 15, also features Anjali, Nivetha Thomas and Ananya in lead roles.

Similarly, UV Creations too has registered a couple of titles — *Oh Dear* and *Radhe Shyam* — for their on-sets film with Prabhas. While *Jaau* was favoured initially, the production house had to go for alternate title after Dil Raju decided to name his Friday release, starring Sharwanand and Samantha, as *Jaanu*. The leading producer took the required consent from UV Creations and Prabhas though.



Surya ton leads Mumbai's fight back

Ranji Trophy
Live from 9:30am IST
HOTSTAR

BINDRA'S GOLD TRANSFORMED SHOOTING'S LANDSCAPE IN INDIA: VERMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Crediting Abhinav Bindra for changing the landscape of shooting in the country, rising pistol marksman Abhishek Verma on Thursday said the gold medal gave confidence to many aspiring shooters.

In 2008, Bindra became the first Indian to win an individual gold medal at the Olympic Games at Beijing.

"Abhinav Bindra's gold medal completely transformed the shooting landscape in our country. It gave that confidence to many aspiring shooters like me that I too can perform well in the sport and get a medal for my country," Verma said.

For the Tokyo Games, the number of quotas stands at a record 15 after a highly successful 2019 that saw Indian shooters top all the Rifle-Pistol World Cups and the season-ending World Cup Finals.

Verma also managed to book an Olympic quota for India by winning the gold in the 10m air pistol event at the Beijing World Cup.

"I am working really hard towards honing my skills and giving my best shot at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics," Verma said.

The first edition of the Khelo India University Games is being organised in Bhubaneswar from Feb 22 February to March 1 March and Verma feels the tournament will help get a system in place for aspiring sports persons.

"I think this is the best thing to have happened for grassroots level sports in our country, previously there was a national university championship that used to take place but no one was aware of it," he said.

"Firstly with Khelo India Youth Games and now with the Khelo India University games taking place I think we finally have a system coming in place which provides a professional competition space for all aspiring athletes of our country."

Verma also said it is very important that parents encourage their children to take up sports and support them in their endeavour of becoming an athlete.

"Parents play a huge role in building their children's careers who are aspiring to pursue professional sports. With the government coming up with initiatives like the Khelo India University Games, I feel it is essential for parents to understand that it shouldn't only be about studies, a career in sports is very much a realistic thought," said the shooter.

PCB needs to use services of former players, says Akhtar

IANIS ■ LAHORE

Former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar has labelled the U-19 team's semi-final show against India as "immature", saying their cricket board can seek help from former players like him, Mohammad Yousuf and Younis Khan.

Pakistan colts lost to India by 10 wickets to crash out of the World Cup at the semi-final stage.

Pakistan were skittled out for 172 and then it was a cakewalk for centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal who remained unbeaten on 105 with Divyaansh Saxena not out on 59 as India won in 35.2 overs scoring 176.

"Don't lose heart. You need to learn from failures. These are not setbacks, these are opportunities. Well done on reaching the semi-final but the better team won," Akhtar said on his YouTube channel.

Akhtar termed Pakistan's ground fielding as "pathetic and foolish". He lavished praise on Jaiswal, saying he will play for India one day as

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Suryakumar Yadav blazed his way to 134 to lead Mumbai's fight back on the third day of their Elite Group B Ranji Trophy game against Saurashtra after the domestic giants conceded 73 runs first-innings lead.

After losing opener Bhupen Lalwani (3) early, Surya (134 off 130 balls, 17x4, 3x6) and Jay Bista (46) wiped out the deficit in just 16 overs to keep Mumbai in the hunt at the SCA Stadium in Khandheri.

Surya notched up his 14th first-class 100, as he played his usual aggressive game, while Bista played second fiddle.

The duo added 119-runs for the second wicket and their partnership brought Mumbai back into the contention in what is a must-win game.

Surya got a life at 44 and he made optimum use of it.

All-rounder Shams Mulani was promoted to number four and he added 98 runs for the third wicket with Surya as Mumbai looked to gain the upper-hand.

But left-arm orthodox spinner Dharmendrasinh Jadeja, who troubled Surya, won the battle after trapping him in front of the wicket.

In-form Sarfaraz Khan joined Mulani and the two remained unbeaten when stumps were drawn with Mumbai at 285 for 3, extending the lead by 212 runs.

Earlier, resuming at the overnight 257 for 6, Saurashtra overhauled Mumbai's first-innings score of 262.

A gritty unbeaten 84 by Chirag Jani helped the hosts take a 73-run first innings lead.

Paes to play in Bangalore Open

BENGALURU:

Indian tennis legend Leander Paes on Thursday confirmed his participation in the Bangalore Open ATP Challenger, beginning here on February 10.

Paes, who is into his farewell season, will be seen in action for one last time on home soil at the \$162,000 event at the KSLTA.

"Playing at home in front

Afghanistan recall Shapoor for Ireland T20Is

Kabul: Afghanistan have recalled fast bowler Shapoor Zadran for the upcoming three-match T20I series against Ireland. Zadran makes a comeback in national colors after almost one and a half years. The pacer last played in a T20I in June 2018 against Bangladesh. The 15-member squad announced by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) selection committee also consists of young all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai. Opening batsman, Usman Ghani, who was not included in Afghanistan's series against West Indies in October 2019, is back in the squad as well. Afghanistan will face Ireland in a three-match T20I series which will be played on March 6, 8 and 10 at the Greater Noida Ground. PTI

PCB needs to use services of former players, says Akhtar

he has the hunger.

"Jaiswal will go places. He has the hunger to do well. He will definitely play for India. India looked so matured. And that is because they have matured coaches."

India won the U-19 World Cup in 2018 with Rahul Dravid as the head coach. Akhtar cited his example, saying if you want the best to groom your youngsters, you need to spend money on them.

"They got India's best middle-order batsman Rahul Dravid for the coaching role in U-19 team."

When you get a big guy, you need to pay him well. Here, Younis Khan went to take the job, the PCB offered him a job, and then they are bargaining with him. '15 lakh nahi, 13 lakh le lo' (take ₹ 13 lakh and not ₹ 15 lakh). He said 'take it back'. Is that how you treat your stars?

"There is Mohammad Yousuf, Younis Khan, I am here, just ask us. We will help the team. You think if we were a part of U-19 coaching staff, the team would have performed like this?" said Akhtar.



Madhya Pradesh's batsman Venkatesh Iyer plays shot during his unbeaten 80 run innings against Karnataka at KSCA Navale stadium in Shimoga PTI

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu defeated Baroda by an innings and 57 runs at Motibaug Ground in Vadodara with right-arm medium pacer K Vignesh taking a fiver in the second essay.

Due to Vignesh's heroics with the ball, Tamil Nadu dismissed the hosts for 259 in their second innings to register an emphatic win and picked up seven points.

His haul included the key wicket of captain Krunal Pandya, who made a defiant 74 (95 balls, 10 fours, 2 sixes),

having him caught in the deep by substitute M Siddharth and Deepak Hooda (4).

The 25-year-old medium-pacer, who made a comeback into the team after being dropped for the match against Railways (which Tamil Nadu won comprehensively), said it was good to be back in the squad and among wickets too.

"The wicket was good and we had to really bowl well in the second innings because it slightly eased out

after we batted," Vignesh said.

ANUJ RAISES DELHI HOPES

NEW DELHI: Wicketkeeper batsman Anuj Rawat's stroke-filled hundred gave Delhi a slim chance of an outright win after Gujarat got the all-important first innings lead in group A encounter.

In reply to Delhi's 293, Gujarat scored 335 after starting the day at 269 for 4 with Manprit Juneja (124, 190 balls) and Dhruv Raval (94)'s 221-run

stand for the fifth wicket proving crucial in a 42-run lead.

However left-handed Anuj, a former India U19 captain, then took the attack back to the opposition camp with a superb 133 off 194 balls that had 15 fours and two sixes.

Delhi ended the day at 228 for four with a lead of 186 runs going into the final day.

While the chances of an outright win on a good batting track might not be more than 25 percent but Anuj's innings certainly gave Delhi a glimmer of hope if they can get a lead of 275 by lunch and get 60 overs at opposition.

"That's the plan. The wicket is good for batting but it is slightly up and down at times. But yes, bowlers need to bend their backs," said the student of Rajkumar Sharma, who is also Virat Kohli's coach.

GOA RETURN TO TOP

SOVIMA: Goa dished out an all-round performance to thrash Nagaland by 229 runs inside three days to return to the top of Plate table.

With a cushion of 142-run first innings lead, Snehal Kauthankar (68 not out from 63 balls; 9x4s, 1x6) and skipper Amit Verma (66 from 73 balls; 6x4s, 2x6s) put together 103 runs in 95 balls for the fourth wicket to declare their second essay at 221 for four, setting a stiff 364 target for the hosts

In reply, only three Nagaland batsmen reached double digit scores as they were folded for 134 in 36.4 overs to suffer their second defeat this season.

Stuart Binny top-scored with 58 but there was little support from the other end with Shrikant Mundhe (38) being the other batsman to reach double figures.

Prajnesh out of Tata Open

Soon-woo beats Gunneswaran to end India's challenge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fourth-seeded Kwan Soon-woo stormed into the singles quarter-finals at the third of Tata Open Maharashtra with a hard-fought 6-3, 7-6 (7-5) win against India's Prajnesh Gunneswaran at Mhalunge Balewadi Stadium in Pune on Thursday.

Despite losing the first set, the India No 1 put a brilliant show in attempt to comeback which saw the second set going into decider. However, World No 88 Soon-woo held his nerves in the tie-breaker to score crucial points and wrapped up the match.

Prajnesh, who entered the South Asia's only ATP Tour tournament, which is organised by Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) in association with Government of Maharashtra, with a direct entry in the main draw, denied his opponent match points on a couple of occasions.

With Prajnesh's loss in the round of 16, India's challenge came to an end in the singles.

Earlier Sumit Nagal, Ramkumar Ramanathan, Sasikumar Mukund and Arjun Kadhe lost their respective matches in the opening round.

Earlier in other singles last-16 match, Australia's James Duckworth held his nerves during thrilling three-set 6-7 (4-7), 7-6 (8-6), 6-3 over Taro Daniel. Despite losing the first set, the sixth seeded Duckworth made timely comeback to win the hard-fought second set. However, the Australian had continued the momentum to win the decider easily to complete victory.

In doubles category, pair of Romain Arneodo and Andre Begemann caused a major upset in the tournament as they knocked out top-seed pair of Robin Haase and Robert Lindstedt with a thrashing 6-3, 6-3 win to enter the semi-finals.

However, third seeded Jonathan Erlich and Andrei Vasilevski also made their way into the last four. Erlich-Vasilevski had fought hard before registering 5-7, 6-1, 10-8 win against Italian pair of Stefano Travaglia and Paolo Lorenzi.

Olympics on mind, India improving with each match: Gurjant

NEW DELHI: The Indian men's hockey team began their FIH Hockey Pro League campaign on a fantastic note after defeating the Netherlands in both their matches last month. And the world No 5 Indian team now will face a bigger challenge when they host world No 1 side Belgium on 8 February and 9 February at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. India's Forward Gurjant Singh expressed that the Indian set-up is improving with each match and is working towards a common goal of performing well at the Olympics this year.

"This is a very crucial time for us. Every match is very important for us. We are coordinating and playing well as a unit. However, we have to ensure that we keep putting up good performances consistent-



ly. Each and every player in the team has the Olympics in their mind and we are working towards doing well at the tournament," said the 25-year-old. The forward added that the team is confident ahead of taking on Belgium since India performed brilliantly during their tour of Belgium last year. "We had a great tour of Belgium last year, we won all our matches there. That result certainly gives us a lot of confidence. All the FIH Hockey Pro League matches will help us prepare for the Olympics. All the top teams in the world are playing this tournament. Now the Indian team is performing well. We beat the Netherlands last month, who are ranked third in the world. So the team's morale is quite high at the moment," said Gurjant. PNS

Belgium expects good fight

NEW DELHI: After a marvelous start of their Pro League campaign which saw them defeat Australia and New Zealand away from home, World Champions and world No 1 Belgium Belgian team led by experienced midfielder Thomas Briels, arrived in the Bhubaneswar brimming with confidence ahead of their two matches against hosts India. Expressing delight at the prospect of playing India at the iconic Kalinga Hockey Stadium, Briels said he's looking forward to playing at the venue where his side lifted the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup trophy in 2018. "It feels really good to be back in the city where we became the World Champions. And I'm

expecting a great round of matches against India, who have also improved massively in the past couple of years," said the 32-year-old.

Commenting on opponents India, Briels said he expects a good fight, "India is looking really sharp as well, and they have been playing well which is something we saw in their initial two matches against the Dutch. We expect a tough couple of matches, and its going to be a good fight for us as well. Of course, we are wary of the threat that they possess, but we are really excited to play a tough opponent like India so we can improve further before the Olympics." PNS

As big a fan of Dhoni as anyone else: MSK Prasad

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

Former chairman of selectors MSK Prasad is as big a fan of MS Dhoni as anyone else, although in his chair, it was his job to 'move on' from the stumper and give youngsters a chance.

"As far as we are concerned, we are backing youngsters and giving them as many opportunities to settle well and play long," Prasad was quoted as saying by Sportstar. "Mahi will take a decision for himself. As a panel member, if I keep professional duty aside, I am as big a fan of Dhoni as anyone else. He has achieved everything under the

sun winning two World Cups, the Champions Trophy, the No. 1 Status in Tests. Nobody can question that. "About his career, he will take a call. As selectors, our duty is to move on and identify the next generation of players and keep giving them chances."

Under his watch, Rohit Sharma blossomed to be one of the best batters in world cricket and also cemented his spot in the Test team as an opener. "Well, Rohit is now an all-format player. His transformation is stunning. We know his unbelievable talent in white ball cricket with those double centuries.

"And, in the last four to five months as a Test opener, he has shown his class. I wish he has one good away series. That should change his mindset," opined Prasad.

On Shreyas Iyer, who is India's newfound No.4, a position the team struggled to find a player for during his tenure with Vijay Shankar going to the World Cup and not doing well at the spot, Prasad said: "In Tests, we have Hanuma Vihari and Shreyas for ODIs. Shreyas is doing well."

Prasad also said when Jasprit Bumrah was out with injury for a long time, he was training in a manner which

meant he would not be rusty on return. Bumrah has been on-song since making a comeback with the fifth and final T20I in New Zealand being a case in point where he returned magical figures of 3/12.

"Even though he was resting, he was training in such a way that once he came back into the squad he was not rusty. He was ready from ball one."

Asked about the cases of Karun Nair and Ambati Rayudu who were not picked despite good performances, Prasad said: "I felt seriously for Rayudu. I can clearly say that. It was a very touch and go

issue. Our committee always felt that he should be on the radar of Test selection after the 2016 Zimbabwe tour.

"And, I spoke to him as to why he was not focussing on Test cricket. If you remember, based on the IPL performances, we picked him for ODIs, which may not look appropriate to many. Then, we focussed on his fitness for one month at the NCA, helped him there. He has delivered to an extent. Unfortunately, I am also hurt at what happened to him (apparently referring to the 2019 World Cup selection when Rayudu was ignored) having played with him. I feel bad for him."

'Olympics will go ahead': Tokyo organisers slam virus rumours

AFP ■ TOKYO

Tokyo 2020 Olympics organisers said Thursday the Games would "go ahead as planned", slamming misinformation over the new coronavirus for triggering panic.

Chief executive officer Toshiro Muto revealed that organisers have set up a task force to combat the fast-spreading disease that has killed over 560 people and infected at least 28,000 -- the vast majority in mainland China -- but promised that the Games would be not derailed.

"The Olympics will go ahead as planned," he told reporters after a Paralympic project review.

"It is important to remain objective and cool-headed. We don't want to alarm the public. The infection is still limited and there is no problem staging the Olympics based on the current situation."

International Paralympic Committee (IPC) spokesman Craig Spence complained that scaremongering had created an "info-demic" that could skew public perception in the run-up to the Olympics and Paralympics.

"Fear is spreading quicker than the virus," he said.

"It's important we quell that fear. Only 191 of the total cases are outside mainland China, so let's put things into perspective.

"If you compare those rates with the common flu, they are still relatively small numbers," added Spence.

"The World Health Organization (WHO) has not declared this a pandemic. We dealt with the Zika virus in Rio and in these matters we need to rely on the experts.

"We will follow the advice of the World Health Organization. Every organising committee looks into countermeasures, and we have measures in place from previous Olympics and Paralympics here in Tokyo. It is standard practice, it's business as usual." More than 20 countries have confirmed cases of the flu-like coronavirus.

GLOBAL PANIC Japan has had no reported deaths so far, but 45 cases have been detected, including at least 20 people on a cruise ship carrying more than 3,700 passengers and crew quarantined off Yokohama.

The WHO has declared the outbreak a global health emergency. Japan has warned citizens against non-essential travel to China and fast-tracked new rules including limits on entering the country as it tries to contain the spread of the virus.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Thursday pledged that preparations for the Olympics would proceed as normal.

"The coronavirus is beginning to have an impact on tourism," he said. "But the government will continue to steadily prepare for the Games in close cooperation with the IOC (International Olympic Committee), the local organising committee and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government."

The Japanese government has chartered three flights to repatriate 565 Japanese nationals from Wuhan, the central Chinese city hardest hit by the virus. Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike promised at the weekend to implement "thorough measures" to protect people from the virus.

The health scare has led to the cancellation of Olympic qualifying events in China such as boxing and badminton.

The Tokyo Olympics begin on July 24 with the Paralympics starting on August 25.