

ANALYSIS 7
DIGITAL SLUMS IN INTERNET SOCIETY

MONEY 8
SENSEX ENDS 153 PTS LOWER; NIFTY SLIPS BELOW 12,100

SPORTS 12
SAKHI SETTLES FOR SILVER; VENESH TAKES BRONZE

VIJAYAWADA, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

TARAK SWINGS INTO ACTION AGAIN

Page 11

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'CHAK DE INDIA' FAME SURAJ LATA FILES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASE

Waikhom Suraj Lata Devi, former Indian women hockey captain, has filed a police complaint alleging domestic violence, physical assault and mental torture by her husband, police said. At a press conference in Imphal on Wednesday, the former hockey player said, she was subjected to harassment by her husband right from the time they got married in 2005 and dowry was the main reason. Under her captaincy, Suraj Lata Devi had led the Indian women's hockey team to win three gold medals in the 2002 Commonwealth Games, an event that inspired making of Bollywood film 'Chak De! India'.



SOFTWARE GIANT SAP SHUTS INDIA OFFICES AFTER SWINE FLU SCARE

German software giant SAP on Thursday shut down their offices in India for an "extensive sanitation" after two employees tested positive for H1N1 swine flu at its Bangalore headquarters, the company said. The software major temporarily closed their main office in Bangalore and two other locations — Gurgaon and Mumbai — and asked hundreds of staff to work from home until further notice amid an ongoing global crisis caused by deadly COVID-19 virus. "Detailed contact tracing the infected colleagues may have come into contact with is underway," read a statement.



SIGNBOARDS, MILESTONES IN PUNJAB TO HAVE PUNJABI INSCRIPTION

The Punjab government on Friday announced to make it mandatory for all government and semi-government institutions, boards and corporations to write signboards in Gurmukhi script. Besides, road milestones would also be written in Gurmukhi. The Punjab Languages Department has sent a letter to all the concerned in this regard. Punjab Higher Education and Languages Minister Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa said a decision in this regard was taken to commemorate the 550th birth anniversary of the first Sikh master, Guru Nanak Dev.



ED ATTACHES ASSETS WORTH RS 1.15 CR OF BIHAR-BASED NAXALITE

The ED said on Friday it had attached assets worth Rs 1.15 crore of a "notorious" Naxal leader of Bihar in connection with a money-laundering case against him. A provisional order for attachment of the properties, including a truck and multiple plots of land, has been issued under the PMLA against Arvind Yadav and his family members. "Yadav is a notorious Naxalite and an active member and leader of the banned Left-Wing Extremist and militant Maoist organisation, CPI (Maoist)," the ED said.



India among powerful nations

4

RELIEF AT LAST

AP releases Rs 35.55 cr as ex gratia for kin of farmers

Families of 627 tillers who ended life to get money

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has issued a Government Order (GO) to release Rs 35.55 crore as ex gratia to family members of farmers who killed themselves in the state due to agricultural distress. The amount will be distributed to the families of 627 farmers.



Soon after coming into power last year, the Jaganmohan Reddy government decided to grant Rs 7 lakh to families of farmers who had killed themselves in the last five years.

Special Chief Secretary Poonam Malakondaiah issued the order to approve administrative sanction to the Special Commissioner of Agriculture Department. The amount was allocated from the 2019-2020 budget estimation.

Earlier, when announcing

the ex gratia scheme, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan said that only 391 families would get compensation, while 1,513 farmers had killed themselves between 2014 and 2019.

While the present disbursement of the ex gratia is being welcomed by organisations and farmer rights activists, many

say there are certain points that need to be addressed besides providing compensation.

Peddi Reddy, the state president of Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sankshema Sangam, said, "It's taking years for many to prove on record that they were farmers".

3

ZERO UPI INTERCHANGE

PSP fees may hurt PhonePe, Google Pay

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Through a circular on Friday, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said that it has agreed to revise the UPI interchange and payment service provider fees to "zero" for all domestic UPI merchant (P2M) transactions with retrospective effect from January 1, 2020.

Abolition of the fees has been made for an interim period until April 30, 2020, according to the circular. The same is not applicable to services like mandates, EMI, overdraft account and business-to-business (B2B) collections and payments.

The move to do away with these transactions fees comes after the abolishment of the Merchant Discount Rate.

The move may hit revenues of digital payments players like PhonePe, Google Pay and Amazon Pay which have spent heavily to grab a greater market share in the UPI ecosystem.

Indigo, Air Asia stop bookings for Chennai, Kolkata from Vizag

SUMIT ONKA ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a big blow to the flight services in proposed executive capital, airline carriers Indigo and Air Asia are apparently withdrawing their morning services to Chennai and Kolkata from Vizag respectively.

The service providers have stopped taking booking from April 1 for their morning services.

Indigo's 6.10 am service to Chennai and Air Asia's 7.05 am flight to Kolkata are not available on ticket booking websites. However, the service providers are yet to issue any official communication regarding halting of morning services.

This would further worsen the air communication from Vizag as Indian Navy's stipulated time restriction on civil



Indigo's 6.10 am service to Chennai and Air Asia's 7.05 am flight to Kolkata are not available on ticket booking websites, indicating the stop on bookings

flights has already slashed the slots available at the city airport. Indian Navy has restricted the flying of civilian aircraft at Visakhapatnam airport from 9 AM to 12 noon and 6 PM to 9 PM.

It may be recalled that the launch of dedicated cargo flight from Vizag airport has been delayed due to the restrictions imposed by Navy on the time slots.

The frequency of the flight services has also been reduced

in the last two years. Tours and Travels Association of AP, president K Vijay Mohan said: "The service providers have not issued any official communication. But, booking is not available for the morning slots from April 1. The reason behind halting of their service is unknown yet. There could be loading issue, unavailability of aircraft or they may be planning to divert their service to other city."

3



Minister to sue Bedi for 'stalling' govt schemes

5

Kiran Kumar back in thick of Cong affairs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The last Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh N Kiran Kumar Reddy has been appointed member of Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) Political Affairs Committee and Coordination Committee along with 11 other party leaders.

The AICC appointed former chief minister Oommen Chandy the party's state coordination committee head. Chandy is also the AICC



The AICC announced the APCC Political Affairs Committee in which Kiran Kumar Reddy, a former Chief Minister, will work with his long-time colleagues

general secretary in-charge for the Andhra Pradesh Congress. He is a former Kerala Chief Minister. It may be recalled that

Kiran Kumar Reddy, who led the Samaiyandhra Pradesh Party before the 2014 elections after quitting Congress,

rejoined the party in July 2018 after a gap of almost four years.

On Friday, the AICC announced the APCC Political Affairs Committee in which Kiran Kumar Reddy will work with his long-time colleagues-Sake Sailajanath (Chairman), N Raghuvendra Reddy, MM Pallam Raju, K Raju, Chinta Mohan, N Tulasi Reddy, Shaik Mastan Vali, Janga Goutham, Korivi Vinay Kumar, Shahjahan Basha and Peddada Ramana Kumari.

3

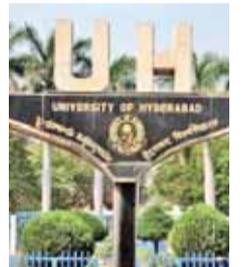
UoH students vow not to pay fine on protest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The University of Hyderabad Students Union on Friday vowed that it would not bow down to the varsity administration and demanded that the imposition of fine on three students for organising a 'Shaheen Bagh Night' event on the campus be revoked.

Condemning the "autocratic and undemocratic attitude" of the administration, the students union demanded that the fine imposed on the students be withdrawn unconditionally. It also assured the student community that it will take every possible step to safeguard their democratic interests.

The university Registrar



had penalised three students for Rs 5,000 each for organising 'Shaheen Bagh Night' on January 31 after 9 pm and for painting and defacing the walls of the North Shopping Complex.

Storm over speech of MIM leader

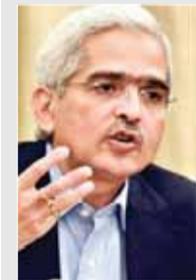
PNS ■ MUMBAI

A huge political storm has erupted over a former Mumbai legislator of AIMIM Waris Pathan for his comments at an anti-CAA protest in neighbouring Karnataka.

While the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena leader Bala Nandgaonkar has issued an open threat to Pathan, lawyer Syed Ejaz Abbas 'Naqvi' has written to the police to lodge a FIR against him.

The howls of protests started after Pathan's February 15 comments in Kalburgi where he reportedly said that "15 crore (Muslims) will prove stronger than the 100-crore majority".

3



Efforts on to include G-Secs in global indices soon: RBI

8

US first lady to visit Delhi govt school, interact with students

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US First Lady Melania Trump is likely to visit a Delhi government school and interact with students on February 25, sources said.

US President Donald Trump, accompanied by wife Melania Trump and a high-level delegation, will arrive in Ahmedabad around noon on February 24 for a little less than 36-hour-long trip. From Ahmedabad, he will travel to Agra before arriving at the national capital for the main leg of the visit.



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia are likely to give a tour of the school to the

US first lady and brief her about the "happiness curriculum" introduced by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, the sources said.

The Delhi government introduced the happiness curriculum in July, 2018. As per the curriculum, students studying in classes 1-8 at Delhi government schools spend 45 minutes every day to attend "Happiness Classes" where they participate in exercises such as storytelling, meditation and question and answer sessions.

3



Gopichand calls on Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ace badminton player Pulela Gopichand on Friday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Gopichand, at present, is the chief national coach for India's badminton team. The PMO later tweeted about the meeting.

No need to worry about CAA, says Uddhav after meeting Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has promised that there will not be a nationwide exercise to make people prove their citizenship through a NPR or NRC and so there is no need to be concerned about CAA, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said on Friday following a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi.



TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Magha & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam: Tithi: Chaturdashi: 07:02 pm

Nakshatram: Shrivana: 11:19 am

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 09:36 am - 11:03 am

Yamagandam: 01:56 pm - 03:23 pm

Varjyam: 03:43 pm - 05:29 pm

Gulika: 06:42 am - 08:09 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritkalam: 02:16 am - 04:02 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 pm - 12:52 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 34/19

Humidity: 38%

Sunrise: 06:39

Sunset: 06:20

Current Weather Conditions Updated February 21, 2019 5:00 PM

'Dry days' for banks, 'drought' in March

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

ATMs across the Telugu states began to run dry by Friday evening, the first day of a three-day holiday for banks this month.

While all banks remained closed on Friday on account of Maha Shivaratri, they will not open Saturday, the fourth of the month, and Sunday.

Replenishing of ATMs Telangana state is expected to take place only on Monday. In March too, customers

can expect more dry days.

Bank employees have already announced that they will go on strike from March 11 to 13. Banks will remain closed from March 8 as it is a Sunday, and on March 10 for Holi festival. March 14 will be the second Saturday of the month and March 15, Sunday.

While banks will remain open on March 9, the possibility of a skeletal staff cannot be ruled out since bankers would want to skip work and extend their "holidays".

Gaiety marks Shivaratri in Telugu states

Lakhs of devotees throng Shiva temples; biggest celebrations witnessed in Srisailem

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Traditional gaiety and religious fervour marked Maha Shivaratri in the two Telugu states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on Friday.

Lakhs of devotees thronged Shiva temples in both the states to offer obeisance after taking a holy dip in rivers and ponds.

The biggest celebrations were witnessed in Srisailem in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh where lakhs of pilgrims from both the Telugu

states and other parts of the country took part in the rituals.

Large number of devotees reached the hill shrine of Lord Mallikarjuna Swami by foot amid chanting of 'Om Namah Shivaya'.

They took holy dip in Patala Ganga before offering prayers to the presiding deity and Goddess Bhramaramba Devi.

Serpentine queues were seen at ticket counters for 'darshan'. The temple authorities made elaborate arrangements for the



Devotees offer harati to a Shiva Lingam to mark Maha Shivaratri at Keesara temple on the outskirts of Hyderabad on Friday.

smooth conduct of the rituals which will continue through the night.

Officials said special arrangements were made for physically-challenged, women and elderly pilgrims.

Both APSRTC and TSRTC operated special bus services to ferry devotees to Srisailem.

Maha Shivaratri celebrations were also held with gaiety at Srikalahasti, which houses one of the famous Shiva temples in the country.

3

CAPSULE

RELIGIOUS FERVOUR MARKS MAHA SHIVARATRI

Shiva temples reverberate with chantings of 'Hara Hara Mahadeva'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The temple city of Tirupati echoed to the chantings of Hara Hara Mahadeva Sambho Sankara on the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri at Sri Kapileswara Swamy temple on Friday.

After completion of morning rituals, Mahanyasa Purvaka Ekadasha Rudrabhisekam was performed and Sarvadarshanam opened for devotees.

The TTD has organised a lofty Rathotsavam (Bhogi theru) signalling the importance of ratham, which is an embodiment of human body and mind and when synchronised with God would provide solutions to all ailments and worldly problems.

The holy bath ritual (Snapanam Thirumanjanam) was performed to utsava idols of Sri Skandamurthy and Sri Kamakshi Ammavaru.

As part of Nandi Vahana Seva during Brahmotsavams on Friday evening and in view of Mahasivaratri, TTD has made elaborate arrangements.

After Nandi vahanam in the evening, the Lingodbhava Abhisekams will be performed from midnight till 4 am of February 22.

On the directive of TTD



Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal and under the supervision of JEO P Basant Kumar, special arrangements for queue lines, parking lot for two and four wheelers and anna prasadam, drinking water and buttermilk distribution for all devotees have been arranged.

In all, 250 Srivari Sevaks, 150 Scouts apart from 100 TTD vigilance sleuths were pressed into service. Siva Parvati Kalyanam will be performed on February 22.

Interested devotees could participate with a ticket of Rs 250. Union Minister of State for Small, Medium Industries Pratapchandra Sarangi visited Sri Kapileswara Swamy temple in view of Maha Shivaratri on Friday.

- Union Minister of State for Small, Medium Industries Pratapchandra Sarangi visited Sri Kapileswara Swamy temple to have darshan
- Siva Parvati Kalyanam will be performed on February 22

He was given a ceremonial welcome by temple officials and priests at the temple dwaram. After darshan of the presiding deity and Kamakshi Devi, he was offered prasadam.

Meanwhile, devotees from across the city thronged Shiva temples from the wee hours of Friday to perform rituals to mark Maha Shivaratri. Devotees stood in serpentine queues at various temples and performed abhisekam with milk and honey. Meanwhile,



temple at Christ Rajupuram, Shiva temple at Mutyalampadu were a few temples in the city flooded with devotees. Durga temple executive officer MV Suresh Babu said that devotees witnessed Lord Shiva and Punnami Ghat on river Krishna was filled with a sea of devotees who took a holy dip.

Later, devotees moved to Shiva temples and offered prayers and performed special pujas. A large number of devotees had darshan of Malleeswara Swamy at Sri Durga temple atop Indrakeladri. Old Shivalayam at One Town, Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy temple in Yanamalakuduru, Lord Shiva

3 missing sisters traced in Bengaluru



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Three siblings, who had gone missing from Dwarakanagar area in Vizag city on February 17, were traced in Bengaluru on Friday.

It may be recalled that three sisters aged 22 years, 20 years and 17 years had left their home on Monday evening. On the same day evening, they sent their mother an SMS stating that they should not look out for them as they would commit suicide. When parents tried to contact them, the phone was switched-off.

Inspector of Dwaraka Police Station Y Murali Rao said that teams had visited Chennai, Tirupati and Bengaluru and finally one of the teams traced the missing three girls in Bengaluru. "Our teams have been making efforts to reunite the girls with their parents," M Yerram Naidu and M Lakshmi, who have been

waiting for the safe return of the trio, Rao added. Though the police are yet to ascertain the exact reasons for the missing of the trio, they are suspecting that a love affair might have been the root of the issue. Police say that girls may reach Vizag either Saturday or Sunday.

It may be recalled that three sisters aged 22 years, 20 years and 17 years had left their home on Monday evening. On the same day evening, they sent their mother an SMS stating that they should not look out for them as they would commit suicide. When parents tried to contact them, the phone was switched-off.

INS Circars conducts blood donation

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A blood donation camp was organised by INS Circars. The camp was inaugurated by Cmde KA Bopanna, Commanding Officer INS Circars, and conducted in collaboration with NTR Memorial Blood Bank at the Command Gymnasium.

There was an overwhelming response from volunteers amongst the naval personnel, including families and Defence Civilians and Defence Security Corps (DSC) personnel, wherein 230 individuals, including ladies, and volunteers and donated

blood, which was handed over to blood bank.

As a part of Community Outreach, naval personnel and Defence Civilians and their families voluntarily donate blood during blood donation camps, which are organised by various naval units in Visakhapatnam throughout the year.

Donated blood is handed over to voluntary blood banks. Last year, 11 such blood donation camps were organised by ENC in which over 2,200 units of blood was donated by naval personnel and defence civilians.

Commodore Venkatraman takes over as COMCOS (East)

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Commodore Venkatraman VSM took over as the Commodore Commanding Submarines (COMCOS (East)). Cmde K Venkatraman VSM took over the command from Cmde AY Sardesai at an impressive ceremonial parade held at the Naval Base INS Virbahu on February 20. Cmde Venkatraman inspected the ceremonial guard and reviewed platoons of naval personnel from INS Virbahu and all the submariners under COMCOS (E).

Hull Artificers graduate from INS Vishwakarma

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The passing-out parade of 58 Hull Artificer (HA) apprentices comprising 51 Indian Navy HA sailors and seven Coast Guard Yantriks was conducted at INS Vishwakarma on February 20. The passing-out parade reviewed by Commodore Sanjiv Kapoor, Commanding Officer, INS Vishwakarma. It marked the completion of two-and-a-half-years professional ab-initio training that comprised both theoretical and on various Hull Systems and equipment.

Jatin Kumar, HA Apprentice, was awarded the FOC-in-C SNC gold medal for standing first in Overall Order of Merit. Aman Yadav, Hull Artificer apprentice, was awarded the Vishwakarma Trophy for 'Best



Sanjiv Kapoor, Commanding Officer, INS Vishwakarma, reviews the passing-out parade in Visakhapatnam on Friday

in Parade Training' and VNK Varma, Yantrik HA, stood first in academics amongst the Coast Guard trainees. A valedictory function also

organised for all the trainees, guests, ship's company and their families. The newly-graduated sailors will assume their appointments onboard frontline warships.

SFI underscores need for reforms in education sector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Reforms in the education sector are the need of the hour, opined Student Federation of India (SFI) leader G Vijay Prakash.

He was participating in the 47th SFI meeting held here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, he reminded that the Central government was trying to centralise the education system in the name of new education policy, while the State would lose it right in the field of education if it becomes a reality.

He said that Student Unions should unite and fight against educational policies of the Centre and student leaders should transform students into leaders and fight against such issues.

He further stated that the BJP-led-NDA government was creating differences among students in the name of CAA, NRC and NPR and forcefully spreading Hindu ideologies among citizens. SFI new committee was formed in which O Esubabu has been elected as the city president, while Ch Sumanth, Narendra, Yusuf, Dinesh and Vamshi have been elected as members.



Tourism Director General gets a feel of the Vistadome

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Director General of Tourism Meenakshi Sharma visited Visakhapatnam Railway Station and appreciated the efforts of the railway authorities in keeping the railway station tourist-friendly and achieving the national award for best tourist-friendly railway station in the country.

Divisional Commercial Manager G Suneel Kumar interacted with her at the railway station and apprised her of various tourist-friendly development activities taken up at the Visakhapatnam Railway Station and in the

Division. She travelled in Vistadome coach from Visakhapatnam to Araku. Waltair Division took the opportunity to commence on-board advertising in TVs of Vistadome coach in the presence of Director General. She appreciated the initiative taken up by the Division and suggested some improvements in the Vistadome coach for enhanced seating capacity and comfort of visitors.



Director General of Tourism Meenakshi Sharma shares lighter moment with commuters in Vistadome coach in Visakhapatnam on Friday

Union leaders oppose RTC MD's proposal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

APSRTC Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Madireddy Pratap should withdraw the proposal to ply private buses in RTC routes as it would push APSRTC into further losses, said APSRTC Employees Union general secretary P Damodar Rao.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, he said that APSRTC employees union leaders demanded that the APSRTC Vice-Chairman

and Managing Director take back his proposal. They will fight against the unilateral decision of the RTC MD with the support of all unions.

State president of employees union YV Rao alleged that his decision will damage the development of the RTC in the State.

He recalled that Minister for Transport Perni Venkataramiah had assured that the government will not allow private carriers in RTC routes.

Vaccination drive in villages to curb cervical cancer

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

"Daughter's human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination uptake was associated with mother's cervical cancer screening attendance. As key decision makers, mothers are central to health interventions to promote both cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination," said Dr D Leela, Gynaecology Oncologist of Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (HBCH&RC), here on Friday.

Cervical cancer is the second most commonly diagnosed cancer in the country. The mother's awareness about symptoms and risk factors has a large impact on the daughter's knowledge and attitude. Mother and adolescent daughter pair was

selected as the sample as they are the target population at risk for suffering from carcinoma cervix. Screening mothers, who are 30 and above in age, are screened for breast and cervical cancer.

Daughters in the age group of between 10 and 14 are given two doses HPV vaccination at an interval of six months while above 15 years were given three doses at a 0, 2 and 6 months interval to protect against HPV infection, thereby preventing cervical cancer said Dr D Leela.

In a bid to prevent cervical cancer incidence, Dr D Raghunatha Rao, Director of HBCH&RC, said, "We adopted remote villages like Appapuram and Dhananipeta in Srikakulam district for complete screening of all women and vaccination of

all girls against HPV virus that causes cervical cancer. We have conducted more than 100 pairs of mother-daughter screening process. Our goal is to achieve 85 per cent of cervical cancer screening between the age group of 35 and 45 and 90 per cent of vaccination among adolescent girls and bring down growing number of cases of cervical cancer by 2030."

Furthermore, Rao said the situation in rural areas is more alarming where the majority of women are illiterate and ignorant about the hazards of cervical cancer. And the vulnerability of these communities are further compounded by lack of access to health care, information and absence of mechanisms for reporting adverse effects. Therefore, there is an urgent need to empower women by educating them on the issue. There is a need to encourage mothers to communicate the right information to their adolescent daughters, he said.



VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 41,850 (10 gm)	₹ 280 ↓
SILVER	
₹ 41,850 (10 gm)	₹ 300 ↑
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹119
Without Skin	₹135
Broiler at Farm	₹82
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	340
VIJAYAWADA	355
VISAKHAPATNAM	390
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.55

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Beneficiaries identified for distribution of house sites

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Collector Md Intiaz said that as part of Navaratnalu, all the eligible beneficiaries in Krishna district would get free house sites on Ugadi.

Addressing the media here on Friday, he said that volunteers in the district identified 2,71,000 beneficiaries in a scientific way for distribution of free house sites in 52 mandals, two municipal corporations and seven municipalities. In rural areas, each beneficiary will get 1.5 cents land and in urban areas, one cent land or flat in G+3 apartments, whichever is suitable.

Vizag Defence Academy students seek facilities

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Tension prevailed at Vizag Defence Academy here on Friday when students of the Academy staged a protest demanding improvement in facilities being provided to them at the academy.

Students sought playground, horse-riding, swimming pool facility and quality food and reduction in fee. However, students were allegedly locked up in a cellar for questioning the management. It is learnt that the Academy is being run by a TDP MLA from Vizag.

Though students tried to meet the administrative officer of the Academy, staff of the



- Students sought playground, horse-riding, swimming pool facility and quality food and reduction in fee. However, students were allegedly locked up in a cellar for questioning the management.
- It is learnt that the Academy is being run by a TDP MLA from Vizag.
- Though students tried to meet the administrative officer of the Academy, but in vain.

Academy allegedly spoiled the students' efforts.

Based on the information, the Gajuwaka police led by Inspector Ch Suri Naidu visited the Academy and inter-

acted with agitating students. Students claimed that they staged a protest against inadequate facilities and high fee in the Academy.

"We didn't register any case as students denied to lodge a complaint. The management of the Academy assured students to provide facilities in a week, the police officer added.

24-year-old man commits suicide

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 24-year-old man was found dead on the railway track between Ghatkesar and Bibinagar on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Kaki Mahesh, a clerk working at a private junior college in Peerzadiguda. A native of Suryapet, he was residing at Bodupally, the officials said.

According to the Government Railway Police (GRP), Mahesh's body was found lying on the tracks between Ghatkesar and Bibinagar railway station. Before resorting to the extreme step, Mahesh had updated his WhatsApp story on Wednesday night saying that he was going to commit suicide and nobody was responsible for his death. Preliminary investigation revealed that Mahesh took the extreme step due to financial problems.

France researcher calls out security breach in AP Intermediate exam site

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A France-based cyber security researcher called out the vulnerability of Andhra Pradesh government website's by exposing and alerting the AP Board of Intermediate Education that personal information of lakhs of its students was being leaked.

The security vulnerability was found on the AP BIE website, which allows intermediate students to access exam results using their hall ticket numbers. However, the AP government took down the site following the alert.

Robert Baptiste, a France-based cyber security researcher, on Thursday tweeted out to

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's office stating that one of their sites was leaking the personal data of students, including the students' Aadhaar numbers, photographs and names of their parents.

Accordingly, the Andhra Pradesh government reached out to Baptiste and he disclosed the issue to a team of cyber experts from the government. Two years ago in 2018, the phone numbers, email ids and addresses of thousands of National Eligibility and Entrance Test (NEET) applications were put up for sale online for Rs 2 lakhs by data brokers. Such student databases are sold by data brokers to advertis-

ers and marketing agents, revealed an investigation by an international media agency.

Officials with the BIE were unresponsive for comment but decided to take out the link that gave access to the students' data. Officials took down the website after officials from the Information Technology & Communications (IT&C) Department and the Chief Minister's office got involved.

Around 9.6 lakh students are to write the Intermediate Board exams in March. The first year Intermediate Public Examination (IPE) will commence from March 3 and the second year from March 5.

GOVT TAKES DOWN WEBSITE



IIT-H to equip young talent in AI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Institute of Technology- Hyderabad (IIT-H), in association with TalentSprint has announced the second cohort of Professional Certification Programme in Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies for college students and young professionals.

The hybrid programme will be for six months and will include a five-week bootcamp at IIT Hyderabad with residential option. The programme will cover AI, IoT, Blockchain, Quantum Computing and other emerging technologies. The year 2020 will be a pivotal year in AI-related employment dynamics, according to Gartner, Inc., as artificial intelligence (AI) will become a positive job motivator.

UoH students vow not to pay fine...

Continued from Page 1

"Time and again, the university administration have issued various show-cause notices and circulars to impart a sense of fear among the student community," the union said in a statement.

The union said this was not limited to university administration but police also filed cases against 22 individuals and 200 others for doing a peaceful march on January 26.

The union assured the student community that this intimidation by the administration will not be successful in suppressing the voice of dissent and protest in the university campus.

It also made it clear that in the current national scenario, where "anti-constitutional and anti-people" laws are being passed in the country, universities cannot keep themselves in isolation. University spaces have always been a site of

democratic dissent and protest since the national independence movement and will continue to be so in future also, they added.

"The intimidation tried by administration will not be able to force students to lock themselves up in their rooms and active resistance will be made every time administration tries to suppress the exercise of their democratic rights," the statement added.

Storm over speech of MIM leader

Continued from Page 1

"They say we have kept our women in the forefront. I want to tell these people — only the lionesses have come out and you are in a cold sweat. You can understand what would happen if all of us come together."

"We are just 15 crore but can be a bigger force than the 100-crore majority population," Pathan said. He added that the minority community could well snatch "your azaadi".

As the issue snowballed into a political controversy, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday is understood to gagged Pathan and has ordered him not to speak with the media till further orders.

MNS leader Nandgaonkar issued a "warning" to the



AIMIM ex-legislator, daring him to a challenge for which he would be taught an appropriate lesson.

Mumbai lawyer Naqvi has alleged that Pathan is being allegedly financed by "another hate-monger from Nagpur"

who are the biggest beneficiary of the hate-speeches of AIMIM and demanded a probe into both sides.

In a statement, Pathan said that he was "totally quoted out of context" by the media on his Kalburgi (Gulbarga) meeting, where even Owaisi and other senior leaders were present.

"I hereby wish to reiterate that I can never say anything intentionally or unintentionally that hurts the sentiments of any caste, community or gender. I am a proud Indian and respect the plurality of this country," said Pathan.

He added that like many other Indians who have faith in the Constitution, he was angry by the sheer neglect of the government in addressing the issues concerning the CAA-NRC-NPR against which people have been protesting all over the country in a democratic manner.

"Neither me, nor my party supports anything that creates a divide between people on the basis of caste, creed and religion. Jai Hind," said Pathan.

AP releases Rs 35.55 cr as ex gratia...

Continued from Page 1

Peddi Reddy, the state president of Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sankshema Sangam, said that: "To get the documents itself has become a problem. By the time the government acknowledges them as farmers, their families will be even more deeply in debt."

He added, "The government said that district authorities should act immediately when a farmer kills himself. In very few cases does instant documentation take place. Usually, the family members of the suicide victim have to run from pillar-to-post to prove that the death was a result of agricultural distress."

RS 150 CRORE ESI SCAM

YSRTUC president demands Atchannaidu arrest for 'scam'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRTUC State president P Gowtham Reddy demanded the arrest of former minister and TDP MLA K Atchannaidu on charges of involving in Rs 150 crore ESI scam. Addressing the media here on Friday, he demanded that the government recover the scam amount and initiate take stern action against the TDP MLA.

He alleged that the then Minister for Labour Atchannaidu had given orders to buy hospital equipment involving Rs 150 crore scam. Rs 51 crore was taken additionally for purchase of medical equipment and medicines. The tender was nominated for Rs 89 crore and the actual cost was Rs 38 crore only, he pointed out.

Gowtham Reddy recalled



that they have been stating that TDP leaders were involved in corrupt activities, however, the truth has come to the fore now in the vigilance inquiry. He demanded stern action against Atchannaidu and companies for cheating workers.

He pointed out that Rs 300 crore pertaining to insurance of workers was diverted for Pasupu Kumkuma scheme. He urged Chief Minister

YS Jaganmohan Reddy to establish a dispensary for 1,000 workers with a referral hospital in 25 km range. He reminded that the Chief Minister accorded top priority to the health sector in the State and provided employment to unemployed. Gowtham Reddy said that on February 25, they will organise YSR Trade Union State meetings at Tadepalli party office.

BJP questions TRS' silence over Waris Pathan, anti-India slogans

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Telangana unit on Friday asked Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao if he could still claim to be secular despite his TRA being associated with the AIMIM which made "hateful, insinuating statements" against a particular committee.

In the wake of controversial statements made by AIMIM leader Waris Pathan at a meeting in Karnataka and pro-Pakistan slogans raised in AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi's public address in Bengaluru, BJP spokesperson K Krishnasagar Rao said: "Can KCR still claim to be 'secular' by being associated with AIMIM, while that party is making hateful, insinuating statements against Hindus with a communal agenda?"

Atchannaidu refutes allegations on ESI scam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former TDP Minister and MLA K Atchannaidu refuted the corruption allegations being levelled against him in a section of the media.

He said that when he was the Minister for Labour from 2016 to April 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi convened a meeting of ministers on ESI. In the meeting, the Prime Minister stressed the need to improve health facilities through ESIC services by using the latest technology, he said.

He recalled that in December 2016, the Central government had issued a letter to establish telemedicine services for the ESI employees providing health services 24/7. He asked officials concerned whether telemedicine services are being implemented in any other State, in turn, they told that they are being imple-



mented in Telangana State. He said that as a minister he ordered officials of the department to implement the same in Andhra Pradesh through a note. Hence, officials carried out services in the State, he reminded.

He said he is no way connected to any scam in purchase of equipment and medicines for ESI hospitals of telemedicine service and as all the records are with the government, they can verify.

AICC appoints APCC office-bearers, DCC presidents

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kiran Kumar Reddy is also got place in Coordination Committee headed by Oomen Chandy. The party high command also announced 11 APCC vice-presidents, 18 general secretaries, 29 Coordination Committee members, 18 DCC presidents including various towns' rural presidents.

Women did not get adequate representation on the two committees.

Among the new vice-presidents appointed are Shahjahan Basha, Janga Goutham, Yedla Adi Raju, SN Raju, Sruthi Devi, Martin Luther, Gangadhar, Murali Danekula, Venugopal Reddy, J Prabhaka and Sreepathi Prakash Rao.

"The Congress president has approved the proposal of appointment of PCC office bearers, District Congress Committee (DCC) presidents, Coordination Committee and Political Affairs Committee for the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC)," a statement from the party said.



Eluru Rural-Jetty - Gurunadham, Machilipatnam - L Tania Kumari, Vijayawada (Rural) - Kiran Borra, Narsaraopeta - G Alexander Sudhakar, Ongole Rural - Eeda Sudhakar Reddy, Nandyal-Lakshminarasimha Reddy, Kurnool (Rural) - Ahmed Alikhan, Anantapur Rural - S Pratapa Reddy, Hindupur - K Sudhakar

Shahjahan Basha, Janga Goutham, Yedla Adi Raju, SN Raju, Sruthi Devi, Martin Luther, Gangadhar, Murali Danekula, Venugopal Reddy, J Prabhaka and Sreepathi Prakash Rao have been appointed as vice-presidents

(Former MLA), Nellore (Rural-Devakumar Reddy and Chittoor - Dr Suresh Babu.

US first lady to visit Delhi govt school...

Continued from Page 1

Similarly, for nursery and KG students, the classes are held twice a week. In Ahmedabad, President Trump will jointly the 'Namaste Trump' event with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the newly built Motera cricket stadium. After the event, the US President and the First Lady will visit Agra, where they will spend about an hour at the Taj Mahal before the sunset. President Trump will then depart for Delhi. On the morning of February 25, Trump and the First Lady will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

From there, they will go to Rajghat to pay homage at the 'samadhi' of Mahatma Gandhi.

It will be followed by restricted and delegation-level talks between Trump and Modi at Hyderabad House. Prime Minister Modi will host a lunch for the US president following the talks. In the afternoon, Trump is expected to attend certain private events at the US Embassy, including a private roundtable with industry representatives. In the evening, the US president will meet President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. A banquet will be hosted by Kovind and Trump will depart from India later that evening.

Indigo, Air Asia stop bookings for Chennai, Kolkata...

Continued from Page 1

According to the flight movement report of Airport Authority of India (AAI), there was a drop of 14.5 per cent in the movement of flights at Vizag airport. The movement of flights was 16,482 in 2018-19 (April-December), but it came down to 14,095 in the same corresponding period of 2019-20.

The number of flight services per day has also come down to around 60 at the Vizag airport.

Gaiety marks Shivaratri in Telugu states

Continued from Page 1

Devotees were standing in queues since early morning for 'darshan'. The temple was decked up with eight tonnes of flowers and fruits brought from Bangalore.

Thousands of devotees thronged the banks of Godavari river in Rajahmundry in East Godavari district for the holy dip. Devotees including women descended on Pushkar ghat and Kotalingala ghat since the early hours of the day for the rituals.

Other Shiva temples in the

region saw huge crowd of devotees. Samarlakoa and Draksharama temples witnessed massive congregations. The devotees alleged that the temple staff were busy attending the VIPs and ignored the common people.

The biggest celebration in Telangana was held at Vemulawada Rajarajeshwara swamy temple in Rajanna Sircilla district. Endowment Minister A. Indrakaran Reddy presented silk clothes to the deity on behalf of Telangana government.

Health Minister Etela Rajender also presented silk

cloths and performed special puja in the temple.

Devotees were waiting in queues since Thursday night to have 'darshan'. Devotees from various placed thronged Vemulawada.

Continuing the traditional practice, priests and officials of Tirumala Thirupati Devasthanam also presented silk cloth to Rajarajeshwara swamy.

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and his Andhra Pradesh counterpart Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy conveyed Maha Shivratri greetings to the people.

No need to worry about CAA, says Uddhav...

Continued from Page 1

Plans of a pan-India NRC, announced by Home Minister Amit Shah in parliament and later refuted by the government, have been a major point of contention against the CAA that was enacted into law this year.

The law which promises citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from three neighbouring countries, had stoked fears that Muslims who are not able to prove their citizenship will be declared foreigners if a nationwide NRC was prepared on the lines of Assam.

"We discussed CAA, NRC and NPR (National Population Register). I have made my stand

clear on these... There is no need to fear the CAA. The oppressed minorities will be benefited. The central government has said NRC will not be implemented across the country. If we see any dangers befalling the citizens, we will oppose it then," Thackeray said.

The CAA has also been a sticking point between the Shiv Sena and its two ideologically disparate partners in Maharashtra, the Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The Sena had forged the coalition after ditching long-time ally BJP following last year's state polls. Both the NCP and the Congress are ardent opponents of the NRC and CAA.

RAJNATH LAYS FOUNDATION STONE FOR NEW ARMY HQ BUILDING

India among powerful nations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday laid the foundation stone for construction of the Army headquarter's new building in Delhi Cantonment and asserted the world now recognises that India stands among the powerful nations. Christened 'Thal Sena Bhawan', the seven-storeyed complex designed "like a rising sun", will be spread over nearly 39 acres, officials said.

"We have laid the first stone of the new Sena Bhawan. This (stone) will not reach the top, but it is the first stone. And, it will represent the unsung heroes of the armed forces who have sacrificed their lives for the country," Singh told a gathering at the foundation stone laying ceremony.

The defence minister asserted that the world now recognises that India is a not a 'weak India, but it stands among the powerful nations globally' and the credit for that goes to "our brave soldiers and the jawans who have made sacrifices".

The Army headquarters is currently housed in the iconic



South Block at Raisina Hill in Lutyens' Delhi. The new department of military affairs headed by the chief of defence staff (CDS) will be housed in this new building, Singh said.

The defence minister also performed "bhoomipujan" (ground-breaking) ceremony at a venue in the vicinity of the Manekshaw Centre.

The ground-breaking ceremony began with inter-faith prayers as four religious teachers, representing the four main religions of India, read lines from their sacred texts, wishing prosperity and well being for the building that will come up and

people who will work in it.

Singh said the desire of soldiers who laid down their lives was not that people would know and recognise them, but "their only desire was that India should be a capable and a powerful country". This foundation stone will serve as a source of inspiration for others, he said.

"Due to our brave soldiers, our country is known as a capable and a powerful one, and India has the capacity and strength to face big challenges," the defence minister said.

Army Chief Gen M M Naravane was also present on the occasion and a large number of

defence personnel and jawans were among the audience. Asked how long will the project take, the Army chief, on the sidelines of the event, said, "It will take about three-four years for the new building to come up".

The office of the Army chief is also located in the imposing South Block which is part of the historic Raisina Hill complex built during the colonial era as part of the 'new imperial capital' of the British Raj.

"About 2,900 officials from the military and 3,100 civilians will be working here," a senior official said, adding that the cost of the project would be in excess of

Rs 700 cr.

The North Block and South Block, Viceroy's House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) and Parliament House, surrounded by a lush green landscape and imposing fountains, were built during the construction of 'New Delhi' that started in 1912.

"The new building complex will also have 250 security personnel for whom lodging facility will be there on the campus. The building will comply to 'prestigious norms' and have a 'GRHA-5' rating. It will have three entry-cum-exit points -- on NH-44, Parade Road and Link Road," the official said.

NDMC revokes suspension of hotel's trade licence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Friday revoked the suspension of the trade licence of The Park hotel in Lutyens' Delhi. The civic body had suspended the trade licence after the five-star hotel's Fire Safety Certificate and Cessation order were suspended following a blaze in its basement last week.

The fire safety certificate and cessation order were restored on Wednesday.

"We had received a formal request from the hotel authorities after their fire safety certificate and cessation order were restored. Due inspection was conducted to ensure all norms have been complied with and the suspension has been revoked," a senior NDMC official said.

Fire broke out at the basement of The Park hotel last Sunday, following which 12 people, including 11 foreign nationals staying at the hotel, were rushed to a hospital,



where nine of them were given first aid. "There was an incident of short circuit at the basement of THE Park New Delhi on February 20. There were no casualties and our in-house crisis management team got into action and controlled the situation immediately.

"We had received a suspension notice from the Fire Department to undertake certain fire prevention improvements in other premises within the property to ensure better safety," a hotel spokesperson said.

SHORT READS



20 injured as Punjab roadways bus collides with truck in Ambala

AMBALA: As many as 20 passengers were injured when a Punjab Roadways bus collided with a stationary truck on national highway near Ambala city on Friday morning, police said here. The bus was on its way to Chandigarh from Delhi, they added. Bus driver identified as Gursewak was referred to PGIMER in Chandigarh while other injured were admitted to the local civil hospital, police said. A case was registered against the truck driver, police said.

19-year-old national-level boxer ends life

NAGPUR: A 19-year-old national-level boxer from Nagpur allegedly ended his life by hanging himself in his hostel room in Akola in Maharashtra on Friday, his coach said. The deceased, Pranav Raut, had represented Maharashtra at a national boxing championship held in Delhi earlier this year, his coach Satishchandra Bhatt said. Raut, a resident of Nagpur, was undergoing training at a sports academy in Akola, where Bhatt was his team's coach, and stayed in its hostel. On Friday, he was supposed to participate in a tournament in Akola. "Yesterday, he had not come for training due to health reasons. However, today morning he ended his life by hanging himself in his room," Bhatt said. Maharashtra Sports Minister Sunil Kedar also confirmed the incident. The reason for the suicide was not yet known. Police could not be reached for comments.

Shopkeeper shot dead by robbers in Delhi's Fatehpur Beri

NEW DELHI: A 47-year-old provision store owner was shot dead allegedly by unidentified persons while he was trying to avert a robbery bid in south Delhi's Fatehpur Beri area, police said on Friday. The deceased has been identified as Ravi Kumar Singhal, a resident of Dera village, they said. Police got information regarding a firing incident at Fatehpur Beri area on Thursday at around 10:15 pm. "Police rushed to the spot and found that Singhal, a grocery shop owner, had sustained a bullet injury. His helper Bhagwan Dass, a resident of village Dera, also got injured in the incident," Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said. One empty cartridge was recovered from the spot, the DCP said. Singhal was shifted to Safdarjung Hospital where he was declared brought dead. He sustained a single gunshot wound. Dass' statement was recorded and he stated that on Thursday night around 10 pm, Singhal closed his store and kept a bag containing cash on the stairs. Meanwhile, three people came there on a motorcycle. One of them took the bag from the stairs and started running. When Singhal and Dass ran to chase them, one person fired a bullet at Singhal. They also hit Dass on his head and fled, the DCP said.

Glad that govt functionaries holding constructive dialogue with me: Guv

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday said he was happy that talks with the state government over issues of concern have begun, and expressed hope that he would be able to perform his constitutional duties without hindrance.

The governor, on the sidelines of a programme in Jalpaiguri, also said that several key functionaries of the government have met him over the past few days to brief him on the initiatives being taken for the state.

"The honourable chief minister (recently) met me for an hour; the chief secretary has also met me several times. I have also had constructive discussions with state Finance Minister Amit Mitra and Education Minister Partha Chatterjee.

"I hope this process will continue and I will be able to



discharge my constitutional responsibilities," he said.

The governor had on Thursday held a meeting with Chatterjee on the current education scenario in the state.

"Had more than an hour one to one productive meeting with Senior Minister for Higher Education Partho Chatterjee. Wholesome way forward in education scenario was discussed. Deliberations covered all pending issues in

education including concerning Universities (sic)," he had tweeted.

The chief minister had visited Dhankhar for an hour at the Raj Bhavan on February 17 - the first such meeting between them since July 2019 when he assumed office.

Dhankhar's ties with the government have been filled with rancour ever since he rushed to the rescue of Union Minister Babul Supriyo, who was heckled and manhandled at Jadavpur University where he had gone to address a function of the RSS-linked ABVP.

He had been seeking a meeting with Banerjee since December last year, but it did not come about as the government invariably cited the chief minister's preoccupation with other engagements.

Though what exactly transpired at the hour-long meeting on Monday was not immediately known, sources said the two discussed "various issues".

MP govt scraps circular on sterilisation

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government on Friday scrapped a controversial circular that set sterilisation targets for male multi-purpose health workers (MPHWs) and warned of salary loss for not meeting goals.

The circular, issued by the state unit of the National Health Mission (NHM), directed each male MPHW to get at least get one man sterilised in this fiscal, which ends on March 31, or their salaries would be withheld and they would be given compulsory retirement.

As the order created a furore, Health Minister Tulsi Silawat announced its immediate withdrawal. I have just now nullified the NHMs order with immediate effect. The language in it was not proper, Silawat told PTI in the afternoon. Things should be done after proper reasoning, he said.

'Namaste Trump' won't mark inauguration of stadium: GCA

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) on Friday clarified the 'Namaste Trump' event is being organised at the newly-built cricket stadium here on February 24 only for hosting US President Donald Trump and it will not mark the inauguration of the complex.

The cricket stadium at Motera is the world's largest with a capacity to accommodate 1.10 lakh spectators.

Even since Trump's visit to the city was announced around two weeks back, local police as well as authorities had been claiming the mega gathering of over 1 lakh people in the stadium would also mark the inauguration of the stadium.

"This event's name is Namaste Trump. It is meant for hosting US President Donald Trump. We will inaugurate the stadium later," said GCA vice-president Dhanraj Nathwani



during an interaction with the media at the stadium.

As per the schedule, Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi would address people in this stadium after taking part in a roadshow.

The event has been named 'Namaste Trump' on the lines of the Howdy, Modi' programme organised in the US last year. The Motera stadium, owned by the GCA, has been completely rebuilt after demolishing the old

one, which was constructed in 1982 with a seating capacity of 49,000 spectators.

The entire stadium complex is spread across over 64 acres. The construction of the new stadium was completed in two years at an estimated cost of Rs 700 crore. The GCA had earlier said the stadium will have 76 corporate boxes, four dressing rooms, a club house and an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Dewan Housing chairman gets bail in Mirchi case

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A special court here on Friday granted bail to Kapil Wadhawan, chairman and MD of Dewan Housing Finance (DHFL) who is accused of having dealings with dead gangster Iqbal Mirchi in the past. Kapil Wadhawan (46) was arrested on January 27 by the Enforcement Directorate under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Claiming that he had no connection with the transaction of Mirchi's properties, Kapil Wadhawan had moved a bail plea before special PMLA court judge P Rajvaidya earlier this month.

While arguing for his bail, defence lawyer Amit Desai

submitted the transaction of DHFL, which the ED has cited for Kapil Wadhawan's arrest, has nothing to do with dealings of Mirchi.

During arguments, the central investigating agency had opposed the bail plea on several grounds including that Kapil Wadhawan may influence the probe.

According to the ED, Kapil Wadhawan was instrumental in laundering of huge amounts of money as part of an illegal deal with Mirchi. A sum of Rs 12,773 crore was siphoned off from DHFL on the pretext of providing loans to one lakh fictitious customers, the ED said. A part of this loan was used to make payments to Mirchi, who died in 2013 in London, it said.

CORONAVIRUS:

Art Basel in Hong Kong cancelled

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The cancellation of the Art Basel in Hong Kong (ABHK) event because of the coronavirus outbreak is a setback but understandable given the circumstances, say Indian exhibitors who were getting ready to participate in the eighth edition of Asia's largest art fair.

Five Indian galleries — Jhaveri Contemporary, Gallery Espace, Vadehra Art Gallery, Chemould Prescott and Experimenter — were to be among more than 240 galleries taking part in the March 19-21 fair.

Priyanka Raja of Kolkata-based Experimenter gallery said the cancellation does come at a cost for her gallery, but agreed that there was a significant "health and safety" risk.

"Like for any other major

INDIAN GALLERIES SAY DECISION SAD, BUT UNDERSTANDABLE



international art fair, the gallery had put in months of planning and significant investment for Art Basel Hong Kong this year too, so it certainly is a strain for the organisation," Raja told PTI. "We understand the decision taken is not an easy one on the

management's side but a necessity... It would be a health and safety risk and a complicated navigation of travel bans for the thousands of people travelling to exhibit and to visit the fair should they have decided to go on," Raja, the co-founder of the gallery,

Bani Abidi (Pakistan) as well as India's Radhika Khimji, Pranet Soi and Rathin Barman.

Mumbai-based Chemould Prescott's Shireen Gandhi said the fair is an "important marker" in their calendar, and its cancellation will render a "discontinuity" in the associations that the event offered every year across the global art fraternity. "We find increasing interest (at ABHK) in contemporary art from regions like HK, Singapore, Korea - the break in this continuity is definitely a setback when it comes to continued associations," said Gandhi, who has previously been on the selection committee of the fair.

Chemould Prescott was set to display works by its key artists, including Mithu Sen, Dhruvi Acharya, Jitish Kallat and Atul Dodiya.

"Like for any other major international art fair, the gallery had put in months of planning and significant investment for Art Basel Hong Kong this year too, so it certainly is a strain for the organisation," Priyanka Raja said

AI-BASED FARMING

Students develop device to increase farm productivity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two research students from Punjab have devised a one-of-its-kind smart farming system that works on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) to increase agricultural productivity.

The device, called 'E-parirakshak', has been designed to monitor an agricultural field for its fertility, keep track of water levels, soil temperature and moisture, as well as intelligently control water pumps, blowers and sprinklers on the field from a remote location. The data collected by the device will be stored in the cloud for future analyses.

Lovely Professional University (LPU), where the two students are pursuing PhD, has filed application to patent



the device. The research was supervised by two faculty members — Rajesh Singh and Anita Gahlot — from the university's School of Electronics and Electrical Engineering.

According to the team, the system comprises several sensor nodes which can be

tility of the soil, water level required, soil temp and soil moisture and control the water pumps, blower and sprinklers through sensors and actuators deployed in the field.

"Furthermore, the system will analyse the data gathered from the field through advanced machine learning algorithm to find out the most suitable crop that can be grown on the field. It also suggests the amount of water, fertilizer and pesticide needed to grow the suggested crop," said Mahendra Swain, one of the PhD students. The device will also detect diseases or infections in the crop and update the farmer about them.

"The system can be used for both modern and traditional farming practices, i.e. - open field, hydroponic and vertical farming. The device does not

need an internet connection and works within a range of 10 kms with star topology. Its range can also be increased if required by using mesh topology," said Wasim Akram, the other PhD scholar.

Said Rajesh Singh, their teacher, "With e-parirakshak, we are making today's cutting-edge technology like AI and IoT work for our farmers. The benefits of a system like this are immense.

"From having the right information about the quality of their field, soil profiling as well as moisture, to being able to monitor the field remotely and control on the ground devices like sprinklers and pumps, the device is a complete agriculture information and field management system rolled into one."

ITBP DG on 100-km march with message for fitness

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ITBP chief S S Deswal on Friday embarked upon a 100-km speed march between Bikaner and Jodhpur in Rajasthan to spread the message of 'Fit India' for his troops and others, officials said.

Deswal, 58, is a walking and fitness enthusiast and has undertaken numerous such treks in the past.

"The Director General has embarked on the latest speed march on Friday from Bikaner in Rajasthan. It will culminate on Saturday in Jodhpur. Senior officials of the force are accompanying the chief in the march which will have halting points at various locations over the 100-km route," a senior ITBP



S S Deswal

officer said. The march, he said, aimed at promoting the 'Fit India' mission of the government and also to encourage force personnel and the youth to engage in physical exercises and remain fit, he said.

Deswal, a 1984-batch Indian

Police Service officer of the Haryana cadre, has earlier undertaken such treks along the Bhrigu lake at over 14,000 feet and Sangla Valley in Himachal Pradesh, Amarnath Yatra, Lipulekh pass at the height of over 17,000 feet in Uttarakhand, a 42-km trek with personnel under training at the forces' academy in Mussoorie and Puri-Konark sea beach walk of 52 kms among others.

The about 90,000-personnel strong Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) is a border guarding force with the primary task of guarding the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. It functions under the Union Home Ministry.

SHORT READS



PM Modi to launch 'Khelo India University Games'

CUTTACK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the first-ever Khelo India University Games at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium here on Saturday. The Prime Minister will launch the multi-disciplinary sporting event through a video conference facility. As many as 3400 athletes from 159 universities across the country will vie for top honours across 17 disciplines, including rugby which is among the six team events. Ace sprinter Dutee Chand, who is a student of KITT, the host university, is excited to be part of the event. "I may make the grade on the strength of my world ranking (currently no. 54 in 100m and no. 43 in 200m) but I really want to make it to the Olympic Games by achieving the qualification standard," she said.

Mishap on set: Crane operator detained

CHENNAI: A crane operator booked on charge of negligence in connection with the death of actor Kamal Haasan's Indian 2 here has been picked up for questioning, police said on Friday. Three people, including an assistant director, were killed and nine others injured when the crane came crashing down on the sets of the movie at a private film city in suburban Nazrathpet on Wednesday. On Friday, a police official involved in the investigation of the case said the crane operator has been detained for questioning, but did not divulge any details. The operator had been earlier booked for various offences under IPC including causing death by negligence. On reports that Haasan and film's director Shankar among others could be summoned for inquiry in connection with the case, the official said the future course of the case alone would determine that. Assistant director Krishna, art assistant Chandran and Madhu, a production assistant, were killed when the crane snapped late on Wednesday.

DGCA proposes drug test on aviation personnel

NEW DELHI: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has for the first time proposed testing of aviation personnel for psychoactive substances such as cannabis, opioids and their variants, officials said. This is in line with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) policy and procedures which has already been prescribed by other leading aviation agencies such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the USA and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). According to an official statement, random test will be carried out under the supervision of the DGCA officers at laboratories authorised by the aviation watchdog and will cover 10 per cent of employees of each organisation in a period of one year. For the testing presence of psychoactive substances, urine sample will be used, it said.

MINISTER TO SUE BEDI FOR 'STALLING' GOVT SCHEMES

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry Health and Tourism Minister Malladi Krishna Rao on Friday said he would take legal action against Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi for allegedly interrupting implementation of developmental schemes decided upon by the elected government ever since she assumed office in 2016.

Addressing reporters here, Rao, elected from the lone Yanam constituency, an enclave of the union territory in Andhra Pradesh, to the territorial Assembly, said he would launch legal action against Bedi for allegedly impeding implementation of developmental and welfare schemes of not only his departments but also all other departments.

Objecting to Bedi's alleged intimidating attitude towards IAS officers, the Minister said the former IPS officer was targeting the Tamil IAS officers.

Referring to the recent findings of the CBI that none of the six officers of the territorial administration had committed any wrong in the selection



Governor Kiran Bedi

and admission of students to privately managed medical colleges in 2017, he said, "The six officers had suffered mental agony and depression because of the allegations the Lieutenant Governor had made against them to the CBI through the Medical Council of India.

"What is her answer to the harassment the officers had suffered because of her authoritative stance," he asked. Bedi had also sent allegedly adverse reports against 'honest officers' to the Union Home Ministry, he said without disclosing their names.

Rao said his departments were not able to implement any centrally sponsored schemes or schemes evolved by the territorial government because of the alleged intervention of Kiran Bedi.

Rao said his departments were not able to implement any centrally sponsored schemes or schemes evolved by the territorial government because of the alleged intervention of Kiran Bedi

"I will never compromise and I have seen several Kiran Bedis in my career and I will file a case against her in the next one week to bring justice to the people and to ensure that the intervention of Bedi does not continue," Rao said.

He said the private medical colleges have been earmarking seats under government quota every year only through the negotiations the government was holding with the managements.

India paying price for not sending Muslims to Pak: Giriraj

PNS ■ PATNA

The country is paying the price for failure to send Muslims to Pakistan and bring Hindus to India after the Islamic state came into being at the time of Independence, Union minister Giriraj Singh has said, triggering a fresh controversy.

The BJP leader made the remark in Purnea district in the Seemanchal region of Bihar which has a sizeable Muslim population and where the Begusarai MP was canvassing in favor of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Highlighting the need for such a legislation, he told reporters late Thursday "when our forefathers were fighting for Independence from British rule, Jinnah was pushing for the creation of an Islamic state".

"Our forefathers, however, committed a mistake. Had they ensured that all our Muslim brothers were sent to Pakistan and Hindus brought



Giriraj Singh

here, the need for such a move (CAA) would not have arisen. This did not happen and we have paid a heavy price for it," the outspoken BJP leader said.

The CAA, which seeks to fast-track granting citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who might have fled their home countries because of religious persecution, has become a major bone

Our forefathers, however, committed a mistake. Had they ensured that all our Muslim brothers were sent to Pakistan and Hindus brought here, the need for such a move (CAA)

of contention since it is feared that a country-wide National Register for Citizens (NRC) may follow.

The Narendra Modi government, which had formerly hinted that a country-wide NRC was on the anvil, seems to have put it on the backburner though a section of citizens across the country, especially Muslims, have been organizing protests out of fear that, if implemented, the NRC may result in a large number of people becoming stateless.

BJP: Why are liberals silent on AIMIM leader?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday alleged that AIMIM leader Waris Pathan's controversial remarks shows the conspiracy going on in the name of anti-CAA protest and questioned the 'silence of liberals' opposing the law. Addressing an anti-Citizenship Amendment Act rally at Kalaburagi in North Karnataka on February 16, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader reportedly alleged that 15 crore Muslims can prove to be heavy on the other 100 crore. Addressing a press conference at the BJP office here, party spokesperson Sambit Patra said Pathan's remarks shows the conspiracy going on in the name of protest against the CAA.

"I want to ask all the so-called liberals, who have been opposing CAA, why are they silent on his remarks," Patra asked.

90 pc ration cards cancelled in Jharkhand genuine: Study

PNS ■ RANCHI

A limited study conducted in 10 of the 24 districts of Jharkhand has found that almost 90 per cent of ration cards cancelled by the state government three years ago belonged to genuine households.

The study was carried out by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), co-founded by Abhijit Banerjee and his wife Esther Duflo, both of whom won the Nobel Economics Prize in 2019.

A random sample of nearly 4,000 ration cards that were verified revealed that "just over 10 per cent belonged to 'ghosts', meaning households that could not be traced," it



said.

In 2017, lakhs of ration cards were deleted in

Jharkhand without even informing the households concerned," claims the study, co-

authored by economists Karthik Muralidharan, Paul Niehaus and Sandip Sukhtankar.

The study, released to the media here, includes an analysis of the deletion of ration cards between 2016 and 2018 in 10 randomly-selected districts of the state.

The then state government had claimed that most of the cards were "fake", the study says.

Quoting a press release of the previous government dated 27 March 2017, it says, "All the ration cards which have not been linked with Aadhaar number will become null and void on 5th April...nearly three lakh ration cards have been declared invalid."



Woman held for holding 'Kashmir mukti, Dalit mukti..' placard

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A day after pro-Pakistan slogans were raised by an agitator at an anti-CAA event here, a young woman was 'detained' on Friday for holding a "Kashmir Mukti (liberation), Dalit Mukti, Muslim Mukti" placard at a counter protest in the city, police said.

Holding the placard with the slogans, she was spotted sitting among the participants of the protest organised by the Hindu Jagaran Vedike against the woman who had shouted "Pakistan Zindabad" on Thursday.

City police chief Bhaskar Rao said she was escorted out of the place as the Vedike members asked her to leave and crowd started gathering.

"She has been now been taken into custody for her own safety along with the

To a question if she would be arrested, the Commissioner said let the investigation be held. "It is too early as she has just been taken into custody," he added

placard... we will find out her background, where she has come from and who are behind her among other things," Rao told reporters, adding she did not raise any slogan.

The "Kashmir Mukti (liberation), Dalit Mukti, Muslim Mukti" slogans were written in both Kannada and English in the placard held by her.

To a question if she would be arrested, the Commissioner said let the investigation be held. "It is too early as she has just been taken into custody," he added.

Last evening, Amulya Leona had raised "Pakistan Zindabad" slogan thrice in the presence of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi after the organisers of the event under the banner of "Save Constitution" invited her to address the gathering, prompting him to denounce her act.

After being removed from the stage, she was later arrested on charges of sedition and produced before a magistrate court which remanded her to 14 days judicial custody.

TRIP TO INDIA

Ivanka, Jared to accompany Trump



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US President Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner will be part of the high-level delegation accompanying him during his visit to India on February 24 and 25, official sources said on Friday. Trump's wife Melania Trump is also part of the delegation, which includes Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Commerce

Secretary Wilbur Ross.

The US president will arrive in Ahmedabad on February 24 for a little less than 36-hour India trip. From Ahmedabad, he will travel to Agra before arriving at the national capital for the main leg of the visit.

The US has confirmed that Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, Trump's senior advisor, will be part of the US president's delegation, official sources said.

Akhilesh slams CM over 'Ramrajya' remark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday lashed out at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over his remark that the "country needs Ramrajya not Samajwad", terming it as against the very essence of the Constitution.

In a tweet, the SP chief said, "Mukhiyaji has said the country does not need socialism this means : he is against the essence of the Constitution. He is not with the poor but with the rich capitalists. He works for some special people and not for society. He is against steps towards ensuring social equality of neglected sections."

The SP chief was reacting to the remarks made by the chief minister while speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the governor's address in the state Assembly on Wednesday.

MEA, TN govt hold diplomatic outreach event in Chennai

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Ministry of External Affairs has been taking up country's economic diplomacy to local stakeholders in order to take part in the business opportunities available overseas, a senior MEA official said here on Friday.

External Affairs Ministry (Economic Relations) Secretary T S Tirumurti said, "in line with the Centre's commitment in cooperated federalism and the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi's) vision of Team India, the Ministry effectively served as a single point contact for outreach efforts of



T S Tirumurti

all states and union territories particularly in attracting foreign investments."

Tirumurti was speaking at the Diplomatic Outreach Event organised by the MEA and government of Tamil Nadu on the topic - "Economic and

investment opportunities in the State."

He said the Ministry has been pro-actively encouraging and supporting the States in their international outreach.

"The idea is to take India's economic diplomacy to the local stakeholders and provide them the platform to participate in investment and trade opportunities available in countries abroad," he said.

Tamil Nadu has been a cradle of ancient Indian civilisation and was one of the most vibrant of Indian states in socio and economic development, he said adding as one of India's most progressive states.

Maha govt plans 18-storey residential tower for ministers

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has chalked out a plan to construct an 18-storey residential tower for ministers on a plot in Malabar Hill in south Mumbai.

The plot, spread over 2,584 square metres, currently houses a 105-year-old bungalow, "Puratan". A committee, comprising secretaries, has approved the project which will cost Rs 119 crore. The panel has approved an FSI of 4 for the residential tower.

Floor space index or FSI means the ratio between the area of a covered floor (built up area) to the area of that plot



(land) on which a building stands.

Sources said on Friday the Puratan bungalow, which is currently unoccupied and in dilapidated condition, will be demolished to make way for a building which will house residences of 18 ministers.

The total area of construction will be 10337.80 square metres.

Each minister will have construction of 574 square metres on each floor which will include a living room, 4 bed rooms, kitchen, office, visitors lounge, ante chamber, two staff quarters and storage space, among other facilities, they said.

There will be guests/visitors lobby and lifts, separate entry and exits for ministers and family members, guests and visitors. There will be a multi-purpose hall with pantry, service lift and service lobby, the sources said.

OPERATION 'MAA'

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The "remarkable" decrease in the number of local youths joining various militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir has been a result of Operation 'Maa' launched by the army, which also targeted the leaderships of outfits "in a people friendly manner", a top army officer said here.

Lieutenant General Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon, who heads the strategic Kashmir-based XV corps, started Operation 'Maa' whereby a local terrorist trapped in an encounter is made to talk to his mother in a bid to convince him to return to his normal life.



"Nothing is lost until your mother can't find it," Lt Gen Dhillon said while explaining that the results of the operation

through, the encounters are halted and the parents or society elders are involved to urge the trapped local terrorist to 'return'. This is Operation 'Maa' and we have been successful many times," Lt Gen Dhillon told PTI in a written reply.

However, details were not made available by the army as this could jeopardise the safety of former militants who are inching towards living normal lives in the national mainstream.

He said effective operations, especially against the leaderships of terrorist outfits, are the result of the determined pursuit of joint counter terrorist operations "in a people friend-

ly manner".

According to a report compiled recently by security agencies, on an average only five youths joined militant groups every month since the special status of the erstwhile state was revoked over six months ago and it was bifurcated into two union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh -- whereas the figure before August 5, 2019 was 14 per month.

Lt Gen Dhillon also believes that successful operations by security forces, which led to "elimination" of 64 per cent new recruits during their first year of joining terror groups, has also acted as a deterrent.

A Chinese conundrum

As that nation catches a cold, the world sneezes. But the virus spread has led to a revival of crucial sectors back home



The effects of Coronavirus, now called COVID-19 by the World Health Organisation (WHO), have mostly been contained along China's borders. Beijing declared a war-like situation to deal with its spread. It shut down all its cities effectively and Wuhan, the centre of the outbreak, became a ghost town. Streets, that once bustled, wore a deserted look. According to data from *Flightradar24*, a flight tracking site, air traffic in China dropped by over 80 per cent since the outbreak. Nevertheless, the spread of coronavirus forced the entire world to realise just how integral China is to the global supply chain, even when it does not produce finished products. Take the example of the Indian pharmaceutical sector, which is afraid that a shortage of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) that form the basis of many important medications, including anti-retroviral drugs used to manage HIV/AIDS, will start running out by mid-March. We are so dependent on China-sourced raw materials that they form almost 70 per cent of India's imports of key ingredients for medicines. The potential damage this has caused to the sector cannot be wished away. Most importantly, domestic manufacturing is struggling to take off. But the long-term implications of the spread of the virus must not be missed and it has at least compelled the Government to reset its focus on local sourcing to offset the current supply disruption. In the pharma industry itself, a revival of old drug manufacturing units that once produced key ingredients for crucial medicines is on the cards. In other sectors such as automobiles, a complete shutdown in China is expected to lead to a shortage of fuel-injectors and electronic control units among other devices that are essential to meet the new BS-VI emission norms that come into force nationwide on April 1. In sectors like paints and plastics, China supplies essential dyes used for colouring. Industry insiders have warned that production lines in various sectors as also across the country will come to a screeching halt if supplies do not restart by the middle of next month. And even if they come back into the market, it might take six to eight weeks for fresh products to be shipped from China to India. The situation is so dire that even the Central Government has said that the Coronavirus outbreak can be considered a *force majeure* on contracts and that it can even be classified as an act of God for vendors so as to negate penalties if delivery schedules are not met. Logistical experts are working overtime to ensure once supplies start, delays at ports and at Customs points are minimised.

While there is no firm outline as to when production will restart at factories, the Chinese Government has announced that production units in Wuhan will remain shuttered till early March at the very least. However, manufacturing can happen around Beijing and the Pearl River Delta, possibly with limited production by next week. The Coronavirus outbreak must serve as a warning for Indian industries to diversify their supply chains. The Indian Government, too, must start encouraging production of critical components within the country. While this is an extreme situation, it has exposed Indian vulnerabilities to Chinese supplies. The latter is the former's top non-oil trading partner. But statements from the Chinese Government concerning Arunachal Pradesh prove that it is still inimical to India's interests, even if, at least once, it did support our stance against Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) pertaining to the farce surrounding Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar. While we live in a globalised world and it is impossible for a single nation to do everything for itself, India must use the COVID-19 outbreak as an opportunity to protect its industrial interests. This will be in the world's greater interests as well.

Pak in grey zone

No matter what the FATF says, India has to develop its own dynamic on the war on terror at a time of shifting alliances



Just when all the lobbying by Pakistan seemed to have softened up deciding powers at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — the global watchdog that tracks terror-funding States and can disqualify them from global aid — they have held themselves back, and rightly so, keeping our neighbour in the grey list. Though we have been lobbying hard, and had even at one stage argued convincingly enough for Pakistan to be blacklisted, its all-weather friends, China, Turkey and Malaysia, brought it back from the brink. It

needed the support of 13 countries to get out of the grey list, and though it has taken a few compliant correctives, they weren't proof enough. It may have finally imprisoned the 26/11 mastermind of the Mumbai attacks Hafiz Saeed and even booked his charities through which he funded money but is yet to cap the money trail to other terrorists or prosecute the financiers. Besides, it could deliver only on 13 of the 29-point action plan it had promised to implement during the last session. It now must show improvements in the next four months. For India, this comes as a reprieve considering at the last regional meeting of the FATF, it was the lone voice of protest with the US, EU and even Japan appearing convinced about Pakistan's efforts to curb terrorism. But the US, while endorsing India's position on Kashmir at the UN and proscribing Jaish chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, is too invested in stitching up a deal with the Taliban before it exits Afghanistan. That explains the clean chit in Beijing and even the acknowledgement of Pakistan's "great efforts" at course correction. The US also thinks that freezing aid to Pakistan might just aggravate the economic instability in the region and have a cascading impact on politics. The US also needs a trade deal with India, which is why it will not overtly hurt our position *vis-a-vis* the FATF. China, which is increasingly looking at a strategic partnership with India while being Pakistan's ally, has devised its own workaround. It now wants a renegotiation of the FATF brief itself, saying the grouping had no business to blacklist nations but should help them counter terrorist funding and networks. India must realise that the shades of the FATF list mean nothing in terms of threat levels ever since the blacklist was diluted as a "call for action" and the grey list was downgraded to "other monitored jurisdictions." Besides, the FATF has just put Pakistan on an extended timeline to fulfil the technical criteria and not been exactly censorious about it. For our neighbour, this means a radical overhaul of its terror economy as it has to show visible proof of penalties against terror-financing, including sanctions and controls on international transactions.

In the end, India must remember that global penalties won't impact Pakistan's proxy war with India. Even while staying on the FATF watch, there has been no cessation of terrorist infiltration into Kashmir. Pakistan will continue raising Kashmir. India has to evolve its own dynamic regarding terror instead of focussing solely on isolating it diplomatically. For the fluidity of geopolitics means that each nation would work out its tactical advantage in an evolving context and might not prioritise India's concerns. And global politics is but transactional and revolving stakes mean shifting alliances.

A day of martyrs

February 21 has a special significance for Bangladesh, which transcends its observance as the International Mother Language Day. On this day, Dhaka fought for Bangla's recognition



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

February 21 has a significance for Bangladesh that transcends its observance as the International Mother Language Day. Every year from 1953, it has been observed in that country as the Bengali Language Martyrs' Day or Language Martyrs' Day in memory of four students — Rafiq, Barkat, Jabbar and Salam — killed in police firing on a peaceful demonstration in Dhaka on the same day in 1952. The demonstration, in turn, was a part of the historic language movement that, more than anything else, contributed to the rise of the liberation struggle, which culminated in Bangladesh's emergence into freedom in 1971.

The language movement owes its origin to the Pakistan Government's decision to have Urdu alone as the country's State language. Its incipient stirrings followed the announcement by Pakistan Government's Central Education Minister in late 1947 that Urdu would be the country's only State language. A resolution seeking to make Bengali a language of the Constituent Assembly along with Urdu and English, was defeated on the first day of Session on February 23, 1948, thanks to bitter opposition by former Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan. A massive burst of anger exploded in what was then East Bengal, which was renamed East Pakistan in 1955 under former Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Bogra's one-unit scheme, which also merged the four western provinces into a single unit, West Pakistan.

The anger spread and intensified following Muhammad Ali Jinnah's visit to East Bengal from March 15 to 28, 1948, during which he reiterated his stand of Urdu being Pakistan's sole State language and warned Bengalis about the activities of "subversive elements" bent on destroying Pakistan. A lull followed, only to be shattered by the interim report of the Constitutional Basic Principles Committee on September 28, 1950, which stated that Urdu would be Pakistan's State language. The movement peaked after Nazimuddin, who became the Prime Minister following the assassination of the preceding incumbent, Liaquat Ali Khan, on October 16, 1951, read out from Jinnah's speech in Dhaka saying that Urdu would be Pakistan's sole State language. More, he denounced those who wanted Bengali to be a State language as "provincialists" and, as such, enemies of the Pakistani State.

A series of strikes and demonstrations that followed culminated in a general strike throughout East Bengal on February 21, 1952, the day when the four students were killed. Dhaka and many parts of East Bengal remained paralysed on the 22nd when two persons were killed in police firing and 45 injured in lathicharges and tear gassing by the police. The movement intensified throughout Bangladesh in the next few days, with shops and offices closed and train and steamer services paralysed and Dhaka seething in anger. Savage repression by the Government foiled the general strike called



for in Dhaka on March 5, 1952. By then, however, the movement had spread to even the most remote reaches of Bangladesh and it had become clear that it was a matter of time before the Central Government accepted Bengali as a State language. This it did on April 19, 1954, when Pakistan's Constituent Assembly decided that both Bengali and Urdu would be the country's two State languages.

The installation of Bengali in its rightful place in Pakistan's governance and public life was a historic victory for the people of East Bengal. It was, however, the immediate and most visible outcome of the language movement. Far more important was the latter's identity-defining and transformative role in the history of East Bengal, leading to the eventual rise of the sovereign nation of Bangladesh. A mass movement involving almost every part of Bangladesh and every section of its population, it shaped the self-perception of the overwhelming majority of the people as Bengalis as well as Muslims and not — as immediately after India's Partition — as Muslims above everything else. It also prompted the province's rising middle class to identify itself passionately with Bengal's rich, eclectic and liberal-humanist culture, which acted as a powerful countervailing force against the spread of fundamentalist Islamist doctrines in its ranks.

In terms of historical causa-

“ A MASS MOVEMENT INVOLVING ALMOST EVERY PART OF BANGLADESH AND EVERY SECTION OF ITS POPULATION, IT SHAPED THE SELF-PERCEPTION OF THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE AS BENGALIS AS WELL AS MUSLIMS AND NOT — AS IMMEDIATELY AFTER INDIA'S PARTITION — AS MUSLIMS ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE ”

tion, however, the most important consequence was the feeling of self-confidence that victory in the language movement imparted to large sections of people in East Bengal. The increasing feeling that they could confront and defeat the rulers entrenched in Karachi and Islamabad did much to sustain their long resistance to the western wing's efforts to economically exploit and politically subjugate them, of which the language policy was a part and which owed much to the composition of the country's armed forces and bureaucracy.

The role of the Army was particularly important. It ruled the country from 1957 to 1968, 1977 to 1988 and then again from 1999, when General Pervez Musharraf captured power through a coup, to 2007, when he resigned as President to avoid impeachment. It has always called the shots even when a civilian Government has been in power. Almost wholly from the western wing, Army officers favoured the interests of the region and, as a hangover from the British period, looked down upon Bengalis as "non-martial."

The bureaucracy, particularly the Civil Service of Pakistan, which wore the mantle of the erstwhile Indian Civil Service, was dominated by Urdu-speaking people from the western wing. Given the low competence level of Pakistani politicians, they exercised a disproportionate influence on making and

implementing policies. People from East Bengal had little say.

An early indication of the intended shape of things to come was clear from the report of the Constitutional Basic Principles Committee, which besides saying that Urdu would be Pakistan's State language, provided for a Constitution, which would neutralise the impact of East Bengal's numerical superiority in the country's politics, and put it under the western wing's domination. It also sought to create a presidency vested with arbitrary powers, which made it easy for an incumbent to become a dictator. Widespread agitation postponed a decision on the report. Nevertheless, its contents as well as the Government's language policy convinced an overwhelming majority of people in East Bengal that their Central Government was bent on dominating and exploiting them — a belief that was increasingly strengthened over time by the policies emanating from Karachi and Islamabad.

The rest, including the evolution of the resistance movement into a tidal wave for national liberation under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's leadership, India's trouncing of Pakistan in the 1971 war and Bangladesh's emergence as a sovereign nation in the teeth of genocidal repression, is history.

(The writer is Consultant Editor, *The Pioneer*, and an author)

SOUNDBITE

The politics in the country is facing a crisis of credibility due to the difference in words and deeds of the politicians and this needs to be checked.



Defence Minister —Rajnath Singh

It's very interesting to see how people consume everything on mobile across cities and towns. Why should we not step up and make content for the mobile?



Academy Award winner —Guneet Monga

Pakistan has made enormous efforts in improving its counter-terror financing system, which has been recognised by the vast majority of the FATF members.



Chinese official —Geng Shuang

There should be gravitas, seriousness and depth in Trump's visit as well as tangible outcomes on substantive issues that should be announced during the joint declaration.



Congress spokesperson —Anand Sharma

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In denial mode

Sir — On the anniversary of the Pulwama terror attack, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi raised three important questions: Who benefitted from the attack? What was the result of the inquiry into the matter? And who did the Government hold accountable for the security lapses that allowed the attack? Rattled by these questions, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra snubbed the Congress scion, saying he is making a "dastardly comment" and that the Gandhi family can never think beyond "benefits."

Patra's response, however, was far from satisfactory. BJP leaders can abuse Rahul Gandhi but at least for the sake of the slain jawans, the Centre must answer his questions. It is true that the BJP benefitted tremendously from the Pulwama attack by making it a poll issue.

Why did Patra not snub Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, who had said that the Balakot air strike would help the BJP win over 22 Lok Sabha seats from his State? Even the Prime Minister sought to take credit for the strike. Should he not

Real India is hidden behind the walls

This refers to the editorial, "Bending backwards" (February 20). It is a tell-tale testimony of our times that in a span of five decades, Indian politics has graduated from *garibi hatao* (remove poverty) to *garibi chupao* (hide poverty). The construction of a wall between the Ahmedabad airport and Indira Bridge in Gujarat to hide India's poverty from the view of US President Donald Trump and his wife Melania is symbolic of class disparity. We know well that Trump rose to power on an exclusive hate campaign, at the heart of which was his commitment and rhetoric to build a wall at the Mexican border. His arrogant pledge, asking Mexico to even pay for such a wall, added to his deceitful masculinity and persona, traits which do matter in the elections to the highest office in America. In our penchant to welcome guests beyond their expectations, we have perhaps gone too far in pleasing Trump by offering him a spectacle of a wall on his forthcoming visit.

Ironically, the wall in question is not to limit illegal migration but to hide the legal citizens of this country. The building of walls to hide poverty is not new in this world. To build a wall to separate the view of poverty has its own unique flavour. It becomes even more important in the context of a democracy where the people, both poor and the rich, vote to form the very Government



which wants to hide them from visiting leaders of affluent countries. The indices of human development in Gujarat reveal a story where the necessity of such a wall to hide the poor and poverty can be explained, though not justified. Despite the so-called "Gujarat model of development," poverty and poor human existence is the unceasing companion of the Gujarati masses, irrespective of what the Government wants us to believe. No wonder, Gujarat's ill-fate has continued unabated till date so as to warrant a wall of shame.

Javvadi Lakshmana Rao
Andhra Pradesh

have taken responsibility for the Indian helicopter that was shot down in friendly fire? The "nationalist" Government should also find out who is accountable for allowing the enormous

amounts of explosives smuggled to terrorists. Clearly, the BJP has failed to come up with any answer even a year after the tragedy. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

Learn the balancing act

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Bending backwards" (February 20). US President Donald Trump

won the 2016 presidential election betting on his policy of "America First." With the 2020 elections round the corner, it is but expected that his aim would be to accrue maximum gains for his country.

Considering his interests, Trump's utterances that Washington is in no hurry to seal a trade deal with New Delhi did not come as a surprise. But it is sad that in welcoming him, simplicity has taken a back seat. Extravagance should have been avoided. Even if India and the US differ on trade issues, balance must be maintained in relations in all fields.

Sanjeev
Via email

Splurging money

Sir — The state of our nation and its poor is not hidden from the world. Why should we be spending over ₹100 crore on Trump's visit? Such a huge sum of money can solve many problems facing the country.

Shilpi
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Medical R&D a lost cause

Medical research should be one area where we have the potential to lead India towards the beginning of an era of bio-economy by 2030



KM CHERIAN

Research and Development (R&D) contribute to strengthening the economy of a country in terms of growth and revenue. While R&D is primal, it is also essential that the Government pays attention to sustain the same in every industry and particularly healthcare, which is one of the fastest growing sectors. At present, the healthcare industry has a long way to go when it comes to research and technological progress. There is a dire need for R&D in basic medical sciences so that indigenous technology gets a chance to grow. This is only possible, when there is support from the Central Government in the form of policies and capital. The availability of good infrastructure, too, is imperative to create a conducive environment for R&D. Thankfully, several areas have been identified by the Centre to keep up the tempo on infrastructure development. It is well-known that several large organs are received from human donors only and the wide disparity in the supply and demand ratio has resulted in many fatalities. Today, the stage is evolving into a time where solid organs could be manufactured using a person's own cells and a biological scaffold, like a shark fin, on which it could be grown. This will soon be available off the shelf. Shark skin is another potential tissue substrate to create biological tissue heart valves in view of its inherent tensile strength and durability. Unfortunately, due to ignorance on the part of regulatory bodies and other law enforcing agencies, even the licence for producing them has been poorly formulated and prioritised.

Another important area is in the realm of stem cell research with its tremendous regenerative potential, but we face many hurdles in their commercial production despite having the knowledge, technology and facilities. According to a recent study published in the *British Medical Journal*, the Indian medical industry fares poorly on multiple critical parameters, including the quality of care, ill-equipped facilities, lack of healthcare professionals, paucity of funds and professional qualifications of doctors, making the entire sector a debatable part of the Indian economy. Therefore it is important that provisions be made in the Union Budget to address this issue by providing funds for skill acquisition and establishment of educational institutions. It is quite overwhelming to see that in our country, where growth is a priority, change is a very slow and ignored process and our healthcare sector has been ailing for several decades now. But, as the country recompenses a claim at the geopolitical high table under a nationalist Government, its human development motives are increasingly pushed toward severe scrutiny. Also in this day and age, affordable healthcare for all should be one of the top priorities of the Government.

Growth in India's younger working population is also posing challenges we have not seen before. High stress levels, unhealthy and sedentary lifestyle, increased intake of processed foods, increased tobacco and alcohol use and so on, are giving rise to co-morbidities like diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia/obesity and other lifestyle diseases, which in turn have accelerated the growth of Coronary Artery Disease with a high incidence of premature deaths. The major challenges being faced in cardiac care are low availability of quality treatment, specialists, preventive and curative cardiac care facilities and due to this, the future of cardiac care should be given a holistic outlook. In addition, majority of the hospitals with cardiac facilities are located in urban areas while the rest of the country is faced with little to no access to quality care.

Today, technological disruptions are transforming healthcare delivery worldwide. The role of medical technology, emergence of Information and Communications Technology, expanding network of the internet and social media play a major role in transforming healthcare delivery. Digital medicine is the future as devices get interconnected. In a large country like ours teamwork is crucial when it comes to delivering quality healthcare. The current taxation policies and regulations do not address issues regarding diagnostic tests and home healthcare, which should definitely be considered under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, as well. In our nation, healthcare has always been expanding and the need to increase expenditure proportionally has to be addressed.

India imports more than 75 per cent of its medical devices and patented drugs, thus making healthcare unaffordable to the masses. While we are big on generic drugs, new molecule development and patenting is lacklustre. Moreover, medical equipment should be exempted from taxes so that healthcare is more affordable. The necessity to forge new advances in cardiac healthcare and bio-medical engineering are being slowly extinguished not by time but by a Government that is apathetic to the possibility that millions could have access to better healthcare and this, in turn, could stimulate and pioneer cutting-edge research. India should make optimum use of the new Budget which will create an opportunity for opening and supporting the first Medical SEZ. Time and again, India has taken the lead in pioneering developments. Medical research should be one area where we have the potential to lead the country towards the beginning of an era of bio-economy by 2030.

(The writer is a Padma Sri awardee and cardiothoracic surgeon credited with India's first bypass. He is Chairman and CEO of Frontier Lifeline Hospital)

I RENEW MY APPEAL TO THE CWC TO HOLD LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS TO ENERGISE WORKERS AND INSPIRE VOTERS. —CONGRESS LEADER SHASHI THAROOR

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



IF ANYONE HAS ANY DOUBTS ABOUT THIS, HE SHOULD KINDLY READ THE RESOLUTION OF THE CWC BEFORE GIVING ANY STATEMENTS IN PUBLIC. —CONGRESS CHIEF SPOKESPERSON RANDEEP SURJEWALA

Digital slums in internet society

A divide is explicitly emerging in India, which might result in massive gaps in access to the internet in the age of a network society



MOHAMMAD IRSHAD

ARNISHA ASHRAF

The internet has entered all possible dimensions of human existence. It has overwhelmingly transformed the contours of social communication, behaviour and imagination. The web is gainfully managed by knowledge workers, who could be from diverse social groups and identities, to steer it in a determined direction to attribute shape through three indispensable variables: Power, language and culture. Internet has acquired the status of something that is inherently for the good of the public, hence it must be considered a fundamental human utility. Our growing reliance on communication networks has facilitated the advance of a technology-driven internet society.

In India, the rapid growth of online and partially private behavioural and policy changes in doing business furthered the rise of an (ICT) Information and Communication Technology-monitored "internet economy." Diffusion of mobile phones could make access possible to various things, which were earlier only physically accessible. In India, not enough theoretical engineering has taken place concerning online communities to enable them to exploit the scope of the same comprehensively. It however, remains explicit that the internet can bring significant threat to conventional corridors of power, making them fearful of its power. And rightly so, as it carries the potential to transform prevailing social structures.

The internet has become a crucial constituent to underline the arrival of digital citizenry throughout the world. This will further contribute in the formulation of different online social groups and identities. However, it is notable that new and efficient legislations have not emerged so far pertaining to digital citizens. Therefore, new citizens act without any constraints, rules and procedures in this new land. This perhaps helps them escape accountability for certain actions, in contrast to the physical citizenry. In doing so, this might develop the case for an appropriate study of anonymity, verification, authenticity and lack of moral currency. Social network theories are helpful to understand online communities in the country. Moreover, information exchange can happen among people of same communities, whether they are members of civil society, students or professionals. We are, however, not sure about the quality of the same.

Internet Society, in a 2017 report, maintains that the Net allows people to develop and join new communities and eliminates geographical barriers to make connections. It further demonstrates that around 53 per cent of the world's population was offline in 2017. As mainly rural regions of the world did not have access to the internet, this has reasonably contributed to a sharp rise in the digital divide/digital discrimination. The personal freedom to express and right to the internet was largely suspended and put on hold.

The web deliberately seems to be failing in projecting its true meaning to produce extensive, eloquent departures to the new age to humanity, different from the agricultural and industrial society. Though new means of communication have carved out a social, political and eco-



THE HUGE COST OF ACCESS TO AND THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY WILL SET THE STAGE FOR A DIGITAL DIVIDE I.E. DIGITAL DISCRIMINATION. DIGITAL ILLITERACY IS ALSO ON THE CONSTANT RISE IN INDIA. PARADOXICALLY, THE GOVERNMENT IS CLAIMING TO BE MANUFACTURING THE BASE AT A BREAKNECK PACE FOR DIGITAL INDIA, WITHOUT ADDRESSING THESE UNRELENTING PROBLEMS



nomics space for some unnoticeable and unsung communities, the internet has also been considered as a new instrument to withstand new business organisations, power structures and technology-determined groups of diverse nature.

Certainly the goal of digital citizens and digital participation is gaining momentum. India has close to 1,162 million mobile phone subscribers and 1,183 million telephones. Though, in contrast to 2018, there is a sharp decline in mobile subscribers and telephone subscribers in 2019. A major cause of the same could be the deteriorating health of the Indian economy. The Government must employ strong measures to arrange for free and affordable internet to maximise digital participation in digital India. Instead of doing that, the Government is promoting the culture of internet shutdowns across the country. In 2019, the number of internet shutdowns rose over 100 times than in the past.

Ordinary citizens could be the generators and contributors of information i.e. knowledge. This, however, is brought along with the ample use of technology, which is costly and requires trained and efficient individuals to make use of it. In an agricultural society, those who could not acquire land of their own to cultivate then just worked as labourers, in other words service providers. Likewise, in this technology-driven age, with some exceptions, they cannot acquire key positions to make it functional for them, particularly the underprivileged.

Telecom Statistics India (2019), reports that telephone subscribers in rural and urban India stand at 514 million and 669 million respectively. It authenticates that a considerable widening disparity exists between rural and urban telephone subscribers, which

stops a sizeable rural population from existing in the online/digital world. A study by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), *India Internet (2019)*, noted that nearly one-third of users access the internet for more than one hour in urban areas, whereas in rural regions, a similar proportion of users access the net for 15-30 minutes. It raises pertinent questions about the elementary construction for rural India to be an effective contributor to the vision of the Digital India Programme.

In this age of alternative facts, anyone can claim information/knowledge by generating and contributing to content making. It raises grave concerns regarding the validation of this information. In the meantime, this has provided people with ample opportunities to become knowledge producers instead of remaining consumers of manufactured information/knowledge. Women's Rights Online by the World Wide Web Foundation says that in the poor areas of New Delhi, the few women who are online use the internet to look for important information on their rights (17 per cent), search for jobs (29 per cent) or voice their opinions online (eight per cent). The survey, initiated to minimise the gender gap in India, argues for prioritising free public net access.

In another report by IAMAI (2017), in urban India, the ratio of women mobile internet users stands at 40 per cent as opposed to an impressive 60 per cent of men. In rural India, women mobile internet users are only 33 per cent compared to 67 per cent men.

This widening inequality might be a notable obstruction to the purpose of digital equality and participation. It, therefore, shall be a matter of grave concern to all of us. According to the same report, 57 per cent of the mobile inter-

net users are under the age of 25 and a large portion of that, with the help of fake news, trolling and disinformation, cater to online constituencies of political parties.

Still there are people who can't access the internet as they don't have smart phones, laptops, gadgets and other mandatory devices. Therefore, a digital divide is explicitly emerging in India, which might result in massive gaps in access to the internet in the age of a network society. The huge cost of access to and the use of new technology will set the stage for a digital divide i.e. digital discrimination. Digital illiteracy is also on the constant rise in India. Paradoxically, the Government is claiming to be manufacturing the base at a breakneck pace for Digital India, without addressing these unremitting problems.

Leading theorist of the information society, Frank Webster argues that the new society is more of a theoretical one. The construction of these theories will determine the democratic and egalitarian patterns of this new age. If these ingrained flaws formed during the construction of theoretical knowledge are rectified, it would foster a sustainable information environment.

Undeniably, at this epoch, we have information in abundance and fewer instruments to certify authenticity, relevancy and beneficial information, which set the score for the post-truth age. Meanwhile, still, some of them could not enjoy the enormity of information. Hence a parallel, mammoth building in the internet society is constructed, wherein digital slums will find a permanent place, without any trace of their digital history.

(Irshad is Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, DU and Ashraf is Assistant Professor, IMS Unison University, Dehradun)

The quality of water still awaits a verdict

Clean supply is a basic right like clean air and is needed for survival. The citizens of Delhi must fight for their fair share of this important natural resource



KOTA SRIRAJ

quality to be better than that of some European cities. Even though the comparison with European cities seems a bit far-fetched, what is really worrying is the fact that the citizens of Delhi still have no conclusive answer regarding the quality of their water supply. And all the reports did was to spark off a slanging match between various political parties in an election year.

Traditionally, we rely on the authentic testing standards and procedures of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). In September 2019, the BIS collected tap water samples from 11 locations across Delhi and tested the same for odour, colour and pH values and Total Dissolved Solids. These were part of the 24 parameters on which the samples were assessed. The water samples eventually failed on all the 24 parameters, leading to a major hue and cry in the political as well as public sphere.

However, even as the confusion over the authenticity of various reports remains, children and the elderly continue to consume water with dubious quality. The only one to



gain out of this mess is the water purifying industry, which is witnessing an unprecedented boom on the back of the fears of the populace. The just-concluded elections also did not see any of the contesting parties give clarity on how they would approach the problem of unsafe drinking water and air pollution in the national Capital.

So, for the citizens of Delhi, the problems continue unabated as they battle with dirty air and water, with

no respite in sight. In January, a leading media group commissioned a study to test the water quality in seven Lok Sabha constituencies across Delhi in an effort to highlight the water quality woes of the Capital before the February 8 Assembly elections. Termed as Operation Paani, the initiative involved collecting water samples from across the city on three different days and getting them tested by independent water quality experts.

The tests eventually found that half of Delhi was getting unsafe drinking water. However, this time the report has not found any detractors. But then, the elections are over, so who is bothered to highlight the issue anymore. The spectre of beleaguered, frustrated and short on temper residents fighting for water near rusty water tankers is an all too common sight in India. Unfortunately, it is the same even in the national Capital and has remained so even after decades of governance by some of the so-called best governments in power. It seems like it is in the best interests of political parties not to solve such problems so that they can be milked for votes in the next elections.

This, sadly, is the fix that India finds herself in, where political issues are kept alive at the cost of the common man. So, how does Delhi get its water right? Clean water is a basic right like clean air and is needed for survival. The citizens must fight for their fair share of this important natural resource. The present Government in Delhi prides itself on the fact that it is people-friendly and

approachable, which means it must listen to the problems of the people and more importantly do something about solving the issues that matter to the populace. And not just the Government, water woes are an amazing opportunity for the corporate world, too, if India Inc wants to approach the issue through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme. Under the CSR programme, corporates can tie up with the Government and install an on-the-spot water checking mechanism that is connected to the water supply pipes. This will give a real time feedback on the quality of the water being supplied. If suitable technology is paired with this initiative, then water quality readings can be forwarded to the citizens' phone through an app and also be sent to the Government department concerned. This initiative will definitely improve water quality and Government accountability in one go, provided the politicisation of the issue stops and a genuine quest for a solution begins.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



CHINA'S GAG ON MEDIA IS BAD

In the midst of the coronavirus outbreak, Beijing has expelled three journalists. Since the Wall Street Journal headline on Coronavirus caused real anger in China, the expulsions may help to divert growing rage at the official handling of the outbreak towards foreigners. But reliable coverage, of the kind that Chao Deng, one of those expelled, has been producing from Wuhan, is in the interests of all. (The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



Muthoot Finance raises \$ 550 million via bonds

NEW DELHI: Gold loan financier Muthoot Finance on Friday said it has raised USD 550 million (around Rs 3,900 crore) through dollar bond, offering a coupon of 4.4 per cent. The proceeds of the issue will be used for towards lending, the company said in a release. Last year in October, it had raised USD 450 million through its maiden three-year bond. "The response from international bond investors in our second issue is quite overwhelming. This fund raise will enable us in further diversifying and strengthening our sources of funding," its chairman M G George Muthoot said. The transaction saw 37 per cent participation from Asia, 13 per cent from Europe and 50 per cent from the US. The bond was launched with an initial pricing guidance of 4.750 per cent on February 20, but with a strong demand from investors, the company was able to tighten pricing by 35 basis points to 4.4 per cent, the release said.



LTI enters the Nifty Next 50 Index

NEW DELHI: National Stock Exchange of India Ltd. (NSE) has included technology consulting and digital solutions company Larsen & Toubro Infotech (LTI) in its Nifty Next 50 Index. LTI got listed in July 2016, and the company has grown rapidly during last four years, leading to this significant milestone in its growth journey, it said in a release. The NIFTY Next 50 Index is computed basis free float methodology i.e taking the firm's equity price and multiplying it by the number of shares readily available in the market, it was noted. "It is a significant recognition as it represents top 50 companies that are considered most lucrative for investors", LTI said. Roughly over ten per cent of the stocks traded on NSE constitute from NIFTY Next 50 Index and this is increasing year-on-year, the release added.

India hitting US 'very hard' on trade, says Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India has been hitting the US "very hard" on trade with high tariffs for many years, Donald Trump complained ahead of his first visit to the country during which the President said he will "talk business" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote American products.

President Trump and First Lady Melania are scheduled to travel to Ahmedabad, Agra and New Delhi on February 24 and 25.

"I'm going to India next week and we're talking trade. They've been hitting us very hard for many, many years," Trump said at a 'Keep America Great' rally in Colorado on Thursday.

Trump told thousands of his supporters that he "really likes" Prime Minister Modi and they would be talking business.

"We've got to talk a little... We've got to talk a little business. It's been hitting us hard. They give us tariffs, one the highest in the world is India," he said.

Ahead of Trump's visit, there have been reports on India and the US agreeing on a trade package as a precursor to a major trade deal.

Downplaying the expectation of a trade deal with India during his visit, Trump said the



"We've got to talk a little... We've got to talk a little business. It's been hitting us hard. They give us tariffs, one the highest in the world is India"
— DONALD TRUMP, US President

two countries could make a "tremendous" trade deal, but indicated that the talks on this might slow down if he did not get a good deal.

"We're going to India, and we may make a tremendous deal there," Trump said in his commencement address at the Hope for Prisoners Graduation Ceremony in Las Vegas on

Thursday. "Maybe we'll slow down. We'll do it after the election. I think that could happen too. So, we'll see what happens," he said.

"But we're only making deals if they're good deals because we're putting America first. Whether people like it or not, we're putting America

first," Trump said. The bilateral India-US trade in goods and services is about three per cent of the US' world trade.

Trump spoke about his India visit at the Colorado rally and the grand welcome he is expected to get in the country.

"I hear, they are going to have 10 million people. They say anywhere from six to 10 million people are going to be showing up along the route to one of the largest stadiums in the world, the largest cricket stadium in the world, which is brand new and beautiful," Trump said.

He said the "Namaste Trump" rally in Ahmedabad would spoil him.

"Prime Minister Modi said, we will have 10 million people greet you. Here's my problem. We have a packed house. We have a lot of people, thousands of people that couldn't get in. It's going to look like peanuts from now on," he said.

"I'll never be satisfied with the crowd. If we have 10 million people in India, how can I be satisfied when we fill up like a 60,000 seat stadium? I am getting spoiled? He said build a bigger stadium visit," Trump said.

One of his supporters from the audience suggested that he built a bigger stadium.

Efforts on to include G-Secs in global indices soon: RBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das has said the central bank has already initiated discussions with some institutions and efforts are on for inclusion of government bonds in global indices as quickly as possible.

The development would attract higher foreign flows as many overseas funds are mandated to track global indices. It will help bring in large passive investments from overseas, as a result more domestic capital would be available for industry as crowding out to that extent would be reduced.

"That is work in progress. We have had our discussions with some institutions which maintain these global index...not possible to spell out a timeline, but it is a work in progress. Our effort will be to see that it is taken forward as quickly as possible. I don't want to give a timeline," he told PTI in an interview.

This was a long-pending suggestion of foreign investors that was addressed in the Budget this year.

"Certain specified categories of Government securities would be opened fully for non-

Globally, there are some large institutional investors that track these indices, such as Bloomberg Barclays Emerging Market Bond Index, for positional decisions on sovereign papers

resident investors, apart from being available to domestic investors as well," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in the Budget 2020-21.

The specified securities, which will be listed on the indices, will not have a lock-in requirement.

Globally, there are some large institutional investors that track these indices, such as Bloomberg Barclays Emerging Market Bond index, for positional decisions on sovereign papers.

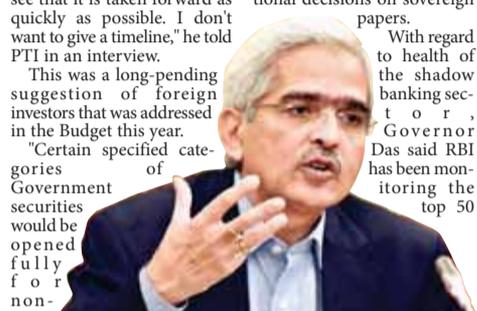
With regard to health of the shadow banking sector, Governor Das said RBI has been monitoring the top 50

NBFCs very closely, in fact much more closely than any-body can imagine from outside.

"Similarly, the health of the other financial sector entities including the banks are also being very closely monitored by the Reserve Bank of India. The Reserve Bank remains committed to maintain financial sector stability," he said.

As far as the NBFCs are concerned, he said, "our close monitoring over the last one year, we have a reasonably good idea about where exactly the stress lies. We are constantly engaged with the individual NBFCs and only very few of the NBFCs have some liquidity issues."

"We are constantly engaging with their management, with their promoters and encouraging them to resolve their problems through market based solutions in terms of getting additional liquidity. The engagement with the NBFCs management is constantly on," he added.



Coal supply by CIL to power sector declines 7% to 378 million tonnes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL's coal supply to the power sector registered a decline of 6.8 per cent to 377.86 million tonnes (MT) in the April-January period of the ongoing fiscal.

The commodity despatch by Coal India (CIL) to the power sector in the year-ago period was 405.61 MT, according to official data.

However, the coal despatch by CIL to the power sector in January registered an increase of 2.9 per cent to 43.20 MT, over 42 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal, it said.

The supply of dry-fuel by Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), a state-owned coal miner, in the April-January period also registered a decline of 2.6 per cent to 44.03 MT, over 45.22 MT in the year-ago period.

Stating rain as the 'enemy of the coal sector', a government



official had earlier blamed extended monsoon for the loss of coal output for a few months (from July) in the current fiscal.

CIL saw its production decline by 3.9 per cent to 451.52 MT in April-January period, over 469.65 MT in the year-ago period.

The state-owned firm had earlier said that it will produce 750 MT of coal in the next financial year.

The firm will further produce 1 billion tonnes of coal by FY2024, Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi had said.

No more retail liquor outlets needed in Goa: Trade body

PNS ■ PANAJI

Liquor traders in Goa on Friday asked the state government to stop issuing any more licences for retail sale of alcohol as the industry has reached "saturation point".

All Goa Liquor Traders Association president Dattaprasad Naik also said if the proposed hike in excise duty on alcohol mooted in the recent state budget is not withdrawn, the entire industry would collapse.

The budget 2020-21, presented in the assembly on February 6, proposed a hike in the excise duty on various liquor brands, including local brew 'Feni'.

Talking to PTI, Naik said 2,000 retail liquor outlets already exist for a population of 15 lakh which is sufficient to meet the requirements in Goa.

"There is no space for more outlets in the state. The state government should stop giving fresh licences for the next



three years, he said, adding the industry has reached "saturation point".

Naik said besides the 2,000 retail outlets, there are 8,000-10,000 bars which sell liquor across the state, a popular tourist destination.

He claimed the liquor trade industry is slowly slipping out of the hands of Goans due to "faulty" policies of the state government.

The budget 2020-21, presented in the Assembly on February 6, proposed a hike in the excise duty on various liquor brands, including local brew 'Feni'

should be made compulsory so as to stop increasing take over of the industry by non-Goans, he said.

Naik admitted that several local traders have illegally leased out their premises to non-Goans. This was the trade which was exclusively with Goans, but slowly it is slipping out of their hands. Now, 75 per cent of the people in this trade are Goans, he commented.

When licences are taken up for renewal annually, the rule of 25 years of domicile in Goa

Strides Consumer forays into north India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer healthcare firm Strides Consumer on Friday said it has forayed into North Indian market with oral nicotine replacement therapy and topical analgesic segments.

The company currently has strong presence in states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Assam. "We have forayed in the market in North as it is a large market in terms of size and consumers here are quite open to trying new products," Strides Consumer Pvt Ltd CEO Subodh Marwah said.

The company plans to expand its presence in western region too, he added. "The expansion into the new geographic sphere testifies our vision to take our brand and products to every customer in the nation," Marwah said.



Union Minister for Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Union Minister for Women & Child Development and Textiles Smriti Irani inaugurating the three-day Organic Food Festival, at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, in New Delhi

India's organic food mkt growing at 17 per cent annually: Harsimrat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's organic food market is growing at 17 per cent annually and has the potential to grow at a faster pace on rising demand for health and wellness food products across the world, Union Food Processing Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal said on Friday.

Badal and Minister for Women and Child Development (WCD) Smriti Irani jointly inaugurated an organic food festival for women entrepreneurs at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium here.

The festival with a theme "Unleashing India's Organic Market Potential" has been organised by both the ministries with CII as the industry partner.

More than 180 women entrepreneurs, self-help groups (SHGs) and co-operatives are taking part in this three-day exhibition organised in the national capital during February 21-23.

Addressing the event, Badal said the two ministries have come together to give women entrepreneurs in the organic sector "wings to fly and reach the sky".

She said this festival would be organised six times a year across India, and the plan is to make it an international exhibition in the near future.

She said the entire world is looking towards organic and wellness food, which is required for both physical and mental health. "In organic and health foods, India is a power house," Badal said.

'Reliance rejig will lead to cleaner structure'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries' move to consolidate its media and distribution businesses under one entity Network18 Media & Investments will create a cleaner structure and make the merger of entertainment channels with Sony less likely, experts said.

Earlier this week, the company said it will merge its TV18 Broadcast business with Network18, and maintain the cable and broadband businesses of Hathway Cable & Datacom and Den Networks,



which it bought in 2018, as separate wholly-owned subsidiaries of Network18.

Network18's portfolio includes Nickelodeon, MTV, and CNBC TV18, among others.

"From RIL's perspective, this creates a cleaner structure and

is easier to manage (as it reduces listed entities)," BofA Securities said in a report Friday.

In a separate report, CLSA said the rejig will make a deal with Sony for merger of entertainment channels less likely as the news broadcasting sector

has a restriction of 26 per cent foreign ownership.

Between content and distribution, BofA considered distribution to be the more important component for RIL's media business as it generates higher margins and return ratios as compared to content that could be aggregated.

"The merger helps improve capital structure as the combined entity will be debt-free and has a balanced mix of subscription (53 per cent) and advertisements (47 per cent) in its revenues," it said.

Asian markets fall on fears over spreading virus

AFP ■ HONG KONG

A spike in new virus cases outside China spooked Asian markets Friday after Wall Street pulled back from record highs as more companies warned earnings could be hurt by the epidemic.

More than 2,200 people have died from the novel coronavirus, which has infected over 75,000 people, mostly in China, and spread panic around the world.

While Beijing claims its epidemic control efforts are working, the rising death toll and number of new infections abroad have rattled investors.

A batch of warnings from companies over the impact of the virus on bottom lines -- including Danish ship operator Maersk and Air France-KLM -



and weaker manufacturing data in Japan also fanned anxiety.

Initial hopes that the virus would have only a short-term impact on earnings and economic growth have given way

to the reluctant realisation that it could linger.

"It took Apple to do what the coronavirus couldn't -- make stocks feel a little queasy," said Stephen Innes of AxiCorp, referring to the tech giant's

While Beijing claims its epidemic control efforts are working, the rising death toll and number of new infections abroad have rattled investors

warning Monday that it would miss its quarterly revenue forecast because of the disease.

"The market seemed to absorb the initial Apple shock in its typically pleasant manner, but it's the aftershocks when corporate America starts waving the warning flags in tandem that could prove to be the biggest gut check."

Seoul's Kospi index fell 1.5 per cent. The country confirmed 48 more virus cases on Friday afternoon, adding to the 52 it announced in the morn-

ing, taking its total to 204.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index closed down 0.4 per cent as investors took to the sidelines ahead a long weekend.

Mainland China's key Shanghai Composite Index closed up 0.3 per cent following central bank efforts to cushion the impact of the virus on the world's second-largest economy, where manufacturing activity has been hit hard.

Elsewhere, Sydney, Taipei and Singapore all shed 0.3 per cent.

China reported Thursday a big drop in the number of new infections after it once again changed the method of counting patients with the virus.

It was the second revision of criteria in just eight days and the flip-flopping "did not help the mood" of investors, noted Rodrigo Catril of National Australia Bank. The National Health Commission reported 889 new cases on Friday, up from the previous day. After the losses on Wall Street and in Europe, Jeffrey Halley of OANDA likened the reaction on Asian markets to "more a case of the sniffles, rather than a full-blown cold". But he said company warnings "could turn into a flood" if the virus crisis continues for the rest of the first quarter and extends into the next.

'READING MINDS' through mentalism

Is it really possible to read someone's mind? Is it possible to control someone's thoughts and actions the way you want? Through proper practice and intense meditation, to some extent it is possible says Squadron leader Jayasimha at an event recently held at Hari Hara Kalabhavan.

of World Memory Sports Council for India. He had been training students and adults on memory and motivation. He claimed that through his research, he created the concept of mentalism, which has been existing for some time in Israel. Addressing a crowd of 1,000 people Jayasimha said, by nature, all of us are mind readers, that's possible for us through reading of other person's body language, psychology and voice modulation. "Through experience and expertise we can

perceive what the other person is thinking and that way we can manipulate that person's thought process. This is being practiced in Israel but this is the first time it's being brought to India," he said. He had demonstrated various feats of memory such as reproducing 100 digit random number by merely looking at it once. Among the other mental feats, he managed to find out what is written on envelopes, say the name of someone's childhood friend correctly, recall the calendar of

2,000 years and predict where the audience will ask him to cut the newspaper clippings. Squadron Leader Jayasimha said that he does not have any supernatural powers but through body language, psychology, voice modulation and behaviour he is able to guess as to what others might be thinking. His mind tricks have really entertained the audience and he said that he will do further research and practice and come up with more such entertaining shows in the coming days.



SHUBH MANGAL...: SHALLOW BUT FUN

At one level you are watching the same old Bollywood rom-com, about two lovebirds trying to unite against all odds, against parental censure and societal diktats. It's all done with feel-good verve too, with the mandatory *naach-gaana* and *shaadi ka tamasha* thrown in. Only, *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* always looked different despite the cliches. The film grabbed eyeballs from the day it was announced because the lovebirds in the frame weren't a guy and a girl. This was commercial Bollywood's first ever homosexual rom-com, catering the story of a couple of lovers.

Which denotes a big leap for mainstream Hindi cinema. The love story has traditionally been the most commonplace money machine among all genres in Bollywood. To retain every stereotype of the genre and turn the lucrative package into a quiet little snub at homophobes, amid standard hilarity and melodrama, is actually quite an experiment to pull off, and debutant writer-director Hitesh Kewalya deserves kudos if only for that much. *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* sets out to narrate that idea through a screenplay set against a smalltown, middle-class backdrop. This is the world of Aman Tripathi (Jitendra), who com-

pletes a happy family album with his mother, father and siblings. Aman is swept off his feet by Kartik Singh (Ayushmann) and thus begins an affair that will leave his conservative family lost for words and reaction. The struggle of the gay couple, as they try to convince their kin into acceptance, is played out with humour, but Kewalya's script credibly avoids getting flippant about it. Rather, as Aman's family go on a desperate matchmaking spree to hook him up with a girl, you realise the joke's on homophobia. Being Kartik Singh has to be Ayushmann Khurrana's toughest challenge among the comedy films he has delivered lately, if only because playing the gay lover would seem at loggerheads with the essential idea that mainstream Bollywood harbours about heroism even in 2020. *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* only marks the latest chapter in actor's continuing adventure with disrupting everything that defines the Bollywood hero, and he is clearly relishing every bit of it. But this isn't Ayushmann's best performance ever — the film and its protagonist lack the nuances of *Andhadhun* or *Article 15*.

For TVF sensation Jitendra Kumar, playing out Aman would seem like a perfect launch into the big screen space. Jitendra fans know him as a maverick of sorts in the web world

where he so effortlessly impresses. He carries that understated screen presence into his act as Aman, a perfect Yin to Kartik's Yang. The odd couple chemistry the two actors share owes itself to an author-backed plot, but *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* wouldn't be the same without Neena Gupta and Gajraj Rao either. Delivering excellent acts individually, they also remain an asset for the film as a duo. Rao and Gupta benefit from the fact that this film, like most of Aanand L. Rai's productions, sets up every character including the prop cast with a balance of the real and the entertaining. Proven talents as Manurishi Chaddha and Maanvi Gargroo, who play out vital cogs, also impress in interesting roles.

The film's biggest assets are its actors, along with the fact that it is among Bollywood's quirkiest shots at comedy ever. Putting the spotlight on homosexuality in a commercial set-up would also seem like a commendable effort at starting a wider conversation on the subject. However, you get a finale that is not altogether unpredictable. Looking at the formulaic Bollywood love story through the prism of gay romance, the film also staunchly refuses to skim beneath the surface while addressing a subject as gay relationship, which has acquired topicality in our times. — IANS

BHEESHMA:

A fun filled ride all the way

K RAMYA SREE
 ■ HYDERABAD

Nithiin has been waiting to taste box office success for the last couple of years, especially after his last film tanked. He had pinned all hopes on *Bheeshma* and took a year-and-a-half before committing to the film. Let's find out if this film gives director Venky Kudumula and Nithiin another hit. *Bheeshma* is a basic romantic love story with a strong undertone of organic farming and its fight over using chemicals in farming. *Bheeshma Organic* and *Field Science* are rival companies and how Nithiin saves *Bheeshma Organic* from his rival firm forms the basis of the story. To begin with, the film starts off with the CEO of *Bheeshma Organic*, *Bheeshma* (Anantha Nag) announcing that he is stepping down from the position. Everyone is curious as to who will take over the company and its Rs 8,000 crore properties. Nithiin, whose name is also *Bheeshma*, becomes the CEO and his love interest Chitra (Rashmika Mandanna) becomes a cat-

alyst for the same. This forms the core of the film. This film is a perfect example of how one can tweak a run-of-the-mill story, infuse it with comedy and the right actors and ensure you laugh your way

to the bank. Speaking of performances, Nithiin plays the character of a meme maker and is depressed over the fact that he has remained single through his life. His performance

was outstanding and it is safe to say that he has worked a lot on himself and his expressions. He seems to have nailed the role without going overboard. His comic timing is intact and pairing with Rashmika has worked well for this film. Overall, he has succeeded in playing *Bheeshma*, who has to be strong as a CEO, but at the same time, be funny as a meme maker. There is nothing much to speak about Rashmika. Her role of supporting *Bheeshma* at every step is shown neatly. She also deserves credit for her top-notch dance performance. Vennela Kishore is the soul of the film. His punch lines keep you laughing throughout the film and one never gets bored for even a second. The comic timing between Nithiin and Vennela is so good that it wouldn't be a surprise if they are paired again in the future. Jisshusen who plays the antagonist was okay as a white collar villain but his character could've been developed better and did not feel very strong for a commercial film. Sampath Raj, Raghu

Babu, Brahmaji get brief roles and they make their presence felt in the film. Hebbah Patel also gets a very small role and did justice to it. Speaking of the direction, despite choosing a very basic storyline, Venky has managed to pull it off with the right cast. The pre and post interval bang is a must watch. Although initially it felt slow for about eight minutes, he managed to create a sense of suspense, comedy and romance soon enough. However, the predictable climax played spoilsport and the film seemed rushed towards the end. The comedy is what holds everything firmly in place, without which this simple story could've become boring. Venky has somehow managed to keep the audience entertained throughout. Music by Mahati Swara Sagar took the film to a different level altogether. Despite having very few songs, the BGM ensures you feel you're watching a commercial film. Production values of the film are top-notch and the neat camera work enhances the visuals quite well.

VERDICT

Bheeshma is an out and out comedy with a simple storyline and cute chemistry between the lead. Be it comedy, action or romance everything is dealt with subtly without much hullabaloo. Smooth editing and good writing add to the film's character and will undoubtedly give Nithiin his sought-after hit.

RATING: 3/5

CAST

Nithiin, Rashmika Mandanna, Ananth Nag, Vennela Kishore, Jisshusen, Sampath Raj, Brahmaji, Raghu Babu



HOPKINS SET TO PLAY MIKE TYSON'S TRAINER IN BIOPIC

Hollywood star Anthony Hopkins is stepping into the boxing ring to portray former world champion pugilist Mike Tyson's famed trainer in a new biopic. Hopkins has been cast as Cus D'Amato in "Cus and Mike", based on author Monty Hall's book *Mike Tyson: Money, Myth, and Betrayal*, reports *aceshowbiz.com*. The film will explore the relationship between the pair and how D'Amato, who died in 1985, served as a tough father figure for Tyson, shaping him into a boxing great who became the youngest heavyweight title

winner in the sport's history at the age of 20. Filmmaker Nick Cassavetes adapted the story from an original screenplay by Desmond Nakano, and will also direct the project, reports Deadline. "This is an absolute dream scenario for me. An opportunity to work with Sir Anthony in a movie about two of my all-time heroes, Cus D'Amato and Mike Tyson, the most ferocious (and my favourite) fighter who ever lived? In a story about father figures that disappear too soon? I'm in heaven... It should be one for the ages..." Cassavetes said in a statement.

No actor has yet been finalised for the role of the troubled, young Tyson, who D'Amato discovered in New York at the age of 13 in the 1980s. Hopkins is the latest actor to be associated with the project about D'Amato — in 2018, Bruce Willis signed on to play the trainer in another movie, which was pegged as the directorial debut for former *Homeland* star Rupert Friend. Martin Scorsese was also previously reported to be teaming up with Jamie Foxx to make a biopic about D'Amato, who was played onscreen by George C. Scott in the 1995 TV movie *Tyson*.



Shilpa Shetty, hubby welcome their 2nd child

Actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra and her businessman husband Raj Kundra have welcomed their second child — a daughter through surrogacy, sources told IANS. They have named her Samisha Shetty

Kundra. A thrilled Shilpa said that Samisha was born on February 15 and tagged her little angel as "Junior SSK". "Samisha Shetty Kundra... Born :15th February 2020 ... Junior SSK in the house.... 'Sa' in Sanskrit is

'to have' and 'Misha' is Russian stands for 'someone like God...' "You personify this name, our Goddess Laxmi and complete our family," Shilpa wrote alongside a glimpse Samisha on social media. The couple has a son, Viaan Raj Kundra, born in May 2012.



SHUBH MANGAL ZYADA... BANNED IN DUBAI, UAE

The latest release of actor Ayushmann Khurrana *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* has been banned in Dubai and UAE over its homosexual content. According to *bollywood-hungama.com*, the film's makers even offered to edit the kiss between Ayushmann and co-actor Jitendra, but to no avail.

A source from Dubai told the portal, "We knew this was coming. Or, rather not coming. We really wanted to see what *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* has to say, since it is the first Bollywood film that normalises a gay relationship. Sadly, all films with a gay content are banned in these parts." When the producers of

the film offered to cut out the kiss scene between Jitendra and Ayushmann, they were reminded that it wasn't about the kiss but the content. Directed by Hitesh Kewalya, *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* is a love story between two men in small-town India. The film also stars Gajraj Rao and Neena Gupta among many others.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

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7					8			
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10								
11							12	
					13			
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16							17	
18							19	

NANCY

SUDOKU

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

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Sixth planet from the sun
- Pieces
- Teenager's skin problem
- A ship's chimney
- A song for a baby
- An insect's feeler
- Stopped
- A large group of soldiers
- A young sheep
- A dog with curly hair that is often clipped

DOWN

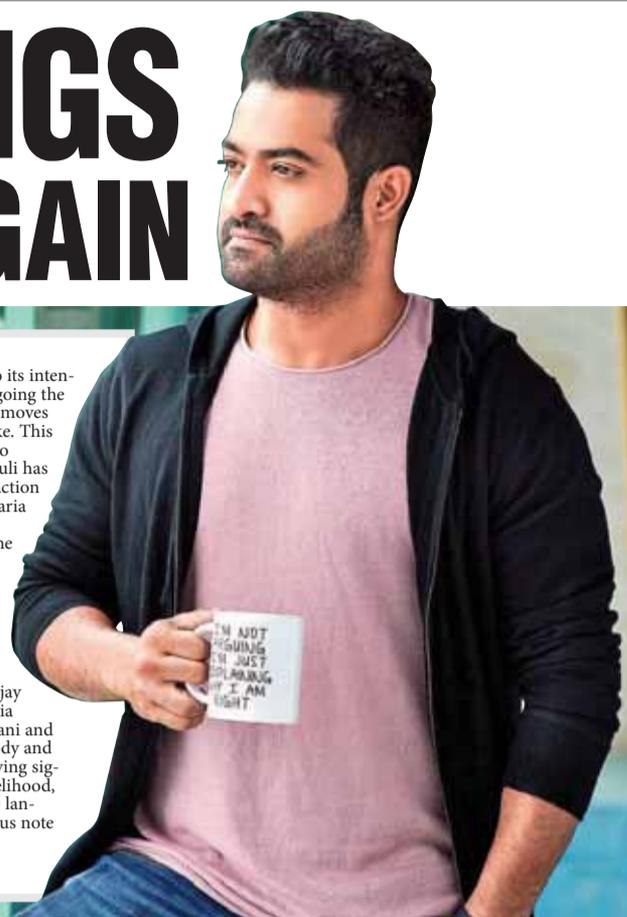
- Something to sit on
- The muscle in your mouth
- Hotels
- A precious metal
- Blow soapy water to make these
- A covering for a bed
- Something to write with
- Made noises while asleep
- The inside of your hand
- A rubber cover for a wheel

SOLUTION

H	A	N	E
S	I	G	H
U	H	E	U
N	E	T	S
B	A	T	C
R	R	C	W
N	E	I	G
S	E	O	H
U	M	B	R
L	L	A	S



TARAK SWINGS INTO ACTION AGAIN



The shooting of *RRR* has shifted to Aluminum Factory, Lingampally, where multiple sets have been erected for some portions of the film, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

For a major part of last one month, SS Rajamouli's *RRR*, starring Jr NTR and Ram Charan, was shot in Vikarabad forests. And now a little birdie tells us that shooting has shifted to Aluminum Factory, Lingampally, where multiple sets have been erected for some portions of the film. The director has already shot at this location in the past. The source adds, "The new schedule has begun on Wednesday evening and it will go on for another four-five days. The shooting is beginning around 7 pm and is being wrapped up in the wee hours of next day. Rajamouli is filming an action scene on Tarak who is playing young Komaram Bheem. 200 extras are dotting the frame every day. The sequence has been conceived creatively and the

night effect is adding to its intensity. As usual, Tarak is going the extra mile to get all his moves right and in a single take. This is the actor's second solo action block as Rajamouli has already shot a lengthy action scene with him in Bulgaria last September." A period-drama in the final leg of its filming, *RRR*, centers around the fictional exploits of two real freedom fighters Komaram Bheem and Alluri Seetharama Raju (played by Ram Charan). The likes of Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt, Olivia Morris, P Samuthirankani and Irish actors Alison Doody and Ray Stevenson are essaying significant roles. In all likelihood, the film will open in 10 languages on a simultaneous note on January 8 next year.

Rahul to play a narcoleptic

Presently filming new director Ravinder's crime-thriller *Black & White* where he plays a cabbie, young and promising talent Rahul Vijay has signed another movie. The film will mark the directorial debut of Lakshman, who has assisted a slew of movies produced by Anil Sunkara in the past, *The Pioneer* has exclusively learnt. A source close to the development says, "The film is a concept-based commercial entertainer. Rahul will be seen as a narcoleptic and problems that arise because of this condition are dealt in a thrilling and humorous way. The story and his characterisation sealed the deal for Rahul as he felt

that the role challenges the actor in him and at the same time confining itself in the commercial ambit, the story offers something fresh to the audience." The source adds that Rahul will begin shooting for the film tentatively titled *Telugu Veeralevara* from March second week and a major part of the filming will take place in Hyderabad. Raju who owns Lakshmikala and Sasikala theatres in Hyderabad is debuting as a producer with the film. Meanwhile, Rahul is awaiting the release of *College Kumar*, directed by Kannada filmmaker Santhu. It is a remake of Kannada hit of the same name. A comedy entertainer with an underlying message, it opens in cinemas on March 6. — NG



Shriya in talks for Rajasekhar's next

Shriya Saran, who was in the news recently for her participation in SS Rajamouli's *RRR*, is in early talks to be in Rajasekhar's next with director Veerabhadram. The film is an action thriller with a general dose of humour and will go to floors next month. "The director has reached out to Shriya to play the film's leading

lady and the actress has evinced her interest. She is yet to sign on the dotted line as her pay structure hasn't been discussed. If she comes on board, she will be seen as Rajasekhar's former love interest in the film," says a source close to the development. The source adds that the film's script has been locked completely and a major part of the film will be shot in Hyderabad.



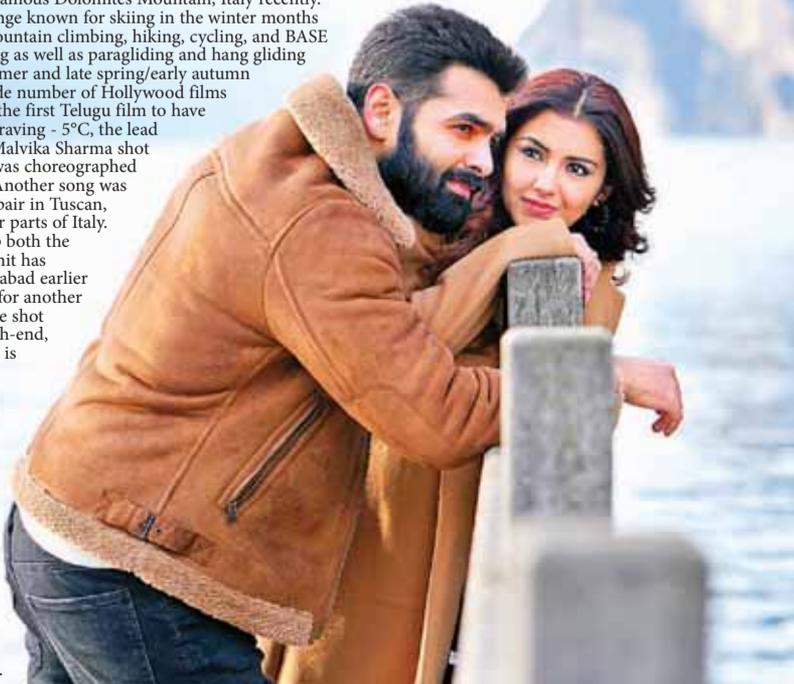
First look

Here is the first look of actress Kajal Aggarwal from her upcoming film *Mosagallu*, starring Vishnu Manchu, Navdeep and Naveen Chandra. Directed by Jeffrey Gee Chin, the film — based on a true story about the world's biggest IT scam — also features Suniel Shetty in a supporting role. The film's unit had recently wrapped up a schedule in the US and a song will be shot in Hyderabad from Monday. The film is slated to release later this summer.



Red first Telugu film to be shot at Dolomites Mountain

One of the songs of Ram-starrer *Red* was shot at the world famous Dolomites Mountain, Italy recently. The range known for skiing in the winter months and mountain climbing, hiking, cycling, and BASE jumping as well as paragliding and hang gliding in summer and late spring/early autumn has attracted a wide number of Hollywood films over years. *Red* is the first Telugu film to have been shot there. Braving -5°C, the lead pair of Ram and Malvika Sharma shot for the song that was choreographed by Shobi master. Another song was shot on the same pair in Tuscan, Florence and other parts of Italy. After wrapping up both the songs, the film's unit has returned to Hyderabad earlier this week. Except for another song, which will be shot towards this month-end, the film's shooting is over. Directed by Kishore Tirumala, *Red*, an investigative thriller, sees Ram in dual roles for the first time, while Nivetha Pethuraj will be seen as a cop. A production venture of Sravanthi Ravi Kishore, the film will hit the screens on April 9.



No.1 Yaari gets a new address

After recovering completely from a kidney ailment, actor Rana Daggubati has dived headlong into work, completing *Aranya* and beginning shooting for *Virata Parvam 92*. We've now learnt that the actor will begin the new season of his hit talk show *No. 1 Yaari* shortly. A show that celebrates friendship, the new season will not only feature more inspiring *yaaris* but it's also going to be a laugh riot just like the second season, a source tells us. "However, instead of Viu, the brand new season will be stream-



Sakshi settles for Silver; Vinesh takes Bronze

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exploiting a weaker field, Sakshi Malik claimed a Silver while Vinesh Phogat dominated her Bronze medal play-off after losing to nemesis Mayu Mukaida as Indian women team registered its best-ever performance at the senior Asian Wrestling Championship, returning with eight medals here on Friday.

The Indian team had won only one Gold medal before this edition but Divya, Pinki and Sarita Mor won three on the opening day. Nirmala Devi came out second best.

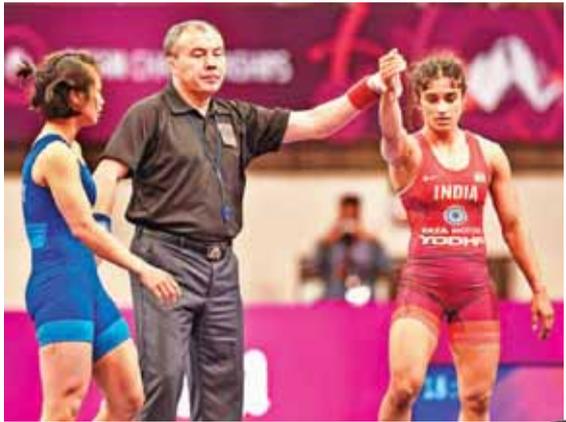
On Friday, Sakshi (65kg, Silver), Vinesh (53kg, Bronze) young Anshu Malik (57kg Bronze) and Gursharan Preet kaur (72kg, Bronze) added to India's tally.

Sakshi twice lost to Japan's Naomi Ruike — in the opening round and the final — to win her second Silver at this event. She had grabbed a Silver in 2017 also.

The Rio Olympic Bronze medalist Sakshi, who has been struggling of late, lost her opening round 1-2 to Naomi and could not score a point in final, which she lost 0-2.

"She was not that strong but I just could not score many points against her. Initially I lost two points and that pegged me back," she said.

Sakshi overcame two weak opponents to eventually reach the final. She outplayed Korea's Ohyoung Ha in her second round, winning by technical superiority. In her semifinal against Uzbekistan's Nabira Esenbaeva, she led 5-0 but her rival pulled off consecutive two-point moves to make it 5-4.



Umpire declares Vinesh Phogat as winner during Bronze medal match against Thi Ly Kieu

Sakshi has been losing in closing stages of late but this time she managed to hold on to her narrow lead, surviving anxious last two seconds.

All eyes were on Vinesh, who yet again fell to Mukaida to go out of the Gold medal race but made a strong comeback to win then Bronze medal play-off against Vietnam's Thi Ly Kieu, winning by technical superiority in the first period itself.

"Obviously I am not happy but I am making progress. It's not easy to beat experienced Japanese in this category. I have lost but I tried a few things and it worked a bit. Earlier I had not even scored a point against her but this time I got two. The gap is not much now, it's 70-100 between Mukaida and myself," Vinesh said.

Vinesh had lost twice to Mukaida in 2019 — at World Championship and Asian Championships — and the trend continued as the gritty Indian yet again struggled to break the strong defence of the Japanese.

In a tough opening round, Vinesh tried single leg attacks a number of times but every time Mukaida blocked her move and eventually got the upper body lock to subdue the home favourite.

Vinesh has won a medal at every Asian Championship since 2013.

Sakshi handed chance to book slot for Asian Olympic Qualifiers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sakshi Malik's dream to compete at the Tokyo Games is still alive with Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) deciding to hold fresh trials in two categories to pick women wrestlers for the Asian Olympic Qualifiers.

Two-time Cadet World champion Sonam Malik had defeated Sakshi during the 62kg trials but since she could not win a medal at the Asian Championship, the WFI has given Sakshi one more chance to book her place in the Indian team.

The Asian Qualifying event will be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from

March 27 to 29. The event was originally scheduled to be held in Xian but was moved out due to outbreak of Coronavirus in China.

"We have made a decision. The trials will be held in 62kg and 76kg on February 26 in Lucknow for women. These are the only categories which could not win any medal. We have also decided to hold fresh trials for 60kg category in Greco Roman style," said WFI Assistant Secretary Vinod Tomar.

The WFI had made it clear before the start of the championship that if required, it may hold fresh trials in categories where the performance will not be up to the mark.

Out of India's two brightest youngsters, it was Anshu who bagged a Bronze while Sonam Malik (62kg), who was pitted against some heavyweights lost her Bronze medal play-off.

Anshu opened up her campaign against Kyrgyzstan's Nuraida Anarkulova, winning by technical superiority but was outplayed by reigning world champion from Japan Riskao Kawai.

She then beat Sevara Eshmuratova from Uzbekistan to win her first medal at senior level.

"I had nothing to lose

and every thing to gain. I now know where I stand when I am competing against seasoned wrestlers in this category. I have got richer in experience," said the 18-year-old.

Sonam, who had defeated Sakshi in the trials, showed good tactical mind in her resounding win against Korea's Hanbit Lee and also in the 2-5 defeat against world bronze medalist Yukako Kawai.

Up against world champion Aisuluu Tynbekova, it was a tough ask for her to get bronze but she fought well before losing.

In the non-Olympic 72kg, Gursharanpreet Kaur Mongloia's Tsevegmed Enkhbayar in the third place play-off to win her second medal at this championship.



Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra in action during ITTF Hungary Open Sharath/Twitter

Sharath-Sathiyam enter Hungary Open final

BUDAPEST: The Indian pairing of Sharath Kamal and G Sathiyam upset top-seeds Kwan Kit Ho and Chun Ting Wong of Hong Kong to enter the men's doubles final of the ITTF World Tour Hungary Open here on Friday.

In a hard-fought five-setter, the Indian qualifiers won 11-7, 12-10, 4-11, 4-11, 11-9 and earned a meeting with the second-seeded pair of Duda Benedikt and Franziska Patrick from Germany in the final to be held today.

The Germans defeated Poland's Dyjas Jakub and Belgium's Nuytink Cedric 11-4, 11-5, 8-11, 11-3.

Also in the mixed doubles semifinals, Sharath and Manika Batra take on German duo of Patrick Franziska & Petrisa Solja.

On Thursday, Sharath and Sathiyam had beaten home favourites Nandor Ecseki and

Adam Szudi in the quarterfinals, after having sent the Japanese pair of Shunsuke Togami and Yuki Uda packing in previous round.

As for Sharath and Manika, they got a walkover in the quarterfinals from the second-seeded Japanese pair of Jun Mizutani and Mima Ito after Mizutani pulled out because of a neck injury he suffered during his singles event.

Manika failed to go past Japanese Miu Hirano in the pre-quarterfinals, losing in straight games of 9-11, 1-11, 7-11, 7-11. Manika, who beat Szu-Yu Chen of Taipei 4-3 in a tough round of 32 match, was down 0-3 before scoring a strong comeback win, including the crucial fourth game on extended points.

Sathiyam is still in the fray and is also slated to meet top-seed Harimoto Tomokazu and Manika will meet Japanese Miu Hirano in the round of 16. PTI



Frankfurt's Daichi Kamada celebrates scoring his side's second goal against Salzburg AP

Jota, Kamada hit Europa hat-tricks

AFP ■ WOLVERHAMPTON

Diogo Jota of Wolves and Daichi Kamada of Eintracht Frankfurt hit hat-tricks, but the man at the heart of the most remarkable Europa League display had a familiar name: Ianis Hagi, who inspired an unlikely Rangers fightback.

In the first leg of the round-of-32 on Thursday, Wolves beat Espanyol 4-0, Eintracht beat Salzburg 4-1 and Rangers beat Braga 3-2 at Ibrox.

Arsenal won 1-0 at Olympiakos and, in early games, Manchester United drew 1-1 away to Club Brugge and Celtic's visit to Copenhagen finished with the same score.

In a battle between two European heavyweights Bayer Leverkusen held off Porto 2-1.

Jota, who hit three in the last pool game in November and had not scored since, struck the first from close range, the second from a narrow angle and the third from outside the area.

Ruben Neves hit a typically spectacular volley and Wolves crushed the club struggling at the bottom of La Liga.

"We competed well and we were clinical," said Nuno Espirito Santo, the Wolves coach.

"For me, the organisation and another clean sheet is important. You know my view that everything starts from there."

In Frankfurt, Kamada, a 23-year-old Japanese midfielder, hit the first after 12 minutes. Two minutes before the break he broke from the halfway line to score a second. He added a third with a header in the 53rd minute.

He then turned provider, starting the move which ended with Filip Kostic netting Frankfurt's fourth.

Kamada has not scored in 17 Bundesliga games this season, but Thursday's hat-trick gave him six in the Europa League, all in his last three games and scored over a span of 178 minutes.

He becomes the third highest Japanese scorer in European club competition behind Shinji Kagawa, who scored 11 for Borussia Dortmund and Manchester United, and

Liverpool's Takumi Minamino who has so far also scored 11, all for Salzburg.

In Glasgow, Braga dominated the first hour and led with goals by captain Fransergio and Abel Ruiz.

Hagi started the fightback in the 67th minute, cutting in from the right and shooting in off the post. His father Gheorghie, who won the UEFA Cup, from which the Europa League evolved, with Galatasaray in 2000, celebrated in the stands.

Joe Aribo then scored a remarkable second, weaving and barging through the massed Braga defence and when he finally burst clear, the Nigerian international finished with composure.

With eight minutes left, Rangers won a free-kick. Hagi stepped up. His shot hit the wall and then arced slowly into the corner of the Braga net just out of reach of goalkeeper Matheus.

Rangers had saved themselves with three goals in 15 minutes.

"I think we've rediscovered ourselves, certainly from the second-half performance," Rangers manager Steven Gerrard told BT Sport.

"We showed unbelievable character, we ran hard for each other, we were more compact, more organised, we had a better shape and we were on the front foot more in the second half."

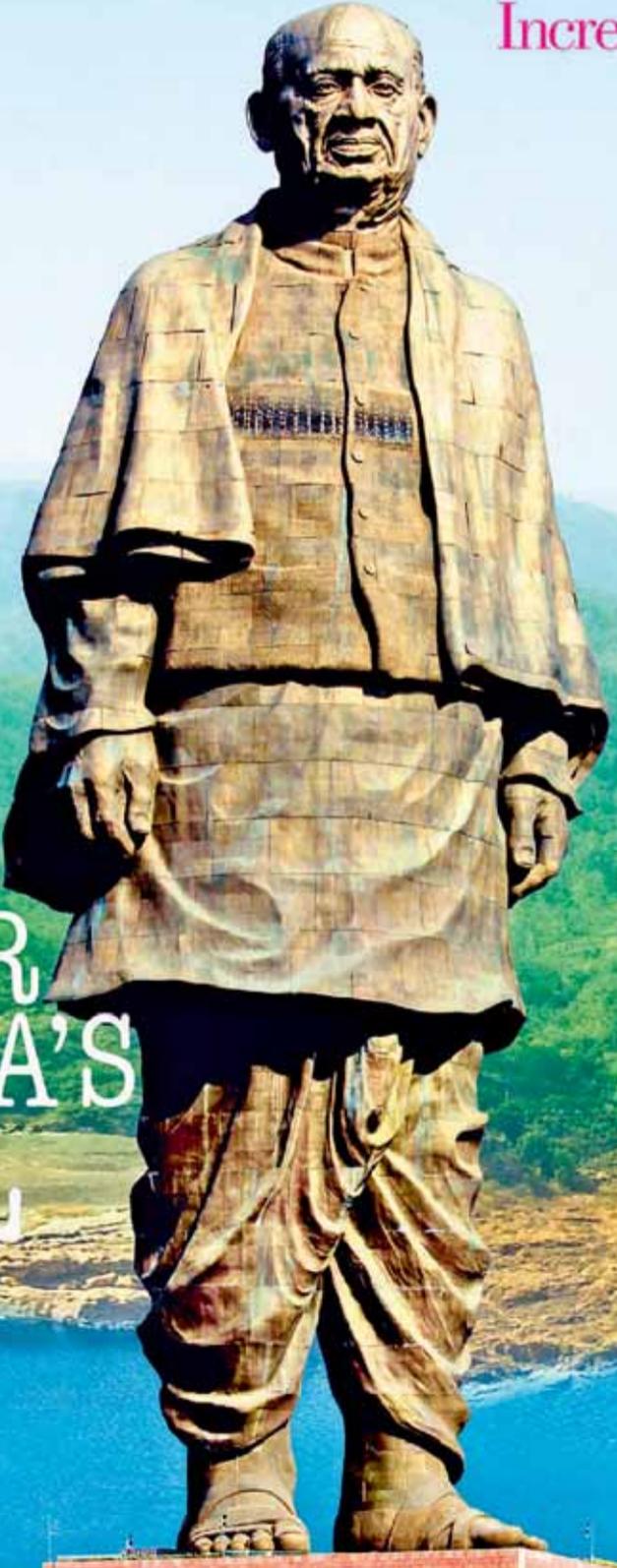
Arsenal also struck late in Greece. In the 81st minute, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang chased a long ball and kept it in play before passing inside to Bukayo Saka. The youngster hit a hard, low cross which Alexandre Lacazette turned in from close range.

Olympiakos had seven strikes on target to six by the Gunners but Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno stopped everything.

"It's my job to make saves," said the German.

"At the end when you have a clean sheet, I'm happy. We won this game and we have the away goal so we're happy."



THE COLOUR OF INDIA'S SOUL



February 26, 2020
Hotel Shangri-La, New Delhi

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