

ANALYSIS 7
 PAY TAXES FOR A
 DEVELOPED NATION

MONEY 8
 MOODY'S CUTS INDIA GROWTH
 PROJECTION TO 5.4 PC FOR 2020

SPORTS 12
 PUNIA, VINESHA LEAD
 INDIAN CHALLENGE

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY FEBRUARY 18, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



MAHA SURPRISE
 BASKET FOR
 SATYADEV

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MICHELIN CHEFS COUNT MUMBAI STREET FOOD IN WORLD'S BEST

Fried potato dumplings are served in buttery soft buns and laced with sinus-clearing spicy chutneys and deep fried green chillis at Swati Snacks. It's a simple dish that's found everywhere and loved all around the globe. But where can you get the best one and what's the secret to turning a handful of minced beef (or something else) and some bread into a delicacy? We asked the culinary elite - chefs laden with Michelin stars and other accolades - and they voted for Mumbai as best street food in India.



DMK MP COMPARES MEDIA TO THOSE IN MUMBAI RED-LIGHT AREA

DMK MP RS Bharathi has waded into a controversy by comparing TV media houses and journalists to those in "Mumbai red light area" alleging money was their primary concern. The Chennai Press Club strongly criticised the senior DMK leader's remarks and demanded an apology from him. In a video that went viral on Monday, the DMK Rajya MP is heard questioning why the media had made a matter of debate, the DMK employing political strategist Prashant Kishor and purportedly questions the rationale behind it discussing party chief M K Stalin and his family's visits to religious places.



ATTENTION, DUBAI. THIS SAUDI CITY IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Ronny Froehlich's voice echoed across the empty rooms as he walked through his company's new office in Riyadh. The German entrepreneur had just set up the internet, but he was already imagining the space as the bustling future headquarters of Golden Scent, a Dubai-based e-commerce firm he co-founded with a Saudi friend five years ago. The next step is to move employees from Dubai and hire more in the Saudi capital. "If you want to be big in the Middle East, you need to be in Saudi-full stop," he said. "Maybe in six months we'll stand here and it's full."



RECORD-SETTING BUFFALO RACER SEEKS TIME ON INVITE FOR TRIALS

A buffalo racer from Karnataka, who was called for trial by the Sports Ministry on Monday after setting a new record as the fastest runner in the history of the traditional sport, Kambala, has said he would need a month's time to attend the training sessions. The trial was arranged by Union Minister Kiren Rijju at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Bangalore after Srinivasa Gowda's videos went viral. "I will not be attending trials at Sports Authority of India. I want to achieve more in Kambala," Srinivasa Gowda, 28, told reporters, seeking a month's time.



TRULY SPEAKING

Much ado about Jagan-Modi meeting

2

We are building capabilities of tomorrow today, asserts KTR

At 3-day BioAsia, KTR says Pharma City launch this year

NAVEENA GHANATE
 HYDERABAD

Emphasising that the Government of Telangana recognises that medicine is moving from pills to cells and block-busters to niche-busters, Minister KT Rama Rao on Monday inaugurated the 17th edition of the three-day global forum BioAsia Summit. "In line with the theme of this year's BioAsia summit, we at Government of Telangana are also committed to building capabilities of tomorrow and are planning to establish a world-class institution focused on curative therapies here in Hyderabad," KTR said, announcing Hyderabad Pharma City will be officially launched in the latter part of this year.



Minister KTR presents the 'Genome Valley Excellence' Award to Dr Carl June for his work in the field of immunotherapy at the Bio Asia summit in Hyderabad on Monday.

The three-day global is being held from February 17 to 19 at HICC with theme "Today for Tomorrow". KTR said, "Pharma City is one of the flagship initiatives of the Government to create a global benchmark for sustain-

able industrial cities. I am happy to report that all the planning works for establishment of Hyderabad Pharma City are complete and also all the statutory clearances, including environmental clearance are in place

a major milestone, are in place. Government of India also has recognized the potential of Pharma City by according the status of National Investment and Manufacturing Zone. We are very close to land allotments to industries".

3 relatives of TRS MLA found dead 20 days after they drown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The bodies of three relatives of a TRS legislator were found in car retrieved from a canal in the state's Karimnagar district on Monday when the police was searching for a couple that fell into the canal on Sunday night.



The car in which bodies of the three deceased were found being fished out from the canal bed with the help of a crane on Monday.

While searching for the bodies of the couple that was riding a motorbike, police found three bodies in a car. They were identified as Radha (50), her husband Satyanarayana Reddy (55) and their daughter Vinayashree (19).

Radha was teacher in a government-run school in Telangana while her husband was a businessman. The family was not seen for last 20 days but no one had lodged a complaint with the police. Manohar Reddy said they had thought that they had gone on a long tour.



Fire at GST Bhavan in Mumbai; no casualty



Coronavirus impact on steel biz for next 2-3 years

Prez, V-P, PM, CMs greet KCR on his 66th birthday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

President Ramnath Kovind, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Ministers of various states greeted Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao on his 66th birthday on Monday. President Kovind, Venkaiah Naidu, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Prakash Birla, Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan greeted the CM over the phone. "Greetings to Telangana CM KCR Garu on his birthday. Praying for his long and healthy life," tweeted Modi. KCR, as he is popularly known, also received birthday



Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao is blessed by veda pundits on Monday.

greetings from his AP counterpart YS Jaganmohan Reddy, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palanisamy, Chhattisgarh Governor Anusuiya Uikey, Punjab Governor VP Singh Badnore.

NIRBHAYA CONVICTS Delhi court orders hanging on Mar 3

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday ordered that the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang-rape and murder case be hanged on March 3 after it issued fresh death warrants, observing that deferring the execution any further would be "sacrilegious" to the rights of the victim for expeditious justice.

The court directed that the four men— Mukesh Kumar Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Kumar Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar (31)— be hanged by neck on March 3 at 6 am until they are dead.



Teen accused of theft dies, D'Mart blamed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a shocking incident, an Intermediate student died soon after he was allegedly caught stealing chocolates from the D'Mart supermarket at Vanasthalipuram in Hyderabad on Sunday night. While the parents accuse the store employees of an assault on the boy, the Police said that the teenager was not even touched and that he collapsed due to ill health and died.

identified as 17-year-old Lavudya Satish, a student of Sri Chaitanya Junior College at Hayathnagar, was allegedly caught shoplifting by the staff and security of the store. "He was allegedly thrashed by the staff severely and collapsed on the spot, following which he was taken to a hospital nearby" family members of the boy alleged. It is said that Satish and two of his friends went to DMart for shopping on Sunday.

Free Wi-Fi at 427 rly stns in TS, AP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of Railways Piyush Goyal will dedicate free high-speed Wi-Fi facility at 427 Railway stations in TS and AP on Tuesday. Goyal, along with MoS (Home) G. Kishan Reddy will lay a foundation stone and dedicate a host of infrastructure and passenger facilities on Tuesday at Secunderabad Railway Station. They will lay a foundation stone for development of satellite terminal at Charlapalli Railway Station and electrification of Yerraguntla - Nandyal section via video link and also inaugurate a double line with electrification of Guntakal - Kalluru section. Also, a function will be held at Guntakal Railway Station for laying of foundation for electrification of Yerraguntla - Nandyal section and dedication of Guntakal - Kalluru double line.

HC chides TSBIE for inaction on private colleges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Monday expressed its displeasure with the state government for failing to take action against Sri Chaitanya and Narayana educational institutions that are being run contrary to the norms fixed by the government by the state.



The HC directed the TD government and the BIE to inform it about the action taken against Sri Chaitanya and Narayana for flouting the rules framed by them. The High Court observed that it appeared that the authorities were hand-in-glove with the managements of the two institutions thereby making the life of students of the colleges miserable. A division bench of the

High Court comprising Chief Justice Justice RS Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy passed the orders while dealing with a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by a social worker by name Dantham Rajesh, a native of Medipally of Uppal from the city. The High Court has also expressed its anger over the report filed by the board. The bench said that the report did not contain the details sought by it.

DEATH OF FUNDS HAUNTS METRO

Let alone phase-2, HMRL doesn't have funds to build an escalator

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Be it Phase-2 of Metro or completing 5 km Old City stretch of Phase 1 or for that matter merely building an escalator, dearth of funds is haunting Metro activities. With the inaugural of JBS-

MGBS stretch, citizens are raising questions over completion of 5 km Old City stretch from JBS to Falaknuma. In fact HMRL itself wants to 'try' to get it done and is extremely uncertain about it. The only statement from the government and HMRL time and again is that "The Chief Minister is extremely keen about completing this stretch".



Student battles for life after car runs over her

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A student sustained critical injuries after being run over by a car at SR Nagar. The girl was first hit by a bike after which a car ran over her, said the Police. The victim was identified as 23-year-old Alekhya, a student residing in a nearby hostel. According to the SR Nagar Police, Alekhya was crossing the road when the mishap occurred. A speeding bike first hit Alekhya and moments

later, a car right behind the bike crashed into the bike and then the girl. The car ran over the bike rider and then over the girl and dragged her for a few metres before coming to a halt. Locals who witnessed the whole incident, rushed to her rescue and immediately pulled her out from under the car. Alekhya was shifted to a hospital where she is undergoing treatment. Her condition was stated to be critical.

INDIAN COUPLE'S SOS FROM WUHAN 'There's no one in our apartment complex'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An Indian couple from Uttar Pradesh, stuck in China's Wuhan city where coronavirus epidemic broke out over a month ago, has sought central government's help to arrange their return to the country. The outbreak, which has claimed over 1,700 people in China, has spread to more than 25 countries across the world in the last few weeks.



Ashish Yadav, an associate professor at the Wuhan Textile University and his wife Neha, a PhD scholar, could not be evacuated earlier this month on Air India flights sent by the centre to Wuhan because of Neha's surgery.

In the two-minute video shot by Ashish from the balcony of his apartment in Wuhan province of China on Sunday afternoon, the professor describes how the couple is running out of supplies

parents are very worried I would request that we should be evacuated soonest." In the two-minute video shot by Ashish from the balcony of his apartment on Sunday afternoon, the professor describes how the couple is running out of supplies. "You can see the weather is very bad today. There is heavy rain and light snowfall since yesterday afternoon."

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Magha & Krishna Paksha
 Panchangam:
 Tithi: Dashami: 02:32 pm
 Nakshatram: Mula: 06:06 am (Next Day)
 Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
 Rahukalam: 03:22 pm - 04:48 pm
 Yamagandam: 09:37 am - 11:03 am
 Variyam: 01:31 pm - 03:11 pm, 07:00 pm - 06:06 am
 Gulika: 12:30 pm - 01:56 pm
 Good Time: (to start any important work)
 Amritkalam: 11:28 pm - 01:08 am
 Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 pm - 12:53 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny
 Temp: 32/18
 Humidity: 38%
 Sunrise: 06:41
 Sunset: 06:18
 Current Weather Conditions
 Updated February 17, 2019 5:00 PM

Much ado about Jagan-Modi meeting

The BJP believes that there are only opponents, and not rivals in politics and this has been the party's policy since long.

A Chief Minister invariably calls on the Prime Minister when on a trip to Delhi, but not party bosses. It's therefore surprising that when CMs of Telugu states call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, such meetings have been assuming political overtones.

Meeting of AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy with the PM recently led to rumours like YSRCP joining NDA, Centre approving the decisions of the YSRC and exoneration of Jagan from his court cases and so on.

As if it was not enough, I-T raids conducted elsewhere in the country were linked to Jagan's ties with the BJP.

BJP AP affairs in-charge Sunil Deodhar had to clarify that there was no alliance between the two parties and identify both YSRCP and TDP as its rivals.

Jagan's mere calling on Narendra Modi and Amit Shah would not drastically alter the political equations. As far as AP is concerned, the BJP will strive to become the strongest rival of the YSRCP.

The BJP has been fighting to protect the interests of Amaravati knowing full well that the decision on the state capital is within the purview of the state. BJP adopted a resolution against shifting of the capital and also clearly spelled out its stand on dissolution of the Legislative Council or relocating the High Court.

As per the statute, the Centre can intervene only on request of state governments when there is a major law and order problem and there is no scope to look at them from political perspective. It is ridiculous to link Jagan calling on the PM and the cases reg-

As per the statute, the Centre can intervene only on request of state governments when there is a major law and order problem. Unlike Congress PMs, Modi is not a kind of a leader who would topple governments in states at will trampling upon the rights of the states

istered against him. Modi strongly believes that the law will take its own course in matters like this.

Dissolution of the Council is never on the priority list of the Centre. To relocate the High Court to Kurnool, approval of collegiums of judges and Chief Justice of India is needed. Moreover, there are many legal and constitutional safeguards to be fulfilled. Therefore, chances of dissolving the Council as and

when Jagan wants are very few. On the rumours of BJP allying with Jagan because YSRCP will have more seats in the Rajya Sabha, political equations in Parliament and state-level politics should be viewed from different perspectives.

Parliamentary party leaders and chief whips of various parties issue directions to their MPs when a Bill is put to vote. There were instances of BJP fighting against those parties



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

that supported Bills moved by the NDA government.

Healthy political culture is when political outfits cooperate on Bills of national importance once elections are over. Modi values this political culture with his popular slo-

gan 'Sab Ka Saath, Sab Ka Vikas'.

Unfortunately, Jagan is implementing a destructive culture ignoring the healthy political culture. He is taking decisions left, right and centre to victimise rival political parties. On account of this, administration has come to a standstill in AP. No doubt, Jagan's lack of experience and TDP beyond recovery will provide golden opportunity to the BJP in AP.

It's clear that the Centre will not help fulfil Jagan's personal agenda, if any.

As far as Telangana state is concerned, the BJP is the most viable alternative to the TRS if the Lok Sabha and recent local body elections are any indication. Hence the

scathing attacks on the BJP by K Chandrasekhar Rao and his son. If their criticism of the CAA is any indication, it fuels doubts whether they studied the Act or are aware of the history of Independent India.

While Modi government is attempting to render justice to the discriminated sections overseas, KCR has been trying to incite sections of society who were not subjected to ill-treatment.

If KCR has any understanding about how non-Muslim population in Pakistan dwindled since Independence and how Muslim population in the country, he would have understood the plight of the non-Muslims.

KCR has been slinging mud against the Centre alleging

that it discriminated against Telangana. Barely a week ago, the Finance Minister made it clear in the Lok Sabha that the Centre released over Rs 1.50 lakh-crore since inception of Telangana. She also mentioned specific release of funds under each head of account.

KCR would not have been able to approach the people for votes had the Centre not released grants-in-aid to backward districts, local bodies, rural development and to implement centrally-sponsored schemes. KCR is well aware that praising the Centre would earn good name for the BJP among the people.

Modi, who abides by the spirit of federalism, is implementing recommendations of the Finance Commission.

KCR only plays politics, ignoring facts. The Centre allocated Rs 1,200 crore for Metro Rail, yet KCR did not invite local MP G Kishan Reddy to its inaugural function only with the intention of insulting him.



'PRO-FARMER POLICIES OF TS GRABBING EYEBALLS'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister S Niranjana Reddy on Monday assured farmers that the state government will procure red gram from them at the MSP and noted that it would put an additional burden of Rs 200 crore on the government.

Addressing media at his quarters here, the Minister said that the whole nation is looking at Telangana because of the pro-farmer measures initiated by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao in agriculture sector. With the diversion of Krishna and Godavari water to parched lands, the farmers are jubilant, he said adding that good days are ahead for farmers in Telangana.

"The TRS government has set an example for the whole nation to emulate its pro-farmer policies. In Kharif, there was bumper harvest in 1.22 crore acres with prosperity dancing all over Telangana soil," the Minister said. "During Kharif, area under paddy was 41 lakh acres, while it was 5



Agriculture Minister Niranjana Reddy addressing the media in the city on Monday

Though the State Government had written to the Centre asking it to increase the red gram procurement quota, it is not responding, said Niranjana

lakh acres under red gram. The State government sought Centre's support to procure 47,500 tonnes of red gram at the rate of Rs 5,800 a quintal.

The Centre is making false promises to double farmers' income by 2022, he said accusing it of being negligent in setting up turmeric board, which will earn valuable foreign

exchange for the country. He objected to policies being pursued by the Centre to release funds to Telangana.

The Centre is not releasing any new funds for Telangana. The state is yet to get its due funds from the government, he said. The role of the Centre is only distributor of funds and does not have any rights over

the funds, he said.

The Centre is not helping the state government, which is progressing with its pro-farmer decisions. Though the State Government had written to the Centre asking it to increase the red gram procurement quota, it is not responding. The Agriculture Department has full information on red gram yield statistics, he said.

If middlemen procure red gram illegally, stern action would be taken against them. If officials are hand-in-glove with them, they would be sent to jail. He asked officials to step up vigil at inter-state boundaries to prevent smuggling of red gram from other states into the state. He thanked the people for their clear verdict in favour of the TRS and thanked officials for ensuring peaceful polls. MLA Biram Harshavardhan Reddy, Marketing director Lakshmi Bai, Markfed MD Bhaskaracharya, Panchayatraj tribalunachairman Bandaru Bhaskar and others were present at the press conference.

TS EdCET notification on Feb 20

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Council for Higher Education will issue the notification for the TS Education Common Entrance Test (TS Ed. CET)-2020 on February 20. Applications can be submitted online from February 24. The last date for submission of registration on online applications forms with the regular fee of Rs 650 and Rs 450 for SC/ST students is April 4 2020. The online applications will be available in the website <https://edcet.tsche.ac>.

The last date for submission of registration of online application forms with a late fee of Rs. 500 is April 25, 2020, with a late of Rs. 1,000 is April 30, 2020 and with a late fee of Rs. 2,000 is on May 4, 2020. The TS Ed.CET 2020 examination will be held from 11 am to 1 pm and 3 pm to 5 pm on Saturday, May 23, 2020. Detailed information regarding eligibility, syllabus, model papers and instructions and procedures for online submissions of applications are available on TS CHE website.

TS decision against CAA unconstitutional, says BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP Telangana State chief spokesperson K Krishna Saagar Rao alleged that the Cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao the other day should have been conducted in Telangana Bhavan instead of Pragati Bhavan as it looked more like TRS election campaign meeting for GHMC elections.

Speaking to the media at BJP state office on Monday, Krishna Sagar Rao said that 'Pattana Pragati' proposed at the Cabinet is a farce and an election gimmick by the Chief Minister. "This government has neglected the city and its development for the last 5 years, and is now trying to deceive its citizens for votes in GHMC elections," he said.

The chief spokesperson said that Cabinet decision passing a resolution to repeal CAA is a minority appeasement tactic and it exposes the 'copy cat' decision by KCR in blindly following Communist and Congress ideology for electoral expediency.

KCR's reference to other states like Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh only highlights the political bankruptcy of TRS and minority appeasement politics similar to that of Congress and Left parties. So far, KCR hasn't clarified to the people of Telangana on any substantive factual reason for his opposition to CAA, he remarked. He said that State Cabinet is a constitutional body



BJP Telangana State chief spokesperson K Krishna Saagar Rao addressing the media in the city on Monday

Decision against CAA ridiculous: Laxman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana state BJP president Dr K Laxman on Monday decried the decision of state Cabinet to pass a resolution against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in the state Assembly on the lines of other states.



In an informal chat with media persons, Dr Laxman said it was ridiculous that the state Cabinet led by Chief Minister K

Chandrasekhar Rao has decided to pass a resolution and demanded abrogation of CAA when the law enacted by Parliament is getting ready for implementation in the country. The state BJP chief questioned Chief Minister did he read our Constitution who claimed to have read thousands of books or an announcement was made after the Cabinet just to satisfy MIM which is protesting against CAA.

and it can't pass a resolution against a national law passed by Parliament. BJP considers the

resolution passed by TRS government in the state Cabinet as illegal and unconstitutional.

Fire breaks out in Nallamala forests

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A major fire broke out in Bimunikolanu area of Nallamala forests sending shivers down the spines of devotees on pada yatra to the temple town.

Devotees on Siva Deeksha, who are on a padayatra to Srisailem have been petrified at the extent of the spreading forest fire. Moreover, the devotees alleged that the forest officials didn't pay heed to douse the flames.

It may be recalled that earlier this month, wildfire in the Nallamala forest reduced about 15 acres of forest land between Vatvarlappally and Domalapenta villages to ashes.

Drones fire 15,000 seed balls in Sircilla

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At the rate of 1 seed ball per second, on Monday, 15,000 seed balls were dropped in 323 hectares of Veernapalli forest in Sircilla. Minister KT Rama Rao on Twitter said, "Seeding through drones as part of Haritha Haaram in Veernapalli in Sircilla constituency today" (sic). The drones flew at a height ranging between 40-50 feet in the forest dropping the seed balls of Velaga, Gangarvari, Gummadi Teak, Seema Chintia, seethapal and Ravi plants.



The drones flew at a height ranging between 40-50 feet in the forest dropping the seed balls of Velaga, Gangarvari, Gummadi Teak, Seema Chintia, seethapal and Ravi plants

on a single day. The dropping of seed balls using drones is 10 times faster when compared to hand planting. It is just 20 per cent of the cost doing it manually, thus saving 80 per cent cost. The entire process cuts down on manpower, time, danger to the tree-planters and results in a ten-fold reduction in the cost for forest land-

scape reforestation."

It may be mentioned here that Department of Environment and Forest and the Emerging Technologies, Department of ITE&C has decided to use drones for seeding and selected MarutDronetech for collaborative development.

MarutDronetech and T-

Works teams with technical mentoring from the RICH has designed, fabricated and tested the country's first aerial seeding drone. The seed balls were made by school children.

"Through this, Marut Drones along with Telangana government wants to set an example through restoring forests quickly, sustainably and collaboratively at required scale to make our dream of a better future, a reality," Prem added. "Each of us in our family have planted saplings today as part of 'EachOnePlantOne'. Many thanks to all those who have shown their love through plantation drive. Request you to kindly take care of the saplings for the next couple of years to ensure successful survival," tweeted IT Minister KT Rama Rao.

'GramSwaraj' to bridge the knowledge gap

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister for Rural Development, Agriculture and Farmers welfare and Panchayati Raj Narendra Singh Tomar on Monday launched 'GramSwaraj', an online learning platform designed and developed by National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) along with 'Kaushal Bharat Portal'.

The launch took place during the General Council Meeting of NIRDPR held at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi.

Aimed at educating the elected representatives of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), 'GramSwaraj' offers 43 courses on Panchayati Raj and Rural Development in Hindi and English, with special focus on Panchayat Governance and



Union Minister for Rural Development Narendra Singh Tomar addressing the media in New Delhi on Monday

Skill Development. The objective is to offer training simultaneously to a large number of functionaries and beneficiaries from anywhere.

Traditional classroom methods take considerable time and can also make it difficult to scale or sustain knowledge. 'GramSwaraj' is an attempt by

NIRDPR to bridge the knowledge gap and provide an opportunity of learning from anywhere, anytime and from any device. At present this portal hosts certificate courses related to Panchayat Governance and Skill Development, both English and Hindi. It is proposed to

offer courses in regional languages also in near future. GramSwaraj Portal can be accessed from the URL - <http://gramswaraj.nirdpr.in/>

The Institute is responsible for carrying out the core activities associated with the implementation of this programme as a Central Technical Support Agency (CTSA) of Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD). Launch of 'KaushalBharat' is a nation-wide initiative where data from all the States is collated in one system, enabling data security and data analytics for quality analytical reports and the scheme improvement.

Lauding NIRDPR for launching the online platform to empower Panchayat Raj Institutions, Narendra Singh Tomar said, "NIRDPR is very prestigious Institute which plays

a crucial role in bringing rural transformation through innovative techniques. I urge NIRDPR for their timely support to State Institute of Rural Development (SIRDs), and to come up with a roadmap for State upliftment in rural sector."

Speaking about impact of the initiative on Rural Development, Dr WR Reddy IAS, Director General, NIRDPR, said, "We have formulated an online platform 'Gram Swaraj' with special focus on Panchayat Governance and Skill Development for elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It is very innovative platform which will provide an experiential learning and will bring behavioral change among people. A mobile application is also launched leveraging technology."

GOs: HC seeks State's response

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Monday directed the state government to file counter affidavit in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the failure of the authorities concerned to upload their GOs and notifications on government website.

The PIL was filed by one Perala Shekar Rao, a resident of LB Nagar in the city. In his petition, he urged the High Court to issue directions to the state government to publish all the Government Department Orders (GOs), notifications and rules circulars on website and update the GOs passed by the government on the official website of the government.

He said that the failure of the authorities of the state government to not upload the GOs and update them at regular intervals was against the principles of natural justice. He also urged the court to appoint a senior officer who shall be responsible for prompt updat-

One Perala Shekar Rao, in his petition, urged the HC to issue directions to the state govt to publish all the GOs, notifications and rules circulars on website and update the GOs passed by the government

ing of the government website and also ensure proper flow of content to the official website of the state government and ensure that all GOs were uploaded in future in the official website.

A division bench of the HC comprising of the Chief Justice of the state Justice RS Chauhan and Justice A Abhishek Reddy later adjourned the matter till February 28.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 41,200 (10 gm)	
₹ 380	
SILVER	
₹ 46,200 (1kg)	
₹ 0	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹110
Without Skin	₹125
Broiler at Farm	₹76
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	385
VIJAYAWADA	413
VISAKHAPATNAM	417
RETAIL PRICE (HYDERABAD)	₹3.85

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
O/o S.E Mission Bhagirath Circle, Warangal Rural.

T.N.No.02,03,04/2019-20 TENDER NOTICE Dt: 14.02.2020.

No. of the works (03) Name of the works: Laying of pipeline from Mission Bhagirath Main Grid Pipeline water supply Connection various Govt. School/Hostels, Laying of pipeline from Mission Bhagirath Main Grid Pipeline for Providing water supply connection and other civil works in undersigned. TOTAL ECV: 79.40 Lakhs. Tender documents available in e-Procurement market 25.02.2020 to 05.03.2020 upto 3.00PM. Tenders accepted Dt: 20.02.2020 to 05.03.2020 upto 5.00 PM. Financial Bid opening Dt: 06.03.2020 at 11.30 AM. Further details may be obtained from the office.

DIPR No: 13/19-DPCL-AGENCY/ADVT/17/2019-20 Dt:17-02-2020 Sd/- Superintending Engineer, MB Circle, Warangal (R).

CRIME CORNER
Man gets 20 yrs in jail for sexual assault on minor

A 26-year-old man was convicted to undergo 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and was also slapped with a fine of Rs 4,000 for sexually assaulting a 5-year-old girl in her sleep, who was his relative. The accused identified as Azmath Khan, a welder by profession was residing at Naya Qila area of Golconda with his extended family. On 29 July, 2018, he was caught sexually assaulting a family member, a minor girl, while she was asleep. The accused was taken to the police by his family members. The cops booked him under various sections of the IPC and PoCSO Act of 2012 and sent the case for trial in the court by remanding him to judicial custody. On Monday, the court convicted him to undergo rigorous imprisonment of 20 years and slapped a fine of Rs 4,000.

Research scholar consumes poison in OU hostel, dies

A research scholar residing in the new PG hostel at Osmania University committed suicide by consuming poison on Monday. The victim was identified as 45-year-old Kompally Narasaiah, a native of Mothkur in Nalgonda. Narasaiah had finished his PhD in Geography, said the police. According to the police, Narasaiah was found dead by his fellow hostel mates. After noticing that the newspaper front of his room was not picked up, other hostellers peeped through the window only to find him lying unconscious on the floor. With the help of a stick, the students unlocked the door and found blood oozing from Narasaiah's nose. The police were then informed who shifted the body for an autopsy. The doctor confirmed that Narasaiah had consumed a poisonous substance, causing his death. The police have registered a case and began an investigation into his death. No suicide note was found in the scene, said the police.

Fearing failure, GATE aspirant hangs himself

A 24-year-old student committed suicide by hanging himself at his room at Malakpet in the city on Sunday. The Malakpet Police who began an investigation into the case said that the student took the extreme step fearing a low GATE score. The victim was identified as Darshan Hareesh Bhai, a native of Rajkot in Gujarat. Hareesh Bhai was residing at a rented room in Moosarambagh. According to the police, a complaint was received from the watchman of the building about the student's death. "The watchman found Hareesh Bhai hanging in the penthouse of the building from the hook of ceiling fan using a bed sheet. He immediately informed the parents of the student and police," Malakpet SI Sreenu Naik said. The police shifted the body for postmortem and handed it over to the parents of the student who arrived later in the day. A suicide note was recovered from the room in which Hareesh Bhai wrote his phone's and laptop's password and asked his parents to go to Coimbatore for his final rituals. His parents told the police that he had written the GATE exam on February 2. After verifying the key, Hareesh Bhai came to know that he was getting low marks. His parents suspect that Hareesh Bhai committed suicide due to depression over poor results.

KTR launches BE's SEZ unit, unveils vaccine for typhoid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
Minister of Municipal Administration & Urban Development, Industries and IT KT Rama Rao inaugurated the new special economic zone (SEZ) manufacturing unit of Biological E at Genome Valley. This plant is setup with an investment of Rs 300 crore as part of the already earmarked overall outlay of Rs1,000 crore in the Genome Valley across BE's Vaccines & Pharma businesses that are underway. It would double its capacity generating employment opportunities for 1,000 people.



IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao inaugurates the Biological E SEZ plant at Genome Valley in Hyderabad on Monday

KTR inaugurated the new R&D centre of Syngene International. The facility is being implemented in two phases at a total investment of Rs 170 crore. It will employ a team of about 270 highly skilled scientific talent

Biological E also launched a new vaccine to prevent typhoid fever. With about 1.28 lakh global deaths every year and about 80 per cent of those cases happening in developing countries like India, the need for vaccine is imperative.

KTR said, "I was told this specially developed vaccine, which will be commercially available in three months' time, is first of its kind making it extremely safe while delivering excellent immunogenicity taking the fight against the disease a step forward". KTR recalled, "Three years ago, on February 6 2017, when I laid the foundation stone for this unit, Mahima had announced that a world-class manufacturing plant would be set up in three years at Genome Valley and here we are today inaugurating this facility".

The Minister also inaugurated the new R&D centre of Syngene International. The facility is being implemented in two phases at a total investment of Rs 170 crore. It will employ a multi-disciplinary

DELEGATION OF BIOASIA PRAISES STATE FOR WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES AT GENOME VALLEY

HYDERABAD: As part of BioAsia 2020, a high level delegation comprising 50 senior officials and leaders from the industry visited Genome Valley on Monday. During their visit, the delegates were shown the state-of-the-art infrastructure available at IKP Knowledge Park, MN (Mission Neutral) Park and the facilities that provide the plug and play environment for the existing and prospective companies. Impressed with the robust infrastructure created at Genome Valley, the delegates curiously asked the local officials regarding the incentives and benefits that the state government is offering to the industries. They also appreciated the efforts of the government for providing a world-class facility which is conducive for investments. After visiting the Genome Valley as a part of BioAsia 2020, the Consul General of Switzerland and CEO of Swissnex India, Sébastien Hug said, "I am impressed to see the infrastructure developed by the state government at Genome Valley. This showcases the vision of the government to develop Hyderabad to become a leading life sciences hub in Asia. Swiss life sciences companies too have been at the forefront of innovation and we see lots of potential for joint collaborations in the area of health tech". CEO of AfricaBio Dr Siya Tututela said, "Genome Valley is a very fascinating model where you have everything from incubation to innovations. The partnerships with the industry help to develop innovative products using Biotechnology that may change the way we take food and medicines. Genome Valley is a very good example of innovations and we look forward to build partnerships with India and Telangana." Chairman of XPOMET Medical Board in Germany, Dr Henri Michael Von Blanquet said, "I would like to thank BioAsia for organising this visit to Genome Valley. They are visionary in terms of attracting investments into life sciences sector. From my side, I would like to explore the partnerships with huge hospital providers"

team of about 270 highly skilled scientific talent.

Speaking at the inaugural KTR said, "Just as it is for Syngene, it is a very special

occasion for Genome Valley and for me personally as well. Two years ago, at BioAsia 2018, Kiran had announced Syngene's expansion plans by

setting up a research and development facility at Genome Valley and here we are today inaugurating this facility"

'Drunk' man hijacks RTC bus, abandons it 10 km away, flees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An unidentified man who was allegedly drunk took to the wheels of an TSRTC bus in Vikarabad on Sunday, risking lives of several passengers on board on Sunday night.

The man fled away after abandoning the hijacked bus 10 kilometers away in Tandur of Vikarabad on Sunday. According to the Tandur Police, the incident occurred at around 09:30 PM on Sunday.

After stopping the bus at Tandur bus stop, the driver and conductor of the RTC bus had got down to relieve themselves. The accused hijacked the bus minutes after it was parked at bus depot. It was the last service for the day.

There were around 25 passengers on board and the bus was scheduled to go to Karamkot, which is 15 kilometers away.



After stopping the bus at Tandur bus stop, the driver and conductor of the RTC bus had got down. The accused hijacked the bus minutes after it was parked at the bus depot

None of the passengers suspected foul play and assumed that the driver himself had continued the journey.

However, after driving for 10 kilometers, the man stopped the bus in the middle of the road, got down and fled away.

The shocked passengers tried calling the man but he did not pay heed. Soon after, the driver and the conductor reached the spot and contin-

ued the journey. The Tandur Police are in the process of identifying the man who hijacked the bus.

Tandur police inspector S Ravikumar said that the officials are examining the CCTV footage. "We have some information about the person. Passengers say he was drunk. We have registered a theft case. We can confirm other information only after nabbing him," the inspector said.

Transport Minister escapes unhurt in minor road mishap

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana state Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar's convoy was involved in a minor crash on Monday.

The Minister, considered close to the TRS top brass, was on his way to wish the Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on his birthday, when the mishap occurred.

According to the police, the incident happened near GVK Mall in Banjara Hills. The four convoy vehicles collided with each other from behind when the main escort vehicle tried to avoid a bike which came in the middle of the road.

As the convoy was moving at a slow speed, no casualties were reported. Later, the minister reached Pragathi Bhavan in another car.

Upon receiving information, the police reached the spot and began an investigation into the incident.

Civic body fines own zonal commissioner over hoardings

● TRS men too face the brunt of drive to fine illegal ads

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Enforcement Vigilance Department wing was on a spree of issuing fines against ruling party leaders for erecting flexis to mark celebrations of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao.

Higher authorities of the GHMC including newly appointed zonal commissioner of Khairatabad P Pravinna was also slapped with a fine of Rs 10,000 on Monday for setting up unauthorised banners at Golconda Fort. A netizen raised concern over the two banners put up near Golconda Fort with GHMC logo on it. The challan was directed to the GHMC zonal commissioner of Khairatabad.

Challans ranging from Rs 5000 has been imposed on local TRS leaders based on the complaints raised by the residents.

Paapani Venkatesh Goud who is part of TRS vidhyarthi vibhagam was fined with 88,000 rupees for sticking wall posters wishing the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao at Lothukunta in Secunderabad. Two challans of



TRS leaders including Pathani RamaKrishna Goud, N Saritha, BS Raj Kumar Patel, Middala Malla Reddy, R Vinitha, Cherka Mahesh were slapped with fines ranging from 5,000 to 15,000 for setting up banners wishing KCR

80,000 and 8,000 were issued against Venkatesh.

TRS leaders including Pathani RamaKrishna Goud, N Saritha, BS Raj Kumar Patel, Middala Malla Reddy, R Vinitha, Cherka Mahesh were

slapped with fines ranging from 5,000 to 15,000 for setting up banners wishing KCR.

Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institution Society was also slapped with fine of Rs 5,000.



Actor Balakrishna with his wife Vasundhara

Accountant booked for forging signature of Balakrishna's wife

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Jubilee Hills Police of Hyderabad booked a case against a junior accountant on Monday for allegedly forging the signature of Tollywood actor and TDP MLA from Hindupur Nandamuri Balakrishna's wife Vasundhara.

As per the sources, Korri Shiva, the junior accountant had allegedly forged Vasundhara's signature and submitted an application to HDFC bank for activating mobile banking feature. Preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused had moved the application with an intention to siphon off the money.

As per banking protocol, the

manager of HDFC bank, Banjara Hills branch has called Vasundhara on February 13 to inquire and cross check if she had submitted any application requesting for activating mobile banking feature of her account. However, Vasundhara denied submitting any application or signing any document," said the police, adding that following an inquiry, it was revealed that Korri Shiva, who is working as a junior accountant in her office, had submitted the application for activating mobile banking feature.

Jubilee Hills police have registered a case of cheating and forgery against Shiva and detained him. Sources said Shiva has admitted of forging her signature.

Man stabs woman over argument in TSRTC bus

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 40-year-old woman was allegedly stabbed in an RTC bus by an unidentified man who was sitting in the ladies compartment of the vehicle in the Afzalgunj area on Sunday.

The accused was first asked to leave and vacate the place by the victim and upon his refusal, she slapped him, said the police. The victim identified as Anuradha, a homemaker from West Marredpally area, was travelling back home from AG office at 11 pm by taking RTC bus when the incident occurred, said the Begum Bazar police inspector, K Madhu Mohan Reddy, adding that the case was initially booked under zero FIR by the Afzalgunj police.

"The victim noticed a man sitting in the woman's area and asked him to vacate the place for her to sit. When he refused to get up, an argument broke between them and she slapped him, following which he pulled out a sharp object and stabbed her with it and fled," said the official.

Following a complaint, a case was booked under section 307 of the IPC and an investigation was launched to identify the man. The woman was rushed to Osmania Hospital and the condition is said to be out of danger.

More lung spaces to be developed in Hyderabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Mayor of GHMC Bonthu Rammoan on Monday held trees a lot to survival of human kind.

The Mayor planted saplings at Gachibowli stadium along with badminton player Pulella Gopichand, government whip Arikepudi Gandhi, MP J Santosh Kumar on Monday on the occasion of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's birthday as part of each one plant one programme.

With the assistance of the IOC, as part of a green challenge, 10,000 saplings have been planted on the premises of the stadium in Miyawaki system.

Lung spaces in city are being developed to enable people of twin cities lead pleasant life, the Mayor said.

Rammoan exhorted various organisations to take part in Haritaharam and improve green cover. Objective of the government is to improve green cover in the state. He called upon students to take active

part in the plantation drive. Later, the Mayor, government whip and MP planted saplings under bio-diversity flyer.

On the other hand, HMRL managing director NVS Reddy launched plantation programme at Uppal Metro depot on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, he mentioned that 50,000 saplings and shrubs are being planted today at Miyapur and Uppal Metro depots, several Metro stations, in the central medians below the Metro.



GHMC Mayor Bonthu Rammoan inaugurates beautification works at ALugadda Bavi Junction in Hyderabad on Monday

CoE for gaming, VFX, AI opens wing in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The IMAGE, a Centre of Excellence for gaming, VFX, computer vision and AI, has taken off with STPI calling for entries for the maiden incubator.

The IMAGE-STPI, a 10,000 square feet facility at Madhapur, will incubate nearly 30 start-ups a year over the next five years.

On Monday, IMAGE-STPI signed agreements with TVAGA (Telangana VFX, Animation and Gaming Association), Hyderabad Angels, the Hyderabad Software Exporters' Association and IIIT-H.

The five entities will provide resources and mentorship to the start-ups at the incubation centre.

Entries can be submitted by March 31 at image.stpi.in. In the first year, 20 start-ups will be selected for the incubation programme.

Officially launching the CoE Jayesh Ranjan, principal secretary said, "Hyderabad is fast emerging as the best global destination for gaming and AI landscape. That's one key reason we believe STPI chose to set up its CoE in the city, and as partners, we are fully committed to this initiative."

City to host India's first Airport Run on Feb 29

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GMR led Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) is all set to organise the first of its kind 'Airport Run' event on February 29, 2020.

Promoted as 'Hyderabad Airport Run 2020', this unique evening run with a tagline of 'Run... Eat... Play... Repeat...' will not only engage the runners but also their family and friends on the lines of a festive carnival that will indulge the participants with fun, food and music.

Aligned to its objective of stakeholder engagement of 'One Family, One Mission', GHIAL is reaching out not



As part of the run, the airport is opening its doors to select registered participants, chosen through a lucky draw to showcase and give a guided educational tour to some specific areas of the airport operations

tion fee of Rs 500 respectively. Registrations are already open and are filling up fast. The minimum age limit to participate in the run is 12 years for the 5K category and 14 years for the 10K category respectively.

Participants can register online at https://www.ifinish.in/event_details/Hyderabad_Airport_Run_2020. This portal will be open for the regis-

trations till 22nd February, 2020.

The run is unique in that very few such runs are conducted in the evening in India and that too in an airport setting. A significant objective of the run is to entertain and engage family and friends of the participants making it an evening of wholesome entertainment and fitness.

Woman accuses Minister of land grabbing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A woman alleging life threat to her from Labour Minister Malla Reddy approached State Human Rights Commission on Monday.

She claims to have owned 1.33 acres of land between two hospitals owned by the Minister in Suraram. She accused the Minister of trying to encroach the land.

She alleged that the Minister with the help of his aides hurling out threats to her. She said that justice was not done to her even after approaching the police.

HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY & SEWERAGE BOARD
O/o. Chief General Manager (Engg), O&M Circle-III, Goshamahal, Hyderabad - 12

e-TENDER NOTICE

e-tender Notice No. and Date	Name of Work	Estimate Contract Value
255/CGM(E)/O&M.C.III/DGM(E)/ 2019-20, dt.14.02.2020	Procurement of FRC Frames and covers to Central Stores Division.	Rs. 40.19 Lakhs.

1. Tender Documents will be available online from dt. 14.02.2020 from 7.00 P.M onwards and the last date for receipt of tenders is dt.20.02.2020.
2. Name & address of Chief General Manager (Engg), concerned - Chief General Manager (Engg), O&M Circle-III, HMWSSB, Goshamahal, Hyderabad-12. 3. The Contractors / firms are requested to upload the information in the 'ZIP' format preferably. 4. Further details can be seen @ <https://www.tender.telangana.gov.in>

Sd/- Chief General Manager (Engg), O&M Circle-III, Goshamahal, Hyd - 12
Customer Care Centre - Blal: 155313

'Green drive' marks KCR's B'day

P V KONDAL RAO
WARANGAL

Legislators, Ministers, MLAs and MPs on Monday competed with each other in planting saplings as part of green challenge thrown on the eve of 66th birthday of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao. The legislators were keen on performing the gesture in the rural parts of their respective segments and Ministers Jagadish Reddy, Etela Rajender and others took part in the plantation programme in their respective districts.

The day started with the birthday celebrations of Chief Minister in the districts and public representatives - from Sarpanch, MPTC to ZPTC and ZP chairpersons, everyone took part in the Green Challenge with a renewed verve in their respective areas.

Minister of Energy Jagadish Reddy along with his family members took up the challenge and planted saplings at the camp office in Suryapet. In Warangal West Constituency, Chief Whip Dasyam Vinayabhaskar took part in the plantation programme on a large scale. Minister Etela Rajender took part in plantation drive at Kamalapur revenue mandal, while MLC and former Deputy Chief Minister Kadiam Srihari took part in the drive in Kannaayapalli village under Raghunathapalli mandal of station Ganpur segment in Jangaon district. Legislator of Station Ganpur Dr Rajaiah planted saplings at MLA camp office.

The ZP chairperson of Jangaon, Pagala Sampath Reddy also took part in the plantation drive in the Jangaon district limits. Apart from plantation drive, the MLAs and public representatives also took part in blood donation camps and cake cutting ceremonies, organised to mark the celebrations of Chief Minister.



(From left) TRS working president KT Rama Rao planting a sapling along with his family members at Pragathi Bhavan; Finance Minister T Harish Rao during KCR's birthday celebrations in Siddipet; Labour Minister Malla Reddy and TRS party Malkajigiri Parliament in-charge Marri Rajashekar Reddy greeting Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on his birthday at Pragathi Bhavan

'Every inch of vacant land covered under Haritha Haram'

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar on Monday termed the Municipal and Panchayat Raj Acts, formulated by the State government, as revolutionary as they ensure 10 per cent allocation of funds towards green budget. "The Act also envisages removal of elected public representatives if they fail to ensure 85 per cent survival of the saplings planted. Both the Acts reflect the vision of the Chief Minister to increase the green cover of the state to 33 per cent," the Chief Secretary said.

He was speaking after taking part in plantation programme organised by the HMDA as part of the 66th birthday celebrations of the Chief Minister at Sanjeeviah Park. The Chief Secretary planted 'Poncha chettu' (Caophyllum inophyllum). "The passion of the Chief Minister towards Haritha Haram is an inspiration to everyone," he said.

Chief Advisor Rajiv Sharma said that every inch of vacant land, all forest



Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar plants a sapling at Sanjeeviah Park

blocks and other places are being covered under haritha haram. Over 30 crore saplings have been planted throughout the state since the formation of the state, he added. Agriculture Secretary Janardhan Reddy said that availability of saplings is in abundance and as such there is a need to take up massive plantation programme to maintain the ecological balance. Spl Chief Secretary (Health) Shanti Kumari asked the officials to re dedicate themselves to haritha haram.

CDMA Satyanarayana said that over eight lakh saplings are being planted across all municipalities in the state. GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar said that saplings are being planted in all the 150 wards of the city. Over 1.20 lakh saplings are being planted in all tourist and religious places in the city, he added. Principal Secretary Municipal Administration Arvind Kumar presided over the meeting. Senior officers Sunil Sharma, Vikas Raj, Rajat Kumar, Ravi Gupta and staff from HMDA also attended.



Nagari MLA Roja greets Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao at Pragathi Bhavan on Monday

EPTRI doing its bit to improve green cover

On the occasion of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's 66th birthday, Environment Protection Training and Research Institute (EPTRI) has taken up plantation drive on large scale in and around the campus on Monday. Principal Secretary C Partha Sarathi, Director General of EPTRI SD Mukherji, Telangana Udyogula Sangam president Padmashri, scientists, environmental engineers and employees of EPTRI participated in the programme and planted saplings of vari-

ous species. Speaking on the occasion, Parthasarathi described EPTRI as a unique scientific and research institute committed for the environmental protection. "EPTRI is covered with about 200 plant species. Many plantation activities have been taken up by the institute to improve the green cover in the city. EPTRI engaged itself in propagation of important medicinal and aromatic plants in its tissue culture lab. Herbal Garden is being established in EPTRI. Excess carbon dioxide (CO2) is building up in our

atmosphere, contributing to climate change," he said. As part of promoting climate change initiatives, EPTRI took up several projects on resilient agricultural practices in drought prone areas of Telangana, Rejuvenation of Urban Forest Blocks which are lung spaces for the citizens, livelihood projects, capacity building programmes to farming community etc. This promotes increase of present tree cover of 24 per cent in the state to 33 per cent of the total geographical area.



Songs on State's welfare scheme released

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has released a CD of songs composed by CM PRO Ramesh Hazari on several development and welfare schemes of Telangana Government. The Chief Minister released the CD on the occasion of his birthday at Pragathi Bhavan on Monday

Adhar Sinha transferred again

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government on Monday transferred senior IAS officer Adhar Sinha yet again all of a sudden. His another transfer in a gap of 15 days has created ripples in bureaucratic circles. Adhar Sinha, who is the Special Chief Secretary rank officer, was transferred to the **A n i m a l Husbandry** on the midnight of February 2, when state government took up a major reshuffle of IAS officers.

He was serving as special CS of GAD (political) then. He joined duties in Animal Husbandry Department immediately. However, on Monday, the government transferred him from Animal Husbandry Department and asked him to report at GAD. He was not given any posting. Adhar Sinha was among the front runners for the post of

Chief Secretary which fell vacant on December 31 with the retirement of SK Joshi. However, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao appointed Somesh Kumar as new CS who is junior to Adhar Sinha.

Since then, Adhar Sinha reportedly sought transfer from GAD expressing displeasure over reporting to Somesh Kumar who is junior to him. Subsequently, he was transferred to Animal Husbandry Department, considered to be insignificant posting. Though no reasons were cited officially for Adhar Sinha's sudden transfer again on Monday, it was learnt that he took few independent decisions in the Animal Husbandry Department without consulting anyone which angered the 'higher-ups' in the government, which led to his transfer again.



Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president N Uttam Kumar Reddy addressing the gathering at Dharna Chowk in the city on Monday

Uttam says only Cong empowered Dalits

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N Uttam Kumar Reddy alleged that both BJP and TRS were against reservation for SCs, STs and BCs and their governments at the Centre and State want the caste-based quotas to be scrapped.

Addressing a dharna at Dharna Chowk, Indira Park on Monday, Uttam said that the Supreme Court's recent verdict stating that reservation for SCs and STs was no fundamental right was quite shocking and the judgment was the result of misleading and wrong representation made by the BJP Government on the issue.

He alleged that BJP and RSS were against reservation for SC, ST, OBC and minorities. However, he said that the

Congress would never let BJP and RSS to succeed in their dreams of scrapping reservation. Stating that the Congress' dharna was non-political, he said there were no elections around and the protest has been organised to instill confidence among Dalits, Girijans, OBCs and minorities that the ongoing reservation would continue come what may.

He said the SC judgement has created lot of confusion and the Modi Government was not giving any clarity by re-assuring the SC, ST, OBC and minorities that the ongoing quota would remain untouched. Uttam Kumar Reddy said that only Congress party empowered Dalits and other weaker sections. He said a Dalit leader, Damodar Sanjeeviah, became the Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

'There's no one in our...'

Continued from Page 1

There is no one in our building. Yesterday, I had just a few empty bottles of water (he shows the bottles) and I had appealed for some water to be given and so today (camera pans to new water bottles), I have been sent some water and this food by the authorities here. We have rations only for a few days so I again appeal to the Indian government to evacuate us soonest," he says.

In another video shot from the couple's apartment balcony on Saturday, Ashish explains how Wuhan has turned into a "ghost town". "There is nothing here. This is university area. Boys and girls used to live here... but there is no one here. Even in our apartment, there is no one."

Teen accused of theft...

Continued from Page 1

Satish allegedly stole a chocolate from the store and was caught by the staff and security. Inconsolable, Satish's parents said that even if their child had stolen a chocolate, the store management should have handed him over to the police or call the parents and counsel the boy.

Meanwhile, friends and relatives of the boy are demanding stringent action against the DMart staff.

His relatives and friends damaged the supermarket building in anger and are demanding a thorough investigation into the death of Satish and arrest those who responsible.

However, speaking to this correspondent, ACP Vanasthalipuram, S. Jayaram, said that the boy took permission from the college principal for a haircut and then went to

the store with two of his friends. "He had a 5Star chocolate bar in his pocket. When the security guard frisked him and noticed the chocolate, he threw it in the store's lobby and while walking out, he collapsed on the ground. We are suspecting it might be due to restlessness but a post-mortem examination report will reveal the true picture. As per the CCTV footage, we found out that the boy was not even touched by any staff" said the ACP, adding that a case was booked under Section 174 (suspicious death) of CrPc and an investigation was launched.

Meanwhile, the Police spoke to Satish's friends who accompanied him to the supermarket.

The DMart staff and security are also being questioned whether there was any altercation between them and the deceased.

Delhi court orders...

Continued from Page 1

It is for the third time that the death warrants were issued by the court against them.

"It is hereby directed that the death warrants, as issued by this court vide order dated January 7, 2020 in respect of the condemned convicts namely Mukesh, Pawan, Akshay and Vinay shall now be carried into effect by causing the said convicts to be hanged by neck until they are dead on March 3 at 6 am," Additional Session Judge Dharmender Rana said.

"Now deferring it any further would be sacrilegious to the rights of the victim for expeditious justice," it said. Nirbhaya's mother expressed the hope that the four convicts would finally be hanged on March 3.

3 relatives of TRS MLA found...

Continued from Page 1

Their daughter was a medical student. Police suspect that the car along with the three accidentally fell into the canal. Karimnagar Police Commissioner Kamalasan Reddy visited the scene. He told the media persons that the car was spotted during the search for the bodies of a cou-

ple. They were identified on the basis of car's registration number. The police official said they were investigating as to how the incident happened.

However there are many doubts over the drowning and missing of car. The family had gone on a trip on January 26 and their mobiles were switched off from the next day onwards and their where-

abouts were not traced. In the wake of traced car in the canal waters the police suspect that the car might have drowned in the canal on the same day, but there were no signs of an accident or anyone in the area had any suspicions.

The three bodies were found on the rear seat and the victims are the relatives of MLA of Peddapalli Manohar Reddy.

Prez, V-P, PM, CMs greet KCR...

Continued from Page 1

Jagan prayed that God continues to shower his blessings on KCR and wished him a long and healthy life so that he can continue serving the people. They wished the CM a happy, healthy and long life. The CM thanked them for their best wishes. "May God bless you with his choicest blessings,"

tweeted Sangma. Former AP Chief Minister and TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu also greeted KCR and conveyed his best wishes. The CM thanked PM Modi, AP CM Jagan, Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma and Chandrababu Naidu for their wishes. KCR's Cabinet colleagues, leaders of the TRS, senior officials and eminent

persons from various walks of life called on KCR at his official residence Pragathi Bhavan and conveyed their birthday greetings. Minister KT Rama Rao along with family members planted a sapling in the Pragathi Bhavan premises to mark the birthday. Former MP K. Kavitha, Rama Rao's wife and other family members were present.

HC chides TSBIE for inaction...

Continued from Page 1

In its earlier order passed on December 18, 2019, the HC had asked the Board of Intermediate to file a report with regard to the number of colleges given permission to run intermediate course, sanctioned strength, addresses where they have been given permission to run, and the actual place where they are functioning from; relevant norms and regulations governing the sanction of the colleges and whether the colleges run by the Sri Chaitanya and Narayana groups complied with the rules of the board. The High Court adjourned the matter till February 27.

Student battling for...

Continued from Page 1

The SR Nagar Police registered a case under relevant Sections of the IPC and MV act. An investigation into the incident has begun. The entire incident was captured on CCTV cameras installed in the area. The Police have collected the footage and are examining it. A case was registered against the driver of the car, identified as Anitha, a student and against the bike rider, Gowtham, a private employee.

Let alone phase-2, HMRL doesn't...

Continued from Page 1

However, for land acquisition, HMRL allegedly doesn't have funds even though the concessionaire agreement has the 5 km stretch as part of it.

On DPR for phase-2, officials have since 2018 been saying: "It is being finalized", or "Awaiting government nod".

Even though DMRC has completed the DPR 2018-19 for 30.7 km stretch, despite all the talk around Phase 2 - it is only in proposal stage.

As per the latest plan, Phase

2 will add another 83 km on top of the 72 km of lines being built in Phase 1. Just the names have been revealed but exact line alignment has not been revealed.

The line is estimated to cost Rs 4,650 crore and will be executed by Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited (HAML) and will be funded by government primarily along with GMR pooling some funds. However, the inordinate delays is leading to standard cost escalation and will further increase the financial burden. Sources

pointed that even in the Phase 1 there is cost escalation because of which the concessionaire is unable to concentrate on real estate despite being given lands by the government.

This issue of cost escalation was allegedly taken to the notice of Chief Minister during the inaugural of JBS-MGBS stretch.

Let alone projects worth thousands of crores, HMRL allegedly doesn't have funds for footpaths, escalators and skywalks. When a netizen quizzed

We are building capabilities of...

Continued from Page 1

He invited the industry to leverage the opportunities to develop affordable and innovative solutions for tomorrow's problems at Pharma City.

"Under the grid strategy is the Medical Devices Park, which is the country's largest medical devices park spread over 276 acres. Within a span about two years, over 20 companies are already setting up their manufacturing and R&D units," KTR said.

He added that the State Government was looking at taking Telangana's combined enterprise value of \$50 billion to \$100 billion and create 4,00,000 new jobs in the state. The state is also going to setup a B-Hub, biotechnology hub in the next 2 months and Curative Therapy Institute with the support of CCMB for cell gene research.

KTR also inaugurated the international exhibition where-in 160 organisations will be showcasing their innovations

and developments from the fields of Medtech, Pharma, Biotech and Healthcare over the three days.

The organizing committee of BioAsia 2020 has bestowed the prestigious Genome Valley Excellence Award 2020 to Dr Carl H June, the Pioneer of CAR-T Cell therapy for Cancer treatment and the Professor of Richard W Vague in Immunotherapy, Dept. of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, USA.

This award has been presented to Dr June for his exemplary contributions to the global life sciences industry.

In the presence of KTR, WeHub and University of Basel signed an MOU today at BioAisa 2020 to promote women in leadership roles and women entrepreneurship, as well as on innovation ecosystem engagement. This was facilitated by Swissnex India as part of Switzerland's continuous engagement with the government of Telangana.

SHORT READS



Probe mines scam with more seriousness: Pilot

NEW DELHI: Udaipur, Feb 17 (PTI) After a bribery racket was busted in the Rajasthan Transport Department, Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot on Monday said the state government should probe the mines scam that took place during the previous BJP government with 'more seriousness'. "We have always talked about zero toleration on corruption. When we were in the opposition, we had opposed a mines scam involving Rs 45,000 crore," Pilot told reporters here. "The lokayukta is probing that. It's been one year of our government and I would like that the scam be investigated by the lokayukta and the government with more seriousness," he added.



Babul Marandi's JVM(P) merges with BJP

RANCHI: JVM(P) of former Jharkhand chief minister Babul Marandi merged with the BJP on Monday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah welcomed Marandi, the first chief minister of Jharkhand, and his supporters into the saffron party at a rally here. Shah also assured the tribal leader that he will get due respect and responsibility in the BJP. "I am delighted that Babul Marandi has returned to BJP. I was working for his return since 2014 when I became the party president," Shah told the well-attended rally. He also raised the Ayodhya issue and withdrawal of special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ensured Kashmir becomes an integral part of India forever by scrapping articles 370 and 35(A) of the Constitution," he said.

SC judgment will uplift women across country: Army officers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Women Army officers on Monday welcomed the Supreme Court order directing the Centre to grant them permanent commission, saying it will help in uplifting women across the country and not just in the armed forces.

Talking to reporters outside the court premises here after the SC order, a woman officer, who was accompanied by some other women colleagues from the Army, said whoever qualifies for the job should be given the opportunity to command.

The SC order, which has to be implemented within three months, will uplift women across the country and not just those in the Army, she said. "Commanding cannot be done rightaway. It needs training. So give them training and whoever fits the benchmark, should be given the opportunity. As per the Supreme Court ruling, the order will be applied on all serving women



officers," the officer said. Advocate Meenakshi Lekhi, who appeared for women officers, said the apex court judgment has given equal rights to the women officers as their male counterparts.

She said a long-pending right has been given to women officers through this order. "The sky is virtually the limit," Lekhi said, adding the top court has also made some observations on how the army authorities have been "mis-leading" the court on the

issue. The top court termed "disturbing" the Centre's argument of physiological limitations and social norms for denying women officers command posts and said there will not be any absolute bar on giving them command postings. It also said women officers in the past have brought laurels to the country and a change of mindset is required on the part of the government to put an end to gender bias in the armed forces.

The top court said despite

Talking to reporters outside the court premises here after the SC order, a woman officer, who was accompanied by some other women colleagues from the Army, said whoever qualifies for the job should be given the opportunity to command

there being no stay on a 2010 Delhi High Court verdict allowing grant of permanent commission to women officers, the Centre has over past one decade shown scant regard in implementing the directive.

It said engagement of women officers in the Army has been an evolutionary process and the Union of India should have acted in accordance with the Delhi High Court judgment when there was no stay on it.



Fire at GST Bhavan in Mumbai; no casualty

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A massive fire broke out in the nine-storey GST Bhavan in Mazagon area here on Monday, a civic official said.

There was no report of any casualty. The blaze erupted on the eighth floor of the GST

Bhavan around 12.30 pm, the official said. Thick smoke was seen emanating from the building after the fire.

It is a level-4 (massive) fire. Sixteen fire engines have been deployed to douse the flames. Firefighting efforts are on. There is no report of any

injury," he said. The cause of the blaze is yet to be ascertained, he added.

The building was earlier known as the Sales Tax Bhavan. But, since the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax, it is now called the GST Bhavan.

People unhappy with my work troubling me: Nivrutti Maharaj Indurikar

PNS ■ BEED

Marathi 'kirtankar' (preacher) Nivrutti Maharaj Indurikar has said some people unhappy with his work for society and the Warkari community were trying to trouble him by demanding filing of cases over a recent remark.

The Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti (MANS), a voluntary organisation working to eradicate superstitious beliefs, last week sought a police case against Indurikar for remarks on timing of intercourse and gender of child which it claimed violated the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act. During a sermon in a hamlet in Ahmednagar, the preacher had reportedly said that intercourse by a couple on an even date would beget a male child, while on an odd date would result in the birth of a girl.

"If intercourse is done at an inauspicious time, the child that is born would bring a bad name to the family. If the timing (of intercourse) is missed, the quality of output (child)



will be sub-standard," he is heard saying in a video that went viral on social media.

Speaking on the issue on Sunday at a sermon in Ahsti tehsil in Ahmednagar, the preacher said, "I have been working for society and among the Warkari community for the past 30-35 years. Some people are unhappy with this and want to put me in trouble."

He got support from BJP MLC Suresh Dhas who claimed the kirtankar was saying what was written in the treatise 'Guru Charitra' and it was wrong for the government to issue notices to him.

KARNATAKA ASSEMBLY

BJP likely to move pro-CAA resolution

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The ruling BJP in Karnataka is likely to push for a resolution in favour of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) during the ongoing Assembly session, top sources said on Monday. The resolution is expected to be moved towards the end of the special discussion on the Constitution, scheduled for March 2 and 3, the sources said.

The move is bound to face stiff resistance from opposition parties — the Congress and JDS — in the Assembly.

Assembly Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri has decided to hold a special discussion on the Constitution on the two days to commemorate 70 years of the adoption of the Constitution.

Though the Speaker has expressed hope that the discussion will focus on the



Constitution and legislators would take part in it rising above party politics, there are apprehensions in some quarters that issues like CAA and NRC may figure in the debate.

BJP-ruled Gujarat in January passed a resolution, congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah

for securing the passage of the CAA, amid opposition from the Congress. Several opposition-ruled states like Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal have passed anti-CAA resolutions in their state assemblies. Joining the ranks of anti-CAA states, the Telangana government has also decided to pass a resolu-

Assembly Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri has decided to hold a special discussion on the Constitution on the two days to commemorate 70 years of the adoption of the Constitution

tion in the assembly against the act. Like in other parts of the county, Karnataka too has witnessed a series of pro and anti-CAA protests and demonstrations.

On December one, an anti-CAA protest turned violent in the coastal city of Mangaluru, resulting in the death of two in police firing.

According to the CAA, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014, and facing religious persecution there, would not be treated as

illegal immigrants, but given Indian citizenship. The Act says refugees of the six communities would be given Indian citizenship after residing in India for five years, instead of 11 earlier.

Though there were expectations in some quarters that the Governor's address to the joint sitting of state legislature on Monday will have some references to implementation of CAA in the state, there was no such mention in his speech.

Seeking to downplay it, BJP sources said: "The issue (CAA) is anyway likely to be discussed during the session in the days to come."

IRCTC says Lord Shiva allotted seat on Kashi-Mahakal Express for blessings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The IRCTC on Monday said a seat was reserved for Lord Shiva in the Kashi Mahakal Express during its inaugural run as a "one-time affair" to seek "blessings" for the success of the new project, as some questioned the move.

The train staff had "temporarily put the photos of Shri Mahakal" on an upper berth during the inaugural run on Sunday to perform pooja, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) said in a statement.

AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi questioned the move and tweeted a photo of the Preamble of the



Constitution, tagging the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The railways had reserved seat number 64 in coach B5 for Lord Shiva on the train that will connect three Jyotirlingas — Omkareshwar near Indore,

Mahakaleshwar in Ujjain and Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi.

The train's first commercial run is scheduled on February 20. "The staff of the new Kashi-Mahakal Express train temporarily put the photos of Shri Mahakal on an upper berth so as to do pooja to seek blessings for the success of the new project (new train and new rake). It is meant only for the inaugural run as a one-time affair.

"The inaugural run was also not open to passengers. There is going to be no such reserved or dedicated berth for this purpose in the commercial run of the train which is starting from February 20, 2020 onwards," the IRCTC said in the statement.

BJP disrespected with Army post stand: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday claimed that the BJP government disrespected Indian women by arguing in Supreme Court that women Army officers did not deserve command posts or permanent service because they were inferior to men.

His attack on the government came after the Supreme Court directed the Centre to grant permanent commission to all women officers in the Army within three months, terming the Centre's argument of physiological limitations and social norms for denying them command posts "disturbing".

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the historic judgment of the Supreme Court has given new wings to the flight of women in the country.

"Women are capable — in the Army, in valor, in water, land and sky. This is a befitting reply to the prejudiced Modi government, which is opposed



to women's power," the Congress general secretary said. Rahul Gandhi, in a tweet, also lauded the women for standing up and proving the government wrong.

"The government disrespected every Indian woman, by arguing in the SC that women Army officers didn't deserve command posts or permanent service because they were inferior to men," he said.

He also attached a news report that said the apex court asked the government to grant permanent commission to women in the Army.

Bengal BJP mulls mass outreach programme before civic elections

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Taking a cue from TMC's 'Didi ke Bolo' (Tell Didi) mass outreach programme, the West Bengal BJP is mulling to launch 'BJP ke Bolo' (Tell BJP) initiative before the upcoming municipal elections in the state.

The BJP leaders, however, denied that the initiative — that is expected to be launched in a few days — is meant to outsmart the TMC's programme and insisted it is aimed at enquiring about people's grievances against TMC-run civic bodies and understanding their needs and demands.

The elections to 107 municipalities and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), to be held this year, are being dubbed as 'mini assembly elections' ahead of the 2021 polls.

As part of the 'BJP ke Bolo' initiative, a helpline number will be launched wherein people will be able to call and register their grievances and if the



saffron party is elected to the civic bodies, it will try to solve the problems, a senior party leader said.

"First, a pilot project will be launched wherein only BJP workers in the 107 municipalities will be asked to register feedback of the masses. Later, a statewide toll free number will be launched for the people," he said.

This initiative will increase the party's direct mass out-

reach and help it identify issues in the civic bodies, the BJP leader said. 'BJP ke Bolo' will be the second mass outreach programme of the party in the state.

It had earlier launched 'Chachakra Dilipdar sange' (Discussions with Dilip da over tea) in which West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh had visited various areas in the state and discussed with people issues faced by them.

SABARIMALA

SC begins hearing pleas on scope of freedom of religion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court on Monday commenced hearing to deliberate upon issues relating to scope of freedom of religion and whether a person who does not belong to a particular faith can file a PIL questioning the religious practice of another religion.

The Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde has framed seven legal questions pertaining to fundamental rights on religion and their interplay with faith and would evolve a judicial



policy to deal with them. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the

Centre, opened the argument by referring to various apex court judgments on funda-

The Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde has framed seven legal questions pertaining to fundamental rights on religion and their interplay with faith and would evolve a judicial policy to deal with them

mental rights to practise and propagate religion under the Constitution and said government and the court have authority to regulate secular part of the religion.

In matters relating to "public order, morality and health" the law can be made by the state, Mehta told the bench

also comprising justices R Banumathi, Ashok Bhushan, L Nageswara Rao, M M Shantanagoudar, S A Nazeer, R Subhash Reddy, B R Gavai and Surya Kant.

Referring to Mehta's submission, the bench said there has been a practice of giving offerings in temples and this

is religious activity. "But if the money is used for terrorism and for running casino etc, then this becomes the secular part of the religion," the bench said while taking note of Mehta's submission.

The hearing would resume in the matter after 2.30 pm. The bench had on February 10 framed seven questions, including as to whether "person not belonging to a religious denomination or religious group can question a practice of that religious denomination or religious group" by filing a PIL.

In signs of thaw, Mamata meets Governor Dhankhar

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee held a one-on-one meeting with Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday, in what is being seen as a sign of thaw in their frosty relationship.

Though what exactly transpired at the hour-long meeting at Raj Bhavan was not immediately known, sources said the two discussed "various issues". It was for the first time since

Dhankhar assumed office in July last year that the two had a person to person talk.

"Had an extremely satisfying an hour long interaction with Honble Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at Raj Bhawan," Dhankhar later tweeted. There was no immediate reaction from Banerjee. He had been seeking a meeting with Banerjee since December last but it did not come about as the government invariably cited the chief minister's preoccupation with other engagements.



Lead from the front

SC allows women officers to get command positions in the Army and quashes use of gender stereotypes as an argument.



Thanks to the Supreme Court, women officers in the Army can now get command positions at par with male officers and break the glass ceiling in the forces. In non-combat roles for the time being. However, the sad part is that they had to fight for it legally rather than being naturalised in the just order of things, considering that they were inducted in the Army in 1992, a long 28 years ago. An entire generation has grown up in between. In this sense, the ruling is more than significant, it is a landmark. For it reminded the armed

forces that as part of an institution that codified discipline, values, honesty, decency and honour, their despotic version of patriarchy, preventing women from leading men beyond event parades, was “discriminatory” and “disturbing.” In fact, it went against the very principles of equality and fairness that the Army professes from time to time. In the process, the court also underlined the need for a mindset change in the evolutionary flow of changing times, not just in the Army but everywhere. It said that deep-rooted stereotypes, that men are dominant and women are primary caretakers, need to go away. It even dismissed the argument of women being unfit physically and compromised by family duties as creating an “artificial” distinction, considering that they have still not been cleared for active combat. The court demolished all chauvinist arguments that can be used as a precedent in deciding similar cases of gender parity, tersely: “To cast aspersions on gender is an affront to their (the women’s) dignity and to the country. Time has come that women officers are not adjunct to their male counterparts. Physiological features of women have no link to their rights. The mindset must change. Women work shoulder to shoulder with men.” With these words, Justices DY Chandrachud and Ajay Rastogi upheld the equality of opportunity for all citizens, elevating functionality above gender and treating human resource in any discipline as deserving of respect than either an entitlement or a consolation prize. It also implied that cultural arguments have no place when it comes to the larger duty of protecting the nation. The court, knowing the tendency of institutions to not follow its orders, said permanent commission would be available to all women, regardless of their years of service and that the judgment had to be implemented within three months. What all this means is that service conditions of men and women officers will be exactly the same and that the latter shall also be provided with choices of specialisation like their male counterparts. A woman can rise to the rank of Colonel and even lead battalions. Women officers, who have been retired, will also get pension benefits.

If the court had to admonish one of the highest institutions of the land — one that is expected to rise above societal ills and be progressive and liberal — on gender injustice, then clearly it is confirmation of inherent biases among the privileged, too. Where women officers can be test cases but not decisive enough, where they may be relegated to staff duties but not challenge the male bastion. The Government’s regressive stand on limiting women’s role in the Army is hypocritical considering its own departments have had all-women marching contingents in Republic Day parades, the Indian Air Force (IAF) allows them to become fighter pilots and the Army has even sent them to tough UN peacekeeping missions globally. Unless they were just tokenism to boost propaganda than really honour winners of the Seva medals and Vishisth Seva medals. The next question, therefore, is should the buck stop with just entrusting greater responsibility to them? Are women just worthy of being included in non-combat roles only? In actuality, like their male counterparts, they, too, give up on all familial commitments to be part of the Army. They, too, undergo the same rigorous selection and training procedures as their male peers. None is arguing that the Army lower its standards. But if women have made it through all kinds of selection criteria, then they should at least be given a chance to prove their mettle. For they are often made a scapegoat for the failure in upgrading standards and changing the status quo. The issue is not only about whether women can be inducted in combat roles but how to make it happen with a radical overhaul of personnel policy. Other nations, including the US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany and Israel, allow women to be part of certain combat units. By resisting change, the Army wouldn’t want to be out of sync with an India that is resetting itself. Certainly, it doesn’t suit its image when the court has to prod it all the time. It needs to be the initiator, not a follower.

Smashing heads

Young people will always find innovative ways of getting hurt for thrills. But the latest game craze is plain stupid



When you are young, you feel invincible. And because death feels so far away, you tend to take physical risks that you never will once you cross the 30s. Nobody is saying that older humans are boring and refuse to take challenges. But the physical ability to take risks is far reduced by simple physiology. There is a reason why an average infantryman is 22 years old; you would not want to go to war with a physically old army. But thanks to young people pulling off crazy stunts, we have seen the proliferation

of adventure sports and some death-defying feats of human achievement. This has been the story ever since human beings gained cognisance of the idea of “self”, which after all, separates us from animals. Until the dare tempts death.

From every generation, some activity or the other emerges that the adventure sports X-Games might take up. But the latest challenge by the young, called the “Skull breaker” is downright stupid and has parents across the world in a state of panic. As the name implies, the challenge is not a smart one. It involves a trio of teens, who stand in a line and jump, and when the central participant’s feet leaves the ground, his/her companions on either side attempt to knock his/her feet out from under them. The prospect of the central participant making a head-fall backwards, with chances of smacking his/her head besides injuring other parts of the body, looms larger. Some children have already been fatally injured and many are suffering the impacts of a concussion. It is beyond one’s rational understanding as to why would anyone want to get a concussion deliberately. However, there are a few things that we must understand: Banning this practice will not end it. The best way to deal with this is to talk to adults at social media firms and actively prevent the widespread sharing of videos. The second way is for parents, teachers and doctors to talk to children and explain what a concussion is and how it can have long-term ramifications. One can get a concussion or an injury while playing sports, particularly contact sports. That is accidental; this stupid activity causes self-harm and it must be classified as such. We must ensure that it is one that is ended and not emulated by future generations while ensuring that the creative physicality of the next generation continues. Just like an army of youth needs a grizzled veteran to maintain discipline and order, this army of children needs some common sense from adults.

Pseudo-Caliphate and India

By throwing his weight behind Islamabad on the Kashmir issue, Erdogan unambiguously signalled his intention to emerge as the imam of the new Caliphate he hopes to lead



SANDHYA JAIN

Even if we overlook the facts about which nation is “occupying” Kashmir, by stating that there is “no difference between Gallipoli and occupied Kashmir”, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan unambiguously signalled his intention to emerge as the “imam” of the new (pseudo) Caliphate he hopes to lead by 2023, the centenary of the Turkish Republic. Addressing a joint session of Pakistan’s Parliament (February 14), he lauded sacrifices made by it in the war on terror and the “positive contributions” it made to the Afghanistan peace process and promised support during the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meet in Paris (February 16-21, 2020). His denunciation of US President Donald Trump’s Mideast plan hints at an eventual challenge to Riyadh in the region.

Erdogan’s determination to restore the Caliphate has created a visible schism between the Arab States formally led by Saudi Arabia and the non-Arab States led by Turkey. A nascent axis is discernible between Turkey, Malaysia and Pakistan; Iran and Qatar complete the anti-Riyadh alignment. Erdogan declared in February 2018, “The Republic of Turkey is a continuation of the Ottoman Empire... the essence is the same, soul is the same...” Unsurprisingly, Ankara has emerged as the new hub for anti-India activities by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Unknown to most people, Turkey has universal jurisdiction laws as part of its domestic laws. Article 13 of the Turkish Penal Code states, “Turkish law shall apply to” the crime of torture “committed in a foreign country whether or not committed by a citizen or non-citizen.”

Khalistanis tried to invoke these laws. Sikhs for Justice, a group working for a referendum (“Referendum 2020”) to create Khalistan, is believed to be funded by the ISI. In October 2018, its legal advisor, Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, filed a case against Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh when he visited Turkey to pay homage at Gallipoli to soldiers from the First Patiala Infantry Regiment (now 15 Punjab), who lost their lives in World War I, on the centenary of the Great War.

Pannun went to Gallipoli to secure an arrest warrant and restrain the Punjab Chief Minister from leaving Turkey. As the Captain was on a non-official trip, he lacked diplomatic immunity as under the Vienna Protocol, only the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister are “protected persons” when abroad in personal capacity. In Pakistan, Erdogan lauded a 1915 rally in Lahore, led by Allama Iqbal, where people from present-day Pakistan supported the Turkish people and blatantly ignored the sacrifices made by Indian soldiers at Gallipoli (Battle of Çanakkale), possibly because the bells tolled for the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey’s domestic laws explain why ex-



IAS officer Shah Faesal was going to Turkey on August 14, 2019, soon after the Centre abrogated Article 370 and divided the State of Jammu & Kashmir into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. It is possible that some foreign mentors asked Faesal to invoke these laws in Turkey. He was to file a case of human rights violations against Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the then Chief of Army Staff Gen Bipin Rawat and others, on behalf of his political party, Jammu & Kashmir People’s Movement (JKPM).

Media reports stated that from Ankara, Faesal was likely to try to take the Kashmir issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague, the Netherlands. But this would not take off for want of jurisdiction; no individual can file a case in the ICJ, only States can. Of course, his arrival in the Netherlands would be embarrassing for India.

But if Faesal really wanted to go to The Hague, he could have taken a direct flight to Amsterdam. His plan was to exploit Turkey’s Article 13 universal jurisdiction law. Some human rights NGO would receive him at Ankara, where he would be lionised as a civil service topper (2010) and Harvard alumni who quit a Government job to protest against the activities of the Indian State in Kashmir. Actually Faesal

“**ANKARA HAS EMERGED AS THE NEW HUB FOR ANTI-INDIA ACTIVITIES BY PAKISTAN’S ISI. UNKNOWN TO MOST PEOPLE, TURKEY HAS UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION LAWS AS PART OF ITS DOMESTIC LAWS. ITS ARTICLE 13 APPLIES TO THE CRIME OF TORTURE ‘COMMITTED IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY BY A CITIZEN OR NON-CITIZEN.’ KHALISTANIS TRIED TO USE IT BEFORE**”

resigned from the service in January 2019 in order to enter politics. However, the sudden split of Jammu & Kashmir and freeze on political activity nixed his unborn political career, leaving NGO activism his only alternative.

Had he reached Ankara, the international media would have splashed Kashmir on the front pages of all important newspapers and magazines and the Indian media would follow suit, thus making Faesal the global face of the anti-India Islamic movement. Once he managed to file a case in Turkey, Islamabad would almost certainly have followed up by filing a case against India at the ICJ, where it has suffered reverses in the Kulbushan Jadhav case.

However, Faesal’s mentors could not anticipate the look-out notices for Kashmiris trying to leave the country; he was caught at the airport, sent back to Srinagar and placed in preventive custody. He has now been booked under the Public Safety Act (February 15).

This argument can be corroborated from Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan’s tweet on August 15, 2019, where he invoked Srebrenica, site of the 1995 genocide of over 8,000 Bosnians by the Bosnian Serb Army led by Ratko Mladic. Khan tweeted: “Will the world silently witness another Srebrenica-type massacre and ethnic cleansing of Muslims in

IOK? I want to warn the international community if it allows this to happen, it will have severe repercussions and reactions in the Muslim world setting off radicalisation and cycles of violence.” The talk of “massacre and ethnic cleansing” of Kashmiri Muslims is, of course, pure bunkum but the tweet suggests an ISI hand in the aborted Turkish escapade.

Meanwhile, Erdogan has been cultivating separatist, religious and business leaders and Islamic groups in Kashmir after the tweaking of Article 370; this goes deeper than his traditional support to Pakistan at the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Previously also, he supported Pakistan in the FATF. While addressing the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2019, he chided the international community for not paying proper attention to Kashmir over the past seven decades.

Interestingly, soon after the FATF and UNGA meetings, the Indian Overseas Congress headed by Rahul Gandhi loyalist Sam Pitroda opened an office in Istanbul in November 2019. Possibly the Congress hopes to recover its once-committed Muslim vote bank by cultivating the emerging Caliphate; the repercussions on India’s internal affairs will need careful observation.

(The author is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

Erdogan’s remarks are completely unacceptable. They reflect neither an understanding of history nor of the conduct of diplomacy.



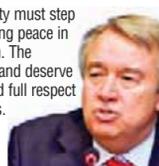
MEA Spokesperson —Raveesh Kumar

I’m happy that I can now do the work that I’ve wanted to. I want to continue working all my life because it’s difficult as people say that actresses have a shelf-life.



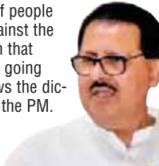
Actor —Kareena Kapoor

The global community must step up efforts to help bring peace in war-torn Afghanistan. The Afghan people need and deserve peace, prosperity and full respect of their human rights.



UN chief —Antonio Guterres

Lakhs and lakhs of people are up in arms against the CAA. His assertion that there would be no going back on CAA shows the dictatorial attitude of the PM.



Congress leader —Sanjay Dutt

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Corrupt rule the roost

Sir — Interestingly, though the electoral bonds (corporate-sponsored cash money to political parties excluding goods and services tax and without the donor’s name) scheme was originally formulated for the Lok Sabha polls, the window for the sale of bonds was opened before the Assembly elections as well. The last instance for this was seen in the just-concluded elections in Delhi.

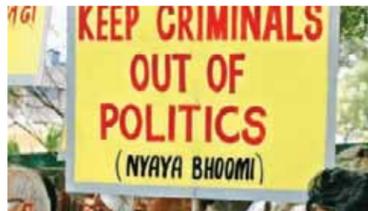
As per the election watchdog, the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections, 139 electoral bonds (78 bonds were worth ₹1 crore each, 34 bonds worth ₹10 lakh each while the remaining 27 bonds were worth ₹1 lakh each) worth ₹81.67 crore were sold by various branches of State Bank of India (SBI).

So far, ₹6,210 crore have been donated through this method ever since the scheme began. In the name of election reform, this electoral bond scheme is the invention of the BJP. This is yet another way of concealing facts and encouraging corruption without a trail.

The dark side of Indian politics

If the ever-rising number of criminal cases against politicians is anything to go by, politics and crime seem inseparable in India. At present, over 40 per cent of the Lok Sabha MPs have criminal cases pending against them. The Representation of the People Act, 1951, does not bar politicians from contesting polls. It just states that individuals punished with a jail term of more than two years cannot contest an election for six years after the jail term has ended. Shortcomings in the RPA cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, it’s welcome that in a fresh initiative to cleanse the electoral system, the Supreme Court has directed parties to upload details of criminal cases pending against candidates in the poll fray on their respective websites. According to statistics, in 2004, about one in four MPs had criminal cases against them. However, the frequency grew to about one in three between 2009 and 2014. Last year, it was much closer to one in two. If almost every other MP stands accused of a serious crime, something is seriously wrong with the choice made by parties. The apex court has done well to reiterate its concern but it could have drawn the line by exerting moral force on political parties, which are clearly violators.

The top court has repeatedly asserted that it’s the voter’s democratic right to know about a candidate’s criminal antecedents, if any. These details help the citizens



make an informed choice. Despite landmark judgments, parties and contestants are reluctant to do the needful for the obvious reason that such disclosure can harm their poll prospects. This time, too, the onus of cleaning the system has been put on the Election Commission (EC). It has been made responsible for enforcing the court’s order so as to ensure “transparency.” But at a time when the institution itself is toothless, how can it change the situation on the ground? The EC should be granted the power to disqualify candidates and de-register parties in case of concealment of vital information and other grave electoral offences.

Abhijit Roy Jamshehpur

Law-abiding citizens believe that the electoral bond is one such corrupt practice that has been made official to benefit the BJP as more than 93 per cent of the bond’s amount goes to the party. It’s a pity that neither the

Reserve Bank of India, (RBI) or the Election Commission (EC) or the Supreme Court is really bothered with this white-collared corruption.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee Faridabad

Digest the irony

Sir — The appointment of Rishi Sunak as the UK’s new Finance Minister is proof of the acceptance of Indian talent. His work is cut

out. It is likely that he will overcome all challenges on account of his vast financial acumen and practical understanding of the issues at hand. Sunak’s rise to prominence has not come without undertones. While we feel proud that Indian-origin men and women are gaining prominence, we brand them as “termites” when they come home in search of livelihood. They are viewed as a “danger” to the nation.

Ruchi Via email

When will we learn?

Sir — Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s admission that his party failed to feel the pulse of the people in Delhi makes one feel the country is a “picture hall,” where the politicians are the “entertainers” and the citizens cast their vote to rate the level of entertainment. Why can’t our leaders realise that people assess their worthiness with reference to the job done?

PP Sen New Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A win-win for Modi and Trump

While India will benefit from stronger defence ties and technology, the US President will gain from his pro-India image in an election year



SIMI MEHTA

On February 24, US President Donald Trump will inaugurate the world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. He will also be welcomed with resounding calls of "Kern Cho, Trump" while participating in a seven-kilometre long roadshow from the airport to the Sabarmati Ashram accompanied by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi. Celebrating the close ties between America and India, this will be the first visit of a US President since 2015 and Trump's first foreign tour after his impeachment trial. The palpable excitement over the visit is evident, with Modi underscoring that this would "go a long way in further cementing India-US ties."

The tour is expected to undertake the obvious optics and engage in serious discussions on broad, strategic ingredients that bring India and the US together. On February 25, the Trumps will be accorded a ceremonial welcome in the second leg of their trip to New Delhi. Defence cooperation is expected to occupy the centre stage and India is set to give a final approval for the \$2.6 billion 24 MH-60R Seahawk helicopters equipped with torpedoes and submarine-detection capabilities for the Indian Navy. Additionally, there is a US approval already in place for the sale of an Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) or the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II to India estimated at \$1.8 billion. This will strengthen Indian defence capabilities and aid the modernisation process of its armed forces.

This will build upon the Trump Administration's previous decisions to ease the controls for high and sensitive technology product sales to India. This will grant to India the same access as NATO allies through the Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 status, as well as sale of armed drones and integrated air and missile defence technology. India would demonstrate its will to modernise its armed forces and strengthen military capabilities and bilateral defence cooperation through the agreements with the US that guide the sharing of sensitive military and communications technology and reciprocal use of facilities.

Trump's maiden visit to India as the US President will strengthen the respective countries' Indo-Pacific policies and witness a synergy in their pushback strategies against the China-Russia alignment in Asia. It would be of relevance to see if the Blue Dot network finds mention at the leadership level. This network, launched by the US Government in November 2019 is a global certification for projects as market-driven, financially-sustainable and transparent and is a reaction to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. It needs to be highlighted that Australia and Japan — the other two members of Quad (apart from the US and India), have already signed up for the network.

In an endeavour to push for deeper trade and business ties, the two countries have been trying to reach a modest trade deal with lower tariffs. But the long-awaited "mini" trade deal may not see the anticipated fruition as talks have run into problems due to concerns over data privacy and e-commerce controls. Add to this the recent withdrawal of India from the list of "developing countries" — a status given in line with the WTO's system of Generalised System of Preferences, on February 10. This would emboss the issues of increased tariff barriers, which could act as an impediment for India getting favourable trade terms. So far, Indian exporters benefitted from the tariff-free access to US markets and receiving the "developed country" tag would subject exports to scrutiny regarding the harm they do to the US industry. Despite this, Indian Inc is optimistic about higher investments from US companies, demanding exemption from high duties imposed by the US on certain steel and aluminium products from India and greater market access for its agricultural, automobile, auto components and engineering products.

Reflecting the strong personal rapport between Trump and Modi, this visit will be the fifth meeting between the two leaders in the last three years to elevate bilateral strategic relations. It would demonstrate the two countries' affirmation of the shared values of commitment to democracy and rule of law and to a more peaceful and open Indo-Pacific, plus the US' acknowledgement of India as its major partner in maintaining the international global order.

Trump's visit to India is possibly the final major foreign tour before the presidential elections in November 2020. Given the fact that Indian-Americans constitute a huge population and voter base in the US, if Trump reaffirms America's commitment to diversity, inclusion and immigrants, this visit would steer a significant number of their votes his way as it will showcase his close ties with their home country. In fact, Modi already blew the US election bugle at the Howdy Modi event in September 2019 in Texas. Swarmed by Indian-American crowd, he endorsed Trump for a second term saying, "Abki baar Trump sarkar."

(The writer is CEO and Editorial Director, IMPRI)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I BROUGHT THE EAST-WEST METRO TO KOLKATA AFTER MUCH SACRIFICE BUT NOW WHEN ITS INAUGURATION DATE CAME, I WAS KEPT OUT OF IT.
 —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE



MAMATA SHOULD STOP MAKING ISSUES OUT OF NON-ISSUES LIKE THIS IN PUBLIC AND CONCENTRATE ON GIVING GOOD GOVERNANCE TO THE STATE.
 —STATE BJP PRESIDENT
DILIP GHOSH

Make your choice

If demand doesn't improve, firms might retain the tax cut bonanza instead of investing. It would've been better to put more cash in the pockets of individuals by giving more IT relief



UTTAM GUPTA

Amid an atmosphere of gloom and doom (triggered by growth plunging to a low of less than five per cent during the current year and muted projections for next year), it is necessary to closely scrutinise tax proposals in the Union Budget for 2020-21 to assess whether or not these will generate the much-needed growth impulses.

The four major factors impinging on a surge are private consumption, investment, export and spending by the State. The Modi Government has kept up the tempo of expenditure by way of building infrastructure and spending on welfare schemes. On the export front, given the all-round depressed growth and international trading environment, there is little that it can do in terms of using this lever for providing the much-needed fillip.

Therefore, much of the focus has to be on the first two levers, i.e. private consumption and investment. The big question is whether the tax proposals will help in boosting demand. First, let us look at the changes in personal income tax (PIT).

At present, a person having an income of ₹2,50,001-₹5,00,000 per annum pays a tax of five per cent, those earning more than ₹5,00,000 but less than ₹10,00,000 pay 20 per cent tax whereas, someone having an income higher than ₹10,00,000 pays 30 per cent. Accompanying this are a plethora of exemptions and deductions viz. Section 80C (annual investment, expenses, life insurance premium and so on, up to ₹1,50,000), Section 80D (health insurance premiums), Section 24 (interest on home loans), Section 80CCD (including extra NPS contribution up to ₹50,000), Section 80E (education loan interest) and Section 16 (standard deduction on salary income) and so on.

This Budget, even while retaining five per cent tax for annual income in the ₹2,50,001-₹5,00,000 range, on income higher than ₹5,00,000, proposes a differentiated structure with five slabs against two under the existing scheme of things. The proposed slabs and corresponding tax rates are 10 per cent for ₹5,00,001-₹7,50,000; 15 per cent for ₹7,50,001-₹10,00,000; 20 per cent for ₹10,00,001-₹12,50,000; 25 per cent for ₹12,50,001-₹15,00,000 and for those earning above ₹15,00,000 a tax of 30 per cent. A person who decides to avail lower tax rates under the new scheme will have to forego most exemptions and deductions. In other words, he can either continue with the existing scheme or go for the new regime. No cherry picking is permitted.

For a person availing of most tax breaks, switch-over to the new regime won't yield any savings. He could even be worse off depending on the income profile and deductions/exemptions availed. For instance, a person having an annual income of ₹15,00,000 and availing tax breaks aggregating ₹3,75,000 (Section 80C:1,50,000; Section 80D: 25,000; Section 24: 2,00,000) or net income ₹11,25,000 will have to pay ₹1,56,000 as tax. In case however, he opts for the new scheme i.e. taxable income remaining at ₹15,00,000 but lower rates, his tax liability will be ₹1,95,000. This being ₹39,000 higher, he would prefer to continue with the old scheme. However, the reality on ground zero is that an overwhelming number of assesses are unable to avail of the tax breaks. This is because people in the early stages of their family life have high expenditure commitment and hence need more cash in hand, leaving little surplus to invest which is necessary for availing deductions. Then, there are people at the age end, say age 55 years plus, who are

“THE BUDGET PROPOSALS (SEPTEMBER 2019 AND NOW) ENTAIL A MAMMOTH GIVEAWAY OF ABOUT ₹1,50,000 CRORE PER ANNUM. THIS SHOULD HELP IN SPURRING INVESTMENT DEMAND. HOWEVER, CONSIDERING THAT AT PRESENT, CONSUMPTION IS SUBDUED AND ALREADY, SURPLUS CAPACITY EXISTS IN SEVERAL SECTORS, ITS IMPACT ON THE SHORT-TERM MAY NOT BE MUCH



under no compulsion to save (he has already built a house or nearly completed education of the children). Such people who are unable or unwilling to invest — due to economic circumstances facing them — and hence, unable to avail exemptions and deductions would stand to gain by switching over to the new dispensation. In the above example (annual income ₹15,00,000), the tax liability of such a person under the old regime would be ₹2,73,000, which is ₹78,000 higher than under the new regime (₹1,95,000). Without doubt, he/she will be inclined to go for the latter. That apart, the FM's proposals empower assesses to take their own decisions instead of being constrained by available tax breaks. Someone wanting to have more cash in hand can opt for the new scheme whereas another person keen to save more can continue with the old regime.

According to an internal exercise by the Union Finance Ministry, the proposal will entail a loss of ₹40,000 crore to the exchequer, which means that much extra cash in the hand of tax payers which they can spend, thereby giving a boost to demand and in turn, growth.

Another proposal expected to put more cash in the hands of individuals, especially those earning less than ₹10,00,000 per annum, relates to the manner of levying dividend distribution tax (DDT). At present, a company is required to deduct tax (known as DDT) at the rate of 20 per cent (including surcharge and education cess, this comes to 20.35 per cent) from the surplus/profit set aside for distribution of dividend to shareholders. The Budget proposes to substitute this by taxing dividends in the hands of recipients/shareholders.

This substitution means that retail investors, whose earnings are in the ₹500,001-₹750,000 and ₹750,001-

₹10,00,000 range, will stand to gain as they will pay tax on dividend at 10 per cent and 15 per cent respectively, as against 20 per cent they pay currently. This will also be a booster to foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) who will be able to claim offset for the tax paid on dividend received from companies here in their respective jurisdictions (this is not possible under the existing dispensation of levying tax before distributing profit).

Implementation of this proposal will entail an annual loss of ₹25,000 crore to the exchequer. This much extra money in the hands of investors will also help augment purchasing power. Coming to corporate tax, on September 20, 2019, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced steep reduction in the rate of corporate tax for "new entities" incorporated on October 1, 2019 in the manufacturing sector and start production by March 31, 2023 from the existing 25 per cent to 15 per cent. Such companies won't have to pay minimum alternate tax (MAT) (levied on book profit of firms which have no taxable profit courtesy, exemptions and incentives).

Furthermore, the tax rate on existing companies was reduced from 30 per cent to 22 per cent (for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) annually with a turnover of less than ₹400 crore. This was reduced from the already preferential 25 per cent to 22 per cent) sans exemptions and deductions. These firms are also exempt from MAT. For companies who decide to continue with the old regime viz. tax at 30 per cent with tax breaks, MAT was reduced from existing 18.5 per cent to 15 per cent. In the Budget for 2020-21, the FM has extended the benefit of 15 per cent rate to "new" power companies. Besides, "cooperatives" are eligible for the 22 per cent rate sans exemptions and deductions. The steep reduction in tax rate

(for new enterprises, it is at 15 per cent. This is lower than other major countries viz the US 21 per cent, China 25 per cent; even for existing firms at 22 per cent, this is comparable) is a major structural reform aimed at making Indian firms more competitive and leaving more resources with them for increasing investment. The FM has given a choice, enabling them to choose either the old regime (higher tax rate with exemptions) or new regime (lower tax rate sans exemptions).

The Budget proposals (September 2019 and now) entail a mammoth give-away of about ₹1,50,000 crore per annum. This should help in spurring investment demand. However, considering that at present, consumption is subdued and already, surplus capacity exists in several sectors (major investment by way of setting up new projects can come only after existing capacities are fully utilised), its impact on growth in the short-term may not be much.

Unless private demand improves significantly, companies might be inclined to retain the tax cut bonanza instead of investing. It would have been better if the Government had put more money in the pockets of individuals by giving extra relief in PIT (say, by applying 10 per cent tax to the entire income range ₹5,00,001-₹10,00,000 instead of limiting this up to ₹7,50,000) as the need for resurrecting growth now is far more pressing.

To conclude, tax proposals in the 2020-21 Budget are in the right direction. However, a lot more needs to be done in terms of further reducing and simplifying the PIT. With regard to corporate tax, the Government should aim at 15 per cent rate applicable uniformly to enterprises in all sectors, new and existing (sans exemptions).

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

Pay taxes for a developed nation

The Government needs to proactively create the culture of paying taxes in order to be able to fulfil the dream of us becoming a \$5 trillion economy in five years



RAJEEV AHUJA KEERTI PRADHAN

The Indian Government aspires to take the economy to the \$5 trillion level over the next five years. It is a difficult goal by its own admission but not an impossible one. Given the current economic slowdown, many experts had hoped for a much stronger fiscal stimulus than what is contained in the recent Union Budget. That being what it is, some experts believe that the Government has missed an opportunity. However, the Centre seems to think differently. While acknowledging the need for growth-enhancing measures, the Niti Aayog's Vice-Chairman, Rajiv Kumar, had hinted prior to the Budget on using "alternate" measures in the face of limit-

ed fiscal headroom. Subsequently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its monetary policy, used unconventional tools to give the economy a shot in the arm. Without getting into the debate on what's an optimal dose of economic stimulus and what combination of fiscal and monetary policy could deliver it, Government spending does have an important role in the revival of the economy. The Centre believes that a decent dose of fiscal stimulus is already contained in the Budget.

Be that as it may, growth revival is closely tied to Government spending, which in turn is closely tied to revenues and taxes are an important source of it.

It is startling to note some income tax statistics that have recently been cited: That only 8,600 individuals have reported incomes above ₹5 crore and only 2,200 professionals (doctors, chartered accountants, lawyers and so on) have declared professional income above ₹1 crore in the entire country in the fiscal year 2018-19. These figures don't match well with some other statistics, such

as the number of premium cars sold or the total people travelling abroad. There seems to be significant scope for improving tax compliance, which is essential to India achieving its \$5 trillion goal.

No rationale for tax avoidance: Tax evasion or underreporting may have been justified when corruption in public administration ran high. But now that the Narendra Modi Government has been able to provide a cleaner administration, this justification is no longer valid.

Further, the taxpayers can be reasonably certain that their money is being used responsibly. Indeed, the Modi Government has a vision of creating a "New India" and is focussed on the economic development of the entire country.

The Government's focus on the development of the North-east region, on "aspirational" districts and on Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities is all aimed at unleashing economic development across the entire country. Furthermore, several policies and programmes such as Skill India, Mudra Yojana, Start-up India, dou-

bling of farmers' income with the promotion of agriculture and allied activities such as animal husbandry and so on are aimed at benefiting all sections of society.

Additionally, the Government is working towards ease of paying taxes. It is simplifying the taxation system and making it citizen-centric. It has taken or is taking several steps such as simplifying laws, reducing the tax burden, making tax assessment faceless, bringing taxpayers' charter and so forth that should instil trust and confidence among tax-payers. But trust and confidence alone are not sufficient to persuade people to pay taxes honestly. The culture of tax avoidance developed over the last few decades will need to be changed consciously.

Promote tax-paying culture: The Government needs to promote the culture of paying taxes in the country. This can be done through a combination of measures. First, the example of clean administration at the national level needs to percolate down to the sub-national level too. Second, it's not enough for the Prime

Minister or Chief Ministers to be clean. Every Minister as an individual tax-payer ought to set an example. Third, the Government needs to run media campaigns to inform the public of their civic duty and also to connect the dots transparently on how their taxes are contributing towards nation-building. Fourth, the Government needs to rope in popular personalities with a large fan following to drive home the message of paying taxes — pretty much the same way as it has been doing for some other social campaigns. The culture of paying taxes honestly has to be instilled consciously and proactively.

India has a rich tradition of people donating to social organisations involved in helping the needy. However, in a well-functioning system, the Government, through its various programmes and initiatives, ought to be taking care of the needy. Although people are free to continue giving private donations, they don't necessarily have to, as long as they are paying their taxes and holding their Government accountable

for its performance, including its welfare role.

Tax culture essential: India is considered to be a lower-middle income country as per the World Bank's country classification which is based on income per person. Even if India becomes a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, it would still be considered as a lower-middle income country as per the World Bank classification.

The changes in the taxation system that the Government has or is introducing can help it generate revenues to fuel economic growth. Achieving a \$5 trillion economy in the next few years is not difficult. India may take a year or two longer but the goal is within reach.

However, to become a truly developed economy, India will need to change the mindset of its people. It will have to consciously and proactively create the culture of paying taxes.

(Ahuja is a development economist formerly with the World Bank and Pradhan is advisor and adjunct professor, Chitkara University, Punjab)



FOREIGN EYE



LEND A HAND TO IDLIB REFUGEES

As abrupt as the surge in those fleeing Idlib has been, this is a long-awaited disaster; the end result of decisions made over the years. Only an immediate ceasefire and unhindered flow of aid can offer these desperate civilians any hope of respite: Western powers should be doing everything they can to press for them. This is far less than those now huddled in Idlib are owed — and even this, it seems, may be too much to expect.

(The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



Suzuki Motorcycle India launches BS-VI compliant 'Burgman' scooter

NEW DELHI: Suzuki Motorcycle India Pvt Ltd (SMIPL) on Monday launched BS-VI compliant version of its 125cc scooter Burgman Street model priced at Rs 77,900 (ex-showroom Delhi).

The new Burgman Street is equipped with fuel injection technology and integrated engine start and kill switch to offer smoother riding experience at less emissions, the company said in a statement. SMIPL Managing Director Koichiro Hirao said the company has been a pioneer in the 125cc scooter segment in India and successfully created a new category of advanced premium riding with the Burgman Street model. "We are confident that the upgraded Burgman Street with BS-VI will add a zing to an overall riding experience for our customers," he added.



IRFC lists USD 1 bn medium-term notes on India INX

NEW DELHI: The BSE-owned India International Exchange (India INX) on Monday said it has listed two tranches of Indian Railway Finance Corporation's (IRFC) medium-term notes worth USD 1 billion on its debt listing platform. In the first tranche, bonds worth USD 700 million will be issued at a coupon rate of 3.249 per cent due in 2030 while the second tranche consists of bonds worth USD 300 million at 3.95 coupon rate due in 2050. India INX said in a release. The issue is part of IRFC's USD 2-billion Global Medium Term Note Programme, it added. India INX is the country's first debt listing platform that allows raising funds in any currency of choice by both foreign and Indian issuers from investors across the globe. Since the launch of the global securities market, medium-term notes worth over USD 46.5 billion and bonds worth over USD 21.1 billion have been listed on the platform so far, India INX said.

Coronavirus impact on steel biz for next 2-3 years

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The impact of Coronavirus outbreak will be felt on global steel industry for at least two to three years, as China is the largest producer of the alloy, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday.

The minister also asked Indian steel companies to enhance output, particularly special steel, to grab larger global market share.

A strategy paper was being prepared for producing 10 million tonnes of special steel at a cost of Rs 50,000 crore with 50,000 employment potential in the present scenario, he said.

India is the second largest global producer of steel with an annual output of over 106 million tonne (MT), but lags much behind China that accounted for 928.3 MT of the alloy in 2018.

"When some markets in the globe face pressure, its positive reflection is felt in some other markets. This is an automatic (natural) law. India occupies number two slot in steel production. From capital goods to finished products - how can we derive benefit - we are holding talks with stakeholders," Pradhan said on the sidelines of a CII event.

Pradhan also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has offered a helping hand to China to fight the deadly virus.



Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan lighting the lamp at the workshop on "India Steel: Fostering Steel Usage in Railways & Defence Sectors", in New Delhi on Monday. The Chairman, Railway Board, Vinod Kumar Yadav is also seen.

“India is a technologically competent country. There is lot of manpower, lot of domestic market, lot of raw material ... Synergising all these factors we have to be self sufficient, we have to create a new model...We have to produce good quality of special steel...We can also export

—DHARMENDRA PRADHAN, Union Minister

He urged players - both large and small - including the startups to come forward for production of special steel and check its import, as countries like Japan and Korea where exporting finished goods to

India after adding value to raw material imported from India. "India is a technologically competent country. There is lot of manpower, lot of domestic market, lot of raw material ... Synergising all these factors we

have to be self sufficient, we have to create a new model...We have to produce good quality of special steel...We can also export," Pradhan said.

The coronavirus that emerged in central China at the end of last year has now killed nearly 1,800 people and spread around the world.

As of Monday, 70,548 people had been infected across China, the majority in and around Wuhan - the capital of Hubei province, where the outbreak was first reported.

Moody's cuts India growth projection to 5.4 pc for 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Investors Service on Monday slashed India's growth forecast to 5.4 per cent for 2020 from 6.6 per cent projected earlier on slower than expected economic recovery.

In its update on Global Macro Outlook, Moody's said India's economy has decelerated rapidly over the last two years and expects economic recovery to begin in the current quarter.

"We expect any recovery to be slower than we had previously expected. Accordingly, we have revised our growth forecasts to 5.4 per cent for 2020 and 5.8 per cent for 2021, down from our previous projections of 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively," Moody's said.

The growth projections are based on calendar year and as per its estimates, India has clocked a GDP growth of 5 per cent in 2019.

With a weak economy and depressed credit growth reinforcing each other, Moody's said "it is difficult to envision a quick turnaround of either, even if economic deceleration may have trogued".

On the fiscal front, it said,



The growth projections are based on calendar year and as per its estimates, India has clocked a GDP growth of 5 % in 2019

the Union Budget 2020 did not contain a significant stimulus to address the demand slump. "As similar policies in other countries have shown, tax cuts are unlikely to translate into

higher consumer and business spending when risk aversion is high," it said.

Moody's said it expects additional easing by the RBI. However, if the recent rise in CPI inflation, mainly as a result of higher food prices, is seen to have second-round effects, this would make it more challenging for the central bank to cut interest rates further, it added.

With regard to global growth, Moody's said the coronavirus outbreak has diminished optimism about prospects of an incipient stabilization of global growth this year.

India plays crucial role in Etihad's growth strategy

PNS ■ DUBAI

India plays a crucial role in Etihad Airways' growth strategy, contributing significantly to the airline's global operations, a top company official said.

Marking the Abu Dhabi-based carrier's 15-years of flying to India, Neerja Bhatia, Etihad Airways' Vice President, Indian Sub-continent, reiterated the airline's unwavering commitment to the country over the last 15 years, which she said, "has resulted in Etihad Airways becoming one of the most preferred airlines for travellers from India."

Etihad began operations in India in September 2004.

A statement released by the airline said Mumbai was the first route in the country to be served by Etihad and today the city ranks highest in terms of total passengers the airline has carried over the years, with the



Owing to passenger demand on this route, Etihad introduced a fourth daily service to Mumbai last year

number exceeding 3.5 million.

Owing to passenger demand on this route, Etihad introduced a fourth daily service to Mumbai last year. Delhi and Cochin rank second and third, with the airline carrying over 3.2 million and 2.3 million passengers on these routes, respectively over the years. Etihad has also added a fourth daily frequency on its Delhi - Abu Dhabi route.

As a result of its optimized schedule of non-stop flights between the UAE and India, appealing to greater numbers

of point-to-point business and leisure passengers, Abu Dhabi is now the most popular destination for Indian travellers on the Etihad network, said the statement.

Etihad operates 161 return flights per week between Abu Dhabi and 10 key Indian gateways of Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram, connecting each of these gateways to international destinations.

ONGC stock falls over 3 pc on Q3 results

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation lost over 3 per cent on Monday after the company posted halving of its December quarter net profit.

On the BSE, the stock slumped 3.15 per cent to Rs 100. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), it fell 3.19 per cent to Rs 100.

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on Friday reported halving of its net profit in the third quarter ended December 2019, after it faced the double whammy of falling oil and gas prices and a drop in production.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investments in the Indian capital market through participatory notes (P-notes) continue to decline and hit a nearly 11-year low of Rs 64,537 crore till the end of December 2019.

P-notes are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process.

According to Sebi data, the total value of P-note investments in Indian markets -- equity, debt, and derivatives -- slumped to a fresh low of Rs 64,537 crore till December-end after hitting a 13-month low of Rs 69,670 crore at November-end.

The fund inflow through P-notes in December was the lowest since February 2009, when the cumulative value of such

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



investments stood at Rs 60,948 crore, according to the data.

Of the total investments made till the end of November, Rs 52,486 crore was invested in equities, Rs 11,415 crore in debt and Rs 636 crore in the derivatives segment.

A total investment of Rs 76,773 crore was registered at the end of October. This was first gain after a continuous decline since June, the data showed.

Market experts believe that liberalised norm for foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) by the regulator Sebi is impacting investment through P-notes route.

Reliance Infra shares rise 5 pc on strong results

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Reliance Infrastructure on Monday surged over 5 pc after the firm reported 18 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 345.51 crore for the third quarter ended December 31.

The stock rose 5.13 per cent to trade at Rs 20.50 on the BSE. It gained 5.38 per cent to Rs 20.55 on the NSE.

Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra) on Friday reported 18 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 345.51 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2019.

The Anil Ambani-led company had clocked a net profit of Rs 293.77 crore in the corresponding quarter previous fiscal, it had said in a regulatory filing.



SpiceJet inducts two A 320 planes

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Budget carrier SpiceJet on Monday announced the induction of two Airbus A320 planes in its fleet.

The two narrow-body planes, wet leased from Bulgarian carrier BH Air, joined the fleet on Friday, SpiceJet said in a release.

Under a wet lease arrangement, aircraft, crew as well as maintenance and insurance are provided.

With the latest induction, which has the approval of aviation regulator DGCA, SpiceJet

now has 121 planes, it said.

The airline, however, did not disclose the period for which these planes have been leased.

This is the second time the Gurugram-based airline, which primarily flies Boeing planes and regional jet

Bombardier Q400s, will operate Airbus-brand planes as in 2015 also it had inducted similar aircraft in the fleet on lease.

The move comes amid a continued uncertainty around the Boeing 737 MAX planes, which were globally grounded

in March last year, after two of these planes crashed --one in Malaysia and other in Ethiopia -- in a short span of five months, raising safety concerns.

The no-frills carrier had 13 B737 Max planes in the fleet at the time of the grounding of these planes.

Spice-Jet has ordered 225 Boeing 737 MAX, for USD 22 billion. Despite facing an unprecedented crisis following the grounding of the 737 MAX, SpiceJet grew by close to 60 per cent in 2019, the airline said in the release on Monday.

SpiceJet has added more than 40 planes to its fleet since April last year, it added.

OYO net loss widens to USD 335 mn in FY19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hospitality firm OYO Hotels & Homes on Monday said its consolidated net loss widened to USD 335 million (over Rs 2,390 crore) for the fiscal year ended March 2019, mainly on account of international expansion.

The company had reported a net loss of USD 52 million (over Rs 370 crore) for the preceding fiscal.

Consolidated revenue of the company for 2018-19 stood at USD 951 million as against USD 211 million in the year-ago fiscal.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech giant Microsoft on Monday said it has set up a new development centre in Noida, its third such facility in India, that will serve as an engineering and innovation hub for the company.

The announcement comes ahead of the visit of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella slated for later this month.

"The centre will build on Microsoft's commitment to tap India's world-class engineering talent to create solutions for global impact," Microsoft said in a statement.

The India Development Centre (IDC) represents Microsoft's strategy of globally shared development to build products and services for driving digital innovation, it added. "The IDC-NCR will play a



critical role in Microsoft India's expansion and growth story. The facility will open opportunities for thousands of engineers, with plans to expand to a full-fledged development centre, similar to IDC facilities in Bengaluru and Hyderabad," the statement said.

The company, however, did not disclose the investment being made for setting up the centre.

The IDC-NCR will be home to the company's engineering teams across various technology groups, including Microsoft's Artificial

The announcement comes ahead of the visit of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella slated for later this month

Intelligence (AI) and Research Group, Cloud and Enterprise Group, and Experience & Devices Group, along with Core Services Engineering and Operations, the statement said. The IDC-NCR will also house Mixer, Microsoft's live streaming gaming platform team, becoming the first centre to host the gaming team outside the company headquarters in Redmond, United States.

Soil health card boosts farm income by up to Rs 30K/acre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Use of soil health card has helped farmers reduce substantially the cost of production and achieve higher production, thereby increasing farm income up to Rs 30,000 per acre, depending on the crop, according to a latest government study.

The study, conducted by the National Productivity Council (NPC) in 76 districts of 19 states - covering 170 soil testing labs and 1,700 farmers, has been released on the completion of five year of the government scheme.

Soil health card provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving its health and fertility.



The study, conducted by the National Productivity Council (NPC) in 76 districts of 19 states - covering 170 soil testing labs and 1,700 farmers, has been released on the completion of five year of the government scheme

For instance, there was Rs 25,000-30,000 per acre increase in income from tur, around Rs 25,000 per acre from sunflower, Rs 12,000 per acre from cotton, Rs 10,000 per acre from groundnut, Rs 4,500 per acre from paddy and Rs 3,000 per acre from potato, it said.

Application of fertilisers as per the recommendation of soil health cards led to savings in nitrogen fertilisers like urea, thereby resulted in reduction in cost of cultivation.

In case of rice, the cost of cultivation was reduced by 16-25 per cent and savings of nitrogen was found to be around 20kg/acre. In pulses, there was 10-15 per cent reduction in cultivation cost and savings of 10kg/acre urea.

Similarly in oilseeds, the reduction was 10-15 per cent and savings on nitrogen was 9kg/acre in sunflower, around 23kg/ acre in groundnut and around 30 kg/acre in castor. Among cash crops, the

reduction in cotton was 25 per cent and savings on nitrogen fertiliser was around 35 kg/ acre, while in potato the saving on nitrogen fertiliser was 46 kg per acre, the study added.

Stating that judicious use of fertilisers also resulted in increased production of crops, the study showed that there was 10-20 per cent increase in production of paddy and 10-15 per cent in wheat and jawar.

There was 10-30 per cent rise in production of pulses, 40 per cent jump in oilseeds and 10-20 per cent in cotton production, it said.

World V launches Rs 100 cr fund for Indian startups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

World V on Monday announced the launch of a Rs 100 crore-fund that will invest in early and mid-stage startups in the country.

With a corpus of Rs 100 crore, World V Technology Fund - Series 1 will invest in early to mid-stage companies working in industries such as consumer, healthcare, finance, logistics and entertainment, a statement said.

World V will lead the investment in both consumer facing and B2B companies working on emerging technologies, including cloud, big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning and internet of things, it added.



The World V Technology Fund - Series 1 will identify companies that needs more than just funding, World V Partner Deepak Shetty said. "With access to global best practices, World V will work towards creating a platform for knowledge transfer and nurturing of talents in the invested companies. This is first in a series of technology funds that we will be introducing in India," he added.

The ART of the SCRAP

Art, like life, finds a way to be expressed. This can be seen in K Ravi Chandra's artwork who uses automobile scrap to build sculptures, finds
V SATEESH REDDY

Art knows no limits. Guntur-based artist K Ravi Chandra reiterates that statement by converting automobile scrap into beautiful art. Ravi did his Bachelors in Fine Arts from JNTU, Hyderabad and Masters of Fine Arts from Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata University. While experimenting with various forms, Ravi found his love in making art from scrap. Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Ravi says, "My family has been involved in creating art for

decades. My grandfather used to make bronze sculptures for temples. My father Katuri Venkateswara Rao is a self-taught sculptor who also designs temples. They have been my inspiration since childhood in choosing art as my field."

While many artists choose acrylic, watercolour or others as their medium, Ravi chose scrap. He shares, "In 2011, I participated in a biodiversity scrap camp in Hyderabad and it inspired me to work more on scrap material. I create my artwork from automobile scrap including iron, washers, iron link

chain nuts, bolts, metal wires and more. Even the owners of the automobile shops, where I go to collect scrap, don't believe that I can make art out of the scrap collected from their shops. After I showed them what I do, they began to encourage me to pursue my passion.

From animals like horse, lion, camel, elephant, cheetah, duck and scorpion to human figures such as Mahatma Gandhi on his charaka, a farmer with a pair of bulls, a robot, a village woman and a man holding a cup, Ravi has built them all with scrap. "I want to show various

stages of a human life through art. I also feature lifestyles of various people from the villages and urban areas," he adds.

Ravi showcased his work in Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Kolkata, Gandhinagar and Mumbai and received great appreciation from art lovers. He said that the online art community is also very supportive of his work.

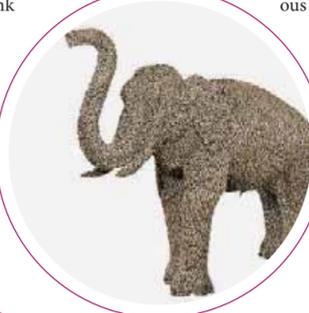
He says, "I work for two to three months on each piece. Once the work of a sculpture is completed, it gets a coat of red oxide, topped with a silver coat and a rexine finish. Once I got a call from a steel expo in Gandhinagar and they requested me to display my work there. Similarly, I get calls from across India to display my work. It's an honour for me."

On a concluding note, Ravi said that he would like to work more on social causes to create awareness among people about various societal issues.



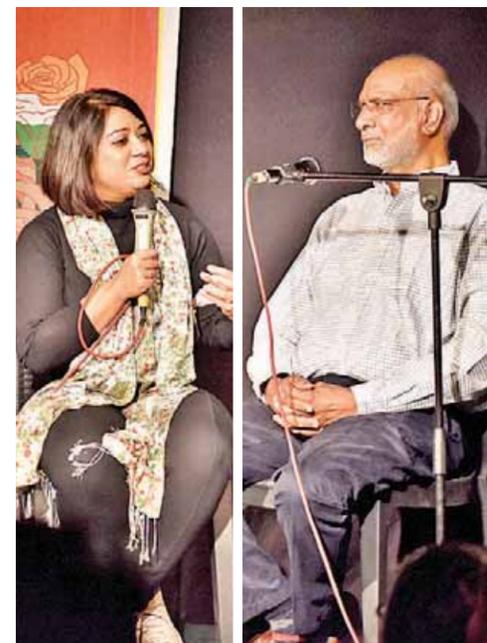
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K RAVI CHANDRA ARTIST



When citizens refuse to be subjects

Senior journalist Faye D'Souza, who was in the city over the weekend, spoke about the NRC, the CAA, the ongoing assaults on students in the national capital and other issues plaguing the country, reports MESHAEEL SALEEM



Lamakaan, an open cultural space for the city, organised an event 'India My Valentine' on Sunday. The open mic discussion, whose large number of attendees made their presence felt even from outside the gate, was hosted by senior journalist, Faye D'Souza. The event followed by a stand-up act by comedian Aditi Mittal. The idea behind this event was conceived by actor Swara Bhaskar to show each citizen that everyone stands united with the country in her good and bad times, said Faye. "The purpose of this event is to talk about what's going on in our country and how we can overcome all the issues together," said the journalist. The video of police assaulting people studying

inside the library at the Jamia Millia Islamia set the tone of discussion that prompted many questions from the attendees. "Won't parents feel reluctant about sending their daughters to any of the Delhi colleges now?" she questioned. She said that she stepped down from being a mainstream journalist as there are restrictions that come with the job. She urged people to take up independent journalism as only then one would get the freedom to voice one's opinion without restrictions. Without straying from the topics on abuse of human rights and worsening safety structures, Faye kept the discussion light by managing to pull out a funny thread here and there, keeping the audience entertained. Later, in a discussion

with economist Mohan Guruswamy, Faye spoke about the NRC, the CAA and the efforts needed to safeguard the constitution. Guruswamy was of the opinion that the Constitution has been replaced by the Bhagavad Gita and everyone should strive to make sure that the principles enshrined in the Constitution are protected. Both the speakers were of

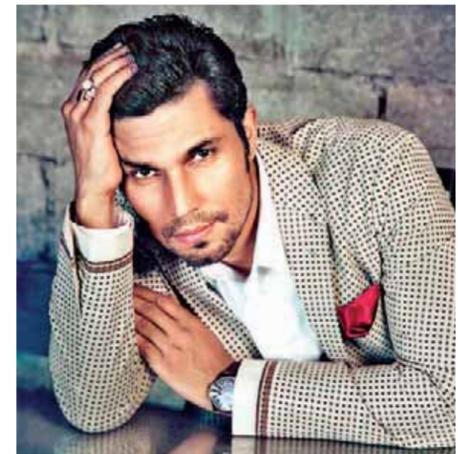
THE IDEA BEHIND THIS EVENT WAS CONCEIVED BY ACTOR SWARA BHASKAR TO SHOW EACH CITIZEN THAT EVERYONE STANDS UNITED WITH THE COUNTRY IN HER GOOD AND BAD TIMES

the opinion that the government should move away from religion and focus on the core issues such as infant mortality, the rate of dropouts from schools, farmer suicides and safety conditions for women and children. The audience was in for a treat when Faye welcomed Supreme Court lawyer Menaka Guruswamy — who fought for decriminalising homosexuality by overturning Section 377 — to speak about the importance of judiciary in times when police officials are taking a free hand in shooting down accused in criminal cases. "As long as we are treated as subjects and not as citizens we would continue to face pressure from the powers to be to adhere to the narrative that suits them," Menaka said.

Her discussion ended with everyone singing the National Anthem. Soon came on to the stage popular stand-up comedian Aditi Mittal who provided the much needed comic relief from the serious discussions so far. Aditi got everyone laughing out loud with her description of the time when she was given an award for women's empowerment and the kind of people she met at that event. She wrapped up her act by singing her own rendition of the song *ajeeb dastaan hai ye* that was applauded by everyone. At the end of the event most of the attendees left the venue with a sense of participating in discussions that concern the country at large and in the afterglow of spending quality time with like-minded peers.

Internationally-renowned conservationist Ian Redmond OBE, award-winning explorer and environmentalist Sacha Dench and Indian actor and equestrian Randeep Hooda on Monday were named CMS Ambassadors for Migratory Species until 2023 under the redesigned Ambassadors Programme launched at CMS COP13.

The launch of the redesigned programme took place on the opening day of the Thirteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) here. Ambassadors can either be global celebrities who have expressed a desire to contribute to raising awareness of migratory species and the work of the convention, or prominent individuals from conservation, science, literature, or other fields who can mobilize attention for specific issues or species. British biologist Ian Redmond is widely respected for his work with great apes and elephants and has served as Ambassador for Migratory Species since 2010. He has led anti-poaching patrols, guided film crews to close encounters with gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans, and elephants, and worked to support local conservationists during civil wars in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Redmond will represent terrestrial species for CMS.



Randeep named ambassador for migratory species

"One of the most important things I can do in my role as an Ambassador for the UN Convention on Migratory Species is to talk about CMS, write about CMS and help to make documentaries and social media posts about what it does and which species it helps," he said. Australian Sacha Dench is a pioneering conservationist, champion sportswoman and record-breaking adventurer who is known as the 'Human Swan' following her paramotor journey tracking the Bewick's Swan's migration from the Russian Arctic to the UK in 2016. Dench will be taking to the air for a trip of more than 6,000 miles later this year to track the migration route of ospreys from Scotland to Ghana. Randeep Hooda is an award-winning film and theatre actor, as well as a

professional equestrian. He has advocated for many environmental causes, including wildlife protection and animal welfare, and has generated public awareness for his beach clean-ups in Mumbai. "Migration is a part and parcel of the life cycle of many species. It is not only important for them but also important for our planet. They make this world a healthy and more diverse place. Many of them are under threat and we need to work jointly across the globe to protect them," he said. "As an Ambassador, I hope to take the conversation about conservation from conferences to local cooperation," Hooda added. — IANS

AWARENESS ON OBESITY

Kims-Livlife Centre celebrated its anniversary at ITC Kohenu, Madhapur. The guests had a live music followed by a fashion show to create awareness on obesity. Doctors of Kims, models & socialites walked the ramp and had a gala time. During the programme, a panel discussion on obesity was conducted.



PARTY

ARCHITECT'S DEN

Herestia — a new store which helps architects and designers to work with creative ideas — was launched in Hyderabad. Fashion lovers checked out the store's latest segment of sintered surfaces offering, manufactured by new generation of press technology, and had a nice evening.

Photos by SV Chary

CITY GUIDE

EVENTS

YOGA WORKSHOP

Fab Cafe, Gachibowli is conducting a Yoga workshop at its premises on February 23 between 9 am and 11 am.



CHILDREN'S ART EXHIBITION

Children's Art Exhibition will be held on February 22 at Lamakaan from 12 pm. Children would be trained in various art forms during the exhibition.



MOVIE SCREENING



Cinephiles Film Club is screening a film Amour tomorrow at Lamakaan from 7 pm. Octogenarian couple George and Anne's happy life comes to a halt, when Anne suffers from a stroke and George must do everything possible to help her recover.

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



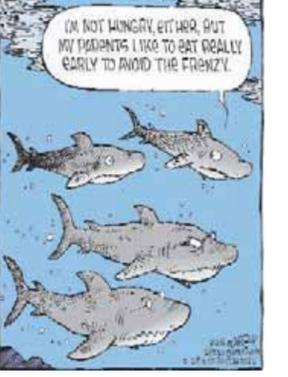
GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



NANCY



SUDOKU

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7				9			1
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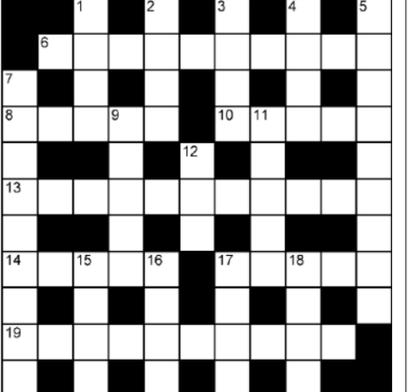
Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Not finished
 - Chewed up and swallowed
 - Tongans live in this country
 - Someone who works with wires, lights, switches
 - A name for a doll
 - Have a quarrel
 - These are published daily
 - To do something very well
 - Happen
 - Snoop
 - Important rules
 - The barks of a small dog
 - Mountains
 - A young woman
- DOWN**
- Weave wool with big needles
 - Connect together
 - A small mark
 - A green feathery plant
 - Something left over
 - Cutting off a person's head
- SOLUTION**
- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | I | S | T | E | R | W | A | N | D |
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| J | E | A | R | E | E | G | E | Y | |
| I | A | N | T | L | E | R | S | | |
| G | W | A | S | E | O | | | | |
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GINGER MEGGS



Landing the lead role in Venkatesh Maha's *Uma Maheswara Ugra Roopasya* is destiny, says Satyadev. In a free-wheeling conversation with NAGARAJ GOUD, the actor speaks about his preparation for the role of a small town photographer, working with Maha and more

Maha surprise basket for SATYADEV

Satyadev, who is playing the titular role in Venkatesh Maha's *Uma Maheswara Ugra Roopasya* (UMUR), a remake of Malayalam hit *Maheshinte Prathikaaram*, watched the original sometime back in 2016 with a friend. The director and the actor decided to bag the remake rights of the film but their efforts proved to be futile. As luck would have it Maha approached Satyadev to front the

remake last year. There's another interesting story as well behind the actor-director duo coming together. "Maha was supposed to make his debut film with me but it couldn't transpire for some reason. He later went on to make *C/o Kancharapalem*. I wasn't expecting him to get back to me after the film's success but he left me a text one night in the second half of last year, asking me if I could meet him up. We caught up later and he told me about remaking

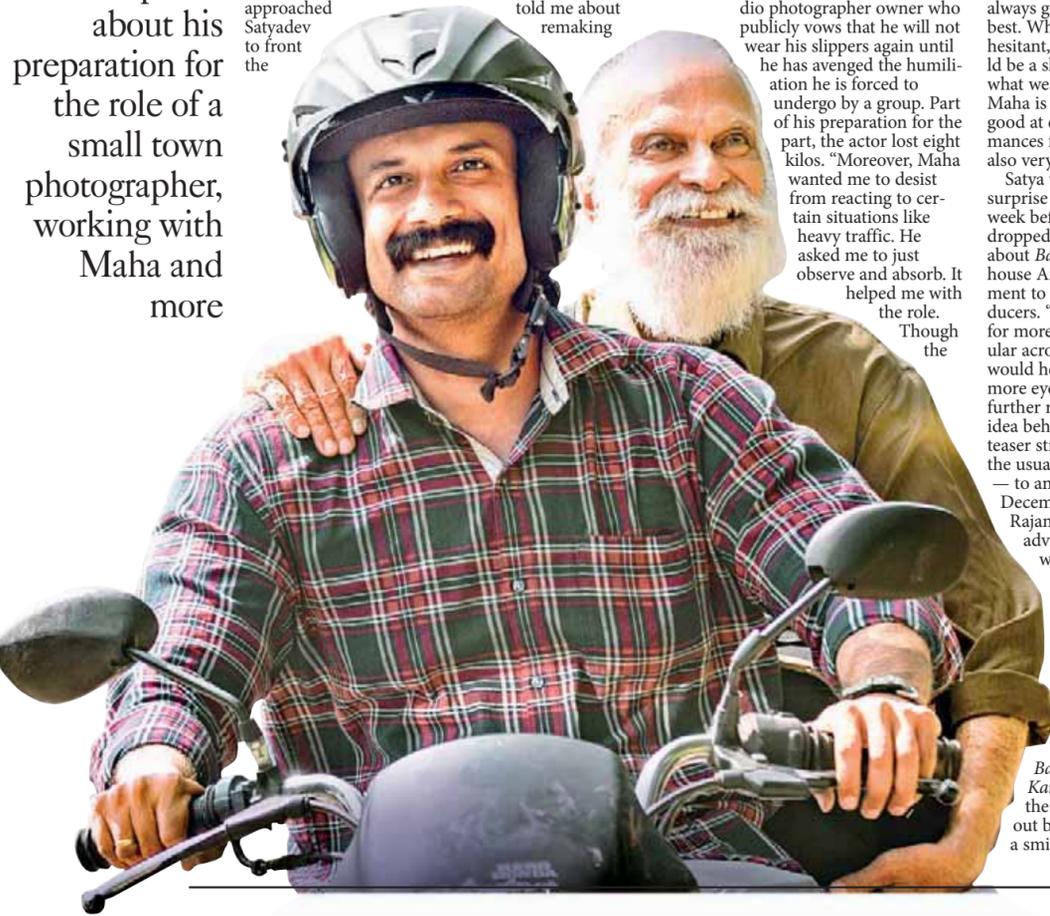
Maheshinte Prathikaaram with me. I was at loss of words when he mentioned about it. Here is a film that I have desperate to get my hands on and it falls in my lap three years later. It was destiny. I immediately agreed to give him dates on priority. He was equally astonished when I told about my failed attempts to remake the film," Satyadev tells us in an exclusive conversation.

In the film, Satya will be seen as an Araku-based studio photographer owner who publicly vows that he will not wear his slippers again until he has avenged the humiliation he is forced to undergo by a group. Part of his preparation for the part, the actor lost eight kilos. "Moreover, Maha wanted me to desist from reacting to certain situations like heavy traffic. He asked me to just observe and absorb. It helped me with the role. Though the

remake will have some scenes similar to the original, this version will be Maha's take on the original," he informs, adding that they've wrapped up the filming in flat 35 days. "It was shot in a non-stop start-to-finish schedule in Araku, including during the Dasara and Diwali stretch."

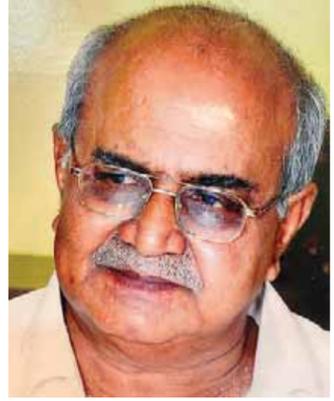
Maha's clarity of thought, Satya points out, impressed him the most. "When a director has complete clarity over what he is doing, it will be easy for the actors and we can always give more than our best. When he is unsure or hesitant, as actors there would be a slight fear in us about what we are doing. Plus, Maha is someone who is very good at extracting performances from his actors and is also very sensible," he raves.

Satya was in for a sweet surprise when Maha — a week before the first teaser dropped online — told him about *Baahubali* production house Arka Media's attachment to the project as producers. "I couldn't have asked for more. Arka's name is popular across the country and it would help our film to get more eyeballs," he informs, further revealing about the idea behind the innovative teaser strategy — contrary to the usual first look or posters — to announce the film last December. "It was Rajamouli *garu* who advised Arka to come up with the teaser plan as everyone generally goes with posters. As our film has revenge as a theme, it was a clever ploy from Maha to include some revenge portions from *Baahubali* and *C/o Kancharapalem* in the teaser. It worked out big time," he ends with a smile.



Srikanth's father passes away

Popular actor Srikanth's father Meka Parameswara Rao, who has been taking treatment for a lung ailment for the past four months at a private hospital in Hyderabad, has breathed his last on Sunday night. Born in Krishna district, he migrated to Karnataka's Gangavati district along with family for a better life. A bevy of noted personalities like Chiranjeevi, Allu Aravind, B Gopal, Gopichand and Raasi among others visited his mortal remains and expressed their condolences to Srikanth and family. Rao's last rites were performed on Monday noon at Mahaprasthanam. He is survived by wife Jhansi Lakhmi, daughter Nirmala and sons Srikanth and Anil.



Nanakramguda Ramanaidu studio to turn realty gold

A popular shooting hub once, Ramanaidu Studios at Nanakramguda, is closing down. With the studio not attracting the films as it used to before, producer and owner Suresh Babu felt its better he uses it for real estate as the area is near to the Outer Ring Road and the price for villas is at an all-time high. "Suresh has inked a deal with Meenakshi Constructions for a gated community in place of the studio. As of now

Bellamkonda Sreenivas' next with Santosh Srinivas is being shot there. Once the film's schedule is over, the current structures in the studio will be demolished for the construction of villas. A villa around the locality is attracting somewhere around Rs 7 crore to Rs 9 crore and Suresh felt investing in real estate was a better proposition than renting it out to films," said a source. Suresh, his brother Venkatesh and sons Rana and Abhiram will operate from Ramanaidu Studios, Film Nagar where all of them have individual offices. It also houses Ramanaidu Film School, a projection theatre besides some post-production facilities.



Suri sets his sights on AKHIL?

Director Surender Reddy's wish of starting on a new film in the coming days might become a reality. After his efforts to team up with Prabhas and Varun Tej didn't yield positive results, the director, according to reports, has approached Akhinehi Akhil with a storyline, which has all the trappings of a commercial entertainer. Buzz is that Akhil has responded positively and Suri has begun to develop the story further. The fact that Akhil is looking to team up with big directors has also worked in Suri's favour, it is said. However, there seems to be an issue on the production front. Akhil, who is right now filming for *Bommarillu* Bhaskar's *Most Eligible Bachelor*, has committed himself to do a film for Matinee Entertainment. His films with Satya Pinishetty and Prashanth Varma for Matinee failed to go on floors, so Akhil wants to honour his commitment to Matinee, which is also bankrolling his dad, Nagarjuna, on-sets film *Wild Dog*. On the other hand, Suri has taken an advance from Mythri Movie Makers and he wants to do a film for them. Once this issue is sorted, an official word about the film will be out.



RGV knocks cops' door for info on Disha case

Tollywood director Ram Gopal Varma visited the Shamshabad police station and met with ACP Ashok to discuss the movie the director has been planning on the Disha case. Speaking to the media after meeting the police personnel, RGV said that he has come to collect information about the case. When asked if he would take permission from Disha's parents to make the movie, RGV said that there is 'no need to take anyone's permission.' Although he didn't reveal much about who is going to



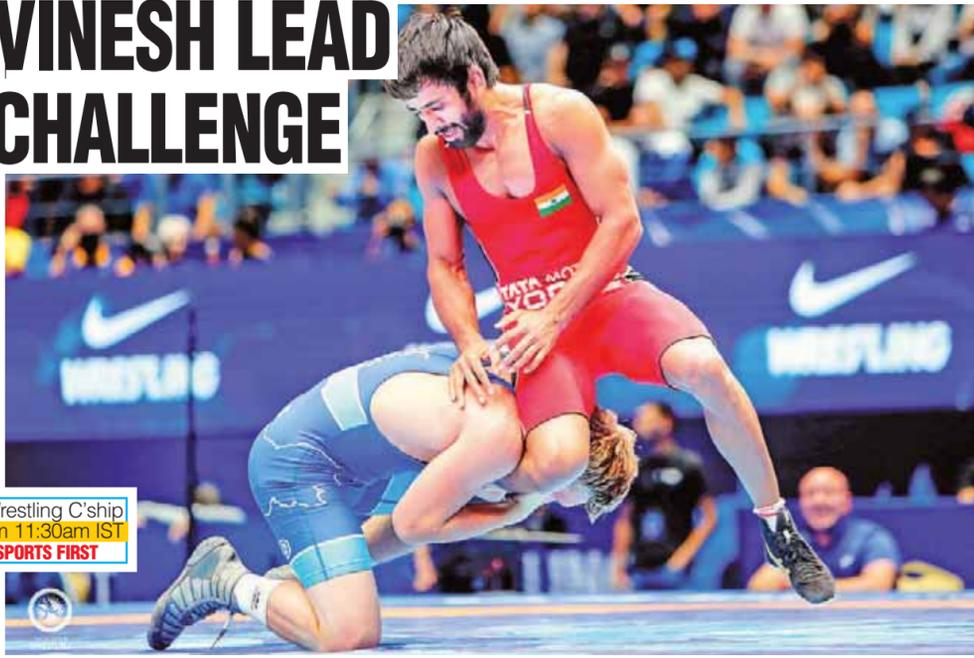
Dhanush's next by GA2 Pictures and UV Creations

Looks like production houses Geetha Arts and UV Creations want to expand their distribution network further. After agreeing to distribute a small film *Palasa 1978* recently, the premier production companies will now be distributing Tamil star Dhanush's next with Karthik Subbaraj in the Telugu states — mostly on May 1. YNot Studios, the production house behind content-rich cinema like *Vikram Vedha*, *Guru* and *Game Over*, has produced the film in Tamil. Having gone on to floors last August, the film, a gangster-thriller, has been entirely shot in the United Kingdom. The first look will be unveiled on Wednesday. Malayalam actress Aishwarya Lekshmi is the film's female lead.

THE FILM IS A GANGSTER-THRILLER THAT HAS BEEN ENTIRELY SHOT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

PUNIA, VINESH LEAD INDIAN CHALLENGE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Defending champion Bajrang Punia will look to retain his 65kg freestyle title while six-time medallist (3 Silver and Bronze each) Vinesh Phogat will aim to upgrade the 53kg Bronze she won in the 2019 edition at Xi'an, China to Gold when the Asian Wrestling Championship begins here at Indira Gandhi Arena today.



Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia (red) in action during 2019 World Wrestling Championship match in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

The six-day event at the KD Jadhav Wrestling Stadium will act as a platform for the Indian wrestlers to test their skills against the best in Asia ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

The championship has been classified as a ranking tournament for the Tokyo game by the United World Wrestling.

Besides Punia and Vinesh, the 30-member India squad will also feature Deepak Punia, Ravi Kumar Dahiya and 2016 Rio Olympic Bronze medallist Shakshi Malik.

Anshu Malik, Ashu and Sonam Malik are the three youngsters who would look to make a mark in the tournament.

The tournament will be played in three categories — men's freestyle, Greco-Roman and women's wrestling. The first two days will see Greco-Roman competition, followed by women's wrestling (next two days) and men's freestyle (last two days).

There was initially uncertainty over the participation of four Pakistani wrestlers and two officials due to political tension but they have been cleared by the government to take part in the championship.

However, a 40-strong Chinese contingent will not be taking part in the championships as they have not been granted visas by the government due to the novel coronavirus outbreak there.

The Senior Asian Championship is returning to India after a gap of two years. India last hosted the championship in 2017. In the 2019 edition, India had won 16 medals, including the lone Gold from Punia in 65kg category.

World No 2 and India's leading medal hope, Punia said, "It is a great opportunity for all

Asian Wrestling C'ship
Live from 11:30am IST
STAR SPORTS FIRST

of us. We will be playing in front of our home fans. Though to many it might seem as pressure, but I believe it will work as an advantage and I am hopeful that large numbers will be coming in to fill the stands and support us." Dahiya, who has already qualified for the Olympics courtesy his Bronze medal-winning performance at the 2019 World Championships, echoed Bajrang's feelings.

"We are excited about the tournament. I am personally looking at ensuring that in my weight category I end up winning Gold. 57 kg is a tough weight category and has probably the stiffest competition but losing is not an option when you are playing in your home



ground," he said. Fresh from her Gold medal at the Ranking Series in Italy, Vinesh is India's brightest medal prospect in the women's category.

"We have a strong contingent in both men and women's category. Asia has a very good set of wrestlers and being the Olympic year everyone will be looking to get as many wins as possible heading to the Tokyo Games. Personally, I am looking at this competition as a launchpad for my upcoming competitions," said Vinesh.

One of the dark horses of the tournament will be Sakshi (65 kg) who has not done anything of note last year. While she is not competing in her regular weight category, she could utilise the tournament to redeem herself.

Sakshi had won a Bronze in 62kg in the last edition. Apart from the Indians, there will be a number of top international wrestlers as well, like

Kenichiro Fumita, Gold medallist at 2019 World Wrestling Championships, and Nurislam Sanayev from Kazakhstan in freestyle.

In Greco-Roman, wrestlers like South Korea's Ryu Han Su (a two-time world champion) and Uzbekistan's Elmurat

Coronavirus impact: No entry for Chinese wrestlers in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chinese wrestlers will not compete in the Asian Championships beginning here today as they have not been granted visas by the government due to the novel coronavirus outbreak there, a top official of the national federation said on Monday.

Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) assistant secretary Vinod Tomar said that the government has denied visas to the 40-strong Chinese contingent.

"We have got to know that the government has not granted visas to the Chinese contingent and so they are not taking part in the Championships," Tomar said. "The world is grappling with the issue of coronavirus and so health of the athletes is the primary concern now. It is understandable why the government has not given visas to them," he added.

Tasmuradov (a five-time Asian Championship Gold medallist) will be in action. Aisuluu Tynybekova of Kyrgyzstan, Gold medallist at

Asked what could be United World Wrestling's reaction on the denial of visas to the Chinese wrestlers, Tomar said, "We do not see any issues here, it is not something which happens in normal times. We are dealing with a grave health issue facing the world."

"It is not happening just in this championship, other countries have also done the same to Chinese athletes in other sporting events. Moreover, the UWW has not told us anything or given any direction about the Chinese wrestlers in the past week or so."

Talking about the granting of visas to the Pakistani wrestlers, Tomar said, "There could be issues had we not granted visas to the Pakistani wrestlers. So, we tried hard to get it done. But in case of Chinese wrestlers, it is for the health and safety of the participating athletes."

2019 world championships and a three-time Asian Championship winner, will be headlining the women's wrestling category.

Saina, Srikanth chase Olympic berth

PTI ■ BARCELONA

Seasoned Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth will look to keep their Olympic hopes alive when they compete at the \$170,000 Barcelona Spain Masters starting here today.

The Indian duo has been inconsistent in 2019 and didn't enjoy a good start to the new year.

While Saina has crossed the first round in only one of the three events in 2020, Srikanth has lost in the opening round in all three tournaments that he has played so far this year.

Saina and Srikanth are currently ranked 18th and 15th respectively, while being placed 22nd and 26th in the *Race to Tokyo* rankings, which takes into consideration only the points accumulated from the tournaments played in the last one year.

According to the BWF Olympic qualification rules, only two players from each singles category can qualify if their ranking is within the



top-16 by April end. Among the Indians, world champion P V Sindhu and B Sai Praneeth and men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have almost secured their berths for the Tokyo Games.

With the Olympic qualification cut-off date ending in April, there are only seven tournaments, including the Barcelona Spain Masters, left in the calendar and the Indian duo will have to produce consistent performances to earn a ticket to Tokyo.

London Bronze-medallist Saina, who is looking to make her fourth Olympics, will begin her campaign here against Germany's Yvonne Li.

Third seed Srikanth, on the other hand, will face fellow Indian Subhankar Dey, who notched up a morale-boosting win over world No 20 Indonesian Shesar Hiren Rhustavito in the Asia Team C'ships on Saturday.

Srikanth, who was also a part of the team in Manila, won two of his singles matches and lost one last week and he would hope to go deep in the draw in the tournament.

Sania returns to action in Dubai

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian tennis star Sania Mirza will return to action at the ongoing Dubai Open on Wednesday after recovering from a calf injury which had cut short her campaign at the Australia Open in January.

The 33-year-old Indian will pair up with her French partner Caroline Garcia and they face Russia's Alla Kudryavtseva and Slovenia's Katarina Srebotnik in the opening round of the women's doubles event.

"Quitting off a grand slam tournament due to an injury is a sad experience. Especially, when you are back into the game after a long break. But thanks to my physio for making me fit for the tournament. I have started practicing and look forward to a great tournament," she said.

'United by Emotion': Tokyo 2020 unveils Games motto



AFF ■ TOKYO

Tokyo 2020 organisers on Monday rolled out the motto for this year's Olympics, *United by Emotion*, which they said reflected the "universal values" and "unifying power of sport".

"Crowds of spectators who do not know each other prior to the Games will come together and learn that there is more that unites them than divides them," Tokyo 2020 said as it unveiled the motto.

The official Olympic motto is *Citius, Altius, Fortius* or *Faster, Higher, Stronger*, but each host city chooses its own motto to accompany that edition of the Games.

London's motto in 2012 was *Inspire a Generation*, whereas Athens in 2004 went for *Welcome Home* — a nod to the birthplace of the Games in Olympia.

Less well-received was Sochi, which plumped for *Hot. Yours*, sparking derision in some quarters. Tokyo said the motto would be beamed onto the Skytree tower in the Japanese capital to raise awareness as it will be seen for miles around.

The opening ceremony will be on July 24 and organisers have stressed there is no discussion about changing this date despite the coronavirus crisis hitting global transport.

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