

OPINION 6 NEW DAWN FOR THE MILITARY

MONEY 8 GADKARI TO HOLD BILATERAL DIALOGUE WITH SWEDEN

SPORTS 12 ISHANT, SHAW TO PLAY IN 1ST TEST

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY FEBRUARY 20, 2020; PAGES 12 & 3



# the pioneer



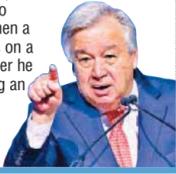
'WILL NEVER DO 3 FILMS A YEAR'

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## NECESSARY TO PREVENT STATELESSNESS, SAYS UN CHIEF

Amid concerns over India's Citizenship Amendment Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), UN chief Antonio Guterres has said it is necessary to do everything to prevent 'statelessness' when a nationality law is changed. Guterres, who was on a three-day visit to Pakistan, when asked whether he was concerned about new laws in India during an interview, said, "Of course (I am concerned). Because this is an area in which the relevant UN body is quite active."



## INDIA TO SWITCH TO WORLD'S CLEANEST FOSSIL FUEL FROM APRIL

India will switch to the world's cleanest petrol and diesel from April 1 as it leapfrogs straight to Euro-VI emission compliant fuels from Euro-IV grades now - a feat achieved in just three years and not seen in any of the large economies around the globe. India will join the select league of nations using petrol and diesel containing just 10 parts per million of sulphur as it looks to cut vehicular emissions that are said to be one of the reasons for the choking pollution in major cities. Indian Oil Corp said almost all refineries began producing BS-VI fuels.



## SOCIAL MEDIA ABUZZ OVER CATS WEARING MASKS IN CHINA

Not just humans but animals too need protection from the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) and images of cats wearing face masks in China went viral online, triggering people to share more such images of their pet animals wearing masks. "Cat in China wearing masks for protection against the coronavirus," posted a user on Twitter. This led to a barrage of such images coming online from pet owners in China, with their pets sporting makeshift masks. "Poor poor baby. I feel for the pets in China. They are being treated worse than humans of China," commented a user.



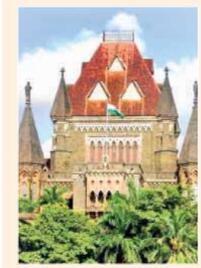
## APPLE'S BUDGET IPHONE MAY FACE DELAY DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

Apple's next iPhone - the iPhone 9 or iPhone SE2 - is likely to see a delay in launch in the wake of the deadly coronavirus outbreak in China. Touted as a budget iPhone, the mass production of the device was supposed to start by the end of this month but may be delayed until sometime in March, according to a report in Nikkei Asian Review. This follows a warning from the Cupertino-based tech giant that coronavirus outbreak will affect its business in the January-March quarter as global iPhone supply will be temporarily constrained.



'Maha govt will carry forward Shivaji's legacy'

4



'Not right to deprive child's access to grandparents'

5



Sensex snaps 4-session slide, soars 429 pts

8

TODAY ALMANAC Month & Paksham: Magha & Krishna Paksha Panchangam: Tithi: Dwadashi: 03:59 pm Nakshatram: Purva Ashadha: 07:27 am Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work) Rahukalam: 01:56 pm - 03:22 pm Yamagandam: 06:44 am - 08:10 am Variyam: 04:03 pm - 05:46 pm Gulika: 09:37 am - 11:03 am Good Time: (to start any important work) Amritkalam: 02:21 am - 04:04 am Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 pm - 12:53 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Sunny Temp: 34/20 Humidity: 52% Sunrise: 06:40 Sunset: 06:19 Current Weather Conditions Updated February 19, 2019 5:00 PM

# Jagan keeps everybody guessing over joining NDA

Speculations abound on CM's meeting with Modi, Shah involved politics

VIJAYAWADA

Are the political equations in Andhra Pradesh set to change? Will the ruling YSR Congress Party join Modi government at the Centre to foil a possible grand opposition alliance?

Political circles in AP have been agog with these speculations over the last few days. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah last week added to the buzz.

Though officially the YSRCP chief called on the two leaders to discuss state-related subjects, certain comments made by a senior party leader sparked the talk of YSRCP joining the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.



Urban Development Minister Botsa Satyanarayana was quoted as saying that YSRCP was not averse to joining Modi government, if it benefits Andhra Pradesh. He said the party was ready to go to any extent for the benefit of the state. Botsa also reportedly stated that their support to the Centre would be issue-based. However, the next day BJP

national secretary Sunil Deodhar made it clear that there is no proposal for an alliance with YSRCP. "Both YSRCP and TDP are our political rivals. There is no proposal for alliance with either of the parties," said Deodhar, who is BJP in-charge for Andhra Pradesh.

The reports of YSRCP-BJP alliance also upset actor Pawan Kalyan, whose Jana Sena joined hands with the BJP last month, in the first political realignment since last year's elections when YSRCP stormed to power with a landslide victory. Pawan Kalyan, a bitter critic of Jagan, lost no time in making it clear that if YSRCP-BJP alliance becomes a reality, he will snap ties with the BJP.

# Union Cabinet gives nod to Bill on women's reproductive rights

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill which proposes establishment of a national registry and registration authority for all clinics and medical professionals serving in the field.

The Bill proposes stringent punishment for those practising sex selection and sale of human embryos or gametes. Giving details of the bill, Union minister Smriti Irani said sex selection and sex determination prohibited are under the proposed legislation. "Ensuring confidentiality of the commissioning couples, women and donors will also be done under the aegis of this proposal of the Cabinet. The bill also has a provision that those involved in trafficking and sale of embryos will be fined Rs 10 lakh at first instance and in second instance the person could be imprisoned for up to 12 years," she said.

The Bill has a provision that those involved in trafficking and sale of embryos will be fined Rs 10 lakh at first instance and up to 12 years in jail thereafter



# Trump: India has not treated US 'very well'

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has complained that India has not treated his country "very well" on the trade front and indicated that a "very big" bilateral deal with New Delhi may not be signed before the American presidential election in November.



"Well, we can have a trade deal with India, but I'm really saving the big deal for later on," Trump, who is scheduled to visit India on February 24 and 25, said on Tuesday when asked whether he expects a trade deal with India before his trip. "We're not treated very well by India," the US President complained.

Trump, forcefully pursuing his 'America first' policy, has previously described India as a "tariff king" for imposing "tremendously high" tariffs on American products.

"We're doing a very big trade deal with India. We'll have it. I don't know if it'll be done before the election (in November), but we'll have a very big deal with India," he said during an interaction

# Trump's remarks an affront to India's dignity, says Cong

NEW DELHI

The Congress said on Wednesday that the remarks made by US President Donald Trump ahead of his visit to India were an insult and affront to the country's dignity and the government should respond accordingly.

Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari said the issue was serious as it sought to undermine the progress made in the last many years as regards strengthening Indo-US ties. He said the tone and tenor of Trump's visit seemed to be "transactional and not strategic". I hope the Ministry of External Affairs or the Prime Minister respond to it," he said.

# TDP starts Praja Chaitanya Yatra

MARTUR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief Chandrababu Naidu set off on a 45-day Praja Chaitanya Yatra (public awareness rally) on Wednesday, starting off the program at Martur in Prakasam district. The rally will move to different parts of the state to make people 'aware' of the flaws in the YSRCP's governance, Naidu said. Speaking at a public meeting held at Martur junction, Naidu lashed out at the Jagan government, heavily criticising the last nine months of the YSRCP's governance. He blamed the government for delaying the Polavaram project through cancelling of con-



tracts and reverse tenders, and for the government's new sand policy, alleging that procurement of sand has remained difficult and expensive for the past nine months.

# Naidu left state with debt of Rs 2.6 lakh-crore: Sajjala

Debt burden of AP in 2014 was Rs 90,000 crore

AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh government has designed welfare schemes for the development of all sections of society and is implementing them. Public opinion is being taken through Spandana programme on them, the YSRCP has said.

"At the time of bifurcation, AP had almost Rs 90,000 crore debt and in just five years, former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu increased it to Rs 2.6 lakh-crore," said Government Chief Advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy. Addressing the media here on Wednesday, Ramakrishna Reddy said that Naidu was refused by people in the recent elections as they were fed up with his governance. "People from across the State and from all communities welcomed YS Jaganmohan Reddy and gave him a record majority. In 2014, Naidu came to power only because of his false promise of waiving farm loans. Though Naidu cheated the public during State bifurcation, people gave him another chance, but he ruined the entire governance with his craze for power," he said.

# Resolution against CAA if needed

VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP senior leader Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Wednesday said that there was no need for people to be unduly worried over the Citizenship Amendment Act, as the government is prepared to adopt a resolution against it in the Assembly, if necessary. "When the YSRCP supported the Bill on citizenship Amendment in the Lok Sabha, there were no NPR and NRC," Sajjala said, adding that the party was clear in its perspective on CAA when it supported the Bill. "We supported the Bill to check across-the-border infiltration, illegal migration into



the country and so on. Subsequently, NRC was included. The government is alert to the anxiety of Muslims. I want to assure everyone that no harm would come to Muslims in YSRCP rule," Sajjala said.

Can Naidu boast of any single achievement in the last five years, Ramakrishna Reddy asked and said establishing the capital in the most fertile agricultural land was the most foolish decision taken by Naidu. "He chose the capital without consulting anyone or

taking opinion of experts. Fearing the cash for vote case, all of a sudden he shifted from Hyderabad to Amaravati despite the option of having Hyderabad as capital for 10 years," said Ramakrishna Reddy.

# YSRCP: Funds of 2 schemes siphoned off in TDP regime

VIJAYAWADA

A senior minister in the AP government on Wednesday alleged misappropriation of funds under two schemes during the previous Telugu Desam Party rule. Backward Classes Welfare Minister M Sankara Narayana claimed that the money was disbursed to non-existent people under the NTR Vidyonnati and skills development schemes in the state.

NTR Vidyonnati was a scheme implemented by the previous TDP government to provide Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh financial assistance to each student belonging to the backward communities for pursuing higher education abroad. The Kapu Corporation was the nodal agency for the scheme. Under skills development,

several centres were opened in all districts to impart necessary training to unemployed youth and Rs 1,000 was granted per head per month. "There were no records of the persons who actually availed of the benefits but money was drawn. In this fashion, at least Rs 250 crore to Rs 300 crore was misappropriated," he told reporters here.

Asked if an inquiry would be conducted into this, he replied it was not possible because there were no records. "We don't know who the people were; in whose names the money was drawn. But the money was clearly siphoned off. There is no way it could be recovered now," Sankara Narayana pointed out. The YSRCP government has since disbanded the NTR Vidyonnati scheme and brought in a new scheme in its place.

# AP clears IPS officer's transfer to TS

HYDERABAD

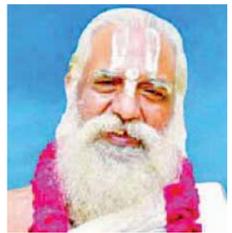
The Andhra Pradesh government on Wednesday issued orders for inter-cadre deputation of AP-cadre IPS officer Gajarao Bhupal to Telangana. He is currently serving as SP of Tirupati (urban). Gajarao Bhupal, a 2008-batch IPS officer of AP cadre has sought inter-cadre deputation to Telangana on the grounds of 'personal hardship'. He had applied to the Union Home Ministry for the same.

The Union Home Ministry approved Bhupal's request and asked AP government to allow for inter-cadre deputation to Telangana for an initial period of three years. Following this, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney issued orders permitting the inter-cadre deputation. Bhupal was relieved from AP cadre with immediate effect.

# Babri demolition accused to head Ram temple trust

NEW DELHI

Nritya Gopal Das -- chief of Vishwa Hindu Parishad's Ram Janambhoomi Nyas and accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case -- will head the trust that will be in charge of building a Ram temple in Ayodhya. Another top member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, vice president Champat Rai, will be the General Secretary. At a meeting this evening, the office bearers of the trust were formally named. A key role will be played by Nripendra Mishra, a former aide of Prime



Minister Narendra Modi, who was named the chairman of the temple construction committee.

# Vijayawada temples ready for Maha Shivaratri celebrations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada city is gearing up to celebrate Maha Shivaratri with traditional fervor. All Shiva temples across the city and its suburbs have been decked up for Maha Shivaratri.

Elaborate arrangements are being made at the famous temples in the city, including Old Shivalayam in I-Town and Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam at Yanamalakuduru where Prabha Mahotsavam is a special attraction for Shivaratri. Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri will be organising Shiva Parvathi Kalyanam to mark Maha Shivaratri and Shivalayam at Penamaluru.

City police and the temple authorities are making elaborate arrangements for the devotees to perform pujas and for darshan right from the wee hours of Friday.

Briefing this corresponding on the arrangements for the Maha Shivaratri celebrations, B Gangadhar, Executive Officer of the Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam,



Yanamalakuduru said that they are expecting about one lakh devotees to visit the temple on Shivaratri.

Arrangements are being made for devotees to come for darshan that begins from February 20 midnight.

Special Ammavari Abhishekam, Kumkuma Puja, Devasthanam Prabha Mahotsavam procession, cultural programmes like kolatam, bhajan singing and more will be organised besides Swamivari kalyanam will be performed at 2.25 am on February 22.

The EO said arrangements for the queues of devotees besides drinking water, buttermilk, prasadam, pandals are

made available and special illumination is being put up. The main attraction of the festival is the Ongole Ox competition. Special darshan tickets are also available, he added.

S Hemalatha Devi, Executive Officer of Old Shivalayam, I-Town said that the Maha Shivaratri festival begins at 2.30 am on February 21 with Maha Shivaratri Abhishekam.

About 30,000 devotees are expected for the occasion and elaborate arrangements are being made for the devotees.

Free prasadam will be distributed to devotees from 4 am to 9 am and Annasamaradhana will be done from 9 am to 5 pm.

Hemalatha Devi said that

queue lines are being arranged for the convenience of the devotees and also for distribution of buttermilk, drinking water, lemon rice and Kesari with the support of donors, said the EO.

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri will be organising Shiva Parvathi Kalyanam to mark Maha Shivaratri. The temple has made elaborate arrangements to meet the devotee rush.

Flowers, fruits and other puja material vendors are getting ready for the occasion as Shivaratri is a major festival that fetches good business for vendors.

S Mallikharjuna Sarma, founder of Sri Vagdevi Aadhyatmika Kshetram and Sri Datta Sai Sarva Siddhi Ganapathi Maha Samstan said on Mahasiva Ratri devotees would participate in the vishesh pujas and other events at 'Sivagiri' besides vishesha Archanas.

Pujas will be performed to the presiding deities Dwarakamayai Sai, Sayana Sai, Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, Dattatreya Sarvasiddhi Ganapathi and Navanathulu of Sri Datta Sai, Sarvasiddhi Ganapathi Maha Samsthan, at the foot of the Vagdevi Kshetram and devotees will be showered with the Divine Blessings, he added.

## Father rejects marriage with beau, girl ends life

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A 20-year-old girl committed suicide by jumping from the fourth floor of a building after her parents refused to allow her marry her boyfriend.

The incident occurred at Maddilapalem under MVP Colony police station limits here on Wednesday morning.

According to police, M Padmavathi, a B.Sc student was in a relationship with a boy since a year.

A week ago, the boy, along with his parents, came to Padmavathi's house to seek consent of the girl's parents for their marriage. Padmavathi's parents rejected the marriage proposal citing various reasons and they also informed the boy's family.

Apparently dejected with the rejection of their marriage proposal, the girl on Wednesday went to their old house near Maddilapalem and jumped from the building to death. The girl's father Srinivasa Rao runs a tiffin centre at China Waltair area in Vizag city.

The MVP Colony police led by Ch Shanmukha Rao registered a case and investigation is on.

The police shifted the body for autopsy.

## CBI court sends bank manager, couple to jail

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The second additional special judge for CBI cases, G Satya Prabhakar Rao, on Wednesday convicted former branch manager of Bank of India, Kakinada and his aide of defrauding the bank.

All the three were sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine of Rs 30,000 each.

The convicts were identified as Marella Satyanarayana Murthy, branch manager of Bank of India Madhuranagar branch Kakinada, East Godavari district, Mariseti Vankata Satya Chandrasekhar Sudheer Raju, a private individual and his wife Mariseti Durga.

The charges against them were that during the years 2003-2006, branch manager M Satyanarayana Murthy, MVSCS Sudheer Raju, M Durga, Soorabathula Venkata Maruthi Chandrasekhar, panel valuer, proprietor of M/s Swapna Soudha Architects and Designers, Kakinada and Patamatti Ravi Shankar (A5), advocate, Kakinada entered into a criminal conspiracy between themselves to cheat Bank of India.

The branch manager abusing his official position dishonestly and fraudulently sanctioned the overdraft on mortgage of property to Sudheer Raju and his wife Durga and disbursed the



entire loan amounts to the couple on the basis of legal opinion issued by advocate Ravi Shankar to the effect that the property has a clear title.

The valuer Chandrasekhar knowing well that the property mortgaged to Bank of India was agricultural land, valued it in terms of a residential property. Thereby, all the five cheated the Bank of India causing corresponding wrongful gain to themselves and corresponding wrongful loss to the bank, the prosecution charged.

An amount of Rs 9,25,000 and Rs 9,60,000 (without interest) in both the loans are outstanding as on date of the filing of charge sheet.

The Court convicted the branch manager under various Sections of PC Act of 1988 and private individuals under the same Sections and ordered that sentences imposed on the accused shall run concurrently.

However, advocate P Ravi Shankar was acquitted of the charges leveled against him. During the trial, the panel valuer Chandrasekhar was also discharged from the case.

## Chalo app, travel cards to make bus travel easy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Madireddy Pratap, VC and MD, APSRTC on Wednesday launched the 'Chalo app and Chalo Travel Cards' that can be used on city buses in Vijayawada.

The app was launched in the presence of dignitaries and Vinayak Bhavnani, Chief Technology Officer, Chalo. Addressing the gathering, Madireddy Pratap said that the new app integrates all 500 APSRTC city buses in Vijayawada into a single live-tracking and journey planner tool.

He said the app will benefit about 2.5 lakh bus travellers of Vijayawada who would be able to know the arrival time of the bus, track the live GPS position, find the cheapest and fastest trip options, buy the daily tickets



directly through the app that also has safety features like emergency SOS.

Vinayak Bhavnani said with the Chalo Travel Card, passengers can buy bus tickets on the go. Each bus will now have a tap-to-pay machine for ticket purchase and incorporates the latest security technology. The Chalo Bus card can be used for buying bus tickets of any amount and hence eliminates the need to carry change, he added.

## Rare sculpture of Shiva found in Guntur district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A rare sculpture of Shiva as Kalyana Sundara Murthy was found at Chandolu village in Pittalavanipalemmandal, Guntur district.

Giving details of the find, Dr E Sivanagireddy, CEO, The Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati (CCVA), said that he noticed it on Wednesday in the premises of the Lingodbhava temple of the village during his survey as part of the heritage awareness programme, 'Preserve Heritage for Posterity' launched by CCVA.

Dr Reddy said that the sculptures of Siva in general are found in the form of Umamaheswara, Nataraja, Arthanariswara and



Gajasamhara Murthy whereas the Chandolu sculpture represents Shiva engaged in a wedding with Parvati in the presence of Brahma seated and performing the ritual of fire and Vishnu offering

Parvati to Shiva.

Shiva is shown as if he is receiving the hand of Parvati (panigrahana) accompanied by Lakshmi and Saraswati.

Dr Reddy said that all the sculptures except Brahma are in tribhanga posture and wearing the holy ornaments and the sculpture of Kalyana Sundara Siva justifies the Sivaratri festival on the day, the marriage of Shiva and Parvati took place.

He appealed to the officials of the Endowments and Archaeology Departments to erect the rare and only one sculpture far found in entire Andhra Pradesh on a pedestal and display a plaque with its historical significance for the benefit of the visitors and safety and security.

## Ministers inaugurate water line, say AP development is priority

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddy Ramchandra Reddy on Wednesday inaugurated water pipeline works from KL Rao Head Water Works to Ranigiri Thota under East Constituency in Vijayawada, taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 6.5 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ramchandra Reddy said that the YSRCP government was committed to developing the state in all aspects.

He said that in the coming five years, Vijayawada city would be transformed into a model city. "Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is taking a



keen interest to develop Vijayawada. In the upcoming local body elections, the YSRCP is expecting to do wonders," Ramchandra Reddy said.

Minister Velampalli Srinivas alleged that during its five-year rule, the TDP neglected development activities of the city.

"Chandrababu Naidu is unable to bear the good name gained by our CM and is hatching conspiracies against Jagan," Srinivas said. He said that the CM was committed to developing Vijayawada into a beautiful city.

The minister said that after the Amaravati drama failed, Naidu started Jana Chaitanya and the people are vexed with his and will not believe him anymore. "The people have realised that TDP never speaks the truth," Srinivas said.

Government Whip Samineni Udaya Bhanu, YSRCP East Constituency in-charge Devineni Avinash, B Bavakumar and others were present.

## Science City bags PSU award for environment

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The Science City of Andhra Pradesh received the 7th PSU Award under Environment and Sustainability category at a programme held in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Babul Supriyo, Minister of State for Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India, felicitated Dr Krishna Rao Appasani, Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Science City Andhra Pradesh.

The award was presented

to the Science City of Andhra Pradesh, a science infrastructure project in recognition of its efforts to organise National Training programme on Eco Air, Developing Eco Educators sponsored by National Council for Science and Technology Communication, Department of Science and Technology in East Godavari and Krishna districts. The programme was aimed at bringing awareness among the general public on air pollution by inviting doctors and scientific officers to give lectures on air pollution and preventive measures.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 41,120 (10 gm)	
₹ 10	
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 47,500 (1kg)	
₹ 1100	
<b>CHICKEN RATES</b> ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹119
Without Skin	₹135
Broiler at Farm	₹82
<b>EGG RATES</b> ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	340
VIJAYAWADA	383
VISAKHAPATNAM	417
<b>RETAIL PRICE</b> (IN VIZAG)	₹3.83

## Complete work on school compound walls by March 31, PR officials told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Panchayat Raj engineering officials were on Wednesday told to take steps to complete NREGS works within the time stipulated by meeting the set targets. The officials were told that they should be held accountable for the tardy progress in works' execution in three districts. Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Peddireddy Ramchandra Reddy, who chaired a review meeting on the progress of NREGS works at Secretariat, directed the chief engineers to supervise works being executed in districts. He expressed shock at the tardy progress in execution of works in spite of clearing of NREGS bills worth Rs 1,400

crore in two months. Under Manabadi Nadu-Nedu programme, 284 mandals have been shortlisted. Under the NREGS, works to give a facelift to 5,853 school buildings would be taken up this year. This includes building toilets and compound walls in schools giving top priority to the walls.

The minister wanted work on compound walls be completed by March 31.

Ramchandra Reddy said that steps to supply cement and steel on credit were being taken. The district collector was asked to convey to the officials to spend the budgeted funds allocated under NREGS for the year. Priority should be given to works related to village secretariat, CC drains and compound

walls, the Minister said.

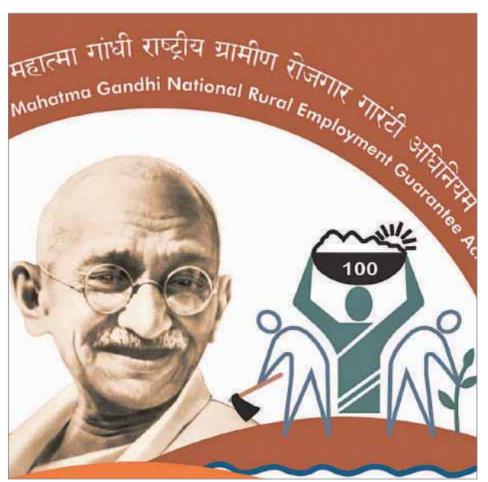
He asked them to ensure that there is no delay in clearing cement supply bills. Sand for NREGS works can be had after coordinating with district collector.

Ramchandra Reddy put the material cost incurred from January 31 to February 18 this year at Rs 138.68 crore, while the expenditure incurred for procurement of materials from April 1 last year to February 18 this year was put at Rs 871.18 crore.

The Minister asked the engineering officials to review NREGA works on a weekly basis at the district-level. Payments made under NREGA works last week were put at Rs 51.73 crore. The state government ordered for a vigilance probe in the irreg-

ularities that had taken place in NREGA works last year, he said. Bills for works cleared by vigilance probe are being paid, Ramchandra Reddy elaborated. He wanted the engineering officials to work harder during the next five weeks since the next year's allocations to

NREGS works depend on the previous year's progress. He specifically told the officials to spend at least Rs 1,000 crore within the time stipulated. Panchayat Raj Commissioner Girija Shanker, Panchayat Raj engineering officials and others took part in the meeting.



## Beneficiaries to get Rs 10k under Jagananna Chedodu scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna district collector A Md. Imtiaz on Wednesday said that washermen, barbers and tailors would be given Rs 10,000 every year under Jagananna Chedodu scheme to enable them to improve their professional work and start small business outlets. Addressing the MPDO, EORD and municipal commissioners undergoing training in the implementation of Jagananna Chedodu scheme at the sub-collector's office here, Imtiaz said that they should prepare the list of barbers, washermen and tailors to help them through the scheme. He said that there are 14,362 washermen, 9,605 barbers, and 70,616 tailors in the State. The officials should identify

the eligible beneficiaries among them for the Jagananna Chedodu scheme.

Those who have a shop and undertake their caste profession are eligible for the scheme. Persons who have a shop and pay the electricity bill and are aged between 21 and 60 are eligible.

The collector said those who own three acres of wetland and ten acres of dry land are also eligible. In the urban areas, persons with less than 1,000 sqft house site are also eligible. However, the government employees, pensioners and persons of other castes but undertook these professions are not eligible. He told the officials to select the beneficiaries transparently by conducting Grama Sabhas.



## CM seeks report on canal beautification in 3 months

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday directed the Mission for Clean Krishna and Godavari Canals and other government officials to take steps to check Krishna and Godavari canal pollution beginning with the beautification of canals in Tadepalli municipality.

He wanted the beautification works in Ryves canal in Krishna district, Krishna Western Canal in Guntur district, Eluru canal in West Godavari, GE Main canal in East Godavari, canals in Pulivendula and Visakhapatnam to be implemented on pilot basis.

The project should be implemented on the basis of Naadunedu uploading images into the website prior and after beautification.

Reviewing measures to check the rivers' canals pollution in towns and villages at his camp office, the Chief Minister said the objective was to make the canals free from pollution and asked the mission to submit a DPR within three months.

He asked the officials to create walking tracks and parks on canal bunds and name them after donors, if any donor



comes forward.

The Chief Minister launched the Mission's website at the meeting.

The officials told Jagan that the length of canals in Godavari delta was 10,000 km while that of Krishna delta is 9,800 km.

Initially, steps to clean canals up to 1344 km in 36 major canals would be taken up.

The Chief Minister asked the officials to implement greening works where there was no canal lining. He wanted them create stone-paved pathways, not to use cement concrete on canal bunds and cover all municipalities as part of the cleansing operations.

A task force with officials

drawn from irrigation, pollution control board, panchayat raj and municipal administration departments and NGOs should be created.

He sought information on extent of release of toxics into the canals and on estimated cost to its prevention. Further, he sought information on STPs and their maintenance. The Chief Minister asked the mission to keep funds ready to run the STPs.

He enquired from the mission particulars about solid waste management and cost of canal beautification.

The beautification works will be implemented in 18 municipalities and municipal corporations in East, West

Godavari districts, Krishna and Guntur. Jagan asked the officials to include Pulivendula and Visakhapatnam in implementing the works, which he wanted to be implemented on self-sustainability basis.

First and foremost, he asked the officials to evacuate those living on canal bunds and allot them alternative house-sites. The moment they build houses there, they should be relocated there.

Care should be taken not to cause any inconvenience to people while relocating the people. Once relocated, precautions to be taken to prevent others from encroaching the canal bunds.

A control room indicating the failure of the STPs should be set up. Students should be trained in maintaining the facility, if necessary.

Top district officials should be involved in the exercise. A CMO official would constantly monitor the works to extend necessary support.

The focus should be on solid waste collection and disposal, the Chief Minister said.

Mission's director Katamaneni Bhaskar, officials of finance, water resources, municipal administration and pollution control officials took part in the meeting.



## Get quality power, Jagan tells officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy directed Discoms to strike a deal with power producers that come forward to provide quality power at a reasonable cost.

He said the Discoms can come out of the red if expenses were cut.

Chairing a review meeting here on Wednesday the Chief Minister said the main focus should be on the 10,000 MW solar power plants proposed to be set up by the government and efforts should be made to increase the number of such plants in the long run.

He also directed the officials to encourage solar and wind power companies which offer power at a lesser cost to ease the pressure on the Discoms.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to ensure qual-

ity coal to the Genco thermal power units so that they become self-reliant and to get the quality of the supplied coal certified periodically by a third party. He said that efforts should be made to get the state power sector out of the red within the next five years.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to see that Genco turns into a profit-making unit and to concentrate on hydro reverse pumping projects. He said an export policy should be prepared to attract investors from outside the state.

There should be no room for corruption in the power sector, he said and added that training should be given to the power sector staff in top class training centres. The Chief Minister directed the officials to complete Krishnapatnam and VTPS projects at the earliest.

## Capital farmers stop MRO's bid to identify lands for poor

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tension prevailed in Venkatapalem, one of the villages of the capital development region of Amaravati, on Wednesday as the residents of the village resisted MRO Malleswari who went there to identify suitable lands for distribution of house-sites on Ugadi among the homeless poor.

The villagers surrounded the MRO's car and questioned her how can the government plan house-site distribution when demonstrations as part of 'Save Amaravati' were underway and capital lands issue was subjudice. Since the farmers, who gathered there in large numbers, refused to budge, the vehicles used by the MRO were stranded on the road. The farmers did not relent despite the best efforts of the police to convince them. Finally, forces were deployed in strength to disperse the farmers.

The Jaganmohan Reddy government plans to distribute 25 lakh house-site pattas among the landless poor of the



state by Ugadi. As part of the exercise, the government is identifying suitable land.

Availability of land in Krishna and Guntur districts, coming under the purview of the capital development region, is low. According to conservative estimates, the quantum of land needed to distribute house-sites is 4,000 acres. To acquire necessary lands, it has become a Herculean task for the officials in the two districts.

The farmers in the region are agitating over the govern-

ment not giving residential and commercial plots in lieu of the lands pooled for Amaravati.

To them, acquisition of lands for distribution of house-sites came as a big blow. Therefore, they have been breathing fire on the government. "Should the government acquire lands in the capital development region," they question.

When MRO Malleswari visited the village to acquire lands for the purpose incensed them further, leading to their obstructing her.

## Trump: India has not treated US...

Continued from Page 1

India is demanding exemption from high duties imposed by the US on certain steel and aluminum products, resumption of export benefits to certain domestic products under their Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), greater market access for its products from sectors including agriculture, automobile, auto components and engineering.

On the other hand, the US wants greater market access for its farm and manufacturing products, dairy items and medical devices, and cut on import duties on some ICT products. The US has also raised concerns over high trade deficit with India which was USD 16.9 billion in 2018-19.

Though President Trump is not happy with the bilateral trade ties, he praised Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and said he is looking forward to his visit to India.

"I happen to like Prime Minister Modi a lot," Trump said.

"He (Modi) told me we'll have seven million people between the airport and the event. And the stadium, I understand, is sort of semi under construction, but it's going to be the largest stadium in the world. So it's going to be very exciting... I hope you all enjoy it," he told reporters.

Trump was referring to a scheduled joint public rally with Modi at the newly-built Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad, capital of Gujarat.

Meanwhile, the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF) in a report said the latest quarterly data depict continuation of overall positive bilateral trade trends.

## Babri demolition accused to head Ram temple trust

Continued from Page 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the formation of the 15-member trust in Parliament on February 5, following the orders of the Supreme Court. He had named nine members, leaving the rest of the posts vacant.

The trust, which held its first meeting today, was also expected to finalise the date for the beginning of construction of the Ram Temple.

Vishwa Prasanna Teerth Swami of the Ram Janambhoomi Trust told NDTV that the temple construction committee would meet next month to take a call on the date to begin construction works.

## TDP starts Praja Chaitanya Yatra

Continued from Page 1

He also blamed the YSRCP for the hike in liquor prices, saying the costs have made it difficult for the common man to afford a drink.

Naidu also criticised the Jagan government for showing biases towards media houses, alleging that they were giving most advertisements only to Sakshi, a media group owned by Jagan's family.

Naidu also said that the government has been 'misusing' the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act and slapping it on people in an unfair manner. "If anyone stands up for the people, they're hurting them financially by attacking their

businesses. They're causing mental harassment by filing cases," he said. He also said that the government was causing physical harm by reducing security cover for TDP leaders.

The rally comes ahead of local body polls to be held in the state.

Speaking against the proposal to shift the capital out of Amaravati, Naidu called for people's support, saying, "We are fighting on your behalf. If you oppose injustice. If they put cases, if necessary, thousands of us will fill the jails."

"To control their aggression, their party must lose massively in the upcoming panchayat and municipal polls," he added, referring to the YSRCP.

## Naidu left state with debt of Rs 2.6 lakh-crore...

Continued from Page 1

He said that Jagan gave a lot of thought in bringing about decentralisation. "Due to the absence of a proper storage system at Srisailem, lakhs of cuces of water was wasted into the sea this year due to floods. Even the Amaravati region is prone to floods, where even foundations cannot withstand. Moreover, it requires almost Rs 1 lakh-crore to turn it into a world-class capital," he said.

"Spending such a huge amount on capital alone would lead to a huge financial crisis. Hence, the Chief Minister decided to have three capitals," said Ramakrishna Reddy and added that Jagan fulfilled 80 per cent of the promises he made to the people in just eight months.

"He developed team spirit among the employees and made them work efficiently. Without any allegation, we created a lot of jobs by recruiting village and ward volunteers. Being committed in developing education and health sectors, we brought revolutionary changes with schemes like Amma-Vodi, Nedu -Nadu, Vasathi Devena, etc.," said Ramakrishna Reddy.

## Union Cabinet gives nod to Bill on women's reproductive rights

Continued from Page 1

Irani said the bill also seeks to protect the reproductive rights of not only the commissioning couple but also the lady who will be part of this process.

"This particular decision of the Cabinet seeks a central database in the country through which details of all clinics and banks, including the nature, kind of services provided, outcome of the services provided will be obtained on a regular basis," she said.

"The data generated from the national registry will also be used for research purposes in this particular segment of health," she added.

According to an official statement, the national board lays down code of conduct to be observed by persons working at clinics, to set the minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory and diagnostic equipment and expert manpower to be employed by clinics and banks.

The states and union territories will constitute the state boards and state authorities within three months of the notification by the Centre. The state board shall have the responsibility to follow the policies and plans laid by the national board for clinics and

**The major benefit of the Act would be that it will regulate assisted reproductive technology services in the country.**

banks in the state, the statement said.

"The bill also proposes for a stringent punishment for those practising sex selection, sale of human embryos or gametes, running agencies or rackets for such unlawful practices," the statement said.

The major benefit of the Act would be that it will regulate the assisted reproductive technology services in the country. Consequently, infertile couples will be more ensured/confident of the ethical practices in ARTs.

The bill follows introduction in Parliament of the Surrogacy Regulation Bill 2020, and the approval of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Bill 2020.

## Vijayawada traffic cops get 5 new bikes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada city Police Commissioner Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao on Wednesday flagged off five new motorcycles with advanced features. The new motorcycles were launched as a pilot project to regularise traffic flow, overcome traffic problems and to control accidents in the city.

Suzuki Motorcycles India Private Limited has gifted the bikes to the police.

The new advanced vehicle is equipped with public address system, a mic, a siren, emergency light, control room box,

The new bikes are equipped with public address system, a mic, a siren, emergency light, control room box etc.

power bank, charging and various other facilities. These vehicles would ply on the city roads and monitor the traffic situations, alert about the traffic situation and clear traffic jams and see that there would be no traffic congestion in the city.

## Sucharita lays foundation stone for substation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita on Thursday laid the foundation stone for the construction of 33/11 KV electrical substation with an estimated cost of Rs 2 crore at Chinalingayapalem under the Kakumanu Mandal of Guntur district.

Speaking on this occasion, she said that the substation will improve power supply to 13 villages in the district. She further said that to solve low-voltage problem, the Central Power Distribution Company is constructing the sub-station.



She said the government led by Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy was committed to the welfare of farmers.

Sucharita said that the gov-

ernment will distribute house sites to all eligible beneficiaries and the government will pay compensation to the farmers who had given their lands for house sites very soon. She said that the amount will be credited to their bank accounts.

The Minister recalled that the village volunteers were paying pension at the doorsteps of beneficiaries. She said the government would disburse houses to 25 lakh women across the state by the Ugadi festival. Sucharita said that she will develop infrastructure in the constituency.

## Jagan keeps everybody guessing over...

Continued from Page 1

Following Deodhar ruling out an alliance, the YSRCP clarified that it is not seeking an alliance with the BJP. Satyanarayana denied that he spoke about YSRCP joining the NDA.

He blamed a section of media for deliberately tweaking his statement. The minister said that Jagan's meetings with the Prime Minister and Union Home Minister were part of the efforts to keep the Centre-state relations cordial and seek more Central funds for the state.

Political analyst Telakapalli Ravi is of the view YSRCP may not join the NDA government but continue to extend support wherever required. He believes that the talk of joining the government and conflicting com-

ments may be a strategy by both. He feels that unlike Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, Jagan enjoys a good equation with Modi. By pulling out of NDA and then going all out against Modi during elections, Naidu had ruffled BJP feathers. After the shocking defeat, Naidu tried to mend fences with the BJP.

"BJP national leadership is not prepared to entertain Naidu though he sent many feelers and spoke in high praise and submissive tone. They even swallowed his members in Rajya Sabha. In the latest development, their TDP legislators dropped their Delhi visit as Amit Shah denied them an appointment," Ravi said.

On the other hand, YSRCP is going all out to please Modi.

"They may not join NDA at present but ready to serve more from outside. Exclusive and even antagonistic social base makes their joining NDA difficult. They may allocate a Rajya Sabha seat for NDA. The Centre is also disinclined at this stage when their unit is attacking Jagan all out."

With 22 MPs, YSRCP is one of the largest parties in Lok Sabha. Its government in the state needs a greater hand-holding by the Centre in view of the precarious finances of the state and the commitments to be fulfilled by the Centre made at the time of bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. Jagan is also looking to the Modi government to back his controversial moves like decentralising the state capital Amaravati by developing two more seats of

governance in Visakhapatnam and Kurnool and abrogation of State Legislative Council, which is dominated by the opposition and is proving to be a road-block for the bills passed by the Legislative Assembly.

"Jagan needs support of Modi government to ensure his political and administrative decisions pass the test of legitimacy. Scrapping of the Council or three capitals, Jagan's decisions would necessitate blessings of Prime Minister," analyst P Raghavendra Reddy said.

"On the other hand Jagan enjoys a unique position in Indian politics today. With Modi and BJP facing pressure from existing allies, the PM and his party are in need of new political partnerships. A political association with

YSRCP will help BJP with the narrative that the party is still an attractive force for regional forces."

He believes that while both parties need each other's support, Jagan may not jump in to join NDA immediately. YSRCP will be watchful of TDP's moves and gauge its proximity with the saffron brigade.

Pawan's joining hands with BJP has already triggered talk that the actor could be acting as a catalyst for a larger opposition alliance against Jagan. Pawan is always perceived as someone with a soft corner for Chandrababu Naidu.

Pawan had campaigned for TDP-BJP alliance in 2014 and played a key role in its victory. After his disastrous electoral debut last year, the actor admitted his mistakes.

# 'Maha govt will carry forward Shivaji's legacy'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday expressed his government's resolve to carry forward the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Thackeray visited the Shivneri Fort in Junnar tehsil of Pune district in the morning to pay tributes to Shivaji Maharaj on his birth anniversary, and announced Rs 23 crore assistance for the development of the fort.

He also said that cases filed against protesters during the Maratha quota agitation in 2018 will be withdrawn. Shivaji Maharaj was born in Shivneri in 1630.

"The poor and needy feel this is their government. That is the reason people have come for this 'Shiv Jayanti' function in large numbers. Our government is committed to carry forward the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Thackeray said after attending some programmes, including a 'cradle ceremony', and reviewing the fort's development works. He said Rs 23 crore have been sanctioned for the development of the Shivneri



**"The poor and needy feel this is their government. That is the reason people have come for this 'Shiv Jayanti' function in large numbers. Our government is committed to carry forward the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Thackeray**

Fort.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and others also attended the birth anniversary function of Shivaji Maharaj. Thackeray said, "Both myself and Ajit dada (Pawar) have come together for doing some good constructive work, and I vow that I will not rest till I achieve the goal."

On the occasion, the chief minister told Pawar that they "should have come together long ago". Thackeray further said that all steps will be taken to preserve Chhatrapati Shivaji's forts and memorial.

"We will ensure that works are

not hampered for lack of funds," he said. He also said that cases filed against protesters during the Maratha quota agitation will be withdrawn. The Shiv Sena president earlier took to Twitter to pay tributes to Shivaji Maharaj, and extended greetings to the people of the state on the occasion of Shiv Jayanti.

Though February 19 is the official date of Shiv Jayanti, the Shiv Sena believes the birth anniversary of Shivaji Maharaj should be observed as per the Hindu calendar.

Earlier, state Congress president Balasaheb Thorat and

senior party leader Ashok Chavan, both ministers in the Thackeray Cabinet, also paid their respects to Shivaji Maharaj in their Twitter posts.

NCP president Sharad Pawar also paid tributes to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and tweeted that his bravery and administrative excellence is incomparable.

Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Devendra Fadnis extended greetings to the people of the state on the occasion of Shiv Jayanti. "Salutations to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his birth anniversary," he tweeted.

# Maoists blow up school building in Bihar

PNS ■ GAYA

Suspected Maoist rebels blew up a school building in Bihar's Gaya district and left behind pamphlets denouncing the CAA-NPR-NRC and the "fascist BJP government", a senior police official said on Wednesday.

Rajeev Mishra, the Senior Superintendent of Police of Gaya, said nobody was injured in the blast that razed the empty school building in Banke Bazaar police station area late Tuesday night. A CRPF contingent was stationed there till recently.

"A team of 153 Battalion of CRPF had been camping in the area since March 18 last year when naxals had carried out an attack ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. They had been putting up at Sonedaha High School and shifted to their own camp in the thick of the jungle nearby on February 08," Mishra said.

Hand-written pamphlets have been recovered from the site which bear slogans against "Brahminvadi, Hindutvavadi fascist BJP government," and question "occupation" of school buildings by security forces.

The pamphlets also urge



people to "unite against draconian measures like CAA, NPR and NRC", the SSP added.

We have inputs about Maoists active in the area leading their support to the protests against CAA-NPR-NRC. On Sunday last, nine women suspected of naxal links were rounded up in Gaya town while they were on their way to Shanti Bagh where a round-the-clock demonstration has been under way," he said.

The SSP claimed that during interrogation one of the women confessed to being an active member of the banned CPI (Maoist) and others said

**On Sunday last, nine women suspected of naxal links were rounded up in Gaya town while they were on their way to Shanti Bagh where a round-the-clock demonstration has been under way," he said**

they had received Rs 300-400 each for attending the Shanti Bagh protest.

## SHORT READS



### TN CM announces 50 per cent subsidy for 'Ulemas' to buy two-wheelers

**CHENNAI:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Wednesday announced a 50 per cent subsidy for 'Ulemas' to buy new two-wheelers and doubled their pension by increasing the payout to Rs 3,000 from the present Rs 1,500. Making a statement in the Assembly, Palaniswami said as of now Rs 1,500 pension was being given to Ulemas such as Pesh Imam, Mothinar, Arabic teacher and Mujawar. Indigent, they had retired after serving Waqf institutions in Tamil Nadu, he said. The Ulema are the guardians and interpreters of religious knowledge in Islam. "The pension for Ulemas will be increased to Rs 3,000 from Rs 1,500," he said amid thumping of desks.

### Three experts appointed members of NDMA

**NEW DELHI:** Lt General (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain, who was GoC-in-C of the Army's Srinagar-based 15 Corps, was on Wednesday appointed as a member of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) along with two others, officials said. Former Director General of the Coast Guard Rajendra Singh and policy advisor, disaster recovery, climate change and disaster risk reduction, UNDP, Krishna Vatsa have also been appointed as members of the NDMA. Kamal Kishore, presently serving as member of the NDMA, has been given a fresh term of five years with effect from February 16. The government has approved the appointment as members of the NDMA, a Home Ministry spokesperson said. All the newly appointed members will serve for a tenure of five years from the date of assumption of charge.

### 4 B'desh nationals without passports, visas arrested

**ERODE (TN):** Four Bangladesh nationals have been arrested at nearby Perundurai for not having passports or visas, police said. They were later sent to Puzhal prison in Chennai and the Bangladesh Embassy in that city was informed about the four, the police said. The four were standing near a Magaliamman temple near Perundurai in Erode district of Tamil Nadu on Tuesday and were interrogated by the police on routine rounds. On inquiry, one of them identified himself as Farooq Haji (38) employed in SIPCOT as a casual labourer, they said. The remaining three were Hemul Islam (22), Siraj Haji (45) and Rafiqul Islam (35). None of them had proper passport or visa, they said. So, the police arrested them and checked the premises where the four were residing on rent. All the four were produced before the Judicial Magistrate who remanded them in judicial custody for 15 days, the police said. The police have informed the Bangladesh Embassy in Chennai about the four and sent their photographs to the mission.

## MP: Khajuraho Dance Festival to begin today

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The week-long Khajuraho Dance Festival will begin from February 20 at the famed Khajuraho Temples in Madhya Pradesh's Chattarpur district, a minister said here on Wednesday. State Culture Minister Dr Vijaylaxmi Sadho said the festival will be held from February 20 to 26 near the western complex of temples from 7 pm onwards.

On the opening day, noted dancers Uma Sharma and Jatin Goswami will be awarded Kalidas Samman for 2017 and 2018 respectively, the minister informed. Dance forms such as Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri, Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam among others will be performed by reputed artists including Delhi's Uma Sharma, Assam's Jatin Goswami and Uttarakhand's Meera Das. The event is organised by the Ustad Allauddin Khan Sangeet Evam Kala Academy under the Department of Culture.

## Notice to UP govt over death of 4 of family due to 'malnutrition'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NHRC has issued a notice to the Uttar Pradesh government over a report that a family residing in a village in Basti district has lost four of its members during the last six years allegedly due to malnutrition, officials said on Wednesday.

The National Human Rights Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise a "serious issue of human rights violation" due to the lack of nutritional diet, adequate medical care and proper means of livelihood.

"Such reported tragic deaths, due to malnutrition and lack of other basic facilities are a matter of concern for it," the rights panel said in a statement.

"The National Human



Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that a family residing at Ojhaganj village of Basti district in Uttar Pradesh has lost four of its members during the last six years due to malnutrition," it said.

Accordingly, the commission issued a notice to the UP government, through its chief secretary, seeking a detailed report, including the data pertaining to effective implementation of social welfare schemes in the district, it added.

## Can Nitin come to explain govt proposal on EVs, asks SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

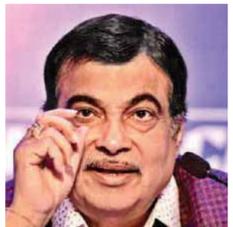
The Supreme Court Wednesday expressed desire to interact with the Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on the proposal for gradual conversion of all public transport and government vehicles into electric vehicles (EVs) to curb air pollution.

The apex court, however, did not seek presence of the minister after Additional Solicitor General A N S Nadkarni raised objection.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, enquired from Nadkarni as to whether the minister can come over for an interaction to assist this court.

"Can the minister come to Supreme Court and explain proposal to introduce non-polluting vehicles run on electricity/hydrogen," the bench asked the law officer.

The bench noted that the minister has been talking



about use of alternative fuels in private and public transport, so the court would like to interact with him.

"Your minister talks about it. We would like to hear him. Somebody responsible should come," it said.

Nadkarni raised objection, saying the appearance of the minister can be misused for political purposes.

He added however that there was nothing wrong in politicians appearing before the court.

"We understand that Mr

Prashant Bhushan is a political person but he is not going to argue with the minister," the bench said.

Without seeking the presence of the transport minister, the top court further said: "We consider it appropriate that all the issues be considered simultaneously with the assistance of authority empowered to take decision."

It then put up the matter for hearing after four weeks.

During the hearing, Bhushan, appearing for NGO - CPIL, said that as per the National E-Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP), 2020 EVs were to be procured by the government.

The authorities were also required to provide charging points for electric vehicles at public places like malls and petrol pumps. Bhushan also said that under the scheme the authorities were required to promote sale of EVs by providing subsidies.

## MLA among 7 booked for raping woman

PNS ■ BHADOHI (UP)

An FIR was lodged against BJP MLA Ravindra Nath Tripathi and six others here on Wednesday for allegedly raping a woman repeatedly for a month in 2017, police said.

The woman, 40, lodged a complaint on February 10, they said. The complainant has alleged that in 2017, Tripathi, the MLA from Bhadohi, and his six accomplices kept her at a hotel for a month and repeatedly raped her, Superintendent of Police (SP) Ram Badan Singh said.

She also claimed that she got pregnant and was forced to undergo abortion, he said.

A probe in this regard was handed over to Assistant Superintendent of Police Ravindra Verma. After he submitted his report, an FIR was registered against the seven men at the city police station, the officer added.

## SC collegium recommends transfer of HC Judge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court collegium has recommended transfer of Delhi High Court Judge Justice S Muralidhar to Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde, in a meeting on February 12, also recommended transfer of Bombay High Court Judge Justice Ranjit V More to Meghalaya High Court.

Besides, Justice Ravi Vijayakumar Malimath who is Karnataka High Court judge has been recommended for transfer to the Uttarakhand high court.

Justice Muralidhar began his law practice in Chennai in September 1984 and in 1987 shifted to the Supreme Court



of India and the Delhi High Court.

He was active as a lawyer for the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee and was its member for two terms.

His pro bono work included the cases for the victims of the Bhopal Gas Disaster and those displaced by the dams on the Narmada.

Apart from CJI Bobde, justices N V Ramana, Arun Mishra, R F Nariman and R Banumathi are part of the new 5-judge Collegium.

## CBI VS CBI: Court raps probe agency for skipping tests on Asthana

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court rapped the CBI on Wednesday for not conducting psychological and lie detector tests on its former special director Rakesh Asthana in a bribery case in which he was recently given a clean chit.

Special CBI Judge Sanjeev Aggarwal directed the initial investigating officer, Ajay Kumar Bassi, in the case to appear before it on February 28 to explain the case diary.

The court further said that advocate Sunil Mittal, a co-accused in the case, "seems like a fictional character emerging from 'Mission Impossible' and 'James Bond'



movies. Why showing so much indulgence to him?"

On Mittal's son-in-law Someshwar Prasad, the court asked, "Why you are showing so much indulgence to someone who isn't cooperating and didn't even share his phone?"

The court had on last

Wednesday expressed displeasure over CBI's investigation into the case and in a reference to Someshwar, it had asked why the accused with bigger roles were roaming free while the probe agency had arrested its own DSP.

Asthana and DSP Devender Kumar, who was arrested in 2018 and later got bail, were named in column 12 of the charge sheet in the case since there was not enough evidence to make them accused.

The CBI registered the case against Asthana on the basis of a complaint from Hyderabad-based businessman Satish Sana, facing probe in a 2017 case involving meat exporter Moin Qureshi.

## Seven child workers rescued from eateries

PNS ■ BHERAMPUR

Seven child labourers have been rescued from eateries in Baidyanathpur area by a task force set up by the Ganjam district administration in Odisha, officials said.

Five children belonged to Ganjam district while the rest were from neighbouring Gajapati district, they said.

The task force comprising the district labour officer (DLO), Berhampur, a member of the district child welfare committee (CWC), the district child protection officer (DCPO), member of Childline, Berhampur and the police conducted raids in several hotels and fast-food centres within Baidyanathpur police station limits on Tuesday.

"The children were rescued

from at least five eateries.

"We will verify the age of the children. If their age is found to be below 14 years, we will register case against the owners of the eateries under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act for engaging them as labourers," said Berhampur DLO Babul Patra.

The district task force would conduct raids in different areas of the city in the next few days. The raids will continue till the end of this month to rescue child labourers as part of the campaign, "Action Month against Child Labour", sources said.

Ganjam district collector Vijay Amruta Kulange has asked the task force to conduct frequent and surprise raids in establishments where children are employed.

## Ammonia gas leaks from cold storage plant; 15 hospitalised

PNS ■ KURUKSHETRA

Fifteen people have been hospitalised and 45 others were affected after inhaling ammonia gas leaking from a cold storage unit at Shahbad Markanda, about 20 kms from here, police said on Wednesday.

The leakage started at the cold storage at about 9 pm on Tuesday when all employees had stepped out for dinner.

The gas spread to the nearby 'Baajigar dera' where 40 families reside. The residents there complained of suffoca-



tion and many of them started vomiting and some were rushed to a nearby hospital. A doctor said 15 persons

were admitted to the hospital at Shahbad while two were sent to Kurukshetra. A few were discharged after treatment. All of them were stable, he said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Surinder Singh said the leakage was plugged with the help of the Fire Department personnel late in the night.

He said 15 persons were admitted to the hospital while about 25 others were discharged after first aid. He said no case has been registered as police have not received any complaint.

## 194-KG HEROIN DRUG HAUL:

# Punjab STF arrests money exchanger in Amritsar

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A money exchanger in Amritsar was arrested for allegedly receiving Rs 75 lakh from one of the accused in a 194-kg heroin haul case, Punjab police said on Wednesday.

Harnit Singh alias Honey, who is running a currency exchange office at Landa Bazaar, has been arrested, said a police official of the anti-drug Special Task Force.

According to investigations conducted by the STF, Harnit was allegedly given Rs 75 lakh as drug money by an accused Ankush Kapoor who had been



arrested in the 194-kg drug seizure case.

"After receiving money from Ankush, Harnit transferred Rs

75 lakh, which was part of drug money, to some people last month. We are trying to find out who Harnit gave this money to," the police official, who is part of the investigation in the case, said.

"Investigations are underway," the official said while adding that Harnit has been booked under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

On January 31, the STF of Punjab police had seized 194 kg heroin and other contraband from a rented house in Akash avenue in Sultanwind village of Amritsar district

after the arrest of six persons, including an Afghanistan national and a woman.

In addition to heroin, 38 kg dextromethorphan, 25 kg caffeine powder probably used to cut and mix the heroin and six drums of chemical composition weighing 207 kg were also recovered from an illicit laboratory inside the house.

Simranjit Singh Sandhu, a proclaimed offender, and Ankush Kapoor, a cloth merchant, were the alleged kingpin of the drug racket busted by the STF. Earlier this month, the STF had seized three kg heroin from the residence of Ankush.

SHORT READS



Mamata blames Centre for Tapas Paul's death

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday alleged that "pressure" created by central agencies and "vendetta politics" led to the death of Trinamool Congress leader and actor Tapas Paul. Paul, a two-term former MP, died at the age of 61 in Mumbai on Tuesday after a heart attack. He was accused in the Rose Valley chit fund scam case and was in jail for over a year. Banerjee, while paying homage to Paul, also alleged that another TMC leader Sultan Ahmed had also died of cardiac arrest as he was under stress after being named an accused in the Narada tapes scandal of 2017. "Tapas Paul was under tremendous pressure from central agencies and was a victim of the Centre's vendetta politics," she told reporters at Rabindra Sadan where Paul's mortal remains have been kept for people to pay homage.



Taro Kono hails Rajnath for being one of most followed

NEW DELHI: Japanese Defence Minister Taro Kono on Wednesday hailed his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh for being one of the most followed defence ministers in the world on Twitter. Singh currently has a following of over 15 million, while Kono has a following of 1.2 million on Twitter. Singh thanked Kono for the compliment. India and Japan share close defence ties and last November held their inaugural foreign and defence ministerial dialogue with an aim to give further momentum to their special strategic partnership. Defence Minister Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had led the Indian delegation, while the Japanese side was headed by Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Kono at the dialogue.



SC-appointed interlocutors visit Shaheen Bagh

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court-appointed interlocutors visited Shaheen Bagh on Wednesday to initiate talks with the protesters after the court suggested that the agitation should be held in an alternative site where no public place is blocked. The protesters have been on a sit-in against the new citizenship law for over two months. Talking to reporters, the interlocutors, Sanjay Hegde and Sadhana Ramachandran, said they had come to Shaheen Bagh to listen to people who had assembled in large numbers.

Not right to deprive child's access to grandparents: Bombay HC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Observing that it is not right to deprive access of a child to his/her grandparents, the Bombay High Court directed a Mumbai-based woman to let her 10-year-old son meet her former in-laws once a week.

**The woman, who has now remarried, in her petition claimed that when she was married to her late husband, she was not treated well by her in-laws. She also said her son has never met his grandparents since his birth**

A division bench of Justices S J Kathawalla and B P Colabawalla earlier this week rejected a petition filed by the woman challenging a family

court order, which directed her to let her late husband's parents meet their grandson once a week, or as and when they come to Mumbai from

Delhi. The woman, who has now remarried, in her petition claimed that when she was married to her late husband, she was not treated well by her



in-laws. She also said her son has never met his grandparents since his birth.

The bench, however, refused to accept this argument. "The reason given by the appellant (woman) that she was not treated well by her in-laws cannot be a ground to deprive access of the child to his grandparents. If the boy has not met his grandparents till date, it is the appellant who is responsible for it," the court said.

The boy was born in December 2009. His father died in February 2010. The boy's mother then started living with her parents and later remarried.

The woman's former in-laws approached the family court seeking access to their grandchild.

In June 2014, the family court allowed the grandparents to meet the boy whenever they visit Mumbai.

CAA: Thousands of Muslims take to streets in TN

PNS ■ CHENNAI

A large number of anti-CAA protesters, majority of them Muslims, held a massive protest against the amended Citizenship Act at Chepauk here, even as agitations were held across Tamil Nadu on Wednesday. The protest here was held under the aegis of the Tamil Nadu Islamic Iyakkangal Matrum Arasiyal Katchigalin Koottamaippu, a federation of state Muslim outfits and political parties.

Representatives from DMK and other political parties also took part in the protest.

Meanwhile, as the demonstration was being held at Chepauk, Chief Minister K Palaniswami in the Assembly located inside the Secretariat a few kms away, announced welfare measures for the Muslim community, including pension hike for 'Ulema' (Islamic scholars). Earlier, in a massive show of strength, agitators came in swathes and converged at Chepauk, before taking out a brief march along the Wallajah road as part of their original plan to proceed to the state Secretariat and lay siege to the Assembly.

However, the Madras High Court had on Tuesday restrained the Muslim outfits from going ahead with their seige protest.

The outfits have been demanding that the state Assembly, dominated by the AIADMK, adopt a resolution



**Agitators were seen carrying placards against CAA, NRC and NPR, besides the Indian flag and raised slogans against the amended citizenship law**

against the Citizenship Amendment Act in the ongoing session which concludes tomorrow.

Agitators were seen carrying placards against CAA, NRC and NPR, besides the Indian flag and raised slogans against the amended citizenship law.

Scores of Muslim women, many of them burqa-clad, joined the agitation here.

The protest resulted in traffic snarls at key points along the arterial Anna Salai, even as police had set up road-

blocks and sealed off roads leading to the Secretariat as part of befooled up security measures. The Secretariat, the state's seat of power, was brought under a stricter vigil, with more police personnel deployed at the historic Fort St George to prevent any untoward incidents.

Anti-CAA protests were held elsewhere in the state, including Madurai, Thanjavur, Cuddalore, Coimbatore, Tirupur and Tirunelveli, with members of the Muslim community hit-

ting the streets against the Citizenship Amendment Act. Palaniswami announced a 50 per cent subsidy for 'Ulema' to buy new two-wheelers and doubled their pension by increasing the payout to Rs 3,000 from the present Rs 1,500. The 'Ulema' are the guardians and interpreters of religious knowledge in Islam. There are 2,814 Waqf institutions in Tamil Nadu and 'Ulemas' working in such registered entities will be provided a subsidy of Rs 25,000 or 50 per cent of the vehicle cost, whichever is lower to buy new two wheelers, he told the Assembly. Also, the government will allocate Rs 15 crore for building a new 'Haj House' here in a land that will be assigned by Tamil Nadu Waqf Board, he added.

JNU SEDITION CASE

Court directs Delhi govt to file status report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A court here on Wednesday directed the Delhi government to file a status report till April 3 on the issue of sanctions to prosecute former JNU Students' Union president Kanhaiya Kumar and others in a sedition case.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Purushottam Pathak also directed the Delhi Police to send a reminder to the city government seeking requi-



site sanctions to prosecute Kumar.

The court passed the directions after police submitted that permission to prosecute

Kumar and others has not been granted yet and the letter requesting sanction is pending with GNCTD.

On January 14, the police had filed a charge sheet in the court against Kumar and others, including former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya, saying they were leading a procession and supported the seditious slogans raised on the campus during an event on February 9, 2016.

DIRECT RECRUITMENT

Members of lower judiciary not eligible for district judge post

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that member of subordinate judiciary services will not be eligible for appointment as District judges by way of direct recruitment.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra said appointments for the posts of district judges is limited for lawyers who have a minimum of seven years of experience of continued practice at the Bar.

The bench while interpreting Article 233 sub clause 2 of the Constitution said the provision bars candidates who are in judicial service to be con-

sidered for appointment by direct recruitment of district judges. Article 233 sub clause 2 states that a person who is already in the service of the Union or of the State shall not be eligible to be appointed as a district judge. The provision also says that a person to be eligible for the post of district Judge should have not less than seven years of practice as an advocate or a pleader and is recommended by the High Court for appointment.

The top court said members of subordinate judiciary can, however, be considered for the post of District Judge by way of promotion.



Sena hails SC order on women in Army, slams Centre's stand

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Wednesday hailed as "historic" the Supreme Court's judgment directing the government to grant permanent commission to women officers in the Army, and said the Centre's stand of opposing command postings for women was "regressive" and an insult to them.

An editorial in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' termed the Supreme Court order as the victory of "women power", and said the Centre needs to change its attitude and vision.

The apex court's verdict meant there was a problem in the central government's "mental frame", it said.

In a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court on Monday directed that women officers in the Army be granted permanent commission and command postings, rejecting the Centre's stand of their physiological limitations as being based on "sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women".

Referring to it, the Sena said, "The Supreme Court said

**An editorial in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' termed the Supreme Court order as the victory of "women power", and said the Centre needs to change its attitude and vision**



there can be no gender bias when it comes to bravery and sacrifice. The verdict is victory of women power."

It is shocking that the central government should question the physical capacity and mental strength of women, the Marathi publication said.

The Centre's stand reflects regressive mindset and this is an insult to women," it said. "The Centre questioned how women can handle risks," it said, adding that the Union government's history is "weak".

Women like Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, Maharani Tarabai, RaniChennamma and

Ahilyabai Holkar displayed exemplary courage and bravery on the battlefield, the Sena pointed out.

"Who can forget Captain Lakshmi Sehgal of the Indian National Army. The central government should change its attitude and vision. The Supreme Court's verdict meant there was problem in the central government's mental frame," the editorial said.

It also highlighted how Swati Mahadik, the wife of Colonel Santosh Mahadik, and Kanika, wife of Major Kaustubh Rane, have followed their martyred husbands in the Army.

"They have gone through all physical tests," the Marathi daily said. Colonel Mahadik, hailing from Satara in Maharashtra, laid down his life battling militants near LoC in north Kashmir's Kupwara district in July 2018.

Bedi asks youth to emerge as entrepreneurs, job providers

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Territorial Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi on Wednesday asked the youth to emerge as entrepreneurs and become job providers by developing skills in addition to acquiring academic qualifications.

She was addressing a batch of 50 youth from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir who were here on a visit under the 'Ek Bharat Shershta Bharat' programme organised by the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan to promote interstate youth exchange programme. The Lieutenant Governor, in a press release, said she had an interactive session with the visiting team of the youth and highlighted the multi-faceted cultures of different regions of the country.



100 on fast-unto-death in Bankura as cracks appear on houses

PNS ■ BANKURA

Residents of a village in West Bengal's Bankura district are staging a fast-unto-death demanding compensation and rehabilitation after cracks appeared on more than 150 houses in the area, for which they blamed explosions in a nearby coal mine.

More than 100 residents, including elderly persons, of Manohar village in Barjora block are taking part in the fast-unto-death since Monday, an agitator said.

"The cracks on the houses have been caused by explosions in the Barjora North Colliery, which is being mined for over a year by a firm appointed by the West Bengal Power Development Corporation Ltd (WBPDCL). No action was taken despite informing the authorities about the cracks. Hence, we have taken this step," he said.

**Barjora BDO Bhaskar Roy, however, said that the cracks were not caused by mining explosions. "Manohar village does not fall in the mining area"**

WBPDCL authorities refused to comment on the issue.

Barjora BDO Bhaskar Roy, however, said that the cracks were not caused by mining explosions.

"Manohar village does not fall in the mining area.

According to a report submitted by a committee, the cracks were not caused by explosions. So, there is no question of rehabilitation," he said.

Man killed in celebratory firing

PNS ■ MORENA

A 49-year-old man was killed in a celebratory firing at an engagement ceremony in Madhya Pradesh's Morena district, police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday night in Shikahra village during an engagement ceremony at villager Naresh Kushwaha's home, Porsa police station in-charge Naresh Niranjan said.

Some revellers fired shots in the air after the ceremony and one of the bullets hit Bhure Singh Kushwaha, he added. The victim was rushed to a hospital at Porsa, where doctors declared him dead on arrival, the official said.

A case of culpable homicide has been registered against an unidentified person and further investigations are underway, he added.

'Arbitrariness in top judicial institutions fatal for democracy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday attacked the government over the appointment of CVC and CIC and alleged there is no place for transparency, accountability and constitutional processes in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'New India, which was fatal for democracy.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala charged that appointments of CVC and CIC are being made arbitrarily on the lines of "khul ja sim sim" (open sesame).

"Arbitrariness in top judicial institutions is fatal for democ-



cracy," he said. "The appointments of CVC and CIC are being made on the lines of 'open sesame'. Bring out names from the pocket and make appointments, that's it. There is no place left for transparency, account-

ability, constitutional processes and compliance of law in Modi ji's 'New India'," he charged on Twitter.

Sanjay Kothari, the Secretary to the President, has been selected as the new Chief Vigilance Commissioner by a high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister Modi.

The committee has also chosen by a majority decision, former Information and Broadcasting Secretary Bimal Julka, currently serving as an Information Commissioner, as the new Chief Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission.

Student held for TikTok video on question paper

PNS ■ MALDA/KOLKATA

A 16-year-old examinee was held on Wednesday in West Bengal's Malda district for allegedly making a TikTok video of the English question paper for class 10 state board exams and sharing it on social media, police said.

The incident happened in Baidyanathpur High School in Ratuia police station area of the district, they said.

It is alleged that soon after the exam began, the boy clicked three pages of the question paper while sitting inside the classroom, edited it on the TikTok app, added Bollywood music to the video



**It is alleged that soon after the exam began, the boy clicked three pages of the question paper while sitting inside the classroom, edited it on the TikTok app, added Bollywood music to the video and circulated it on social media, police said**

and circulated it on social media, police said.

He will be produced before the district Juvenile Justice Board on Thursday, they said.

District education department sources said that the accused's examination has been cancelled and he has been expelled.

The purported video, which

shows some multiple choice and essay-type questions, started making rounds within an hour of the beginning of the examinations at 12 pm.

The incident created a furore among parents and examinees, who questioned the security of examination centres where neither students nor the teachers are being

allowed to carry any electronic gadgets. Officials said Superintendent of Police Alok Rajoria is himself leading a probe into the security lapse at the examination centre.

The authorities have also suspended internet services in some areas near schools spread over 42 blocks of the state, to prevent any malprac-

tices. A top West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBSE) source, however, said that a very few questions in the purported video matched with the original English question paper.

"The question paper in the video also did not carry the logo of the Board, which is embossed on the top," the source said.

WBSE president Kalyanmoy Ganguly will soon meet education minister Partha Chatterjee "to discuss attempts in some quarters to create confusion during the exams and discredit the board and the state government", the source said.

## Bending backwards

Over-the-top preps for Trump visit invite criticism. Do the poor need to be swept under the carpet?



At one end, there is the propagandist accusation that we do not own our Indianness enough as a people or aren't proud of it. On the other end, there is this relic of a colonial obsession, rather subservience, to please the White world. What else explains our bending backwards to roll out the red carpet for US President Donald Trump? To begin with, the Yamuna will be flowing as it should, clean and swirling, for the day that Trump is going to be here. The Uttar Pradesh Government will be releasing 500 cuses of water to clear the river

of contaminants and toxic waste, making what usually is a smelly canal look like a river. On other days, Delhiites only deserve the sewage drain avatar. The one-day wonder is supposed to make us feel proud of living in a waterfront city. Poor monkeys are being chased off the Taj Mahal stretch. And in Ahmedabad, where the POTUS will be landing first, masons are hastily finishing a half-a-kilometre wall along the stretch between the Ahmedabad airport and Gandhinagar to shut off our putrid slums from the eyeline of a speeding limousine. While authorities defend the social barrier as one prompted by security concerns, the real intention is not lost, ensuring pleasing visuals of Indian exotica and a *swachh* Bharat to one of the most important men on the planet. As if that would soften his stand on trade ties with India. Apparently eviction notices have been served to 45 families living in another slum near the biggest cricket stadium that Trump is gushing about. Following the mantra of *Atithi Devo Bhava* is one thing but disowning our truths is quite the other. Yes, India as an emergent economy with a massive population has its own warts, inequities and dualities to live with. But why deny our composite existence or be insensitive to the lesser privileged? For in the end by walling off our imperfections into ghettos, we end up reinforcing old stereotypes instead of changing them and perpetuate Western biases. By acknowledging the existence of the underlings, we give them dignity, prize their contribution to society and mainstream them as a reality that has to be dealt with, not hidden away. Of course, other than the very Indian affliction of undervaluing ourselves while putting our best foot forward, there is the other problem of sustaining the myth of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development work in his own State as Chief Minister. And a gaping slum certainly wouldn't be a glorious ode to his helmsmanship in that capacity for 12 years. So the Modi Government is going all out to strengthen its leadership credentials even if possibilities of a trade deal with the US look remote, particularly over the thorny issue of dairy exports.

The Modi Government has gone to the extent of pulling out all stops to reinforce a crafted image of the country and promote its leadership credentials before Trump. Contracts worth ₹85 crore, from the construction of the stadium, which supposedly has the maximum seating capacity, to the beautification of cities, have gone out to various agencies. The depreciation has already begun with Trump tweeting dissatisfaction over the way India-US ties have shaped up over trade, a clear indication that war on that front will be hard-nosed no matter what the trimmings. Questions are also being raised about Gujarat being chosen simply because it is the Prime Minister's home State. Others are wondering if it wasn't better for the makeover funds to have been diverted to slum cluster improvements instead. Simply on qualifiers, there were other "better-looking" States. Gujarat was ranked 22nd among Indian States in the human development index for 2018. The Maternal Mortality Rate was 91 per 1,00,000 live births in 2016 as compared to 66 in Tamil Nadu and 88 in Telangana in the same year. According to crime data, the suicide rates there due to poverty increased by 162 per cent in 2018. Last year, the UK, too, rolled out the red carpet for Trump for a formal State visit, provoking protests from none other than the London mayor who said that such treatment shouldn't be extended to someone whose "behaviour flies in the face of the ideals America was founded upon — equality, liberty and religious freedom." He had even highlighted Trump's endorsement of far-Right nationalism, picking on minority groups and the marginalised to manufacture an enemy. Perhaps, there's a commonality of perception here that doesn't make Trump look like so much of an oddity in the first place. One would have understood if the "good friend" vibes resulted in friendly deals. But other than "feel good" vibes, which have been around anyway because of improved diplomatic ties of the last couple of years, this gush seems a tad too obsequious.

## Gross indignity

When teachers and spiritual leaders endorse myths around menstruation, policies don't mean anything



For a Government which is prioritising menstrual health and hygiene as part of policy, its loyalist followers are harming it by perpetuating medieval myths around a biological process. And it comes as a huge shock when educators of a modern society — women at that — subject others to the cruellest form of mental and emotional trauma over something as natural as menstruation as was done recently in a college in Gujarat. Sixty eight students at a hostel in Bhuj were made to strip before teachers to prove that they were not

menstruating. What led to this outrage was the fact that the girls, who are undergraduate students at the Shree Sahajanand Girls Institute (SSGI), run by the Swaminarayan sect, were flouting a set of preposterous rules set by the college for them to follow during their periods. The discriminatory and utterly humiliating diktat bars students from entering the college temple, kitchen or touching other girls. In the classroom, they are expected to sit on the last bench and at meal time they have to sit away from others like pariahs and clean their own dishes. Not just this, the hostel keeps a register on when the students get their periods over a two-month cycle. Quite understandably not one girl had entered her name in it. Ironically, after the traumatised students raised a hue and cry over this nightmarish incident, the Principal squarely blamed the students for not following the rules and thus bringing the outrage upon themselves. What made matters worse was the statement by Krushnaswarup Dasji, a religious leader, that menstruating women, who cooked for their husbands, would be reborn as dogs and men consuming such food would be reborn as bullocks! This beats all evolutionary theory and entrenches the worst superstition.

Such words, coming from people who wield influence over the minds of others, particularly in rural India, are disturbing due to the sheer lack of sensitivity and violation of human rights, apart from the fact that they perpetuate illogical beliefs. Myths and taboos surrounding menstruation have to be broken down and a scientific temper has to be developed before Government schemes, incentives, health workers and social organisations succeed in their efforts to improve the lot of women. Over 60,000 cases of cervical cancer deaths are reported every year, mostly due to poor menstrual hygiene. A whopping 23 million girls drop out of school annually. This in a country that has a temple dedicated to fertility,

# New dawn for the military

With the apex court ruling in favour of equality for women, the armed forces will have more candidates to choose from. In defensive engagements, they could well be superior to men



PRAFULL GORADIA

Women soldiers would be a serious problem if and when they happen to be taken prisoner. But as commanding officers, they would seldom be in the first line of infantry fighting. Nor are cavalry officers acutely vulnerable. This question of prisoner of war possibly confused the entire issue of command qualities. The question of strength and stamina has fortunately been resolved as infantry weapons have become light and fire-efficient. There is no comparison between the .303 and today's assault rifles. Even this writer found the former heavy to lift and carry for long.

For the rest, the issue of women as jawans or officers was highly relevant, dominated by the bias of tradition and mindset. Until firearms came into existence, prospects for women were indeed not that bright as the "sword" or the "lance" was heavy and needed strong arms. Women were also weaker due to the quality of diet and the number of childbirths. Mumtaz Mahal, queen of Shah Jahan, who was possibly the wealthiest man in the world of his time, bore 14 children, of whom only seven survived. Imagine the waste of female stamina and strength; how could they be soldiers? She, who cannot be a soldier, cannot be an officer and in turn a commander. To add to this was the patriarchy that refused to see women as anything else, except as householders and mothers.

The invention of the musket in the 16th century sprouted the first ray of hope for the woman as a soldier. The gender of an individual pressing the trigger makes no difference to the target. Early models, however, were very heavy and were often operated by two soldiers resting the weapon on a portable table. This innovation by itself limited chances for women. As the weapon became better and lighter, the lesser was the muscle required. The better and stronger the vehicle, the lesser was the stamina needed. The lesser the child-bearing, the stronger the woman remained. We have arrived so far through four to five centuries.

There has been a new dawn for the military. The armed forces have many more potential candidates to choose from now. Women can make equally good fighting stock whether on land, air or sea. In fact, in defensive engagements, they could well be superior to men. For instance, a tigress or any female animal protects her young, quite ferociously. Arguably, the male may not be so determined while defending even his own house. When a woman defends her homeland, this writer believes, she would be equally committed to saving her progeny. A brave man would defend his country with equal zeal but when he finds his situation hopeless, he is likely to retreat or even surrender. A woman is less likely to give up on protecting her own people, like her own children. An order like "victory or



death" is less difficult for a woman to obey than for a man. Apparently, the braver the commander, the more courageous should be the battalion.

The recent doubt, which the Supreme Court had to clear about whether women officers would make equally effective commanders, is unusual. The male ego fattened since the beginning of time, which, it is widely believed, could find it difficult to obey a woman in public. In private, it is different and even a stronger, wiser person has been listened to readily. Shorn of such mindsets, the issue is one of leadership. In the 1960s, who could have believed that former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would have made a leader superior to say, Morarji Desai? This question is one of leadership and neither of statesmanship, nor prime ministership.

Indira Gandhi retained the leadership of her party, the Congress, until her death. True, she had the advantage of being former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, which gave her an enviable start. After that, she had to rely on her own wit and resources in order to survive and succeed.

The problem hitherto is that women do not get the exposure and opportunity to be

able to perform on the right platform and at the right level; at least in most fields. Kanshi Ram, the founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), gave a start to Mayawati and she came up to be the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief Mamata Banerjee has risen exclusively on her own initiative; she has demonstrated eloquently the qualities needed to make nine crore people of West Bengal to follow.

For some time, maybe some years, women commanders would have to develop superior qualities such as military knowledge, bold initiatives and quick decision-making. Leaders must be superior to their followers. Once that is demonstrated, there should be no difficulty. There is a phenomenon generally not remembered and at times not known. This writer can communicate it through his experience during physical training in college. The Elphinstone College in Mumbai had no ground and, hence, its physical training (PT) classes were occasionally held at the neighbouring Oval maidan. The entire class of 110 students would together move to this ground. There were less than 25 boys, the rest were girls. The latter were given light exercises,

which could be done while wearing sarees (this is what most girls wore 65 years ago). However, boys had to sprint, do sit-ups, push-ups *et al*. This writer was neither strong nor practised and by himself, could do no more than 15 to 17 sit-ups and push-ups. At the Oval, however, in the presence of girls, he could go up to 50 of them. The only explanation for this was gender pride. How could he let his pride down? If this gender pride could percolate to the armed forces, we can expect extraordinary performance from our sailors, soldiers and airmen in an inclusive atmosphere.

When we move from the commander to the level of a senior general, the situation would change. The progress from tactics to strategy is a big leap. The former is adequate for a skirmish or a limited battle. Anything bigger or more on-going would call for greater military imagination to be able to visualise what is neither visible nor obvious. And women make for good strategists. A well thought-out strategy must ensure that the war plan is not upset even if the future brings forth enemy action that is surprisingly different. World War II German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

is probably the most famous General. But when compared with Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, Rommel is considered an exceptional tactician. Whereas Manstein, by his defence and in-depth strategy, delayed the Russian Army from reaching Germany by a whole year. The Manstein brilliance lay in retreating faster than the Russians could move, then wait on the sidelines until the Reds had arrived, only to be surrounded and taken prisoners in thousands.

France has six borders beginning with the North Sea in the west, then Belgium, then the German border, which was defended by a chain of fortresses called the Maginot line. The Ardennes forest was considered impassable as it would have led to Germany, then Switzerland and finally Italy. Berlin was in search of a point of utter surprise attack. Manstein suggested the presumably impassable Ardennes forest. France had left it undefended; his idea was accepted. It took only 40 days to compel France to surrender. That was gem of a strategy. An integration of genders would mean that many evolved minds are at play.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. Views expressed are personal)

## SOUNDBITE

Every Congress worker desires that Priyanka Gandhi should be a RS member. She is an undisputed leader and any State would want to recommend her name for nomination.



Congress leader —Avinash Pande

The audience is intelligent. They recognise that as actors, our job is to convincingly tell stories. We don't have to showcase our personal lives and belief systems on camera.



Actor —Sara Ali Khan

When a national law is changed, statelessness must be prevented. Because when basic right of anyone is to have a country that a person calls his, then everything should be done to avoid statelessness.



UN chief —Antonio Guterres

Donald Trump is visiting India to propagate upcoming US presidential election. They are using Indian Government for the US election.



Congress leader —Nawab Malik

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### More power to women

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Lead from the front" (February 18). India has a history of women commanders, who fought wars against formidable adversaries. The name of Rani Lakshmbai tops this list. While we often cite the protective-destructive capabilities of Shakti, Durga and Kali, it is ironical that it took a Supreme Court order for female officers in the Army to get the same status as their male counterparts. The top court's order, upholding the right of women to equal opportunity in the Indian armed forces, is landmark. It has paved the way for all serving Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers to be eligible for permanent commission at par with their male colleagues. They will now get the same kind of promotion, rank, benefits and pension as that of their male counterparts but in non-combat support services only. Women are still excluded from combat roles. This should change. Women should not just have the right to permanent

### Act now to save our birds

A recent report, titled *State of India's Birds 2020*, has revealed that the count of the house sparrow, the Indian peafowl and certain other avian species in India has increased. Though the fact remains that sparrows have disappeared from most big cities, their numbers have remained stable over a period of 25 years. This factoid is some relief. What is concerning, however, is the fact that several other kinds of birds such as the red-necked falcon, the Indian cuckoo and the blue rock thrush have decreased in number and are struggling to survive. Several reasons such as habitat loss, the use of pesticides, hunting and trapping have pushed them to the edge. Despite earlier calls to end the use of pesticides, its usage continues to plague the environment. Habitat loss, too, continues unabated and a rapidly-growing population isn't going to ease pressures any time soon. Rising temperatures, changing vegetation and extreme weather conditions have played their own role in deteriorating conditions of the birds. Now that we have comprehensive data, which was



compiled on the basis of observations made by over 15,500 bird watchers, we must make the best use of it. It is up for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to secure a future for the birds by taking urgent steps to save threatened species. Resolute steps taken to protect forests and tree cover can offer multiple benefits.

Megha  
Via email

commission but the right to command combat troops, too. The mission is of utmost importance and women are equally capable of helming it. We must take cue from the US, the UK and Israel, who have women in their combat forces.  
Padmini Raghavendra  
Secunderabad

### China leads the way

Sir — Whereas the US dictates monetary transactions globally, China has usurped the manufacturing sphere so much that its transient, if extended, disruption will make every nation feel the chill. Over the past three decades,

China has quietly become the axis of the global economy. Even as it rules heavy industries such as coal, steel, cement and rare-earths among others, it holds equal strength on items as varied as electronic components, solar cells, clothing and air conditioners, to name a few. High volumes of production have brought down

costs of items to such a level that advanced nations have been forced to wind down their own capacities. We may find fault with China's autocratic nature but the fact is, its politics was made to subscribe to the economy. Yet, when it came to combating Coronavirus, China did not give a second thought to the perils of an economic plunge. It went on to take unprecedented and peremptory steps to contain the virus. It is this singular goal clarity that has made it what it is today.

R Narayanan  
Navi Mumbai

### Listen to the Mahatma

Sir — Supreme Court judge Justice DY Chandrachud recently expressed his views on "dissent", calling it a vital ingredient of a vibrant democracy. One needs to take inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi, who had the courage and fortitude to express his dissent in a peaceful manner.

Ashish  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

**FIRST COLUMN**

## Right to liberty reaffirmed

The apex court in a recent decision said that anticipatory bail once granted cannot have an expiry date until specified by the court



MADHAVI KHANDELWAL SHAKEIB NARU

The Supreme Court in its recent decision in the Sushila Aggarwal and Others vs. State (NCT of Delhi) case declared that anticipatory bail once granted to an accused under Section 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) cannot have an expiry date until explicitly specified by the court. This verdict is indeed a cornerstone in reaffirming the right to life and liberty of citizens as guaranteed by our Constitution. Authored by Justice MR Shah and Justice SR Bhat, this verdict has resolved the controversies created mainly by two judgments viz., Salauddin Abdulsamad Shaikh and Siddharam Sattingappa Mhetre, with both of them taking completely opposite views. Salauddin narrowed the scope and jurisdiction of the courts under Section 438 by mandating imposition of strict conditions while granting anticipatory bail. However, Mhetre ruled that grant of bail for a limited period or with any such conditions is contrary to the legislative intention and settled tenets of criminal law. These seemingly incongruent strands of reasoning, stemming from the two distinct lines of precedents and spawning divergent approaches to the scope of jurisdiction under Section 438, impelled a reference to the larger Bench. Before going into the nuances of this verdict, we must understand the meaning and definition of anticipatory bail and its governing parameters. The CrPC, 1973 does not define anticipatory bail and rather provides only the mechanism for availing it through Section 438. However, the apex court defined anticipatory bail as "bail in anticipation of arrest" in the case of Balchand Jain for the very first time. Further, it was also laid down that the power to grant anticipatory bail rests only with the Sessions Court and the High Court. Here, it is interesting to note that the old code of criminal procedure, 1898 did not contain any provision for anticipatory bail and it was adopted only after the recommendations from the 41st Report of the Law Commission of India. Now coming back to the recent judgment in Sushila, the Constitution Bench decided upon a bunch of controversies, cleared some major confusions and passed some landmark orders, which are as follows:

**Reiterated the law laid down by the Constitution Bench in Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia and others vs State of Punjab (Sibbia case):** There is nothing in the CrPC to indicate that the grant of pre-arrest/anticipatory bail should be time-bound. However, the court concerned has the discretion to impose conditions for the grant of anticipatory bail, including a limited duration of protection, on a case-to-case basis, depending on the stage at which the application for anticipatory bail is moved. As a rule, there should be no time-limit imposed in granting pre-arrest protection. The duration of an anticipatory bail order does not normally end when the accused is summoned by the court. However, it is up to the court to impose additional restrictions if there are peculiar circumstances warranting the same.

**The life of anticipatory bail does not end when the accused is summoned by court:** The court found that ordinarily, the protection given through anticipatory bail would not automatically come to an end if the person is summoned as an accused in the case by a court. However, if there are special or peculiar circumstances necessitating the same, the court has the power to limit the tenure of anticipatory bail.

**Time-limits may be imposed by courts but not as a rule:** All the same, the court further noted as per the Sibbia case, the competent court still retains the discretion to impose time-limits or other conditions, on a case-to-case basis, if required. However, it added that such limits should not be ordinarily imposed. The Supreme Court, therefore, has answered the first issue in the following terms: "The protection granted to a person under Section 438 of the CrPC should not invariably be limited to a fixed period; it should inure in favour of the accused without any restriction on time. Normal conditions under Section 437(3) read with Section 438(2) should be imposed; if there are specific facts or features in regard to any offence, it is open for the court to impose any condition..."

**Guidelines on grant of anticipatory bail:** Before parting with the matter, the Bench also issued some more guidelines on the grant of anticipatory bail. It ruled that the anticipatory bail applications should be based on concrete facts, not vague or general allegations, relatable to a specific offence. It is advisable that the court, depending on the seriousness of the threat of arrest, issue notice to the public prosecutor to obtain facts. Nothing in the CrPC compels or obliges a court to impose conditions limiting the grant of anticipatory bail. The need to impose restrictions during grant of anticipatory bail would have to be judged on a case-to-case basis. Such special or other restrictive conditions may be imposed if the case or cases warrant but should not be imposed in a routine manner, in all cases. The gravity of the offence and the applicant's role should guide the court in deciding whether or not to grant anticipatory bail in its discretion. Anticipatory bail granted can (depending on the conduct of the accused) continue after filing of the chargesheet till end of trial.

(Khandelwal and Naru are legal researchers to Supreme Court's Justice MR Shah and Justice NV Ramana)

IF I AM GETTING *SUNDER KAAND* RECITAL DONE, IT DOES NOT MAKE ME LESS PROGRESSIVE. BEING PROGRESSIVE DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE AN ATHEIST.

—AAP MLA SAURABH BHARDWAJ

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**



THE AAP'S ATTACHMENT TO LORD HANUMAN IS NOT A MATTER OF FAITH, BUT A POLITICAL MELODRAMA.

—DELHI BJP SPOKESPERSON PRAVEEN SHANKAR KAPOOR

# Sustainability is your business

Sustained activity, both in words and actions, backed by strong leadership is the need of the hour to achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Climate change is a grim reality faced not just by mankind but everyone who inhabits the Earth. The rising global temperatures are affecting seasons, so winters have become shorter and spring is early to arrive. These shifting seasons impact many life cycle events which in turn have a major impact on agriculture and global food production. What is challenging is that the changes are happening too fast and many species may not be able to adapt to these unprecedented fluctuations. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported a global warming of 1.5 °C, which is enough to put 20-30 per cent of species at the risk of extinction. Sadly, many of us are not even aware of it, let alone work towards mitigating them. And this goes for individuals, societies and businesses. Of the three, businesses all around the world are the biggest contributors to global warming since they are responsible for at least 70 per cent of all carbon emissions. So, on humanitarian grounds, there should be an extreme urgency by businesses to slow down and reverse climate change. Sustained activity, both in words and actions, backed by strong leadership is the need of the hour to achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. This can only be done by being a part of the solution rather than a part of the problem. And this is how some companies are doing it:

**Investments in renewable energy sources:** Several big firms are investing in renewable energy sources to reduce their greenhouse gas targets. McDonald's is leading the way with the large-scale purchase of virtual power that will support wind and solar energy. This renewable energy generation can be equated to taking 140,000 cars off the road for one year. In the furniture industry, IKEA has invested \$2 billion into renewable energy projects and is planning to build 416 wind turbines. It has already installed around 750,000 solar panels on its stores. One of the most powerful corporations in the world and Google's parent company, Alphabet Inc, has also been named as one of the most eco-friendly firms. All offices and company buildings, including Google headquarters in Silicon Valley, are powered by 100 per cent renewable energy, which removes an estimated five million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year. By purchasing a 1.6-gigawatt renewable energy package, Google has made its clean energy portfolio large enough to power a country of the size of Uruguay. Similarly, Microsoft boosted its renewable energy portfolio to more than 1,900 MW, which is enough to power 1.5 million homes. Swiss fragrance and flavour manufacturer Firmenich is one of the most sustainable companies in the world, operating on 78 per cent renewable energy and working with other CEOs and politicians to help limit global warming to avoid pre-industrial levels. Apart from Firmenich, L'Oréal was the only other firm to receive an 'A' (the highest score) across all three areas of the CDP's (formerly Carbon Disclosure Project) rankings — climate change, deforestation and water security. It is committed to zero deforestation by this year-end and has revamped more than one-fifth of its entire product range to reduce dependence on petrochemicals and encourages the use of plant-based, renewable resources. Johnson & Johnson has taken several steps to ensure that all packaging is recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. Its operations are currently powered by 31 per cent renewable energy and it plans to increase this to 100 per cent by 2050.

“ COMPANIES IN 35 COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE US, HAVE EXPERIENCED GROWTH IN THE LAST 15 YEARS WHILE REDUCING THEIR EMISSIONS. ACCORDING TO THE NEW CLIMATE ECONOMY REPORT, THE DECISION TO REDUCE EMISSIONS WILL BE GOOD FOR THE JOB MARKET AS IT WILL CREATE 65 MILLION NEW LOW CARBON EMISSION JOBS WHILE GENERATING ENTERPRISE VALUE WORTH \$26 TRILLION TILL 2030 ”



**Collaborating for saving the environment:** Earth cannot be saved without proper collaboration among different actors in society. One of the major efforts towards this is found in the collaboration between Walmart, several environmental groups and over 1,000 suppliers, known as project Gigaton, to overhaul the company's supply chain worldwide by reducing greenhouse gas pollution by about a billion tonnes by 2030. Nearly 94 million metric tonnes of emissions have already been reduced since its launch. Another global corporate leader and a champion for environmental sustainability is Unilever that is collaborating with farmers worldwide to reduce harm to the environment. It is aiming to procure its agricultural materials from sustainable sources by the end of this year and eliminating single-use plastic packaging in the UK by 2025. It also plans to become carbon positive by 2030 by reducing or totally eliminating the use of fossil fuels and generating more renewable energy than it consumes. Several food companies have also collaborated with sustainable management consultants to assess the deforestation risk developed due to their operations and take steps to create a sustainable food system. Nestle, the largest food company on Earth, uses satellite technology to ensure that no deforestation is taking place in its supply chain. It has also committed to using 100 per cent responsibly-sourced palm oil by 2020. It has been severely criticised in the past for using palm oil that led to deforestation. Danone, a company producing yogurts, water and plant-based food and drinks, is working in collaboration with farmers to reduce soil degradation and water usage, in the process reducing the company's carbon footprint by 25 per cent.

**Say "no" to plastics:** In India, the Philippines and Indonesia, Unilever has found itself under pressure over plastic packaging. Earlier this year, the company was named by the "Break Free From Plastic" campaign as one of the firms most responsible for plastic pollution in these countries. On its part, to help the environment, IKEA plans to ban single-use plastic products from its shops and restaurants by 2020. The company wants to purchase 100 per cent renewable energy by 2020 and use only renewable and recycled materials in its products by the same year. It plans to make its deliveries emission-free by 2025.

**Innovation to save the environment:** As it is rightly said, "Necessity is the mother of all invention." Stopping and reversing climate change is the necessity to save our planet now. However, organisations lack awareness on specific technologies that can help them reduce emissions and boost sustainability. Several entrepreneurs globally are trying to bridge this gap and start-ups are being funded to help companies solve sustainability challenges and make progress toward the 2025 climate goals. Danish shipping company Maersk is using biofuels to help it achieve a carbon-neutral status by 2050. It piloted biofuel made from cooking oil to run its cargo ship from Rotterdam to Shanghai and in the process reduced an estimated 1.5 million kg of carbon emissions. Tesla, the electric-car maker, has a holistic environment protection policy where they make sure that the suppliers work without harming the environment, responsibly manage all waste and efficiently use water and energy resources. Microsoft, on the other hand, is using new age technology like artificial intelligence for several sustainability initiatives, fore-

casting wildfires and risks related to them, minimising the environmental costs of farming, planting trees and protecting endangered species. The Nike Air range of trainers uses at least 50 per cent recycled materials and diverts more than 95 per cent of waste from landfills. Plus the company is soon to release a range of trainers coloured with plant-based dyes, which reduces pollution of waterways.

**Accepting climate change at the policy level:** Voluntary efforts are good but not enough to tackle the real threat of climate change. Businesses should be open to developing climate policies and governments should support companies in implementing the same. This trend had started now with CEOs of several companies like Dow Chemical, BASF and Lafarge Holcim stressing on bringing about new regulations that check and penalise higher carbon emissions and incentivise lower carbon footprints.

This brings us to the question whether trying to protect the planet is also economically viable? Data suggests so. Companies in 35 countries, including the US, have experienced growth in the last 15 years while reducing their emissions.

According to the *New Climate Economy* report, the decision to reduce emissions will be good for the job market as it will create 65 million new low carbon emission jobs while generating enterprise value worth \$26 trillion till 2030. By reducing emissions, companies will witness two-pronged benefits — a higher economic value and a boost to reputation value, from the point of view of the entire stakeholder group, including employees, investors, suppliers and customers. It is a win-win for all.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)

# The huge human cost of stress in mining sector

A survey observed a strong connection between unemployment due to mining closure and mental distress across States. Workers exposed to the negative labour demand shock are facing very low chances of re-entering the job market



CHARUDUTTA PANIGRAHI

Recently, we celebrated 71 years of India's existence as a Republic and thus it would be pertinent to remember Article 21 of the Constitution, which deals with fundamental rights without which a republic would mean nothing. The fundamental right to life as enshrined in Article 21 includes the right to work. It is time for civil society to start talking collectively about livelihood which is recognised as a human right in many communities.

We need to get a more inclusive understanding of what we mean by livelihoods: Life engagement with land, water, forest, right to food, income, food security and the like. So, the first step in building up a narra-

tive is building up a common understanding of what we mean by right to livelihoods.

As we know, livelihood encompasses issues of productive resources and access to resources and involves concerns in labour and goods markets. Work conditions in all sectors are central to the discourse and in particular recognition of work, generating employment, job security and wages.

The mining sector in India has witnessed largescale loss of livelihoods in recent times. On one hand India is aiming for a \$5 trillion economy and on the other we are now finding it difficult to compete with emerging economies like Vietnam and Egypt. It is imperative to focus significantly on the mining sector with concerted efforts to regain its three per cent share and more in the GDP by 2024-25. The sector's GDP share in 2018-19 was 2.6 per cent, down from three per cent in 2011-12. Ever since the Supreme Court cancelled 88 mining leases in Goa on February 7, 2018, life has come to a grinding halt for more than 3,00,000 mining depen-

dents. The State, once the richest economy in India, is now sluggish and the complete closure of mining activities has devastated families and brought about unimaginable misery in the lives of people. In neighbouring Karnataka, too, the ban on ore exports, e-auctions and quota systems in ore production have led to a floundering economy, severely denting the State's development and growth.

The recently-published sourcebook of FIDR, *Mining: A Prudent Perspective*, is based on a survey of 2,415 people from five major States whose economies are mainly mining-driven, namely Goa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Karnataka. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this is the first-ever such report about the people's perception and attitudes toward the mining industry. The study has clearly brought out the impact of the uncertainties due to the ban on mining in these States. The social set-up and the families of miners are in the doldrums due to joblessness and deprivation of livelihoods.

In Goa, the closure of mining has

resulted in a State-wide economic crisis of sorts. Karnataka has witnessed similar economic plight in the wake of the curbs. The FIDR survey indicates that in the five States, mining contributes to over 12 per cent (on an average) of the State's GDP. In Goa, stoppage of iron ore mining has impacted revenues worth ₹34 billion and the livelihood of several dependent segments as it has left stakeholders without an alternate source of income. This repeated stoppage of mining in Goa, Odisha and Karnataka has also led to loss of investor confidence which would have a long-term impact on their economies.

Almost all the respondents (over 90 per cent) agree that the mining sector has brought significant economic benefits for their communities and generated fiscal revenue, export earnings, relieved constraints to investment, spurred economic growth and created jobs. It has also contributed to infrastructure building. However, they also opine that realising and enhancing these benefits require action, primarily from the Government, but also

from mining companies, local communities, employers and businesses in the country. Fiscal revenues from the extractive industry — taxes, royalties and other payments — are the major reasons why governments seek to promote its growth in their States. However, revenues from mining and benefits from them do not flow in automatically. To translate fiscal revenues from the extractive industry into sustainable development benefits, governments need to design and institute fiscal regimes that ensure a fair share of benefits to the States/country, which are also attractive for investors.

About half of the respondents believe strongly that mining drives economic growth through its linkages with the rest of the economy, such as by buying goods and services from suppliers (backward linkages) and by supplying minerals (forward linkages). Barring about 13 per cent, a majority (about eight of 10 stakeholders) describe mining as beneficial as long as the industry works to mitigate its impacts or it is properly regulated.

The findings from the survey suggest that the more the participants felt that mining created economic, employment and community benefits, the greater was their acceptance of it. This sounds obvious but should be viewed in relation to the unshakable faith these communities repose in nature, the ecology and the environment. Like in Odisha, all the mines are located in the remote, low-income, tribal-inhabited geographies. The forest dwellers have deep faith in nature, the flora and fauna which they revere. Hence social licence to operate in these areas would directly relate to how community perceptions of mining associated impacts and benefits relate to its endorsement.

It is clear, that the closure of mines has spiked vulnerability of the community. The survey observed a strong connection between unemployment due to mining closure and mental distress across States. Workers exposed to the negative labour demand shock are facing very low chances of re-entering employment. Either they lack the required skill set appropriate for other

industries and line of work or there are no available employment opportunities. This is leading to long unemployment spells resulting in spiralling of large-scale mental health problems. One in every five persons is suffering from depression and other forms of mental issues.

The survey also discovered that the psychological cost of parental unemployment has been higher on children, leading to general despondency, while teenagers are starting to feel pressured to take on more responsibility in the family. Many have become more aware of the social stigma associated with having jobless parents. It is imperative that the judiciary, legislature and the executive take cognisance of the grim livelihoods scenario threatening all of us. Necessary remedial measures need to be taken at the earliest to help these States, particularly Goa, tide over a catastrophe of inconceivable ramifications — social, economic and intergenerational.

(The writer is an author and TED speaker)

CAPSULE



**Shree Cement shares surge nearly 6 pc on inclusion in Nifty 50 index**

**NEW DELHI:** Shares of Shree Cement Ltd jumped as much as 6 per cent in morning trade on Wednesday as the stock is set to enter the Nifty 50 index from next month. NSE Indices, a subsidiary of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), on Tuesday said that Shree Cement will replace private lender Yes Bank in the benchmark index Nifty 50 from March 27. The stock opened on a bullish note on Wednesday at Rs 25,000, then gained further ground and touched a high of Rs 25,222.90, registering a rise of 5.98 per cent over its previous close. The stock, however, pared some gains and was trading at Rs 24,491.80, higher by 2.91 per cent over its last close at 1144 hrs on BSE. Further, Vodafone Idea, Ashok Leyland, Indiabulls Housing Finance, L&T Finance Holdings and Shree Cement will be dropped from Nifty Next 50, as per NSE Indices. Meanwhile, shares of Yes Bank opened weak on Wednesday at Rs 34, then lost ground and touched an intra-day low of Rs 33.60, down 4.13 per cent over its previous close.



**Maxxis India partners Yamaha for supplying tyres**

**NEW DELHI:** Maxxis India on Wednesday said it has partnered Yamaha for supplying tyres in India and plans to corner at least 15 per cent of the country's two-wheeler tyre market in the next five years. Maxxis India, which is a part of the Taiwan-based Maxxis Group, already has similar tie-ups with Hero MotoCorp and Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India. As part of the tie-up, Yamaha's 125 cc BSVI-compliant Ray ZR and Fascino range of scooters as well as BSVI-compliant model of Ray ZR Street Rally 125 FI will come fitted with Maxxis tyres, a company release said. The company has already started production of tyres with particular specifications to cater to the requirement for both range of scooters, it said. Maxxis India plans to corner at least 15 per cent of the demand by 2023.

**Gadkari to hold bilateral dialogue with Sweden**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari who is representing India in a global road safety event in Sweden will hold bilateral dialogue with his Swedish counterpart for infrastructure Tomas Eneroth, the government said on Wednesday. The Road Transport and Highways Minister is in Sweden to represent India at the "3rd High Level Global Conference on Road Safety for Achieving Global Goals 2030" being held in Stockholm from February 19-20.

During his stay in Stockholm, Gadkari will have bilateral dialogue with his Swedish counterpart for infrastructure Tomas Eneroth, Minister for Foreign Trade Anna Hallberg, Minister for Business, Industry & Innovation Ibrahim Baylan and also with the British Minister for Road Safety Baroness Vere.

Gadkari will also hold talks



**Gadkari will also hold talks with the World Bank Vice President (South Asia) Hart Schafer, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said**

with the World Bank Vice President (South Asia) Hart Schafer, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said. Also on Gadkari's itinerary

will be a Sweden-India Transportation Safety and Innovation Partnership meeting to be attended by a number of CEOs.

Swedish and Indian businesses are likely to exchange several MOUs on this occasion.

Gadkari on Wednesday visited the Swedish Logistics Automotive manufacturer 'Volvo' in Gothenburg. The Minister was accompanied by Ambassador of Sweden in India Klas Molin.

Volvo is one of the world's largest manufacturers of heavy-duty trucks, construction equipment, buses and heavy-duty diesel engines as well as a leading supplier of marine and industrial engines.

The objective of the two-day conference is to bring road safety on the global agenda and renew the world community's commitment to safer roads.

Leaders from participating countries will draw up a roadmap for reaching the United Nation's goal set under the UN Decade of Action of reducing road crashes by 2030.

**Coronavirus brings Adidas sales collapse in China**

AFP ■ FRANKFURT AM MAIN

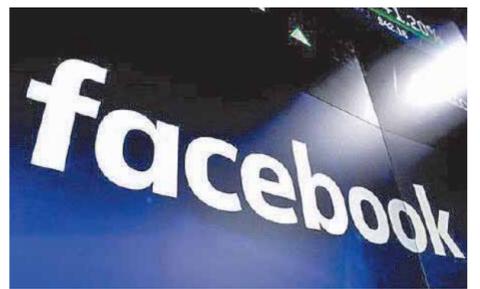
German sportswear maker Adidas said Wednesday store closures in China had brought plummeting sales since the beginning of the novel coronavirus outbreak in late January.

"Our business activity in Greater China has been around 85 per cent below the prior year level since Chinese New Year on January 25," the Bavarian company said in a statement.

Adidas said it faced "a significant number of store closures" on its roster of 500 owned stores and 11,500 franchises in China, while many fewer people are shopping at those which remain open.

The group's "Greater China" region, which includes Taiwan and Hong Kong, has for years been one of the fastest-growing areas of the world for Adidas sales.

And the Asia-Pacific region as a whole accounted for around one-third of Adidas 6.4 billion euros (\$6.9 billion) in revenues in the first nine months of 2019.



**Facebook faces off with IRS in big-ticket tax case**

PNS ■ SAN FRANCISCO

A multi-billion dollar dispute between Facebook and US tax authorities over profits shifted to an Irish subsidiary began playing out in front of a judge on Tuesday.

The Internal Revenue Service contends that Facebook dodged about \$9 billion in taxes, while the leading social network says it is actually owed a refund, according to US media reports.

"This trial is about transactions that took place in 2010, when Facebook had no mobile advertising revenue, its international business was nascent, and its digital advertising products were unproven," spokesperson Bertie Thomson said in an email response to an AFP inquiry.

"We look forward to presenting our case in court and putting an end to this years-long dispute."

The judge is to hear from an array of Facebook executives during the course of proceedings.

Shifting profits to low-tax countries is a routine practice by international companies, and the judge's decision in this case is seen as a possible harbinger about whether that tactic will become less effective. The tax period involved

**The judge is to hear from an array of Facebook executives during the course of proceedings**

dates back nearly a decade to before Facebook became a publicly traded company and smartphones became primary devices for engaging with social media.

The IRS contends that Facebook undervalued technology it licensed to its Irish subsidiary, thereby cutting the amount of money that came to the US for taxation here. Facebook has countered that it should have valued the technology even lower, further reducing the amount paid by the subsidiary and, therefore, the amount subject to taxation in the US.

"Throughout Facebook's history, we have worked with the IRS and complied with all applicable tax laws," Thomson said.

"Our business has had hits and misses but we stand behind the actions taken over a decade ago during a time of great risk and uncertainty for the company."



**Prince Charles opens new Tata JLR innovation centre in UK**

PNS ■ CONVENTRY

Prince Charles has formally launched a new 150-million pound Tata Motors' Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) innovation centre, Europe's largest automotive research and development facility of its kind, at the University of Warwick in central England to create sustainable future mobility projects.

The National Automotive Innovation Centre (NAIC) will house up to 1,000 academics, researchers, engineers and designers from across the UK and India to work on cars and vehicles of the future.

The centre, which was launched on Tuesday, is dedicated to advanced automotive research, design and develop-

ment. The collaboration between Tata Motors, JLR and the Warwick Manufacturing Group (WVG) is aimed at creating sustainable future mobility projects, including electric and autonomous vehicles. "This centre in the heart of the United Kingdom brings together from industry and academia some of the brightest minds to tackle some of our society's toughest problems," said Prince Charles, who admitted pressing for action on environmental issues for nearly 50 years.

"In all the years what has always struck me is the need for a cooperative, joint up approach between all those who are pursuing the same goal by whatever means.

**SpiceJet to launch 20 new flights**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

No-frills carrier SpiceJet on Wednesday said it will launch 20 new flights on its domestic routes, including some services under the government's regional connectivity scheme, Udan, from late next month as part of the airline's summer schedule.

The new flights, starting from March 29, include services to Patna from Amritsar, Varanasi and Guwahati. Besides, it will also launch flights on Hyderabad-Mangaluru, Bengaluru-Jabalpur and



Mumbai-Aurangabad routes, all under the RCS, for the first time on its network, the airline said. The new services will fly daily and will be operated by a mix of Boeing 737-800s and Bombardier Q400 aircraft, it stated. These services will enhance connectivity between

key metros and smaller cities, it said. With the commencement of these new flights, the airline will have a total of 52 flights connecting 12 cities under the RCS scheme, SpiceJet said.

"We are excited to announce the launch of 20 new domestic flights. As we add newer cities and flights to our network, our focus remains firmly on connecting the unconnected parts of the country besides enhancing connectivity between metros and non-metros," SpiceJet Chief Commercial Officer Shilpa Bhatia said.

**Sensex snaps 4-session slide, soars 429 pts**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity indices clawed back lost ground on Wednesday after a four-session falling spree as investors took heart from a decline in new coronavirus cases in China and the Indian government's assurance on tackling the economic impact from the epidemic.

Starting off on a strong footing, the BSE barometer gained strength during the session to touch a high of 41,357.16. The index finally settled at 41,323, clocking a gain of 428.62 points or 1.05 per cent.

Likewise, the NSE gauge Nifty shot up 133.40 points or 1.11 per cent to close at 12,125.90. Market heavyweight

**RIL, HDFC sparkle**



Reliance Industries spurted 2.60 per cent, accounting for the majority of the Sensex gains.

Other winners included Bajaj Finance, HUL, ONGC and HDFC, rising up to 2.79 per cent.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, TCS, Bharti Airtel, L&T and IndusInd Bank shed up to 1.33 per cent.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday met representatives from various sectors, including pharmaceuticals, textiles, chemicals, electronics and IT hardware, solar, auto, surgical equipments, and paints, to review the situation following the outbreak of the deadly virus in China.

She said the government will soon announce measures to deal with the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the domestic industry.

"Positive cues were witnessed in the market on hopes that the government is planning to consider some relief

measures for the ailing telecom players. On the global front, there is a decrease in new virus cases and close to 80 per cent of the Chinese enterprises are back to work indicating a possible economic recovery," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Sectorally, BSE energy, healthcare and oil and gas rose as much as 2.37 per cent. All 19 sectoral indices closed in the green on the BSE.

In the broader market, BSE smallcap and midcap indices jumped 1.41 per cent and 1.34 per cent, respectively, outperforming the benchmark.

The forex market was closed on account of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti.

**Vistara plans to start in-flight broadband service by March-end**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Full service carrier Vistara plans to offer in-flight broadband service on certain international routes by March-end after inducting Dreamliners and Airbus 321 planes, a senior airline official said on Wednesday.

A joint venture between Tatas and Singapore Airlines, Vistara has tied up with Tata group firm Nelco to offer in-flight connectivity service.

Vistara would also be the first domestic carrier to provide in-flight broadband for fliers.

Boeing 787 aircraft are known as Dreamliners.

The airline would offer access to in-flight connectivity only on Dreamliners and Airbus 321 aircraft on international routes, Vistara Chief Strategy Officer Vinod Kannan told reporters here.

The service would also be available for domestic customers when these planes are operated in the Indian airspace.

Nelco has partnered with Panasonic Avionics Corporation to start the service.

"We have ordered Dreamliners and A321 which will be delivered by February-



**Vistara would also be the first domestic carrier to provide in-flight broadband for fliers**

end or March. We will start their commercial operations on international routes by March-end or April with in-flight service on board.

"In the next two weeks, we will sit with Nelco and Panasonic to decide on the price," Kannan said.

Vistara has ordered six Dreamliners and ten A321 planes. In-flight broadband service would be made available on all these aircraft.

"We will get four Dreamliners and two A321 aircraft this year. By end of 2021, we will be offering in-flight connectivity in 10 aircraft," Kannan said.

**Charges have been dropped: Sandeep**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile marketplace Droom founder and CEO Sandeep Aggarwal on Wednesday said a civil settlement has been reached with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in connection with an insider-trading case.



Also, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has dropped all

charges against him pertaining to the said case, Aggarwal said. Aggarwal was charged by the DOJ and sued by the SEC in July 2013, relating to events that took place in July 2009, when Aggarwal was a Wall Street analyst.

"Both the matters have been resolved. The charges by DOJ have been dropped and dismissed. A civil penalty of USD 32,500 was levied by SEC, which I

have paid. The bar on being associated with any investment advisor, broker and securities analysis - which I quit long ago - continues," Aggarwal said.

"I am very grateful that the US justice system agreed that the dismissal of all charges against me was the right and just result. Now, we can put this permanently behind us and focus on implementing our long-term vision," he said.

**CORONAVIRUS VACCINE**

**Sanofi joins hands with US government**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccine division of French pharma major Sanofi, on Wednesday said it will leverage its previous development work for a SARS vaccine to develop a potential vaccine for COVID-19 (coronavirus disease).

As part of the initiative, the company said it will collaborate with Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

"Addressing a global health threat such as this newest coronavirus is going to take a collaborative effort, which is why we are working with BARDA to quickly advance a potential vaccine candidate," Global Head of Vaccines at Sanofi

David Loew said in a statement. While the company is lending its expertise where possible, it believes the collaboration

with BARDA may provide the most meaningful results in protecting the public from this latest outbreak, he added. COVID-19 is a respiratory



**Kotak Mahindra gets nod to trim promoters' stake**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector Kotak Mahindra Bank on Wednesday said the Reserve Bank has granted its final approval for reducing promoters' stake in the bank to 26 per cent. On January 30, the bank had informed about RBI's in-principle acceptance for reducing promoters' shareholding to 26 per cent of the paid-up voting equity share

capital of the bank within six months from the date of final approval of the regulator.

"Further to our intimation dated 30th January 2020,...the Reserve Bank of India has granted its final approval vide its letter dated 18th February 2020 in the matter relating to dilution of promoters' shareholding in the bank," Kotak Mahindra Bank said in a regulatory filing.

**Serum Institute develop vaccine candidate for coronavirus**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Vaccine major Serum Institute of India said a vaccine candidate for the novel coronavirus developed by it in partnership with American biotechnology firm Codagenix is expected to progress to human trials phase within six months.

The vaccine candidate has progressed to the pre-clinical tests phase, that is the animal trial phase, Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd said in a statement.

"I am glad to share that our combined efforts with the team at Codagenix have borne fruit, and we hope to save millions of lives with this vaccine," Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla said.

This breakthrough also shows the country's preparedness to counter global epidemics like the novel coronavirus (Covid-19), he added. "We hope to be ready with the vaccine by early 2022. Our vaccine-virus strain is identical to the original virus and can generate a robust immune response," Poonawalla said.

The cost of the project is up to Rs 300 crore, Serum Institute of India (SII) aims to secure external funding for the project via various global partners, the statement said.



Finding clean public toilets have always been an issue for women. But worry not! Sushma Kallempudi, a 36-year-old Vizag-based entrepreneur is ready with a mobile toilet that can be driven to crowded places and narrow lanes, finds M SHREYA RAJ

## MOBILE SHE TOILETS, PERFECT ANSWER TO A CRUCIAL ISSUE

Necessity is the mother of all inventions, they say. The necessity of clean, accessible toilets for women gave birth to the concept of a 'Mobile She Toilet' in Hyderabad by a 36-year-old woman Sushma Kallempudi.

Sushma, a Vizag-based entrepreneur, says that finding a toilet in public places is one of the biggest problems women face. The 36-year-old woman, who completed her graduation in engineering and has worked with Infosys in the US, began this project under Jalagam Associates, a start-up founded by Sushma and her husband, Sudheer Jalagam, based in Suryapet district in Telangana. She realised that women have to hold it for long periods or drink less water in order to avoid the toilet.

According to Sushma, she wanted to begin a project like mobile toilets in 2004 but she moved to United States after getting married. Upon returning to India after 10 years, she realised that the problem persisted. Thus the idea of a 'Mobile She Toilet' came to shape.



"Clean public toilets have always been an issue for women. Most women either hold it in or don't take fluids much to avoid using public toilets," said Sushma.

The mobile toilet is a single-user loo set up in an electric auto. After charging the vehicle, it can be placed at

any crowded place in the city. The toilet consists of 100 litre water tank which will provide water for the flush system.

Once the septic tank gets full, it can be dumped at a suitable place.

"In cities like Pune unused buses are re-purposed as toi-

lets specifically for women but they are fixed at one place. So I wanted to make a mobile one so that it can be easily placed at crowded places and narrow lanes," Sushma said.

"My idea is to introduce four to five vehicles as a start but there is no funding. I've

given my proposal to the GHMC, contacted NGOs, and spoke to corporates to include this as their CSR activity. We are waiting for a response from them. We are also coordinating with the University of West England and NGOs from Nairobi, Kenya and Uganda for the

technical support. As of now we have put our own money into it. We were supposed to launch the first vehicle by January 26 but it got delayed. We will be able to bring out the first vehicle in the next ten days," Sushma added. Sushma said, "GHMC Additional Commissioner



GHMC Additional Commissioner Hari Chandana has said that there is a need for more than 100 such vehicles in the city for women. Once the project starts depending on the response we get from people we will introduce more vehicles. Clean public toilets have always been an issue for women. Most women either hold it in or don't take fluids much to avoid using public toilets

SUSHMA KALLEMPUDI  
ENTREPRENEUR

Hari Chandana has said that there is a need for more than 100 such vehicles in the city for women. Once the project starts, depending on the response we get from the people, we will introduce more vehicles."

As the name says the vehicle will be driven and operat-

ed by a woman. Sushma said that the cleaning process will be handled by the GHMC department.

Another interesting facility this project offers is that all mobile toilets will be driven by women for women, making it less stressful for women to use them.

Patibandla Jahnvi came back to India with a purpose to build her own company. Now she has received nationwide recognition for her work, writes C PRADEEP



## Triumphant story of an entrepreneur

She is determined to succeed and with unwavering commitment to her profession she pursued her passion to perfection. Meet Vijayawada-based Patibandla Jahnvi who led her company Krishna Andhra Paper Products, Telaprolu, bag the Global Triumph National Award 2020 in the 'Best Start-up Organisation' category.

The Pioneer caught up with Jahnvi at her moment of triumph. Delighted to share her success mantra, she said that her journey into the business

of manufacturing corrugated boxes for exported to various countries started in 2016. They were a semi-automatic plant back then and later it was completely automated. "We do logo designing, printing, artwork on corrugated boxes of all types for industrial use," she added.

"I am happy it has become

popular in a short span of time attracting the attention of the Global Triumph Foundation," she said as she beamed with pride. Jahnvi also said that in December last year she was awarded the South Indian Woman Achiever Award 2019 in Chennai.

She had received the

Global Triumph Award 2020 from MSME-DI deputy director, R Gopinath Rao and TIE-Bangalore, executive director Vijetha Sastry at a programme held in Bangalore recently.

She thanked her family for her success and said that she did her Masters in Pharmacy and LLB which helped her with her business. She had also dabbled in painting in which she has made a mark too.

She said that after completing her education, she joined her father's business at the Coastal Andhra Paper products (Bandarugudem).

Happily married to London-based Venkat Rao Patibandla, she had spent some time in England before moving to Vijayawada for business. Soon, they started a semi-automatic plant which was later converted into an automatic plant known as Krishna Andhra Paper Products.

Jahnvi has two daughters who are as talented as her. Her elder daughter Yamini Patibandla and younger one Vedasri Patibandla had won international awards in 12 events including drawing, singing, essay-writing, storytelling and others.

## Celebrating evergreen classic Hindi hits

Armed with a database of about two dozen cine celebrities whose birth and death anniversaries fall on February — among whom were legendary playback singer Talat Mahmood, reputed music composer Ravindra Jain and film director Vijay Anand — Dakshin Dhvani organised its 55th music programme *Sunke Teri Pukar* at the

Phoenix Arena, Madhapur recently.

Nearly 10 singers sang over two dozen songs of over 13 celebrities. A docu feature on *Lyricists and Hindi Cinema* too was screened on this occasion for the crowd. The attendees were given a tour of the life and times of eight wordsmiths who gave the world some of the finest lyrics. The number of people who attended the event was

proof that despite the event being held in the newest part of the city, there were enough takers for vintage film music which was a delectable mix of tunes and tones.

**A DOCUMENTARY FEATURE CALLED LYRICISTS AND HINDI CINEMA WAS SCREENED**



## Ben Affleck 'regrets' divorcing Jennifer Garner

Actor-filmmaker Ben Affleck has gotten real about what he really feels about the end of his marriage to Jennifer Garner after a long separation. Years after their public break-up, the two-time academy award winning actor said in an interview that he regretted divorcing Garner, reports *aceshowbiz.com*. Speaking to *The New York Times*, the *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* actor called their divorce "the biggest regret of my life."

He elaborated his statement: "Shame is really toxic. There is no positive byproduct of shame. It's just feeling in a toxic, hideous feeling of low self-worth and self-loathing."

Despite his regret, Affleck was determined to focus on the positives. "It's not particularly healthy for me to obsess over the failures — the relapses — and beat myself up," he said. "I have certainly made mistakes. I have certainly done things

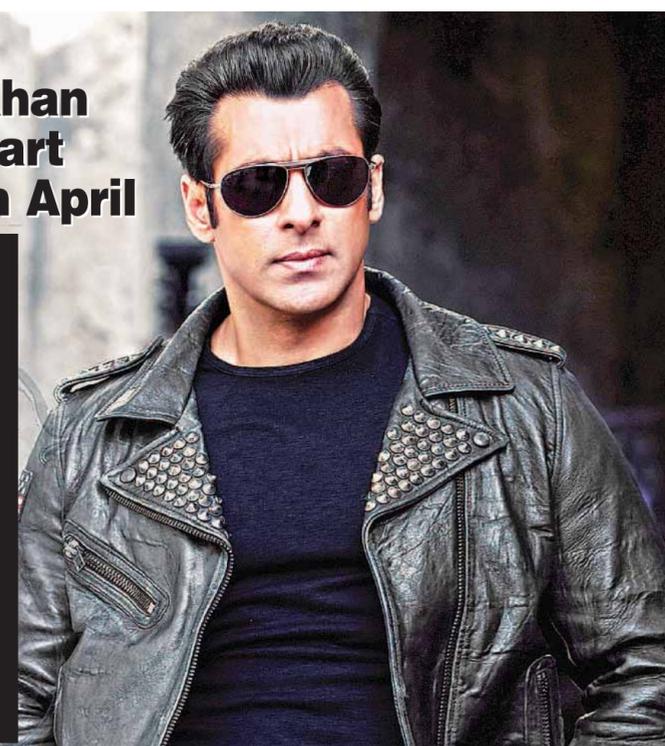


that I regret. But you've got to pick yourself up, learn from it, learn some more, try to move forward." On the causes to his marital issues, the 47-year-old actor owned up to his drinking problems. "I drank relatively normally for a long time," he confessed.

"What happened was that I started drinking more and more when my marriage was falling apart. This was 2015, 2016. My drinking, of course, created more marital problems." "People with compulsive behavior, and I am one, have this kind of basic discomfort all the time that they're trying to make go away," he explained further. "You're trying to make yourself feel better with eating or drinking or sex or gambling or shopping or whatever. But that ends up making your life worse. Then you do more of it to make that discomfort go away. Then the real pain starts. It becomes a vicious cycle you can't break. That's at least what happened to me."

## Salman Khan to kick-start US tour in April

Superstar Salman Khan is all set to kick-start a live concert in United States in April. Announcing the details of the concert, Salman on Tuesday took to Twitter and wrote: "Aa rahe hain hum April mein to be up close and personal with you all... see you all soon." Actors Sunil Grover and Daisy Shah will also perform along with Salman. The event will take place in both US and Canada. Starting from April 3, the *Up, close and personal with Salman Khan* will conclude on April 12. On the film front, Salman is preparing for his action drama *Radhe*.



## DEEPIKA PADUKONE SHARES HER FIRST LOOK AS ROMI DEV IN 83

Actress Deepika Padukone on Wednesday unveiled her look as Romi Dev, wife of cricket legend Kapil Dev, in the upcoming film 83. She says the film is an ode to every woman who puts her husband's dream before her own. In the photo, she is dressed in a black top and peach coloured bottom, and sporting a short hairdo. She is seen smiling at actor Ranveer Singh, who plays Kapil in the film.

Deepika captioned it: "To be able to play a small but significant part in a film that captures one of the most iconic moments in sporting history has been an absolute honour." "I've seen very closely the role a wife plays in the success of her husband's professional and personal aspirations in my mother and 83 for me in many ways is an ode to every woman who puts her husband's dream before her own," added the daughter of badminton star Prakash Padukone.

The film's director Kabir Khan shared: "I have always thought of Deepika as a phenomenal actress and when I was thinking of casting for Romi Dev's role, I could only think of her. Romi has a disarmingly charming and positive energy and Deepika has captured that with perfection." "Her easy chemistry with Ranveer will also greatly help in portraying the relationship that Kapil Dev and Romi share. I'm

delighted that Deepika has been such an integral part of our journey for 83," added the director about Deepika, who is married to Ranveer in real life too. The film is produced by Deepika Padukone, Kabir Khan, Vishnu Vardhan Induri, Sajid Nadiadwala, Phantom Films, Reliance Entertainment and 83 Film Ltd. The Reliance Entertainment and PVR Pictures film is slated to release on April in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

### FUN

#### ARCHIE

#### CALVIN AND HOBBS

#### GARFIELD

#### REALITY CHECK

#### SPEED BUMP

#### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		
5					6
7			8		
9				10	
12	13		14		15
17				18	
19					

#### NANCY

#### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

#### ACROSS

- Very good indeed
- A leader of a tribe
- Chefs
- A religious holiday every year
- A large continent
- A ship's tall pole
- The country just north of the USA
- A female relation
- A wild dog from Australia
- Opposite of strength
- Worshipped statues
- Yelling loudly and shrilly
- A moving staircase
- A rider's seat on a horse
- Part of a stage play
- Opposite of uncles
- A pointed top of a mountain

#### DOWN

- Journeys
- A roof beam
- An ancient South American

SOLUTION

D	I	S	E	A	S	E	S	
I	O	C	L	K				
F	R	A	T	O	M	I	C	
F	R	R	W	A				
E	G	Y	P	T				
R	U	S						
E	A	R	L	Y	S	T	A	L
N	I	S	T	L				
T	Y	P	I	S	T			
E	N	I						
S		G	A	R	D	I	E	N



# 'WILL NEVER DO 3 FILMS A YEAR'

Nithiin speaks to the media about what the audience can expect from *Bheeshma*, his upcoming movie, wish to work in web series and working on three films simultaneously, reports K RAMYA SREE

**N**ithiin, whose last three films failed to crack the box office, is in the limelight for two reasons — *Bheeshma*, and the announcement of his marriage. Seems like the actor is already basking in the positive response *Bheeshma* has been receiving ahead of its release.

Director Venky Kudumula had pitched the idea of this film to Nithiin during the shoot of *Sreenivasa Kalyanam*, but the actor wanted the director to take his own sweet time to develop the complete script, instead of rushing into the story and suffering another flop.

"I insisted him on perfect pre-production work. I told Venky to plan the complete script as the last film didn't do well at the box-office and that I cannot afford another flop. It took a year's time to develop the entire script and is also one of the reasons why I took a year's break," said Nithiin.

This year is special for not just because of his impending marriage, but the actor has also decided

to do at least four films this year.

"I went through many scripts last year as I had some free time and I want to work on myself to ensure that the next script is a super hit. I bankrolled three films that includes the remake of Hindi film *Andhadhun*, *Rang De* and *Power Petta*. Most probably I'll have four releases this year. But I have also decided never to do three films simultaneously ever in my life," the 35-year-old actor said.

Nithiin has always had an image of a lover boy or a chocolate boy because of the number of romantic films he has done from *Jai* or *Gundejari Gallanthaindi*. He has now decided to shift his focus from love stories to other genres, and hence gave his nod to *Power Petta* and the

remake of *Andhadhun*.

*Bheeshma* is a love story infused with comedy and organic farming is a just an outer layer. There was a reason to not show any glimpse relating to farming in the teaser released earlier this month. "After *Dil*, *Bheeshma* is where you will see me in an out and out comedy role," the actor said, crediting *Single's Anthem* as his favourite song from the film.

Nithiin also expressed his interest to work in a web series if he comes across a good script.

"I play a meme maker in the film. It is a fun character to play. This film will be a treat for everyone and I have pinned all hopes on *Bheeshma* to give me a box office success after *Sye* and *Dil*," he said.

Giving insights about his next films he said, "*Andhadhun* will be tweaked a little to cater to the locals here. In *Power Petta*, there are two heroes and it is an action commercial film where you will see me alongside Satyadev."

On the work front, the actor's next, a remake of Hindi film *Andhadhun* helmed by Merlapaka Gandhi, will go to sets in June this year while *Power Petta* will go on the floors in August.



## Sandeep waiting for Prabhas, Vijay?

**R**eports of Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Bollywood projects with big budget actors being shelved has been doing rounds for some weeks now.

The latest we hear is that Sandeep is waiting for a nod from Prabhas. Latest reports state that T-Series has joined hands with Mythri Movie Makers to make a movie with

Prabhas. It also looks like Sandeep might team up with Vijay Deverakonda again. As of now, apart from working on the Puri Jagannadh's film, Vijay has also signed up for a film with Shiva Nirvana who delivered two back-to-back hits in Tollywood. Fans of both heroes are waiting for a word on who will be working with the *Arjun Reddy* director's next.



## Rajinikanth's first look from *Man vs Wild out*

**D**iscovery channel's Bear Grylls on Wednesday shared the first look of Superstar Rajinikanth's debut on small screen in his programme *Into the Wild with Bear Grylls*, after 43 years in cinema.

"Preparing for @Rajinikanth's blockbuster TV debut with an *Into the Wild with Bear Grylls* motion poster! I have worked with many stars around the world but this one for me was special. Love India. #ThalaivaOnDiscovery," tweeted Grylls.

Rajinikanth, 69, and Grylls are shown in a close-up with an adventure theme of fire and flying debris in the background.

In the 15-second motion poster, Rajinikanth is seen with Grylls resting on the bonnet of an off-road vehicle in the forest.

"Rajinikanth has always been a star with swagger! But in the wild everything is different... It was so fun to spend time with the legend and get to know and see him in a totally new way..." said Grylls.

In January, Rajinikanth visited Karnataka's Bandipur Tiger Reserve to shoot for the Discovery channel's new programme.

The tiger reserve lists 28 species of mammals to be thriving in the forest, including royal Bengal tiger, Asian elephant, common leopard, bonnet macaque, Indian pipistrelle and barking deer, among others.



## Naarappa shoots at TN's Red Desert

**V**enkatesh is busy with shooting his next film, *Naarappa* which is the remake of Tamil hit *Asuran*. The remake is currently finishing up crucial action sequences in Tamil Nadu under the supervision of fight master Peter Heins.

"We shot an action sequence in the Red Desert in Tamil Nadu for 10 days. The Red Desert is at Therikaadu near

Thirichendur and is spread across 12,000 acres. This will be a highlight for the film," said Peter Heins.

D Suresh Babu and S Kalaipulli Thanu are producing the film under Suresh Productions Pvt Ltd and V Creations banners.

"*Naarappa* is a powerful and emotional character. People will see a new Venkatesh garu with this movie," said the film's director, Sreekanth Addala.

Executive Producer Vijay Shankar Donkada said that 27 days of shooting has been completed and the current schedule with cover most of the crucial scenes.



## PAWAN KALYAN to donate Rs 1cr to Kendriya Sainik Board

**P**owerstar Pawan Kalyan, who is also the founder of the Jana Sena Party, will visit New Delhi today.

On Thursday, the actor-politician will be visiting the Kendriya Sainik Board (Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare) where he

will be donating a sum of Rs 1,00,000.00.

The same afternoon, he will be visiting the Indian Student Parliament (ISP) as a speaker. At the session, which will be held at Vigyan Bhavan, a short film on the superstar will be played, after which he will address the audience.

Also present at the event

will be eminent personalities like Smriti Irani and Jyotiraditya Scindia.

On the film front, Pawan will star in the upcoming Telugu remake of critically-acclaimed Bollywood film *Pink*. He is also shooting for another film that is scheduled to complete by July-end.

— IANS

# ISHANT, SHAW TO PLAY IN 1ST TEST

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

India captain Virat Kohli on Wednesday dropped enough hints to indicate that seniormost pacer Ishant Sharma and young opener Prithvi Shaw will be in the playing XI for the first Test against New Zealand at Basin Reserve.

If India's net session on Wednesday is taken into consideration, Wriddhiman Saha is starting as the wicketkeeper ahead of Rishabh Pant for the series opener beginning tomorrow. Hanuma Vihari, team's designated No 6 batsman for away Tests, will be the fifth bowling option with Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Ishant being three specialist pacers.

Ravichandran Ashwin is in the mix for the lone specialist spinner's spot though Ravindra Jadeja's all-round skills can't be ignored either.

Ishant, who was out for three weeks with ankle injury sustained during the Ranji Trophy game, bowled full tilt at the nets and even earned appreciation for troubling batsmen with his pace and bounce.

"He (Ishant) looked pretty normal and pretty similar to what he was bowling before the ankle injury. He is hitting good areas again and he has played (Test cricket) in New Zealand couple of times, so his



Prithvi Shaw and Mohammad Shami share a fun moment during India's practice session ahead of 1st Test BCCI/Twitter

experience will be useful to us. It was really good to see him bowling with pace and in good areas," Kohli said during media interaction.

The skipper also said in as many words that the team wouldn't like to change Shaw's natural stroke-play which was a good enough hint that Shubman Gill will have to warm the benches for now.

"Prithvi is a talented player and he has his own game and we want him to follow his instincts and play the way he does. Look, these guys have no

baggage and are not desperate to perform in any manner," the skipper said. The skipper wants Shaw to take a leaf out of Mayank Agarwal's performance in Australia back in 2018-19 when he hit back to back half-centuries in Melbourne and Sydney.

"They don't have any nerves to do well overseas. Like a clear head with which Mayank played in Australia, Prithvi can do the same in New Zealand.

"A bunch of guys playing with fearlessness, something

that can motivate the whole team, gives us start that the team wants and not get intimidated by the opposition in any way." The skipper downplayed India's below-par show in the three-match ODI series, especially that of Agarwal.

"Prithvi, I think you can call him relatively inexperienced and Mayank, I wouldn't call him that inexperienced because he has scored a lot of runs last year. So he understands what his game is like in Test cricket.

"I think sometimes in

white ball cricket we try to do too much but once you come into red ball cricket, you fall into that disciplined mode of batting, which obviously suits him much more at this stage."

While he didn't give an answer on the Saha-Pant debate, the burly Delhi keeper had precious little to do at the main nets and was seen spending more time doing his keeping drills and only got an opportunity to bat when the first team completed its routines. New Zealand are likely to go with an all-pace attack but the Indian captain wants to stick to his team's strengths which is play with one spinner in the four-pronged bowling attack.

"If it had been a Johannesburg pitch, I could have said it's a possibility (to play four pacers) but our team has that skill that we can bowl out other teams with only three fast bowlers," he sounded confident.

"But you need one world class skillful spinner, who can take wickets on any pitch. We won't copy the home team. We would rather figure out what is the most lethal combination, which gives us balance," he added. "As a bowling group it's better than the one that came to NZ last time and that is why we have got so many teams all out in last two and half years. We would like to repeat that here also," Kohli added.

## Will play all formats for at least 3 more years: Kohli



Virat Kohli attempts to take catch during India's practice session ahead of 1st Test BCCI

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

India captain Virat Kohli is preparing himself for a "rigorous three years" of playing all three formats after which he might reassess his workload amid a "transition phase" setting in.

The world's premier batsman is looking at the "bigger picture" in Indian cricket with two T20 and one 50-over World Cup in the next three years after which he might decide on playing two of the three formats.

"My mindset is on the bigger picture as I prepare myself for a rigorous three years from now and after that we might have a different conversation," Kohli replied when asked if he is having second thoughts about quitting at least one format after the 2021 World T20 in India.

"It's not a conversation you can hide away from in any manner. It is around eight years now that I have been playing 300 days a year, which includes travelling and practice sessions. And intensity is right up there all the time. It does take a toll on you," the Indian captain was forthright in his reply.

The skipper understands his presence and peak performance is crucial till the 2023 World Cup after which he understands that the next phase of transition will set in.

"I can keep going on with the same intensity and also understand that the team wants a lot of my contribution in the next two to three years, so that I can ease into another transition that we faced five-six years ago," he said referring to the retirements of Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman.



Indian pacers Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma & Mohammad Shami during nets BCCI

## Ishant adds new dynamic to Indian bowling attack: Taylor

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

A fit-again Ishant Sharma will add a fresh dimension to India's bowling attack, says seasoned New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor, who foresees trouble for his team if it focusses only on tackling Jasprit Bumrah during the upcoming Test series.

Taylor is only two days away from becoming the first cricketer to play 100 games across formats. Less than three weeks away from his 36th birthday, he has already competed in 231 ODIs and 100 T20I.

"I think if we just look at

Bumrah, we are in trouble. I think their whole bowling line-up is fantastic. Obviously, Sharma coming back will bring new dynamics to the team," Taylor told reporters.

Ishant is returning to the Indian squad after recovering from an ankle injury sustained during a Ranji Trophy clash last month.

"They have got a world-class batting line-up as well and we have to get through that. But they are the No 1 team in the world for a reason and we know we have to be on our game to be successful against them," he added.

## HENRY CALLED AS WAGNER'S COVER

WELLINGTON: New Zealand on Wednesday called in pacer Matt Henry for the first Test against India as cover for Neil Wagner, who is awaiting the birth of his first child.

Wagner is among New Zealand's senior pacers alongside Trent Boult and Tim Southee. The left-arm fast bowler has an impressive record in Tests, having taken 204 wickets in 47 games at an average of 26.63.

"Neil Wagner will not be joining the squad in Wellington ahead of the first Test as he and his wife Lana await the birth of their first child. Wagner will remain in Tauranga until the birth. Matt Henry joins the squad tonight as cover," the Black Caps tweeted. Though Kyle Jamieson is in line to make a Test debut, Henry, who has played 12 Tests and 52 ODIs, is also in the mix. PTI

## Test C'ship pinnacle of all ICC tourneys

WELLINGTON: India captain Virat Kohli on Wednesday rated the World Test Championship as the biggest among all the ICC events in the wake of revelations that the game's governing body is planning to have more flagship white ball tournaments during the next eight-year cycle from 2023-2031.

According to ICC's proposed 2023-2031 Future Tours Programme (FTP) cycle, a proposed T20 Champions

Cup is earmarked for 2024 and 2028 and an ODI Champions Cup in 2025 and 2029, alongside the T20 World Cups in 2026 and 2030, and the ODI World Cups in 2027 and 2031.

"I think World Test Championship as an ICC tournament should be right up there. All the other tournaments for me they start under that. This is probably the biggest of them all as every team wants to make it to the final at the

Lord's. We are no different.

"We are in that zone. We want to make sure that we qualify as soon as we can and be in that frame of mind to hopefully win that (championship)," said the Indian skipper ahead of first Test against New Zealand.

Kohli has no doubts that World Test Championship has added a context to the traditional format making the contests more exciting with points

on offer.

"It has made Test cricket more exciting and that's something we have experienced as a side although we haven't had too many games away from home. Couple of games in the West Indies and we haven't had a tour of Australia as a part of Test Championship. This is our first away tour since the start of home season," said Kohli. PTI

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