

ANALYSIS 7
 A TRICKY
 ROAD AHEAD

MONEY 8
 US BEATS CHINA TO BECOME
 INDIA'S TOP TRADING PARTNER

SPORTS 12
 JITENDER ENSURES PLACE
 IN INDIAN TEAM

VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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PAIDIPALLY OUT,
 PARASURAM IN
 FOR MAHESH'S
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TWISTS AND TURNS

Trump dinner invite hots up Telugu politics

■ KCR getting invite, Jagan ignored hotly debated in political circles

L VENKAT RAM REDDY
 ■ HYDERABAD

The guest list at the dinner President Ram Nath Kovind is hosting for the visiting US President Donald Trump on February 25 at Rashtrapati Bhavan has heated up politics pertaining to Telugu states.

For once, the reasons are certainly not cooked up! Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu is among the select Chief Ministers who have been invited for the dinner by the President. For reasons that cannot be fathomed, the names of other prominent

Chief Ministers, including AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, do not as-yet figure in the guest list.

This has touched off a flurry of politically sensitive speculations that it could be due to the "changing equations" of the BJP with TRS and YSRCP for various reasons. Political circles and rumour mills are abuzz over the factors that possibly could have contributed to the Centre adopting different yardsticks

for the CMs of Telugu states, let alone the other uninvited CMs among those of 28 states.

It is widely believed in political circles that TRS and YSRCP are 'secret friends' of BJP. There are strong reasons for this. Both TRS and YSRCP extended complete support to all the initiatives taken up by the NDA-I government between 2014 and 2019, especially demonetization, GST, election of President and Vice President of India etc. Both the parties supported abrogation of Article 370 after the NDA-2 government took over in May 2019. Besides, YSRCP went a step ahead and supported the con-



For reasons that cannot be fathomed, the names of other prominent Chief Ministers, including AP CM Jaganmohan Reddy, do not as-yet figure in the guest list

troversial Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament and voted in favour of it. TRS, on the contrary, vociferously opposed CAA Bill in Parliament and voted against it in both the Houses.

OPENING OF NEW VISTAS

'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' launch today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A new era will begin on Monday with the launch of 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy in Vizianagaram on Monday, according to officials.

'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme will provide financial assistance for hostel and mess charges of ITI, Polytechnic and Degree students.

The Education Department has approved Rs 2,300 crore for the present financial year. The

'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme will provide financial assistance for hostel and mess charges of ITI, Polytechnic and Degree students

As many as 11,87,904 students would be benefited by the scheme



amount under 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' will be credited into the accounts of the mother or guardian of the eligible student.

The Education Department will offer Rs 10,000 for ITI stu-

dents, Rs 15,000 for Polytechnic students, Rs 20,000 for Degree candidates every year through 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme in two equal instalments in February and July.

CONGRESS TO MODI

'Raise H-1B visa issue with Trump'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of US President Donald Trump's visit, the Congress on Sunday asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi would raise with him the issue of easing H-1B visas, restoration of GSP status and security concerns over Taliban.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asked why Prime Minister Modi is silent about "India First" as President Trump talked of "America First".

He also asked whether Modi would ensure cheaper oil for India after it stopped buying oil from Iran in view of sanctions and if Indian steel exports would get a boost after India commits to USD 3 billion defence purchases.

"The Trump govern-



ment's restrictive immigration policies have hit H-1B visas. Indians get 70 pc of 85,000 H-1B Visas.

"Now, Rejection Rate for India has increased from six per cent in 2015 to 24 per cent in 2019, especially for IT professionals. Post 10 million people gala event, Will PM Modi ask for easing H-1B visas," he asked on Twitter.

Surjewala said as the US prepares to sign a deal with Taliban on February 29, what about India's red lines.

Stalker who fired at woman ends life

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An armyman allegedly committed suicide here on Sunday, a day after he opened fire and injured a woman. The body of Diveneni Balaji, 25, was found on railway track near Kolanukonda village in Guntur district.

Balaji, who was on the run after Saturday's incident, is believed to have jumped under a train. He was suspended from Army in December last year following his arrest on charges of sexually exploiting a girl after promising to marry her.

After his release on bail recently, he had been exert-



ing pressure on the girl to marry him. However, the girl and her parents rejected his proposal.

On Saturday, he went to the girl's house in Nadimpalli village in Guntur district. As soon as the girl's mother opened the door, he opened fire from a country-made pistol. The alert woman moved quickly but the bullet pierced through her right ear.

Farmers attack YSRCP MP Suresh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP from Bapatla Nandigam Suresh was allegedly attacked by women belonging to TDP at Lemalle village in the Capital Region on Sunday night.

According to sources, a group of TDP activists obstructed the convoy of the Dalit MP, as he reached the village, and sprinkled red chilli powder into his eyes. The MP gunmen and his associates in the convoy were also attacked.

The incident took place when Suresh was proceeding towards Guntur after participating in Radhamahotsavam in Amaravati. A large number of people reportedly belong-



ing to the TDP, who were opposing the government's move to shift the capital from Amaravati, stopped the convoy.

Meanwhile, Suresh alleged that the attack was engineered by the TDP according to a plan as the TDP was intolerant of the good work being done by the YSRCP government in terms of welfare and development activities in the State.

Transforming the lives of students - paving way for their golden future

JAGANANNA VASATHI DEEVANA..

BOON FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Sri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy
 Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of AP
 will Inaugurate on February 24th in Vizianagaram

Amount to be disbursed under Jagananna Vasathi Deevana			
Course	First Instalment (Jan - Feb)	Second Instalment (July - Aug)	Total Amount
ITI Students	Rs. 5,000	Rs. 5,000	Rs. 10,000
Polytechnic Students	Rs. 7,500	Rs. 7,500	Rs. 15,000
Degree & above Students	Rs. 10,000	Rs. 10,000	Rs. 20,000

Assistance under Jagananna Vasathi Deevana to be given to every student in a family irrespective of number of students in the family.

Around Rs. 2,300 crores per annum to be disbursed in two instalments under Jagananna Vasathi Deevana.

Added to this, around Rs. 3,700 crores per annum to be disbursed (by April) towards Fee Reimbursement under Jagananna Vidya Deevana.

Students studying in all Government, Aided and private colleges affiliated to all universities and Boards in the state are eligible to avail benefit under this scheme

FOR ASSISTANCE DIAL TOLL-FREE NUMBER 1902

Education- Top priority of Jagananna Government

Sri Pinipe Viswaroop, Hon'ble Minister for Social Welfare

EVERY STEP.. TOWARDS RAJANNA RAJYAM

An amount of Rs. 20,000 per annum will be given to families of poor students, whose annual income is 2.5 lakhs or below in two instalments of Rs. 10,000 each, towards boarding and lodging charges by Jagananna Government. First instalment to be given during Jan - Feb and second instalment during July - Aug. The amount will be handed over to mothers of the students

Jagananna Government supporting students at every stage of education

- Rs. 15,000 per annum to poor and needy mothers, whose children are studying in classes from 1 to 12, under Jagananna Amma Vodi scheme. An amount of around **Rs. 6,400 crores** already disbursed under the scheme.
- Rs. 10,000 to 20,000 per annum to students studying from ITI to PG towards boarding and lodging under Jagananna Vasathi Deevana scheme. Around **Rs. 2,300 crores** per annum to be disbursed under the scheme in two instalments.
- Total Fee Reimbursement under Jagananna Vidya Deevana scheme (by April). Around **Rs. 3,700 crores** to be disbursed per annum under the scheme.

A total of Rs. 12,400 crores to be disbursed per annum under these three schemes by Jagananna Government

CAPSULE



Collector Md Imtiaz releases a poster on 423rd Hazrat Syed Shah Bukhari Urs in Vijayawada on Sunday. The three-day Urs will begin on March 4 at Kondapalli village in Krishna district

Collector releases poster on Urs

VIJAYAWADA: District collector Md Imtiaz assured cooperation of the government for 423rd Hazrat Syed Shah Bukhari Urs, which is scheduled to begin on March 4 and end on March 6 at Kondapalli village in Krishna district. The Urs Committee member met the Collector and invited him for the Urs. On the occasion, he released a poster and calendar at the Collector's camp office on Sunday. The Hazrat Syed Shah Bukhari Urs Committee chairman Md Altaf Raza said that they are elaborate arrangements for celebrating the Urs on a grand manner. He said that lakhs of people are likely to participate in celebrations. He said that the committee has decided to feed one lakh people on the occasion. Muslim leaders GMC Basha, Intiqab, Karimullah, Wajid Khan, Irfan, Rafi, Chandbasha and others were present.

2nd Inter-district Soft Tennis Tourney

Krishna dist men, women's teams clinch trophy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna district senior men and women team players clinched the 2nd Inter-district Soft Tennis Tournament that concluded at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium here on Sunday. The tournament was organised under the aegis of Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh and Krishna District Soft Tennis Association.

In men's singles, category Krishna district players secured first place followed by Guntur second and Srikakulam team securing third place. In men's category, K Suhrud secured first place, S Vihit second and M Yudheer third place. In women's singles category, N Anusha came first, S Yashasvi second and P Yuthika in third place in the individual category. Chief coach A Mahesh Babu was the chief guest of the closing ceremony and distributed trophy and certificates to winners.

State Soft Tennis Association president Srinubabu, secretary D Naveen Kumar, treasurer Abdul Kareem, KD Prasanna Babu and others were present.

TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Phalguna & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam:
Tithi: Pratipada: 11:14 pm
Nakshatram: Shatabhishta: 04:21 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 08:08 am - 09:35 am
Yamagandam: 11:02 am - 12:29 pm
Varjyam: 11:30 pm - 01:17 am
Gulika: 01:56 pm - 03:23 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 08:21 am - 10:08 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 pm - 12:52 pm

WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 34/20
Humidity: 43%
Sunrise: 06:38
Sunset: 06:20
Current Weather Conditions Updated February 23, 2019 5:00 PM

Marine Krishi Udan to airlift shrimp from Vizag airport

SUMIT ONKA ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a big boost to the shrimp farming in Andhra Pradesh, SpiceJet will introduce dedicated freighter services from Vizag and Chennai to Surat and Kolkata/Durgapur from February 26 under Marine Krishi Udan scheme.

Andhra Pradesh, the leading producer of farmed shrimp in the country, accounts for 60% of the national production. Tweeting about its new service, SpiceJet stated that shrimp season in the country starts from mid-February and continues till mid-June. Shrimp seeds are sent from major producing centres like Vizag, Chennai and Puducherry to West Bengal and Gujarat for further farming and breeding. Hence, introduction of a dedicated freighter service on these routes would go a long way in fulfilling the Budget-2020 plan of Krishi Udan scheme.

Shrimp hatcheries face many problems in transporting these seeds in the absence of dedicated cargo flights leading to high mortality of shrimp seed, causing heavy losses. SpiceJet's move will greatly improve the



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- Shrimp seeds are sent from major producing centres like Vizag, Chennai and Puducherry to West Bengal and Gujarat for further farming and breeding
- Welcoming the decision, the Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Director, Nekkanti Mahesh, said "This would really help to transport sea food perishing within three to four days"
- Tweeting about its new service, SpiceJet stated that shrimp season in the country starts from mid-February and continues till mid-June

logistics and connectivity, helping shrimp farming grow in the country.

regional airline operating 49 daily flights under UDAN and a pioneer in 'Livestock Krishi Udaan', exporting livestock from India to UAE.

Welcoming the decision, the Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Director, Nekkanti Mahesh, said "This would really help to transport sea food perishing within three to four days. Farmers here can send good quality seeds to Gujarat."

He also suggested that the air cargo facilities to Hyderabad or Delhi should be introduced to tap the huge potential of tuna fishing market. Japan and the US are the main international markets for tuna exports. He said if tuna fish could be exported to these countries using air cargo, the sea food business would see a boom.

However, he mentioned that the air cargo operators should give a thought on the cost factor, as the airport handling charges and other ancillary charges up the input cost too much.

"Most of the marine products are being ferried on water in a frozen condition. The chilled sea food could be sent through air cargo if the cost is reasonable," he said.

Andhra Kabbadi Assn pans 'fake' Krishna body

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Kabaddi Association president and Legislative Council member KE Prabhakar and secretary Veeralankaiah demanded that the government take stern action against Yalamanchali Srikanth for registering a fake Kabaddi Association.

Addressing a gathering at the executive body meeting here on Sunday, Prabhakar said that the Andhra Kabaddi Association was recognised by Amateur Kabaddi Federation and demanded action against Srikanth for registering a fake association.

He alleged that false allegations and cases are framed against secretary Veeralankaiah as he belongs to an SC community. He said that they are ready to face any cases in the court of law as they did not do any wrong.

He further stated that Srikanth was playing with the future of players, which was not correct. Sports should not be clubbed with politics, which would ruin the future of sports and players, he said



Andhra Kabaddi Association president and Legislative Council member KE Prabhakar and secretary Veeralankaiah demanded that the government take stern action against Yalamanchali Srikanth for registering a fake Kabaddi Association

and added the government will take stern action against false and fake sports associations.

Veeralankaiah said that Srikanth was elected the district Kabaddi secretary and since then he has been indulging in wrong activities damaging the sport and disturbing players' future.

He recalled that the association had issued notices

regarding his behaviour, in turn, Srikanth has filed 16 false cases against him. Veeralankaiah said that after his retirement from service, he joined the association only to improve the sport.

Krishna District Kabaddi Association president Ch Venkateswara Rao also condemned Srikanth for foisting cases against State secretary Veeralankaiah.



'Trishula Snanam' being performed at Tirumala on Sunday in which TTD JEO P Basant Kumar and a large number of devotees take part

'TRISHULA SNANAM'

Grand finale to Brahmotsavams

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heralding the grand finale of the annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Kapileswara Swamy, majestic 'Trishula Snanam' was performed on Sunday morning in which TTD JEO P Basant Kumar and a large number of devotees took part.

Earlier, a traditional Snapanam Thirumanjanam was performed to 'Trishula' (trident) the weapon of Sri Skandamurthy.

Speaking after the Agama ritual heralding the end of the annual Brahmotsavams, Basant Kumar said devotees were happy on arrangements being made by TTD. Brahmotsavams

final event of 'Dwaja Avarohanam' was held on Sunday evening. Deputy executive officers Subramanyam, superintendent Bhubathi Raju, temple inspectors Reddy Sekhar and Srinivas Naik and others participated. TTD has spent Rs 5 lakhs for civil engineering works and Rs 6 lakhs for illumination. TTD served Anna Prasadam to 500 devotees daily during Brahmotsavams and for thousands during the Vahana Sevass besides drinking water, milk and buttermilk. In all, four tonnes of flower Meereen was used for Vahana Sevass and temple decoration.

Demand for gold substantially high

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the frightening news of Covid19 (novelcoronavirus) spreading rapidly to many more countries, the demand for gold has recorded substantially high. The yellow metal marched ahead during the week ended Saturday. Gold appreciated significantly and closed at US\$ 1,643 (per ounce). Silver followed suit and closed at US \$ 18.44 (per ounce).

The exchange rates of foreign currencies vis-a-vis Indian Rupee (INR) were: US \$ Rs.71.87, Euro Rs.77.96, British Pound 93.13, Canadian Dollar Rs. 54.36, Swiss Franc Rs.73.47, Australian Dollar Rs.47.60, Kuwaiti Dinar Rs.233.89, Hongkong Dollar Rs.9.23, UAE Dirham Rs.19.57, Saudi Riyal Rs. 19.17, Singapore Dollar Rs.51.42 and Omani Rial Rs. 186.33.

Other parameters were: Brent \$ 57.94 (per barrel), Crude oil Rs.3, 982, Platinum and Palladium closed at US dollars 973 (per Oz.) and 2,714 (per Oz.) respectively, while Copper MCX closed at Rs

431.90(per kg). Gold MCX stood at Rs.42, 588(per 10 gms) and Silver MCX at Rs.52, 492 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 41,170.12 and 12,080.90 points respectively.

At home, the international uptrend in precious metals was reflected and the prices zoomed to the historic high. The demand for jewellery was impacted by about 55 percent due to higher prices. The upcoming marriage season is unlikely to infuse life in the jewellery market because homemakers would prefer to fall back on old jewellery to meet the demand for marriage season.

During the week, standard gold (24 carats) appreciated by Rs.2, 330 and closed at Rs.2, 150 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too moved in tandem, and was quoted in the range of Rs.40, 040 - 10,140.

Silver (0.999) recorded an appreciation of Rs.2, 100 and closed at Rs.48, 300 (per kg). The sentiment in gold and silver jewellery market is likely to remain strong. The investors having switched over their preference from gold to silver; in a couple of weeks, silver

may touch the record level of Rs.55,000 (per kg), while still gold ruling at higher levels relentlessly.

COMMODITIES

The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities was from moderate to strong. Rythu Bazars and the commodity markets located in Begum Bazar, Kishangunj, Mukthiyargunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir Alam Mandi, Dilsukhnagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally, General Bazar witnessed a moderate trend. Most of the commodities, including chillies, coriander, turmeric, tamarind, methi, mustard, rice, wheat, jawar, maize, ragi, ginger etc; either remained steady or remained divergent within narrow margins. Common pulses such as tuar dal, moong dal, urad dal and masoor dal recorded a small appreciation in the range of 15 per cent to 60 per cent, while edible oils, sugar and vanaspati remained unchanged.

Among vegetables, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, Kanda and carrots remained unchanged, while cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed gourd, snake gourd, lady's finger, cucumber and French beans, along with other leafy vegetables, recorded a marginal decline.

'Wild life' quiz for AP, TS students today



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

WWF-India, Hyderabad office, is organising 'Vana Vignana Vinoda', a wildlife quiz in Telugu for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana forest area tribal schools. This initiative is being held in association with the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Tribal Welfare Departments and Forest Departments. The programme has found support from State Bank of India, Srinivasa Farms, Efftronics, Malaxmi Group, Valluripalli Foundation, NCC, Maple Soft, Clove Technologies, RHI and many other individual donors.

This is the country's first regional language quiz on wildlife and nature. The quiz began with a teacher orientation programme where teachers were explained about the aim of the quiz. School-level

elimination round was conducted to select the top three students, who represent their school as a team at the district-level. In the recently concluded district-level rounds, one district-level team has been selected from five agency areas to compete at the Andhra Pradesh state-level.

In all, 118 schools and 9,000 tribal students from Andhra Pradesh forest area schools participated in the quiz. The AP state-level competition will be held on February 24 at the Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amravati, Moghalrajpuram, Vijayawada from 11 am to 1.30 pm.

Sai Kumar, renowned actor and celebrity guest, will grace the occasion and conduct the first round of the quiz. Tejaswini Manogna, Miss Earth India-2019, will be the quiz master.

When shall we stop pampering the outlaws!

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

From the kid-glove treatment meted out by both the government and the judiciary to serial law-breakers squatting on public roads of Delhi and of late, elsewhere in the country, people have had enough!

Dismayed at the submissive attitude of the Constitutional authorities to Shaheen Bagh protestors whose fundamental right to vent protests is recognised at the cost of millions of others, law-abiding citizens are finding themselves unsecured and helpless.

Clearly, such an indifference to the rights of non-protestors is nothing but the breach of Constitutional obligation by these Constitutional bodies upon whom rests the duty to protect the rights of 'all' the people, and not just those of a group of protestors. And, see the tone and tenor of protests! They hold the national flag in their hands, but shout slogans like: Bharat Tere Tukde Honge. We want Azadi and even Pakistan Zindabad and Hindustan Muradabad. Certainly, by no stretch of imagination, such venomous

utterances could be called as lawful protests.

The two months' journey of anti-CAA, NPR and NCR has now assumed alarming proportions. Now the new pitch is 15 crore Muslims versus 100 crore Hindus, wherein the Muslims are exhorted to affront Hindus physically so as to overpower the latter.

Earlier, in shameless open defiance to the Constitution, these anti-national, communal elements, with the help of terrorists and extremist of all hues from within and outside the territories, have dumped the lawfully passed statutes by passing unlawful resolutions in some state legislatures. These acts are, indeed, insult to the Constitution and Constitutional bodies like Parliament and the office of the President of India which are instrumental in passing the laws.

In fact, the situation has reached its boiling point. We are at the crossroads. Jihadi and terrorist forces are hell-bent upon creating a civil war like situation in the country which is evident from the provocative speeches of the Tamasha managers. Therefore, before the law-abiding people are con-

The situation has reached its boiling point. We are at the crossroads. Jihadi and terrorist forces are hell-bent upon creating a civil war like situation in the country which is evident from the provocative speeches of the Tamasha managers

strained to take law in their hands, the government must act firmly, quickly and decisively, though it should have done so quite early when the Tamasha of Shaheen Bagh commenced. Still, if for the reasons best known to the government, it maintains stoic silence, the President should invoke his powers and dismiss the worthless central government, dissolve Parliament and state legislatures and impose President Rule.

Such course of action is needed to protect the Constitution and its cherished ideology. For, if the nation has to survive, its Constitution must survive!

SC on bail petitions

A division bench of the Supreme Court, comprising Justices A.M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari, has dep-

recated the unduly long delay in disposing of the bail petitions by the courts.

Dealing with appeals against the High Court order in Motamari Appanna Veeraraju @ MAV Raju, vs. State of West Bengal, the court, while expressing its displeasure at keeping the bail petition pending since August 2008 and just extending interim orders from time to time, observed:

"... the application for bail or anticipatory bail is a matter of moment for the accused and protracted hearing thereof may also cause prejudice to investigation and affect the prosecution interests which cannot be comprehended..."

Delhi bar protests

The Bar Association of Delhi High Court advocates came out with a resolution to abstain court work in support of Justice

Dr. S.Muralidhar, whose transfer order to Punjab & Haryana High Court has been issued.

For decades, the power of transfer has been considered as the sole prerogative of the appointing authority. The appointing authority may, depending on the exigencies of work, transfer an employee. In several cases, this stand has been taken by the courts and the same has been vindicated by the higher courts.

But now, strangely enough the Delhi High Court's representative body has opposed the transfer of one of its long serving judges on the specious grounds of lack of transparency and arbitrariness. This is, indeed, transgressing the mutually drawn limits by the judiciary and the bar. Therefore, such practice needs to be nipped in the bud.

Compensation for train passenger

The Nagpur bench of Bombay High Court, in a recently delivered judgment, has held that the deceased heirs were entitled to compen-

sation even if he died in a wrong train during alighting from the same.

The deceased Arjun Gawande had boarded the Bhubaneswar Express with two valid tickets knowing well that the train had no stoppage at Badnera station. While alighting, he accidentally fell down and died.

The Railway Claims Tribunal rejected the claim for compensation by the deceased family members stating that the Railway was in no way liable for the death of the deceased who tried to alight at a station where the train had no scheduled stop.

The court, relying on a catena of apex court's judgments, awarded Rs 8 lakh as compensation to the deceased legal heirs.

Of mood and adjournment

Though it may sound strange, it is true that the Punjab & Haryana High Court has considered the 'mood of the court' as 'sufficient cause' to

grant adjournment to a lawyer. After Justice Rajiv Narain Raina dismissed four petitions in quick succession, the counsel for the next case, K.S Sidhu got alarmed and when his case was called out, he pleaded for an adjournment stating that it appeared the mood of the court was not good.

The court obliged Sidhu, but added that all the four dismissed cases were worthless. The provision for adjournment of a case is found in Order VII, Rules 1 & 2 of the CPC. According to it, the court may grant adjournment if sufficient cause is shown. However, not more than three adjournments in the whole case can be sought.

Pride of Telangana The Telugus in general and the people of Telangana in particular have a reason to rejoice. Ms. Saritha Komatireddy, daughter of Geetha Reddy and Hanumanth Reddy, has been appointed as a Judge in the US district court in New York.

She is a prosecutor and teaches Law in the Columbia Law School, New York. Both her parents hail from Telangana.

"No politics for four years," is now the gyan that is making the rounds in the districts these days, thanks to top leaders of the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti. Ministers taking part in the Panchayat Sammelans are asserting that in view of the 'non-election season' everyone should concentrate on attaining developmental goals as per the state government's micro-level planning. Avoid political leanings is their mantra now! Awareness meetings concerning the Panchayat Raj Act and the new Municipality acts are reflecting these aspects in detail. Public representatives and Ministers are elaborating on non-political concepts to help realise development at the grassroots level of democracy.

Energy Minister Jagadeeshwar Reddy was the first member of the Cabinet to focus on this subject. He called upon sarpanches and public representatives in rural parts not to have any political leanings while

For a change, politics takes a back seat

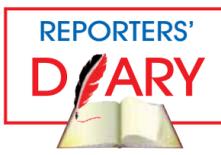
executing developmental programmes in their respective regions. His opinion is supported and affirmed by all the ministers who now feel progress is the only slogan to carry forward in the non-election hour.

Peg in bar vis-à-vis that in compound

Although the Andhra Pradesh government says it is committed to introducing prohibition in a phased manner, the presumed length of time for that to happen has given rise to a skewed market which makes palpable discrimination among tipplers. While branded versions of liquor are freely available for 'glassmates' at bars, people from disadvantaged sections with less expensive options

have to contend with whatever is available at the government-run liquor shops. Should they embolden themselves, be it Dutch courage or whatever, and ask for their favorite brands, the stock reply the hapless boozers get is 'adi ledandi' (we don't have it). Staffers at liquor outlets express their helplessness when customers get too inquisitive.

The new government's initiative was initially welcomed even by tipplers. Now some of them smell a rat as the shops are keeping their favorite brands away from them. For those frequenting the 'compound', it may have been OK if they were not available at all. What is heartburning is that those very brands are freely available in bars!



'Protocol' crushed for taking 'red bus' lightly

After all, 'red bus' showed its strength and emerged victorious. It also ran over 'protocol' issue successfully. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy had criticized the TRS government and HMRL authorities for their failure to observe 'protocol' during the opening ceremony of the JBS to MGBS stretch of the Metro Rail corridor on February 7. Kishan was

sore because the programme was held in his Lok Sabha constituency. However, Telangana Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav succeeded in giving it a different colour. He made it seem like an issue between Kishan Reddy and Talasani and no wonder it continued that way for a few days as a mutual fight. That fight ended with the entry of 'red bus'. Kishan's comments suggesting that Telugu people were familiar only with 'red bus' until Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced them to trains (made during Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal's visit to TS) drew criticism on social media. The very next day the 'red bus' ran over the 'protocol' issue. Kishan Reddy himself chose not to raise the issue of protocol thereafter. A

senior scribe commented that Kishan might have not known the power of 'red bus'; hence, the slip of the tongue. After all, the Government itself had changed the color of red bus for obvious reasons.

State and IP

Union Minister Piyush Goyal asked TS IT Minister KT Rama Rao as to how the state was involved in IP (intellectual property) of the pharma industry. At the recent BioAsia event, during CEO conclave, KTR raised a concern that 'In India, when it comes to IP and enforcing IP, there are grey areas... that state and Center sometimes are disjointed and disconnected, which apparently is hurting further investments coming into R&D'. While the relations of state and Center

have always been discussed, Piyush sought to know how the state came into picture. KTR then pointed that the DCGI works with the investor or industry to confer IP and then state actually gives permission to manufacture. When this is disjointed, in fact when a gentleman spoke to me and said there are 30 IP infringement cases filed in the last few years. This is a huge number for one organization. Then Piyush said that IP department is trying to reorient itself and proposed to ask DPIIT to come out with a framework where the state and Center come at legally binding agreement to work as partners and in support of each other in promotion of industry so that they can get stable, simple and predictable regulatory framework.

(Contributed by P V Kondal Rao, Ch Pradeep, K Venkateswarlu and Naveena Ghanate)

CAPSULE

Home Guard dismissed for sexually assaulting girl

MACHILIPATNAM: A Home Guard was on Sunday dismissed from service after he was arrested on charges of sexually assaulting a minor girl here, police said. According to an official release, Krishna District Superintendent of Police M Ravindranath Babu issued orders removing B Phanindra from service following an inquiry. The accused, working as a driver of women police station here, was booked under POSCO Act, on Saturday.

Senior citizens stage silent protest against govt

VIJAYAWADA: Senior citizens took out a silent protest at Ayodhya Nagar under the leadership of former MLA and member of Lotus Landmark Senior Citizens and Friends Association K Subba Rao here on Sunday demanding that the government continue Amaravati as the capital of the State. In a release, Subba Rao recalled that Amaravati was declared as the capital in the Assembly during the TDP tenure. YS Jaganmohan Reddy, the then opposition leader, also had given his consent to it. But after coming to power, he announced three capital cities, which is not correct. He said that politics for personal benefits would hamper the development of the State and create regional differences. Lotus Landmark Senior Citizens and Friends Association member MV Sarma said development should be decentralised not the administration, which is not the right move by the government. He further stated that they would support farmers and women from the capital region Amaravati, who have been protesting against the government's move from day one.

Farmers attack YSRC MP Suresh

Continued from Page 1

He further stated that stringent action would be taken the culprits, who were involved in the attack against him.

It may be recalled that the MP was recently attacked at Nandigama village in Krishna district by Telugu Nadu Student Federation members, who were opposing the three-capital concept of the Jaganmohan Reddy government.

'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' launch today

Continued from Page 1

The objective of the scheme is to help mothers financially so that they continue to send their wards to higher education without any difficulty. All eligible students will be covered under the scheme. At present, 50% of the 'Vasathi Deevana' scheme amount is being released to mothers' accounts.

JVD cards with a unique bar code for each student are being distributed to all eligible students. The bar code indicates the full details of the student, including the status of sanction, under the scheme.

Organic vegetables sold at Vizag prison a big draw

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Authorities of the Central Prison have set up a stall in front of the jail at Adavivaram to sell the freshly grown vegetables by inmates. They are planning to increase the production after seeing the demand.

Brinjal, lady's finger, tomato, bottle gourd, ridge gourd and a few other vegetables grown by over 60 inmates in over six acres of land at the Central Prison in Vizag city were being sold at the stall in the morning hours.

Prisoners eat over 300 kgs of vegetables per day what they grow and the remaining is sold at the stall. Since inmates growing organic vegetables, the demand for the prison grown vegetables has been growing, as people, who travel through the Adavivaram



route in the morning hours, are buying them," said Superintendent of Vizag Central Prison S Rahul.

The vegetable production by itself fetches over Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000 for the department per day. Prisoners used to sell vegetables Rs 30 to Rs 40 per

kg depending on the market trend and other factors. Inmates are cultivating vegetables in organic method, the quality of vegetables is good. I used to purchase the prison grown vegetables whenever I visit the Adavivaram area during the morning hours" said,

- Brinjal, lady's finger, tomato, bottle gourd, ridge gourd and a few other vegetables grown by over 60 inmates in over six acres of land at the Central Prison in Vizag city were being sold at the stall

- Since inmates growing organic vegetables, the demand for the prison grown vegetables has been growing, as people, who travel through the Adavivaram route in the morning hours, are buying them," said Superintendent of Vizag Central Prison S Rahul

Shreenadh, a native of the Arilova area in Vizag city.

'Jagan's backward march detrimental to AP's growth'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

IT companies are planning to relocate to other States, while new ones are not showing interest to venture into the State due to fear of J-Tax, alleged TDP MLC Buddha Venkanna.

Addressing the media here on Sunday, he said that TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu had convinced many IT companies to set up their units in the State to generate employment for the unemployed youth. With the policies of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy those companies are relocating to other States, he alleged.

Kia Motors Company has established its unit in the State besides many Information and Technology companies established their units with the initiative taken by Naidu. He

alleged that Jagan was rendering injustice to people of Andhra Pradesh for his selfish gains..

About Rs 1 lakh crore worth investments had gone from Amaravati, Rs 50,000 crore investments have withdrawn due to Singapore Consortium going back from Amaravati, reminded Venkanna



added that till now Rs 1.8 lakh crore worth investments shifted to other States, which was a big setback to the State as youth has been deprived of employment. He recalled that Kia has almost planned to shift to the neighbouring State Tamil Nadu after Jagan coming to power. Furthermore, Adani, Lulu Group, Reliance, APP Paper Mill have refused to invest in the State, he pointed

- Rs 1 lakh crore worth investments had gone from Amaravati, Rs 50,000 crore investments have withdrawn due to Singapore Consortium going back from Amaravati, reminded Venkanna
- Till now Rs 1.8 lakh crore worth investments shifted to other States, which was a big setback to the State as youth has been deprived of employment, he pointed out.

He alleged that Jagan is striving for his selfish goals and not bothering about the development of the State and employment generation.

'Minorities more secure in India'

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Secularism is in the blood and veins of every Indian and minorities are more secure in India than any other country, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said on Sunday. Finding fault with the tendency of some countries to comment on India's internal matters, he asked them to refrain from advising India on its internal affairs.

Noting out that India was the largest parliamentary democracy, he said it was capable of managing its own affairs. Speaking at the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of Andhra Vidyabhi Vardhani (AVV) Educational Institutions in Warangal, he, describing 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' as the essence of Indian culture, said that secularism is in the blood and veins of every Indian and minorities are more secure in India than



any other country. Respecting all religions and 'Sarva Dharma Sambhav' is our culture and we should continue to follow it, he added. Naidu also remarked that Bharat Mata Ki Jai means the 'Jai of 130 crore Indians'. Stressing that peace was a prerequisite for development, the Vice-President said that in a democracy, everyone has a right to dissent and protest but it should be done in a peaceful manner.

He asked the youth to develop positive attitude in life and be constructive and not obstructive in their approach.

All set for Balalaya festival at Alipiri temples in Tirupati

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Elaborate arrangements have been made for conduct of Balalaya ritual at TTD local temples near Alipiri Padala Mandapam from February 24 to 26; with 'Ankurpanam' on February 24th.

Sri Lakshmi Narayana temple, Sri Andal Ammavari temple, Sri Perialwar temple and Sri Bhaktanjaneya temple are located in the Padala Mandapam complex at Alipiri.

Balalaya ritual consisting of 'Akalmasha Homam' and 'Laghu Purnahuti' in the morning on Monday and 'Punya Havachanam with 'Agni Prastha' and 'Kalakrshan' and 'Kumbharadhana Homam' in the evening.

On February 25 morning, 'Agni Pranayanam, 'Kumbharadhana for portraits, 'Akalmasha Homam' and 'Laghu Purnahuti' will be performed, while Maha Shanti



Purnahuti and Mahashanti Prokshana' will be performed in the evening.

On February 26 on the 'Phalguna Sudha Tadhya Meshha Lagnam' after 'Punya Havachanam Ku Bha Aavahana' will be conducted in

the morning and temples will be thrown open for Sarva Darshan. Special grade deputy executive officer of Sri Govindarajaswamy temple Varalakshmi is supervising arrangements for the three-day festival.

Indian Lawyers Association opposes CAA, NPR

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The BJP government should elicit public opinion before implementing the CAA, NPR and NRC, said Indian Association of Lawyers (IAL) National President and Senior Advocate of Supreme Court Rajindra Singh Cheema.

Addressing the media at the Indian Association of Lawyers 10th National Conference, which commenced at Tummalapalli Kalakshetram here on Sunday, he said that IAL will pass a resolution demanding that the Central government take back its decision on CAA, NPR, NRC and not to suppress the peaceful agitation against CAA.

Rajinder demanded that budding advocates and stu-



dents studying law shall be provided stipend and financial assistance, health insurance and called upon like-minded people to support them to move ahead in their endeavour to bringing economical equality in society. Association State general secretary Chalasan Ajay Kumar and national secretary B Bhaskar were also present.

Trump dinner invite hots up...

Continued from Page 1

On top of that, KCR recently came down heavily on the BJP-led NDA government for taking up controversial issues like CAA, NPR and NRC, while ignoring 'real issues' facing people like economic slow-down, unemployment etc. KCR even expressed his inclination to lead an anti-CAA agitation across the country by involving like-minded parties.

No wonder, BJP leaders, both at national and state levels, have since been attacking KCR relentlessly for his anti-CAA stance. Despite all this, KCR has got an invite to attend the dinner for Trump, along with select CMs from BJP-ruled states and states having coalition governments with BJP on board.

Political circles are now convinced that BJP, notwithstanding KCR's rhetoric, still considers TRS to be its 'good friend' and that it has no confidence in YSRC, despite Jagan's overtures to the Centre. Their reasoning is that without Prime Minister Narendra Modi's approval, no Chief Minister would have got an invite from the Rashtrapati Bhavan for the dinner.

Apart from KCR, the others



invited are the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Assam, Haryana and Bihar.

Reports from Telangana CMO indicate that KCR is flying to New Delhi on Tuesday morning to be part of the rare honour given by the Centre.

One more juicy speculation doing the rounds is that Trump has evinced interest in meeting KCR, following a suggestion from his daughter Ivanka Trump who was given memorable reception in Hyderabad during her visit to the city to attend the Global Entrepreneurial Summit three years ago.

Until late in the night on Sunday, there was no official communication from the Rashtrapathi Bhavan or the

Chief Minister's Offices of AP and TS over who all got the invite, though the names of KCR, Uddhav Thackeray of Maharashtra, Manohar Lal Khattar of Haryana, Naveen Patil of Odisha and B S Yediyurappa of Karnataka were 'leaked' to the media on Saturday.

Apart from Jagan, the names of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee also do not figure in the list of invitees, triggering debates in political circles of those states.

Sources in TRS confirmed that KCR got an invite and that he would be leaving for Delhi on Tuesday. There was no confirmation from AP government sources on Jagan getting invite until late in the night on Sunday.

As things stand, Trump, accompanied by wife Melania Trump and a high-level delegation, will be accorded civic reception in Ahmedabad around noon on February 24. From Ahmedabad, he will travel to Agra, before arriving at the national capital for the main leg of the visit.

On the morning of February 25, Trump and the US 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 to 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 lunch for Trump 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 President Trump will depart from India later that evening.

Raise H-1B visa, GSP restoration with Trump, Cong to PM

Continued from Page 1

"Have we forgotten IC-814 hijacking and release of terrorist Masood Azhar in Kandhar, who's JEM then attacked Parliament and Pulwama? As gala bash unfolds, Will Modiji raise our National Security concerns," he said.

The Congress leader said continuing since 1974, the US removed India from Duty Free Imports i.e. GSP (generalised system of preferences) on June 5, 2019.

It has affected the USD 5.6 billion Indian exports to the US, especially gems, jewellery, rice and leather, he noted.

"Post 'Howdy Modi' and 'Namaste Trump' gala events, Will PM ensure restoration of GSP status," he asked.

Surjewala said up till 2018, India imported 250 crore tonnes crude oil/month from Iran on rupee payment, 90 days credit and doorstep delivery.



The Modi government has stopped buying cheaper Iran oil as per the US sanctions that raised oil prices in India, he alleged.

"As fest continues in Ahmedabad, Will Modiji secure cheaper oil for India," he asked.

The Congress leader alleged that India's exports of USD 761 million of steel to the US fell by 50 per cent to USD 372 million as the Trump government has hiked tariffs on import by 25 per cent.

"As India commits to USD 3 billion defence purchases, why zero relief for India's export of steel?"

Stalker who fired at woman ends life

Continued from Page 1

Hearing her screams, locals rushed to the scene and tried to catch Balaji. He threw his bag and the weapon and escaped.

Injured Rama Devi was shifted to a hospital. Police detained an auto-rickshaw driver, who allegedly helped the attacker.

Police had registered a case of attempt to murder and launched a man-hunt for Balaji. His body was found on Sunday. His relatives identified the body, which was shifted to a hospital for autopsy.

Police were investigating how he had procured the weapon. The accused, hailing from another village in the same district, met the girl at a wedding and fell in love. He later took her to Bapatla town, where he developed physical contact with her on the promise of marriage. He later distanced himself from the girl, who lodged a police complaint against him.

'HUNAR HAAT' Govt portal to market products of artisans, craftsmen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Minority Affairs Ministry will get the products of artisans and craftsmen participating at the 'Hunar Haat' here registered on 'Government e-Marketplace' and is also in touch with several export promotion councils for facilitating large scale orders for them from India and abroad, Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters on the last day of the event, organised by his ministry, he said the 'Hunar Haat' at the India Gate Lawns, Rajpath was "historic and successful" and was visited by several dignitaries, including Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

"Today during 'Mann Ki Baat', Prime Minister Narendra

Modi appreciated 'Hunar Haat' and artisans, craftsmen and their exquisite indigenous handmade products. By mentioning 'Hunar Haat', the prime minister has reiterated our government's commitment to promote and encourage the legacy of our indigenous arts and crafts," Naqvi said.

Talking about Modi's surprise visit to 'Hunar Haat' last week, the minority affairs minister said his visit gave a tremendous boost and worldwide recognition to the talent of Indian artisans and craftsmen.

"Prime Minister Modi also enjoyed 'kulhad ki chai' and Bihar's delicious 'litti-chokha'. During his about one-hour long presence at 'Hunar Haat', the prime minister visited several stalls and interacted with artisans and also took information about their indigenous products," Naqvi said.



Prez hails judiciary for pursuing gender justice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday hailed the efforts of the Indian judiciary in pursuing the "cherished goal of gender justice" and said that the Supreme Court has always been "pro-active and progressive".

Speaking at the International Judicial Conference 2020 - 'Judiciary and the Changing World', the president said the apex court has led "progressive social transformation" and

In pursuing the cherished goal of gender justice, to mention one example, the Supreme Court of India has always been pro-active and progressive

— RAM NATH KOVIND, President

referred to the over two decades old Vishaka guidelines for preventing sexual harassment of women at workplace.

"In pursuing the cherished goal of gender justice, to mention one example, the Supreme Court of India has always been pro-active and

progressive," Kovind said. "From issuing guidelines on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace two decades ago to providing directives for granting equal status to women in the Army this month, the Supreme Court of India has led progressive social transformation," he said.

Congress 'adrift'; party must fix leadership issue: Tharoor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress must fix its leadership issues on top priority to address the growing perception among the people that the party is "adrift", senior leader Shashi Tharoor said on Sunday and asserted that resolving the uncertainty over a long-term president was crucial for the party's revival.

Tharoor also said that it was up to Rahul Gandhi to take a call if he wishes to return as Congress chief, but if he does not change his earlier stance then the party needs to find an "active and full-



time leadership" so that the party can move forward as the nation expects.

The Thiruvananthapuram MP, who last week renewed his

call for elections for the CWC, said the process of electing some members of the party's highest decision-making body will usher in a dynamic leadership team with a credible mandate to work together to address the organisational challenges.

Asserting that the Congress is the indispensable national alternative to the "divisive policies" of the BJP, Tharoor said, "The immediate cause of worry for many of us is that there appears to be a growing perception in the eyes of the public that we, as a political entity, are adrift."

Recovery of foreign make bullets in Kerala Central agencies, states roped in for probe

PNS ■ KOLLAM/ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Taking a serious view of recovery of foreign make bullets, suspected to be of Pakistan origin, in Kollam district, the Kerala government has roped in the Central agencies and other states for the probe which will be monitored by its anti-terror squad DIG.

Director General of Police Loknath Behera on Sunday

said the investigation in the case had been handed over to the Anti-Terror Squad and the central agencies informed about the bullets and their assistance sought. A day after the 14 live bullets were abandoned in Kulathupuzha, around 60 km from here bordering Tamil Nadu, a two-member team of the Military Intelligence from Ernakulam reached the town for investigation, police said.



Traffic hit in Khureji Khas due to anti-CAA stir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Traffic movement was affected in northeast Delhi's Khureji Khas area on Monday after a large group, comprising mostly women, gathered there to protest against the CAA, police said.

They said the protesters, approximately less than 100 in number, assembled on a stretch leading to the main road of Khureji Khas for a sit-in demanding roll back of the amended anti-citizenship law. "The protesters have gathered on one side of the stretch which leads to the main road. There is traffic movement but it is very slow," a senior police official said.

Cornell Law School centre 'studying' CAA, NRC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens in India are among the several sensitive legal issues which have drawn the attention of the Cornell Law School for conducting a fact-based study on them.

The US-based Ivy League law school, which launched its Cornell India Law Centre here early this month, is dedicated to promoting the study of Indian law and policy within the US legal academy.

Although there are centres on China's law, Africa's law, and European law at US law schools, there has not been significant focus on the study of Indian law among US legal scholars.

Sital Kalantry, faculty director of the centre and clinical professor of law, told PTI that another goal of the Cornell India Law Centre is to foster collaboration between Indian law schools, legal professionals, judges and their counterparts in the US.

Kalantry said the Centre is working on summarising impor-



tant Indian Supreme Court cases such as on the Aadhaar scheme, decriminalisation of section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, verdict in the Sabarimala case and the surrogacy law.

The faculty director said the Centre is also keenly watching the developments on CAA, NRC and establishment of foreign tribunals in Assam keeping in mind the need to conduct fact-based evaluations of these contentious issues.

"We hope to use empirical and other legal methodologies to inform law and public policy in India, including debate about the CAA and NRC," Kalantry said. She said Cornell India Law

Centre is the first centre of any American law school in India that examines Indian law across all substantive areas.

There is a MoU between the Centre and Jindal Global University for a pilot project on dual degree programmes allowing students to earn Indian and American law degrees in six years.

The Centre was formally inaugurated on February 7 in the presence of former Supreme Court judge Justice (ret'd) A K Sikri, Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal and senior advocate and Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

Dr Kafeel Khan's maternal uncle shot dead

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR (UP)

The maternal uncle of Dr Kafeel Khan, who was recently arrested for allegedly making inflammatory statements during anti-CAA protests, was shot dead in front of his house at Bankatichak in Rajghat area here, police said on Sunday.

Dr Nusratullah Warsi aka Dada (55), a property dealer, was shot dead on Saturday night at about 10:45 pm and an FIR against two people was filed in this connection on a written

complaint of his family members. According to police, it appears to be a case of murder due to monetary and property dispute and they are searching for both the accused.

Dr Kafeel Khan, suspended doctor of Gorakhpur BRD Medical College, was last month arrested under charges of giving a provocative speech during a protest against the CAA and NRC at Aligarh Muslim University and was later charged with the National Security Act. Warsi on Saturday evening

had gone to his lawyer Siraj Tariq's house, a few metres away from his own house, and was returning home on foot when a man shot him in his head, killing him on the spot.

"On the written complaint of family members, case of murder against one Imamuddin and Anil Sonkar has been registered and police has initiated probe and is searching for both the accused. Police met the women in their house and is interrogating them," Circle Officer VP Singh said.

FIR against cop for thrashing man at police station

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A 36-year-old sub-inspector has been booked for allegedly beating a man who accompanied a complainant in a kidnapping case to Mahim police station here, an official said on Sunday. The incident took place on Friday when sub-inspector Gahinath Satav was on night duty.

Ganesh Jalgaonkar (55), a Western Railway employee residing in Mahim Causeway area, went to Mahim police station along with his neighbour Nadeem Sheikh to find out

about the progress made in Sheikh's complaint of his two minor children going missing, the police official said.

Sheikh had filed a police complaint after his children went missing from home on Wednesday.

When Sheikh and Jalgaonkar went to the police station on Friday around 3 am, Satav asked them why they were sitting there. The two men told him they had come to enquire about

SHORT READS



Newly-wed woman abducted by man from same village

MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP): A newly-married woman was allegedly abducted from her parents' house by a man belonging to a different community in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district, police said. The woman was kidnapped from Surju village of the district on Saturday and a case was registered after her brother lodged a complaint, Kotwali SHO Anil Kapervan said. The three accused persons, including main accused Shehzad, are absconding, the SHO said. According to the complaint, the woman got married on February 10 and had come to her parents' house for a post-marriage ritual without her husband. On Saturday, she was kidnapped with the help of two of his friends, it stated. The accused are residents of the same village, the SHO said, adding that a search is on for them. It is suspected that the woman and Shehzad were in a relationship before her marriage, police said.

Wild boar attacks five people in UP village

MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP): At least five people, including a Class X student and an elderly woman, were injured after being attacked by a wild boar in a village here, police said. The incident happened in Tandeda village under Kakrol police station limits of the district on Saturday, they said. The boar is said to have entered the village from a nearby jungle and attacked several people.

Six-year-old girl found dead near dargah in UP's Bahraich

BAHRAICH (UP): A six-year-old missing girl was found dead on Sunday from bushes near a dargah in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district, police said. Hashmeen (6) had gone missing on Saturday night after her family paid a visit to Sayed Salar Masood Ghazi dargah here, they said. The parents lodged a missing complaint and she was found dead the following morning. The body has been sent for a post mortem, police added. A probe is on and no arrests have been made so far.

Fernandes memorial opens at Bejai church

PNS ■ MANGALURU

A memorial erected for late union minister and socialist leader George Fernandes at the Bejai Church cemetery here was inaugurated on Sunday.

The memorial, built on his mortal remains as per his religious customs, was inaugurated by Mangaluru bishop Peter Paul Saldanha.

Speaking after blessing the memorial, Saldanha said the late leader always stood for the working class and fulfilled their dreams.

A son of Mangaluru, he moved to Mumbai and then to the national capital to work for different sections of people in the country, the bishop said.

He said Fernandes, a former Defence and Railway minister, had the extraordinary ability to dream big which resulted in



the establishment of Konkan Railway project.

He knew the power of democracy and the pulse of the people, thereby earning powerful positions at the Centre. Fernandes brother Micheal Fernandes, who also spoke, thanked the church and all others for erecting the memorial and urged the people to carry the late leaders work forward.

Church officials, former

MLA J R Lobo and corpora-

Intemperate language no offence under sexual harassment act:HC

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Madras High Court has observed a solitary allegation of intemperate language against a woman employee does not constitute an offence under the law on sexual harassment at work place and the act cannot be allowed to be misused with exaggerated or non-existent charges.

Granting relief to a senior central government official who was accused of sexual harassment by a woman officer, it also said the Administrative Head or the Chief has every right to extract work and he or she has his or her own discretion and prerogatives.

Allowing a petition by V Natarajan, Deputy Registrar of Trade Marks and GI, Intellectual Property of India, Chennai, a bench of Justices M Sathyanarayanan and R



Hemalatha quashed orders of the Central Administrative Tribunal and the district Local Complaints Committee (LCC) against him.

"The complainant, it appears, made a futile attempt to settle her personal score with the petitioner. Every office has to maintain certain decorum and women

employees cannot be allowed to go scot-free without completing their assignments," the bench said in a lengthy order on Saturday.

If a woman employee was discriminated against due to her inefficiency or for any other official reasons, the recourse for

her is not the one taken by this complainant, it said.

"Though the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is intended to have an equal standing for women in the work place and to have a cordial workplace in which their dignity and self-respect are protected, it cannot be allowed to be misused by women to harass someone with an exaggerated or nonexistent allegations, the bench added.

The woman officer had lodged a complaint on December 2, 2013 against the petitioner with the Registrar and Controller General of Trade Marks and GI and Patents and Design, accusing him of high-handed and arrogant behaviour, causing hurt to her self-respect.

CHANDIGARH PG FIRE INCIDENT: Police arrest man who runs the facility

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Chandigarh police on Sunday arrested the man who runs the paying guest accommodation in Sector 32 here, a day after a fire at the premises claimed the lives of three young women, who were all students.

A senior police official said the owner of the house where the fire broke had sub-let it to Nitish Bansal and another person, who were running the PG facility, which was allegedly violating fire safety norms and other rules. "Nitish Bansal has been arrested in the case," Inspector Baldev Kumar, Station House Officer of Sector 34 police station, said.

Bansal, his partner and the house owner have been booked by police under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code,



including those relating to culpable homicide not amounting to murder, act endangering life of others and disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant.

"Further investigations are on and we will arrest other accused too," the SHO added. Deputy Commissioner Mandeep Singh Brar ordered an inquiry into the fire incident and the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (South) has been directed to conduct a thorough probe and submit a report at the earliest.

Ahmedabad gets ready to say 'Namaste' to US Prez

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Ahmedabad city of Gujarat is gearing up to welcome US President Donald Trump on his visit here on Monday when he will participate in a roadshow with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and jointly address a gathering at the 'Namaste Trump' event at a cricket stadium.

Officials and security agencies are giving final touches to preparations for the US President's visit to the city.

Even as there is uncertainty over Trump's visit to Sabarmati Ashram during his roadshow, all preparations have been done in anticipation of this arrival there with Modi, officials of the ashram said.

The Sabarmati Ashram served as the epicenter of the country's freedom struggle during Mahatma Gandhi's stay there.

As per the plan, Trump and Modi will embark on a 22-km roadshow from the Ahmedabad airport, where the US President will be accorded a grand welcome.

After the roadshow, both the leaders will reach the newly-built cricket stadium in Motera area of the city.

Authorities believe over one lakh people are expected to line up along the route of the roadshow, which has been named as 'India Road Show' by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation.



The city civic body is leaving no stone unturned to make the roadshow a memorable experience for the dignitaries as well as the people of Gujarat

The city civic body is leaving no stone unturned to make the roadshow a memorable experience for the dignitaries as well as the people of Gujarat.

"Hello Ahmedabad, Come, be a part of the 22 km long mega India Road Show. Lets showcase the best of Indian culture and diversity to the world. #Namaste Trump," Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner Vijay Nehra said in a tweet on

Sunday. The civic body has invited artistes from almost all the states to perform during the roadshow.

There will be separate stage for each state at regular distance on the route and artistes from different states would perform on these 30-odd stages.

After the roadshow, Trump and Modi would reach the stadium at Motera for the 'Namaste Trump' event, where

the two leaders would address a gathering of around 1.10 lakh people.

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

It has been completely rebuilt after demolishing the old one, which was built in 1982 with a seating capacity of 49,000 spectators.

Ahead of the address by Trump and Modi, a mega cultural programme will be held at the stadium where noted singer Kailesh Kher and many other artistes have been invited to entertain the crowd.

The city police earlier said more than 10,000 security per-

India looks forward to welcoming US President Trump: Prime Minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India looks forward to welcoming US President Donald Trump. The US president is on a visit to India from February 24 to 25. "India looks forward to welcoming @POTUS @realDonaldTrump. It is an honour that he will be with us tomorrow, starting with the historic programme in Ahmedabad," Modi wrote on Twitter. The prime minister was responding to tweet by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, which said that "entire Gujarat speaks in one voice — #NamasteTrump".

sonnel, to be led by 25 senior IPS officers, will be deployed for the roadshow and the 'Namaste Trump' event.

The massive deployment will be in addition to officials of the United States Secret Service, and personnel of the National Security Guards (NSG) and the Special Protection Group (SPG) guarding the events.

The police will be using the anti-drone technology to neutralise any suspicious drone on the route, officials said, adding that an anti-sniper team of the NSG will also be stationed along the route.

NARENDRA MODI, TRUMP TO VISIT SABARMATI ASHRAM

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Preparations are on in full swing at the Sabarmati Ashram here for the visit of US President Donald Trump on Monday, even as an official confirmation on it is still awaited. Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in a roadshow from the Ahmedabad airport on Monday. The two leaders will later address the 'Namaste Trump' event at a newly-built cricket stadium in Motera area here, according to the schedule announced by the Gujarat government.

A state government official said preparations were also going on at the Sabarmati Ashram, a place closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi, even as they await an official confirmation from the Ministry of External Affairs on the US president's visit to the place.

"Preparations are underway. It will be officially announced soon," said state tourism secretary Mamta Verma, who was on a visit to the ashram to oversee the arrangements.

An official confirmation is expected from the Ministry of



External Affairs "within a few hours", she said.

The ashram's secretary, Amrut Modi, said they are prepared to welcome the US President if he visits the place.

The ashram's area around 'Hriday Kunj', which was the home of Mahatma Gandhi and his wife Kasturba Gandhi for 12 years between 1918 and 1930 during the freedom struggle, was being given special attention.

A large cut-out of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was placed outside the ashram. Security has also been tightened with several police personnel and sniffer dogs deployed

in and outside the premises. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Friday said the White House will take a call on Trump's Sabarmati Ashram visit.

Rupani's statement came in the backdrop of speculation that the US president will not visit the ashram.

Meanwhile, preparations were underway on the route, leading up to the ashram, which will be part of the roadshow, as per the plan shared by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation.

Stages have been erected along the road where cultural shows will be held by various artistes.

UNPRECEDENTED STEPS IN DELHI

NEW DELHI: ITC Maurya, the hotel where US President Donald Trump will check-in on Monday, has been brought under an unprecedented security cover with anti-sabotage teams involving the Army and paramilitary conducting checks on the routes to be taken by the visiting dignitary.

Security agencies are also working in close coordination with the US Secret Service, officials said. Anti-drone detachment of NSG, snipers, elite SWAT commandos, kite catchers, canine units, sharpshooters on high-rise buildings and Parakram vans have also been deployed along the routes and areas in and around the hotel where Trump will be staying,

they said. Police personnel from six districts have been deployed for the security arrangements and nearly 40 companies of Central Armed Police Forces have been pressed into action. Hundreds of high-definition CCTV cameras with night vision have been installed across the Sardar Patel Marg where hotel ITC Maurya is located to monitor the situation round-the-clock, the officials said.

Five years ago, when Trump's predecessor Barack Obama visited the national capital, the Delhi Police had rented 605 CCTV cameras and spent more than Rs one crore in hiring, installing and later removing them.

Massive security cover in place

AHMEDABAD: Over 10,000 policemen from different parts of Gujarat have been deployed at strategic locations in Ahmedabad as part of the elaborate security arrangements for US President Donald Trump's visit here on Monday, officials said.

The massive police deployment is in addition to officials of the United States Secret Service, and India's elite National Security Guards (NSG) and Special Protection Group who would also be guarding the US president's visit. The Secret Service agents along with other US security



personnel have already arrived with their equipment and vehicles in at least four cargo planes during the last one week.

Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take part in a 22-km roadshow from the Ahmedabad international airport and then proceed for the

'Namaste Trump' event at the newly-built Sardar Patel Stadium in the city's Motera area, where over one lakh people are expected to be present.

Police will be using the anti-drone technology to neutralise any suspicious drone on the route, officials said, adding that an anti-sniper team of the NSG will also be stationed along the roadshow route, starting from the airport till the Motera stadium via Indira bridge.



CAPSULE

Navy's MiG-29K jet crashes off Goa coast, pilot ejects safely

PANAJI: A MiG-29K aircraft of the Indian Navy crashed into the Arabian Sea off the Goa coast on Sunday morning, the Navy said. The pilot ejected safely, a Navy spokesman said, adding that an inquiry has been ordered into the incident. The aircraft was on "routine training sortie" when it crashed off the Goa coast around 10.30 am, he said. "The pilot of the aircraft ejected safely and has been recovered. An enquiry to investigate the incident has been ordered," the spokesman said in a tweet. The twin engine, single-seater aircraft developed a "technical snag" due to which it crashed, he said. The aircraft had flown from the INS Hansa base at Vasco in South Goa. This is the second mishap of MiG-29K aircraft in Goa in the last three months.

Naveen Patnaik files nomination for re-election as BJD chief

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday filed nomination papers seeking his re-election as the BJD president — the post he had been holding since the regional outfit was formed on December 26, 1997. Accompanied by senior leaders, MPs and MLAs, Patnaik arrived at the state headquarters of the Biju Janata Dal, a party he founded and named after former CM and his father Biju Patnaik, and submitted papers before returning officer P K Deb for the February 26 elections, party sources said. This is for the eighth consecutive time Patnaik filed his papers for the BJD's top post. He is the lone leader to have filed nomination for the post, they said. Organizational elections are held in the BJD every three years, in accordance with the party's by-law.

Preserve, conserve India's biodiversity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

● Says Modi in Mann ki Baat

Describing the biodiversity of India as a "unique treasure" for the entire humankind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to preserve and conserve it.

Addressing his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio address, the prime minister referred to Tamil poetess Avvaiyar to drive home his point. "What we know is just a handful of sand. What we do not know is like a universe in itself," he said quoting her.

Similar is the case with the biodiversity of this country, the prime minister pointed out.

"The more you know, the more you realise the magnitude of what you do not know. Our biodiversity too is a unique treasure for the entire human kind. We have to preserve it, conserve it and explore



further," he said. The prime minister said the traditions and the legacy we have inherited teaches us compassion toward all living beings and boundless love for nature.

To join the culture of hospitality, every year numerous

species of birds from across the world come to India. Throughout the year, India is home to many migratory species. "We are told that more than 500 varieties of birds fly in from varied regions," he pointed out.

He informed that recently, biologists discovered a new species of fish whose habitat is within the caves of Meghalaya. It is believed that this fish is the largest among aquatic species found under the surface of caves. "It is a matter of joy that India, and especially Meghalaya, is home to a rare species. It lends a new facet to India's biodiversity. We are surrounded by many such mysteries, which are still undiscovered. To discover such a phenomenal enigma calls for fierce detective passion," he said.

In his address, the prime minister also referred to the 'Hunar Haat' organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs at the Rajpath. Last week Modi made a surprise visit to the Haat where he interacted with people, had litti-chokha for lunch and enjoyed a hot kulhad of tea.

Ahead of budget session, Thackeray meets DyCM, Pawar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Ahead of the budget session of Maharashtra Assembly, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray held a closed door meeting with NCP president Sharad Pawar and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar at his official residence here on Sunday. The leaders arrived at a consensus on communicating to the Centre about "objectionable parts" of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), a senior state leader said.

This comes against the backdrop of Thackeray's recent statement that he had no problems with the NPR and



nobody should be afraid over the CAA. The Sena's stand appeared at variance with that of the NCP and the Congress, which are its alliance partners in the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government. The meeting, held at the CM's offi-

cial residence 'Varsha' on Sunday, focused on two issues - implementation of the CAA, NPR and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state, and the budget session beginning on Monday, the leader said.

Will preside over WB State University convocation as Chancellor: Guv

PNS ■ KOLKATA

After being prevented from attending the annual convocation of two top state universities, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said he would be presiding over the graduation ceremony at West Bengal State University (WBSU). Dhankhar, who is also the chancellor of all state

varieties, said he would discuss ways to improve the performance of the WBSU with VC and the faculty members on the occasion. "Would be presiding as Chancellor Convocation of the West Bengal State University on February 25, 2020. The University since its inception in 2008 had its first convocation in 2017," Dhankhar wrote on his official Twitter handle.

Health Ministry mulling to increase legal age for tobacco consumption

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry is mulling to increase the legal age for tobacco consumption from 18 to 21 years as part of its efforts to strengthen the provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products

Act (COTPA). A legal subgroup constituted by the ministry for suggesting legal reforms for tobacco control held its meeting recently and has submitted its recommendations to the ministry.

The committee, besides increasing the legal age of

tobacco consumption, has also recommended increasing the fine amount for violation of rules and introducing a provision of tracking and tracking mechanism to check illicit trade of cigarette and tobacco products, an official said.

AAP eyeing UP polls after Delhi sweep

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After registering a thumping victory in the Delhi elections, the Aam Aadmi Party is eyeing the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls scheduled in 2022 and said that it will seek votes in the name of Delhi's development model.

A AAP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh claimed that the BJP's "Gujarat model" was nothing compared to his party's Delhi development model. He said workers will reach out to the people in UP and tell them about party's development agenda and schemes. "We have started making ground in politically sensitive Uttar Pradesh. We are sure that the 2022 election will be

contested on development agenda, and we will seek vote in the name of Delhi's development model," Singh said.

"The Delhi elections has proved that people are discarding politics of hatred and preferring politics of development. In the Delhi polls, 15 MLAs belong to UP and they will be given responsibility in the state to strengthen party base," he added.

The AAP leader said the party will soon launch a membership drive in the state. Attacking Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Singh alleged that "gundaraj" (hooliganism) and "arajakta" (anarchy) were at its peak in Uttar Pradesh, and attempts were going on under the present dispensation to "harm" democracy.

BHU team unearths 4000-yr-old crafts village in Varanasi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 4000-year-old urban settlement has been unearthed by a team of the Benaras Hindu University in Varanasi, which experts say is one of the craft villages mentioned in ancient texts.

The Benaras Hindu University's Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology which did a preliminary survey of the site in Babhanivay vil-



lage, 13 km from Varanasi, said they had found remnants of

one of the settlements that have been mentioned in vari-

ous literature surrounding the holy city.

Initial survey of the site in Babhanivay village in Varanasi district has found a temple dating back to the 5th Century AD through 8th Century AD, potteries which are 4000-year-old and walls which are 2000-year-old, said Professor A K Dubey of Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, BHU.

"On the basis of the surface

materials at the site we can say that the structure is anywhere between 3500 to 4000-year-old," said Dubey, who is part of the team which will excavate the site from February 23.

He said that it gains significance because of its proximity to

Varanasi, which according to legend was founded by the Hindu deity Lord Shiva 5,000 years ago, though modern scholars believe it to be around 3,000 years old.

It's showtime

Trump is show business and in Modi, he has found a kindred soul. But will anything meaningful come out of his visit?



Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election will most likely be repeated in November this year, considering the rate at which things are moving with the Democrats. It isn't surprising, therefore, that Governments across the world, no matter what their personal views on Trump, hitch their wagons to his train. But unlike other pragmatic leaders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump appear to have a genuine bond, at least in public. The sight of the two men holding hands at the "Howdy Modi" event in Texas dominated world media. It gave heartburn to Opposition politicians not only in India but to other leaders across the world, too. While parents teach their children that they should not look at friendships as *quid pro quo* arrangements, the fact is that India and the US need to leverage the relationship of the two leaders into something much more concrete. Of course, the strengthening of India-US defence collaboration is something that started under former Prime Minister Vajpayee's tenure and was reinforced by the UPA Government under Manmohan Singh. The Modi Government is building on that edifice. India will be buying more American hardware, including helicopters and air defence systems but the signature deal that Trump wants is in trade, which seems to be very far away at the moment. America wants access for its dairy products but India is understandably wary of cattle fed with hormones and animal matter over there. Besides, there's also the need to protect Indian dairy farmers as we are the largest milk producer in the world. On the other hand, India wants access to American markets under favourable terms and the US has said that is only for "developing" nations and as a member of the G-20, India is hardly "developing."

Irrespective of the failure to clinch a trade deal worth just a few dollars — one of the reasons why he is not bringing his key economic aide — Trump's visit will also need the ruling Government to do some tough answering. His appearance today with Modi will take place under conditions when our Government has failed to pass the "religious" test. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which calls for a religion-based code of identity, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), have put the nation on the boil, with protests refusing to die even two months after they started. The Government's principle of challenging the very Constitution that called for "equality" of all religions by considering some to be less "Indian" than others, has led to several nations, even the UN, expressing concern over its authoritarian ways. The lockdown and detentions in Kashmir have caused much discomfort in the US, even among key Senators, who fear a subversion of democracy in the name of "Hindu India." Allegedly, Trump has vowed not to miss this opportunity to address the issue and is bound to raise it both during his public remarks and certainly in private. He needs Pakistan to keep the Taliban in leash and will need to be seen as pushing some margins in Kashmir. If only as an arm-twisting tactic or to rile up Modi's insecurities at a time when he wants to be seen as a hefty global leader. But we are hard-nosed, too, about business. So treat this as spectator sport; one of the biggest shows that India has ever seen. We could all laugh about the "10 million people" gaffe but there will be more people than Trump has ever seen greeting him. But nothing of substance might come out of it.

Alliance pressure

The Sena doesn't want to burn bridges with either its State allies or the Central BJP leadership



Ever since the Maharashtra Aghadi Government assumed power as an unlikely coalition of divergent ideologies — the Shiv Sena, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress — there has been much speculation about its lability. Particularly, the BJP, which lost out the power race despite being the single largest party because of its refusal to accommodate the Shiv Sena, leaves no opportunity to rile up the inherent tensions in the alliance. Which is why Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray's flip-flop on some of the most contentious issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Population Register (NPR) feathers the split theory considering both the Congress and NCP are vociferously against them. But when both NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut have assured that the alliance government will last five years, it points to a rationalisation of politics at the grassroots level. So the three parties, realising each needs the other to stay relevant, have successfully dissociated the local contexts from the national one. And although they have been long-standing foes for over a quarter of a century over local issues, they are desperate to prop each other up to stay in governance.

The Shiv Sena, being ideologically on the Rightist end of the spectrum, cannot disown the moorings of what made it. It has already successfully rewired nationalism as a definition of Marathi pride. But not quite sure about its run in a convenient arrangement, it doesn't want to exactly burn bridges with the top BJP leadership. To expect it to discard its Right-wing face completely would be wishful thinking. So though he had initial reservations on the CAA, Uddhav is siding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interpretation of it not being against Indian Muslims. The NCP and the Congress are against the exclusionary intent of the CAA, which violates the Constitutional guarantee of equality of all religions. Similarly, Uddhav, while vociferously opposing the profiling-based National Register of Citizens (NRC), is going soft on the NPR, although that is largely being seen as a precursor to the NRC. By walking the thin line, Uddhav is also publicising that he is with the Centre on issues that wouldn't hurt his State. Also, he probably wants to peg the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) on development rather than bringing in the national debate on Hindutva versus secularism. The illusion of calm within the Aghadi was blown off earlier with the Sena favouring an NIA probe into the Elgar Parishad case and NCP-Congress expressing strong dissatisfaction over it. His visit to Ayodhya and the Veer Savarkar issue was hugely discomforting for his partners, too. But such uneasy equations will continue and each party will clench their teeth and fists, knowing the importance of keeping the Government intact. The Sena knows the role of the Congress and the NCP in getting it the chief ministership. The NCP knows it can encash its role as the mediator from both sides. Letting go of the Government and risking the desertion by its regional leadership are the last mistakes the Congress would want to commit. If the alliance is to stay though, it is in the best interest of all three parties to stick to the CMP and not peak out of turn. Else, they could fall to the hawkish plans of the BJP which loses no opportunity to embarrass the Sena among its core voters. And if they do not budge, they will turn the BJP's dream of the Aghadi crumbling under its own weight into a reality. Unless its back channel diplomacies are making the Sena leaders have second thoughts.

Misplaced enthusiasm

We should focus on the inked papers, determinants and agreements that fructify or don't, pursuant to Trump's visit and not on 'walls' which are of little consequence in policy



BHOPINDER SINGH

"Walls" and the US President Donald Trump seem to have some sticky fixation that goes beyond the contentious Mexico-US border "wall", the cost of building which would be about \$25 billion. The recent case is the much humbler 400-metre-long and seven-feet high wall in Ahmedabad. Trump's visit to this city has led to an estimated drain of ₹100 crore. The said amount will be spent on resurfacing and constructing new roads, on security imperatives, for transport and refreshments of over 1,00,000 guests in the "world's largest stadium", transplanting trees, flower arrangements, cultural extravaganza as also the "contentious" wall-column that seems to have caught public attention for its ostensible purpose.

Clearly, this wall-column hides a slum cluster of some 800 families that dot the unavoidable road stretch — from the airport to the main venue. It does have some security angle, given the heavy population density along the road, which typically necessitates a smooth passage for the presidential entourage. But it is essentially a "beautification" move that is neither unique to India nor necessarily unwarranted in the context of sprucing any location in preparation of such events. It is certainly a sad reflection of the reality that besets any urban dwelling. However, the efforts towards putting forth a "picture-perfect" view is par for course in any civic engagement.

The Government cannot be faulted for projecting a certain ambience and operational flawlessness, especially as the event is aimed to enhance "magnificence" of an emerging India (with the inauguration of the "world's largest stadium"). Putting the best foot forward in terms of visuals is the norm, not the exception. But it certainly is tantamount to glossing over some reality that always lurks in the midst of any city, be it Ahmedabad, New Delhi or even Washington, DC. State visits are necessarily and deliberately over-sanitised and bedecked from all aspects of the diverse reality that always exists in proximity. The majestic drive from the Rashtrapati Bhawan to the splendid Janpath, all the way up to the India Gate, or even to other parts of Lutyens Delhi, does not reflect the socio-economic diversity, reality and depravity of some other parts of the capital that is spared the cavalcade of such dignitaries.

The recent phenomenon initiated by the Modi Government of showcasing different cities across the country (beyond Delhi) is novel as it willy-nilly facilitates a modicum of development therein. Many cities have benefitted from the spotlight — be it Varanasi during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit or Chennai, which hosted Chinese Premier Xi Jinping, Ahmedabad, which had previously hosted Xi and is again prepping for the next high-profile foreign visit, may be benefitting disproportionately



ly from such visits along with the Prime Minister's political constituency of Varanasi. But again, as the son-of-soil of Gujarat and the "people's representative" of Varanasi, he thought he is entitled to that bias.

Similar "walls" had come up at various places in Beijing during the 2008 Olympics. China had strategically used this occasion to announce its "arrival" on the global scale. At that time, the Chinese had spent over \$130 million to just restore and paint their building-temple complexes that dotted the five-mile axis on the main Olympic zone. Much later, Rio de Janeiro had to face much criticism for its "walls of shame" that sprung up to divide the shiny new Olympic city in 2016 from the typical Rio de Janeiro shanties that populated the city. A five mile long highway from the airport was covered with a 10 feet "wall" that was painted with welcoming murals. Everyone knew that it covered the inequities that beset the Brazilian reality.

Later, activists derided such moves as Potemkin displays and used the facade afforded by such "walls" to post expressions of cynicism and revolt against the Government. But then, the alternative of leaving the reality in its naked sores is, perhaps, equally untenable and unhelpful, considering the larger stakes

“CHARM OFFENSIVES HAVE LIMITED 'UTILITY' AND THE CLASSICAL ATITHI DEVO BHAVA (GUEST IS GOD) HAS VERY LIMITED RESONANCE WITH HARD-NOSED BUSINESSMEN LIKE TRUMP OR XI. LOOK AT AGREEMENTS, COMPROMISES AND EXCHANGES INSTEAD”

and ambitions involved in hosting such events.

The Commonwealth Games (CWG) in Delhi in 2010 had led to thick bamboo "curtains" being planted around squalid clusters. Beyond the political blame-game, the event selectively and successfully highlighted New Delhi's gleaming new airport, swanky metro, wide roads with streetlights — an important infrastructural change that did alter the face and perception of the city.

In India, outside Delhi, the architectural development and approach of the city centre from the airport is such that it would entail many improvisations, sprucing up and even the inevitable "walls" from an aesthetic, practical and security perspective. A lot of public emotions is unnecessarily raked with debates on such "walls", which could be more meaningfully directed at the more substantive part of the visit ie, the agreements, compromises and exchanges that take place, which have a long-term impact in affecting people's lives.

While there can never be a universally-agreed formula to determine how much is "too much" on such "walls", common sense suggests that an element of beautification and related requirements does require a semblance of "cover-up." On

the contrary, the public eye on the ball should remain focussed on the inked papers, determinants and agreements (with Trump, even disagreements) that fructify or don't, pursuant to this visit. Puerile debate and passion on "walls" have a tendency to hijack the larger narrative at stake.

It is, perhaps, more pertinent to criticise the waste-of-moment captured in the famous tea ceremony on the swings on the banks of Sabarmati in Ahmedabad when Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted Xi, when at that very moment, the People Liberation Army (PLA) was involved in a face-off with the Indian armed forces at the border. Charm offensives have limited "utility" and the classical *Atithi Devo Bhava* (Guest is God) has very limited resonance with hard-nosed businessmen like Trump or Xi.

Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai (India and China are brothers) of the 1950s is a lesson not to be forgotten as is the memory of the US Naval fleet sailing into the Bay of Bengal in the 1971 Indo-Pak war. The minor "walls" in 2020, though not very elegant, ought not to be the substantive concern of the day.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

SOUNDBITE

The rule of law is the most fundamental feature of modern constitutions and its success depends on how judiciaries respond to emerging challenges.



Chief Justice of India —SA Bobde

We feel love, humour, empathy, compassion, hatred...but in overall behaviour of ours, because of education and our upbringing, we know to differentiate between good and bad.



Actor —Riteish Deshmukh

Decolonisation is a process that has to be guided by the needs of communities. People's concerns are varied and it is our collective responsibility to amplify their voices.



UN chief —Antonio Guterres

Nationalism and the slogan, *Bharat Mata Ki Jai*, are being misused to construct a militant and purely emotional idea of India that excludes millions of residents and citizens.



Former Prime Minister —Manmohan Singh

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stop interfering

Sir — It is untenable that China has raised objections to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, claiming that it is in violation of its territorial sovereignty and sabotaged mutual trust with India. New Delhi has done well to stand its ground, pointing out that Arunachal Pradesh is an "integral and inalienable" part of India and Indian leaders routinely travel to the State as they do to any other State.

It has become a habit for Beijing to make unwarranted noises when anyone visits the eastern-most part of the country. It did so even when the Prime Minister was there to lay the foundation stone for a tunnel under the critical Sela mountain pass. But why does it keep raising objections to it? Being a totalitarian regime, it never allows "personal freedom" to flourish. But unlike China, India is a democratic country and individual freedom, culture, religions and so on are always protected here. This is why India has always taken recourse to "polite diplomacy" to make its point. The Chinese outburst is linked to its frustration. One of

Tourism has opened up new vistas

Man's itinerant exploits introduced him to the wonders of travelling, which have continued since early times. In recent years, it has become much more affordable and convenient for humans to explore unknown territories. More and more people are shedding inhibitions and embarking on pleasure trips to locales across the country. Foreign tours, too, have become common. Exploring new places and appreciating the beauty that nature opens out for guests form the crux of any excursion. Although many travellers love seeing famous monuments, exploring new cultures often provides worthwhile travel experiences. Getting to know about the local people and their lifestyles helps a holiday-maker get an in-depth knowledge of the region. Local food being a fundamental component of a destination's attributes, eating traditional food and cuisine is an integral part of the travel experience.

This is why tourism has opened up new vistas that have enhanced the joys of travelling. The mountains, rivers, the sea and the beaches — all have been given the much-needed tourism "makeover" to make them attractive for visitors. Exploiting the nature's bounties, the Government and other stakeholders have showcased the uniqueness of their land to increase tourism footfalls. Attaining the status of an industry by itself, tourism has gradually



evolved as the chief economic lifeline for many States. However, it is quite disappointing to have the same places in the State featuring as "exotic locales" for years at a stretch with travel operators making no efforts to promote new destinations to hold the interest of tourists. There have been several instances of foreigners touring Goa on their own "discovering" scenic spots that even the locals are not aware of. "Stale" itineraries are the undoing of a system of tourism promotion that refuses to shed the tried-and-tested methods. The need of the hour is to have innovations guiding the grandiose schemes.

Pachu Menon Margao

the major concerns for China is the ongoing infrastructural projects undertaken by our country over there. Beijing maintains that until a settlement on the border issue is achieved, no one can visit

Arunachal. But do we have to pay heed to it? We are a sovereign republic and none can tell us where Indians can travel.

TK Nandanam Chennai

Unaddressed issues

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Message of Shaheen Bagh" (February 19). The protest at

Shaheen Bagh is the longest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The Supreme Court has done well to appoint mediators to open the road blockade. The Government, too, has made it clear that it is ready to negotiate. But it is disheartening that it took the initiative to end the logjam only after a long wait, when the court intervened. Further, the Government's sole interest is to get the road vacated. Shaheen Bagh became a major challenge for it with its peaceful and civil character. What about finding a solution to the concerns raised by the women?

Niharika Via email

Respect orders

Sir — Indeed, protests are meant to serve a wake-up call for democracy. But it is important for Shaheen Bagh protesters to consider the disruption they have caused. They must abide by the Supreme Court's orders.

Ashok Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Mitigate India's water stress

The Govt should come up with a comprehensive roadmap and the States have to step up their efforts for successfully achieving the JJM target



SONIA GROVER

NIYATI SETH

India is a water stressed nation with per capita water availability of about 1,544 cubic metres. It has been ranked 13th among 17 extremely water-stressed countries as listed by the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas released by the World Resources Institute (WRI). The country, closely followed by neighbouring Pakistan, was under "extremely high" levels of baseline water stress. As many as 12 of the 17 water stressed countries were from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the document warned that climate change may complicate the crisis in coming years.

A region is said to be water-stressed when the demand exceeds the available volume of water or when poor quality restricts its use. Alarmingly, both groundwater and surface water in the country are extremely exploited. In a grim reflection of the situation in the country, groundwater levels declined by more than eight centimetres per year between 1990 and 2014 in northern India.

The rapidly declining per capita water share, source vulnerability and growing contamination of groundwater are some of the causes for serious concern India. Both surface and groundwater resources are highly exploited and figures released by the Ministry of Jal Shakti paint a dismal picture. About 1,186 of 6,881 groundwater "assessment units" are categorised as over-exploited. It has been reported that India extracts more groundwater than China and the US combined. Also, the latest report of the Niti Aayog mentions that 21 cities of the country will exhaust their groundwater resources soon. Of the States and Union Territories, Chandigarh was the most water-stressed, followed by Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

To address these concerns, the Union Government launched the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) which promises water to every household in the country by 2024. In the Union Budget 2020, under the head of Wellness, Water and Sanitation scheme, (about ₹3.60 lakh crore was approved earlier for the JJM) ₹11,500 crore has been allocated for 2020-2021. The main focus this time will be on source sustainability and augmentation. Various water conservation measures like rainwater harvesting, renovation or rejuvenation of tanks and lakes, reuse of waste water, development of recharge structures, desalination along with watershed development and intensive afforestation will also be undertaken. These measures will not only enhance the water availability of the country but also ensure sustainability of the available resource. This is a much appreciated step as it was the need of the hour. The Government's plan is a well-thought-out approach which will focus on the source which is needed for sustainable management of the resource.

However, the allocated Budget for 2020-21 is just 15 per cent higher than the previous year's Budget that was around ₹10,000 crore (the allocation for 2019-20 was almost double of that for 2018-19). It is an ambitious target to be achieved in the next five years, given that previously the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (currently subsumed under the JJM) aimed at providing drinking water supply in rural areas by 2030 at an estimated cost of ₹6 lakh crore. But the JJM has low Budget allocations with a shorter timeline. Also, the allocation this year is just about three per cent of the total Budget sanctioned for the scheme, given that the first year is critical to impart momentum to this flagship programme. Also, there are lessons to be learnt from past programmes such as the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) which has now been subsumed under the JJM.

The target under the NRDWP was to provide piped water tap connections to 35 per cent of rural households by 2017 but the latest figures of 2019 showed that the connections have only reached around 18 per cent of the households. The performance of NRDWP was not very satisfactory and some of the reasons were that the contribution of States was on the lower side. Also, some States faced paucity of funds for the piped water scheme. Telangana had to borrow money from banks to operationalise its mission for piped drinking water supply from surface water sources (Mission Bhagiratha). Another key factor was that the allocated amount usually remained unspent because of late submission of proposals and the long time taken for implementation of the sanctioned projects.

The Government should come up with a comprehensive road map and the States have to step up their efforts for successfully achieving the mission target. Perhaps 2020 is a crucial year for both the Centre and the State Governments to overcome the challenges and expedite the implementation process.

(Grover is Fellow and Seth is Research Associate, Water Resources, TERI)

THEY SAY WE'VE KEPT OUR WOMEN IN FRONT. ONLY THE LIONESSES HAVE COME OUT AND YOU'RE SWEATING. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF ALL OF US COME TOGETHER.

—AIMIM LEADER WARIS PATHAN

POINT COUNTERPOINT



IT APPEARS PER SE BOTH THE AIMIM AND THE BJP HAVE COME TOGETHER AND CHALKED OUT A DIVISIVE AGENDA.

—MAHARASHTRA PCC GENERAL SECRETARY SACHIN SAWANT

A tricky road ahead

India must ensure that it does not cede ground in dealings with US negotiators accompanying Trump and end up doing what doesn't suit its national interests — an Iran yet again



VIVEK MISHRA

As US President Donald Trump visits Ahmedabad-Agra-Delhi today, the spectrum of expectations remains variegated. Although the agenda of the bilateral meet seems holistic, with a 12-member delegation accompanying Trump during his two-day visit to India, apprehensions remain regarding the deliverables coming out of the trip.

Besides, there have been quite a few changes in Trump's itinerary and agenda, signalling last-minute negotiations, disagreements and possibly discontent on either side, on the key issues of trade. The US has adopted a hard negotiating position vis-a-vis India and has signalled its unwillingness to retract from that stance. Among other things, the US has been reluctant to reinstate India's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) status and has continued to seek market access for its dairy products.

New Delhi has held out till now, but it is going to be difficult to predict the course of negotiations in the coming future. If nothing concrete comes out of bilateral trade talks in the few months following Trump's visit to the country, he could further harden negotiating grounds for the US, as was the case with China.

Even though many have held that the centre-piece of this visit, a substantive/mini-trade deal between the US and India, may have collapsed, the political signalling of Trump's visit is strong for both the countries. For India, it means a continuation of the growth in strength of Indo-US ties with each successive President.

The short, 36-hour stay of Trump is being utilised in the most effective way, in so far as signalling is concerned. The Ahmedabad "Namaste Trump" event, Agra's Taj Mahal stopover and the critically-decisive talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump along with the visit to the Raj Ghat, tie concrete deliverables with cultural symbolism.

For the US, as the domestic primaries are heating up, running up to the presidential elections at the end of the year, the timing and the targeted constituency of the Indian-Americans as vote bank, could draw significant advantages for the Republican Party and the Trump administration.

Trump's tweet that, "We're not treated very well by India", but that he happens to "like Prime Minister Modi a lot" underscores the comfortable-uncomfortability of this visit. Both leaders realise the value of each other's partnership in times when China is not the same option for partnership for either country as they are for each other.

Trump's declaration that he is "saving the big deal" with India for later and he "does not know" if it will be done before the presidential election in November, signals two things: First, that the ongoing negotiations on trade are a hard bargain for either side and that neither party is willing to give concessions or cede positions. Second, both sides have desisted from earmarking a deadline for the finalisation of these negotiations, which speaks of the complex nature of the consultations involved.

In the end, the lack of availability of an immediate trade deal to sign for Trump may not be a pressing irritant. India's trade surplus with the US has significantly come down in the last

“ IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY MEGA TRADE DEALS, BOTH SIDES WILL TETHER THE PROJECTION OF SUCCESSFUL US-INDIA BILATERAL RELATIONS TO DEFENCE DEALS. SECURITY COOPERATION AND A COMMONLY-VISUALISED REGIONAL ORDER IN THE INDO-PACIFIC. AS SUCH, DEFENCE DEALS ARE LIKELY TO BE THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE VISIT. IN PARTICULAR, THE \$2.6 BILLION DEAL TO BUY 24 SEAHAWK HELICOPTERS FROM AMERICAN DEFENCE MANUFACTURER LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATION IS GOING TO CAPTURE HEADLINES ”



few years owing to energy imports from it, which is the sixth-largest source of crude oil imports for the country currently. Besides, the US continues to be India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade expected to cross \$150 billion for the first time this year.

In the absence of any mega trade deals, both sides will tether the projection of successful US-India bilateral relations to defence deals, security cooperation and a commonly-visualised regional order in the Indo-Pacific. As such, defence deals are likely to be the highlight of the visit. In particular, the \$2.6 billion deal to buy 24 Seahawk helicopters from American defence manufacturer Lockheed Martin Corporation is going to capture headlines.

The Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Modi recently cleared the purchase of the 24 helicopters and the deal is going to benefit India as these platforms are expected to boost the Navy's anti-submarine warfare operations — an emerging area of maritime cooperation with the US and a critical component of the Indo-Pacific security resolve. At the level of the regional order in Asia, two issues will be very critical during this visit. The Trump administration could nudge New Delhi to play a larger and stronger regional role in the Indo-Pacific region.

First, the role that New Delhi would play in the Indo-Pacific region is of utmost importance to Washington. For a long time, the US and other partners of the Quadilateral security grouping view India as a "dithering" member. The US views itself as having taken quite a few steps in the Indo-Pacific that haven't been well reciprocated through actions by India. Among them, the renaming of the Indo-Pacific Command to pragmatically engage India directly in all matters relating to the Indo-Pacific. Washington views New Delhi as a key player in the US' strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

The Raisina Dialogue held in January in New Delhi witnessed an important development regarding the Indo-US joint vision in the Indo-Pacific. The US moved to correct a potential disconnection in the Indo-US common view by declaring that its own vision in the Indo-Pacific now includes the Gulf region, which the US' *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* excluded initially. This small but significant change builds a common platform to advance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region for both the countries. However, even as both countries try to find common ground in the Indo-Pacific to work with, New Delhi should try to emphasise certain uncompromising positions of geopolitics in this vast region. India's own relation with Iran has to be worked up, despite pressures from Washington and significant cuts in oil imports from Tehran.

India should deftly employ strategic hedging to work with both Iran and the US. While New Delhi knows that for a middle power like it, balancing between two major players — the US and China — is going to be much easier than balancing between a major force and a regionally-strong yet sub-middle power like Iran. The real challenge of diplomacy for India lies in its ability to navigate successfully without creating hostilities, especially in times when partisan geopolitics has threatened to become a diplomatic norm,

beckoning the polarisation that characterised half a century before the current one. In the continental dimensions of the Indo-Pacific, Afghanistan is going to be a critically-important factor given the timing of domestic politics in that country, China's increasing role in Kabul and the US withdrawal lined up. Trump is a known pusher for India's greater role in Afghanistan and this visit could see a diplomatic nudge to New Delhi to change its role in Afghanistan, if not increase it. President Ghani's return to power in Afghanistan, the US' deal with Taliban to be signed on February 29 and its subsequent withdrawal could be used as diplomatic tropes for India to increase its security role in Afghanistan.

India should be wary that it does not cede ground in dealings with the hard negotiators accompanying Trump and end up doing what doesn't suit its national interests — an Iran yet again. Even if nothing much comes out of the upcoming Trump visit, India should prepare for uncompromising negotiations. Yet, the visit has the potential to catapult bilateral ties to a new level and set new grounds for engagements in the future. If Modi has initiated the culture of "informal talks" with China, with the US it is the "grand events" that mark a distinct note in bilateral relations. As such, the Ahmedabad event in the cricket stadium further pushes the idea of a large gathering to welcome visiting Heads of State towards a concrete diplomatic norm.

(The writer is Deputy Director, Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies, Bhubaneswar and Research Fellow, ICWA, New Delhi)

The monster that they created still lurks

The Reagan Govt spent millions on printing textbooks propagating jihad and disseminating them in Pak madrasas and schools in the 80s



NADEEM PARACHA

In 1992, while working as a reporter for an English-language weekly in Karachi, I was assigned a feature on certain books that were part of the curriculum in schools operating in two low-income areas of the city.

These were not Government schools. They were largely run and funded by "charity organisations", two of which were eventually banned by the Government in 2003. I managed to acquire two Urdu textbooks that were being taught to students between the ages of eight and 12. In simple Urdu, the books had chapters on jihad, infidels, obscenity and so on. When I asked an active member of one of the charity organisations about the books, he told me the tomes were not originally published in Pakistan. To my astonishment, the books were actually reprints

of textbooks that were first authored and printed in the US in the early and mid-1980s. They were then shipped to Pakistan, where they were distributed to various schools and madrasas countrywide and to madrasas and schools in the villages of Afghanistan near the Pak-Afghan border. This was done during the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan between 1980 and 1988. Afghan and Arab insurgents were stationed in Pakistan and sustained by financial aid and support from the US and Saudi Arabia.

In the March 23, 2002 issue of *The Washington Post*, Joe Stephens and David Ottaway write that, during the insurgency, Ronald Reagan's Government spent millions on the printing of textbooks (in Pashto, Dari and Urdu) "filled with violent images and militant teachings, as part of covert attempts to spur resistance to the Soviet occupation." These books were sent to Pakistan with the billions of dollars' worth of "aid" that Pakistan received from the US to facilitate the insurgency.

Stephens and Ottaway add that the books "were filled with talk of holy war and featured drawings of guns, bullets, soldiers and mines." After the Soviet

forces left the region, in the late 1980s, these books became part of the Afghan school system's core curriculum. Stephen and Ottaway write that the same books were also used by the violent Taliban regime that came to power in Kabul in 1996.

In 2002, just months after the US forces ousted the Taliban from power, an American foreign aid official stated that a major "scrubbing operation" in Pakistan and Afghanistan had been launched "to purge from the books all references to killing." This was briefly covered by a 2002 issue of *Daily News*, the now defunct Pakistani English newspaper. The reporter had added that, before "scrubbing" the books that it had circulated, the US was the first non-Muslim power to have propagated "holy war" among Muslims to undermine a "common enemy." This is not correct.

The first to do so was Germany. On October 14, 1914, a senior cleric in Istanbul — which at the time was the capital of the Ottoman Empire — declared a "holy war" against Britain, France, Russia and Serbia. He did this with the approval of the Ottoman Sultan and on the behest of Germany. The bankrupt empire had decided

to become an ally of Germany during World War-I. The Sultan accepted a hefty payment from Germany to bolster the ailing Ottoman economy. He also saw the alliance as an opportunity for the empire to regain the regions that it had lost in the 19th century and onwards.

In the April 2011 issue of the journal *War in History*, historian Mustafa Aksakal writes that, to anti-German forces, the Ottoman jihad proclamation was understood as "a linchpin of the German scheme to revolutionise Muslim populations in territories of Germany's enemies."

According to Aksakal, the German lawyer, historian and archeologist Max von Oppenheim was one of the main architects of the "scheme." A propaganda organisation, the Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (The Intelligence Bureau for the East), headquartered in Berlin, produced and then circulated jihadist literature among the Muslims of Asian and African territories held by the British. The two most prominent texts in this context were a booklet by Jewish scholar and founder of Modern Islamic Studies in Germany, Eugen Mittwoch and a 1915 brochure by the Muslim scholar Salih Ash-Sharif Al-

Tunisi. According to Samuel Krug, in his essay for the research project *Making War, Mapping Europe*, the booklet contextualised jihad according to contemporary politics, whereas Tunisia's brochure explained it as a binding theological concept. Both texts were published in Berlin by the German Society of Islamic Studies.

The fallouts of the two schemes, one by Germany and the other by the US, were completely different. Due to the fact that Germany and the Ottomans badly lost the war, secular Muslim nationalism and hybrid Leftist ideas completely sidelined the jihadist fervour roused by German propaganda. German and Ottoman defeats strengthened secular nationalist narratives in Muslim countries and discarded theocratic ideas.

On the other hand, as British author Jonathan Steele demonstrates in his 2011 book, *Ghosts of Afghanistan*, even though it was the collapsing Soviet economy that forced Soviet forces to leave Afghanistan and then the stopping of aid to the Government that left behind in Kabul, the US and Pakistan spun the Soviet departure to mean a "victory of faith against communism." It was this perception that saw

militant propaganda devised by the US to linger in the region. No wonder then, when the US forces invaded Kabul to topple the Taliban regime in 2001, they found madrasas still using textbooks that the US had circulated in the 1980s. What's more, according to a December 2014 report in *The Washington Post*, despite the fact that, ever since 2002, Unicef in Afghanistan destroyed almost half a million of these books, many were still being taught to children in areas under the control of Taliban insurgents.

In 2015, Pakistani soldiers found similar textbooks in seminaries and schools in areas that were once dominated by extremist groups. These groups were ousted through a military operation. In other words, until 2015, textbooks authored and published in the US in the 1980s to glorify "holy war" in the minds of young Muslims were still being used in various seminaries and schools of the region.

Some commentators suspect many of these tomes are still out there. And they are expected to make a full comeback if (and/or when) the Taliban manage to return to power after the imminent departure of US forces.

(Courtesy Dawn)



VICTORY OF THE GREEN BRIGADE

The return of the blue whale, the world's most majestic ocean traveller to southern waters should serve as a showpiece for wider possibilities of conservation. Ecological wrongs can be righted, or at least mitigated, with sufficient will and organisation. The more general comeback of the whale, for which environmental campaigners should take a great deal of credit, can be an inspiration for victories yet to be won. (The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



RCom's committee of creditors to meet on Monday

NEW DELHI: Reliance Communications (RCom) on Sunday said a meeting of the company's committee of creditors is scheduled to be held on Monday. The 18th meeting of committee of creditors (CoC) of Reliance Communications Ltd is scheduled to be convened on Monday, February 24, 2020, RCom said in a regulatory filing. No other details were disclosed. According to sources, the CoC on Monday will put to a vote asset bids received from UV Asset Reconstruction Company and Reliance Jio from which lenders are expected to recover around Rs 23,000 crore. UV Asset Reconstruction Company is learnt to have placed a bid of around Rs 14,700 crore, while Reliance Jio has made an offer of Rs 4,700 crore for tower and fibre assets of Reliance Infratel Ltd.



Godrej Properties sells properties worth Rs 3,532 cr

NEW DELHI: Realty firm Godrej Properties sold properties worth Rs 3,532 crore during the April-December 2019 period, up 12 per cent as compared with a year-ago period. According to an investors' presentation, the company's sales bookings stood at Rs 3,155 crore during April-December 2018. In terms of volume, Mumbai-based Godrej Properties sold nearly 52 lakh sq ft area, an increase of 3 per cent from the corresponding period of the previous year. Out of the total sales bookings of Rs 3,532 crore achieved during the first nine months of this financial year, the housing segment contributed Rs 3,471 crore.



CONVID 19: Airports to screen passengers from 4 more countries

NEW DELHI: Aviation regulator DGCA has ordered screening of passengers from four more countries - Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia, as part of efforts to prevent spreading of coronavirus. Now, fliers from as many as 10 countries would be screened at Indian airports. Already, passengers travelling in flights from China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore are being screened at Indian airports in the wake of the Novel Coronavirus 2019 (CONVID 19). Cases of the virus infection have been reported in many countries, including India.

RBI alone cannot contain inflation: Rangarajan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former RBI governor C Rangarajan has said the Reserve Bank alone can not contain inflation as supply side shocks are needed to be managed by the government. In a paper titled 'The New Monetary Policy Framework - What it Means', Rangarajan talked about the limitations of the RBI's monetary policy in containing inflation. "The inflation mandate as already mentioned must provide for a range and a time frame for adjustment which

should not be too short. "Nevertheless, monetary policy must act irrespective of what triggered inflation. Obviously, supply-side management is needed in situations of supply stock and that should be the responsibility of the government," he said. Rangarajan said the adoption of inflation targeting by India has given rise to many doubts and concerns. The new monetary policy framework requires the Reserve Bank of India to maintain consumer price inflation at 4 per cent with a

margin of + or - 2 per cent. "Thus in a sense, it is flexible targeting. The amendment to RBI Act also provides for the setting of a Monetary Policy Committee which will determine the policy interest rate in order to abide by the inflation mandates," he said. The focus on inflation targeting by monetary authorities hardly mean a neglect of other objectives such as growth and financial stability, he noted.

—C RANGARAJAN, Former RBI governor

"What inflation targeting demands is that when inflation goes beyond the comfort zone, the exclusive concern of monetary policy must be to bring it back to the target level. When inflation is within the comfort zone, authorities can look to other objectives," the former RBI governor said. The monetary policy framework adopted by India and many other countries is correctly described as 'flexible inflation targeting'. "This flexibility is extremely important because it emphasizes the uncertainties

against which central bank have to operate," Rangarajan noted. The government had in 2016 constituted MPC to set the benchmark interest rate. The MPC is headed by the RBI governor. Of the six members, three are nominated by the government, while the remaining three are from the RBI. The committee takes decisions based on majority vote. Each member has one vote but the RBI governor has a casting vote in case of a tie.



US beats China to become India's top trading partner

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The US has surpassed China to become India's top trading partner, showing greater economic ties between the two countries.

According to the data of the commerce ministry, in 2018-19, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at USD 87.95 billion.

During the period, India's two-way commerce with China aggregated at USD 87.07 billion.

Similarly, during April-December 2019-20, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at USD 68 billion. It stood at USD 64.96 billion with China in the same period.

Trade experts believe that the trend will continue in the coming years also as New Delhi and Washington are engaged in further deepening the economic ties.

An expert said that if the countries will finalise a free trade agreement (FTA), then the bilateral trade would reach at different levels.

"FTA with US will be very beneficial for India as the US is the biggest market for domestic goods and services,"



Trade experts believe that the trend will continue in the coming years also as New Delhi and Washington are engaged in further deepening the economic ties

Federation of Indian Export organisations Director General Ajay Sahai said.

He said that India's exports as well as imports are increasing with the US, while with China both are declining.

America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. On the other hand, India has a huge trade deficit with China.

In 2018-19, India has a trade surplus of USD 16.85 billion with America, while it has a deficit of USD 53.56 billion with the neighbouring country.

The data showed that China was India's top trading partner since 2013-14 till 2017-18. Before China, UAE was the country's largest trading nation.

A top American business advocacy group has said that a free trade agreement between India and the US is a key to resolving their trade disputes as it will cover biggest irritants in ties, including tariffs and mobility of Indian professionals.

Professor at Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) Rakesh Mohan Joshi said that India should be a bit cautious while negotiating a trade pact with the US in areas, including agriculture and food products, as America is the world's largest producer and exporter of certain commodities like maize and soybean.

"A trade deal between the US and India would further increase the trade between the two countries easing tariff restriction and opening up of bigger market for products. India is a major exporter of steel, steel products and aluminium products with combined exports of USD 22.7 billion last year.

"Steel exports to the US have continued to decline and it went down from USD 372 million in 2017-18 to USD 247 million last year. This is only 2.5 per cent of our overall USD 9.74 billion steel export to the world," Pawan Gupta, the Founder and CEO of online trade platform Connect2India observed.

Govt to sell stake in THDCIL, NEEPCO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is keen to sell its stake in THDC India and North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) to state-owned NTPC in the current fiscal, according to a source.

The acquisition is expected to fetch around Rs 10,000 crore to the exchequer.

"The government is keen to complete the transaction whereby the NTPC would acquire government's stake in THDCIL (THDC India Ltd) and NEEPCO this fiscal only for meeting its revised disinvestment target of Rs 65,000 crore for the 2019-20," the source said.

The government had earlier proposed to raise Rs 1.05 lakh crore from disinvestment during 2019-20. However, in the budget presented earlier this month, it reduced the divestment target to Rs 65,000 crore.

The government has garnered Rs 18,345.06 crore from divestments in public sector



The government has garnered Rs 18,345 cr from divestments in public sector undertaking so far, as per DIPAM portal

undertaking so far, as per DIPAM portal.

"The government would leave no stone unturned for concluding the deal this fiscal itself. Now it is necessary to meet the disinvestment target.

"This will not happen first time. Last year also, Power Finance Corporation had concluded the deal to acquire entire government stake in REC Ltd for Rs 14,500 crore on March 28, 2019," the source said.

The transaction had helped the government meet its disinvestment target of Rs 80,000 crore for 2018-19.

NTPC had engaged SBI Capital for evaluation of the deal. The Department of Disinvestment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) had engaged RB SA Advisors for evaluating NEEPCO, and Deloitte for THDCIL transactions.

In November last year, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had approved a proposal of the finance ministry for divestment of central government's stake in THDCIL and NEEPCO. Later, the NTPC board approved the acquisition deal on January 27, 2020.

Lotteries to attract 28 pc GST from March 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 28 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) will be levied on lotteries from March 1, according to a notification. The GST Council had in December last year decided to impose a single rate of 28 per cent on state-run and authorised lotteries.

The revenue department notified the GST rate on supply of lotteries and amended its earlier Central Tax (Rate) notification. Accordingly, the Central Tax rate for supply of lotteries has been amended to 14 per cent and a similar percentage will be levied by the states. This will take the total GST incidence on lotteries to 28 per cent.

"This notification shall come into force on the 1st day of March, 2020," the revenue department notification said. Currently, a state-run lottery attracts 12 per cent GST, while a state-authorised lottery attracts 28 per cent tax.

MEGA BANK CONSOLIDATION

Series of regulatory approvals and clearances still pending

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With the deadline of April 1 fast approaching for the mega merger of ten public sector banks, there seems to be more odd in the way of meeting the target date as a series of regulatory approvals and clearances are still pending, bank officials said.

Even after Cabinet approval to the proposed mega merger plan, officials said, fixation of share swap ratio, shareholders consent and other regulatory approvals are expected to take at least 30-45 days.

It is believed that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has sought details from these lenders about their financial projections for the next three to five years. Details in respect of NPAs, capital requirement, credit growth and cost savings on account of the mergers have been asked for, officials said.

So, chances of the merger becoming a reality beginning next fiscal year seems little unrealistic at the moment, a senior public sector bank official said.

Besides, regulatory nods, the Scheme of Amalgamation has to be laid before Parliament for 30 days for the perusal of the members. The second-half of the Budget session is scheduled to start on March 2.

Last year in August, the government announced the consolidation of ten public sector banks (PSBs) into four mega state-owned lenders.



It is believed that Prime Minister's Office has sought details from these lenders about their financial projections for the next three to five years

As per the plan, United Bank of India and Oriental Bank of Commerce would merge with Punjab National Bank, making the proposed entity the second largest public sector bank. It was decided to merge

Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank, while Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank. Similarly, Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank are to be consolidated with Union Bank of India.

According to a senior banker, information technology integration of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda is still in process even after 10 months of merger. In addition, the HR issues still continues to hamper business, causing inconvenience to customers.

Moreover, the mega merger would create greater disturbance in the banking system and will affect the operation especially loan sanction as there will be chaos initially for few months, the official added.

'Test checks' on telcos AGR dues standard audit procedure: COAI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terming 'test checks' proposed by the government on telcos' AGR arithmetic as standard audit procedure, industry body COAI has said the DoT needs to ensure consistency among its different circles on calculation of dues to minimise any differences.

Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) also cautioned that any decision to encash bank guarantees will be "disastrous" for the telecom industry, which only has three private players.

"Any move to encash bank guarantees will precipitate an already precarious situation," COAI Director General, Rajan Mathews said. Mathews termed the 'test checks' being proposed by the telecom depart-



ment to examine deviation in calculation of dues by companies as a "standard audit procedure". He pointed out that while amounts need to be finalised as soon as possible, operators too should be given a fair opportunity to explain the deviations in calculation. "There should be consistency amongst all LSAs (Licensed Service Areas) of the DoT (Department of Telecommunications) on how the amounts are calculated, so the differences are minimised," Mathews added.

NBFCs should raise resources on sustained basis: Srei

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Srei Infrastructure Finance, one of the country's leading NBFCs, on Sunday said the sector, which is passing through a liquidity crisis, should be able to raise resources on a sustained basis.

The government and the regulator, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), should come out with more clarity for raising medium-to-long-term funds by the non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), the firm's chairman Hemant Kanoria said.

"The basic raw material for the non-banking finance companies and banks, is money. The NBFCs should be able to raise resources on a sustained basis for conducting their businesses," Kanoria told PTI.

In a bid to address the liquidity issue, the government has taken some steps through the "partial guarantee scheme" for interim funding.

"Raising resources by NBFCs from the public is a limited option and done from time to time. It depends on the profile of the NBFC concerned. The main structural issue needs to be addressed," Kanoria said.

Talking about the city-based company, he said lending activity is getting affected due to liquidity issues.

"Funding has become very slow. This has affected credit off-take and flow of loans to infrastructure and the MSME sector. However, equipment finance is slowly picking up," he said.



AC prices to go up by 5 per cent amid coronavirus scare

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Season for air-condition sales is going to start soon, and the sector is bracing for a hike of up to 5 per cent, amid combined impact of customs duty hike on compressors and increased logistics costs due to Coronavirus outbreak in China, which is the main supplier.

Amid Coronavirus scare, several manufacturers expect 2020 to be a challenging year for the industry as they are going to airlift component such as controllers, compressors and other materials from China, Thailand and Malaysia and the increased logistic cost would put pressure on input costs.

According to some makers, the crisis "unfortunately" has come at a critical time, when



April-June season is knocking, during which the industry accounts around 40 to 45 per cent sale of residential aircon-

ditioners. "There is a shortage due to Coronavirus and in order to keep the production up, we are

'No need for panic in industry, trade'

NEW DELHI: Indian industry and trade, including pharmaceuticals, are ready to manage the "evolving" coronavirus situation without causing any major impact on the supply chain and no major challenge is foreseen in the near term, according to industry body ASSOCHAM. Stating that there is no need for panic, ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said the Indian government and industry have been reacting in a pro-active manner in close coordination with each other.



"Yes, in a highly integrated economy, global supply chain is a reality but there are adequate cushions available to deal with temporary disruptions. "Both the Indian government and the industry have been reacting in a pro-active manner, in close coordination with each other, to face any economic, technical or

even contractual impact of the coronavirus on the world economy," he added. He pointed out that so far, there has been no major disruption in supply chain on the Indian industry and no major challenge is foreseen in the near term. Sood said while India imports substantial amount of APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredients) to the extent of 60-70 per cent from China, there are several domestic and global firms that have set up API units in India as well.

airlifting the critical components from China. There is also an increase in customs duty on compressors and others," Blue

Star Managing Director B Thiagarajan said. Blue Star, an air conditioning and commercial refrigeration company, has

already increased prices by 3 to 5 per cent on various items. "This is not only because of Coronavirus. We have to airlift

GIVING OUR FURRY FRIENDS A SPACE IN REEL

The word portrait has been made famous by artistes across the globe since time immemorial. While most shutterbugs focus on capturing portraits of humans and their behaviour, a photojournalist in Hyderabad has thrown that convention to the wind by capturing dogs. Yes, you heard that right. A portrait of man's best friend! Read on as K RAMYA SREE takes you through the chronicles of the lives of doggies



Photojournalist Kandukuri Ramesh Babu, who is known for photos that are an ode to womanhood and capturing the perspectives of people leading their lives, has now decided to pay tribute to dogs under the theme 'Portraiture of Compassion'. Kandukuri is known for taking pictures of the unknown and unnoticed aspects of everyday lives of ordinary people. The photo exhibition was inaugurated by Akkineni Amala, founder of Blue Cross Hyderabad, over the weekend. Speaking of his shift from capturing people to stray animals, he said, "Dogs, especially street dogs, are a special entity of our world. Good, bad or worst, whatever their

situation is, they are with their being and nothing else." "They bark, bite, yawn, mate and what not, all in the open. This is what amused me, as all these actions are as emotional as humans and as touching as mankind. This is why I treat them as my fellow beings," he further said. "Thousand of people live on streets without bread and butter, and even without a shelter. Dogs are an extension to humankind and it is an inevitable consequence that sometimes dogs and people dwell together and share a close rapport and friendship. This photo exhibition tries to encompass all of the aforementioned characteristics of our furry friends and shows the various emotions of a stray. While in one picture

you find a dog sitting amid huge trees and mountains lost in the nature, in another picture it is portrayed as being curious about other creatures wandering in front of it. While another picture show the miserable life they lead as they search for food in garbage bins. "There is a lot work to be done," said Amala after seeing only one picture of a dog with the ear notch while the rest didn't have it. The ear notch is a mark through which people can recognise that the dog has been vaccinated and sterilised. "A pair of street dogs can raise a litter of 2,000 puppies in their lifetime, so sterilising one pair of dogs can reduce their population by 2,000. So

don't hesitate to contact GHMC when you spot a dog without an ear notch in your community," she said stressing on the importance of sterilisation. "The photos on display here are a collection from 2010. I didn't realise that I had captured about 5,000 pictures of stray animals. When I was looking through my old pictures, I came across these photos and felt I should celebrate the ordinary. Because even stray animals are a part of our ordinary lives." Kandukuri said on the reason behind the exhibition. (The exhibition will be open till March 2, 2020, between 9.30 am and 6.30 pm at Hamburg Hall, Goethe Zentrum, Hyderabad)



Setting fitness goals for women

MESHAEL SALEEM and UMM E MARIA write about the sixth edition of Pinkathon held at KBR Park and the message on fitness it had for women, especially mothers

to them. Women of all age groups participated in the early morning event at the park. The walk was a symbol of all the life ahead of a mother and motherhood not being the end of life for a woman. The event encouraged the need to stay healthy and fit by just walking in the early mornings. Model and fitness activist Milind Soman participated in the event enthusiastically encouraging women to have fun while they exercise. The moms were happy to be guided into doing push-ups and squats by Milind before the walk began. "My mother is fit and that is the reason I am also fit," he told the crowd. Speaking about the origins of Pinkathon in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Milind said that, "When he used to run an event management company 17 years ago he thought about how working out is usually set aside for men and not as much for women. So I started Pinkathon to encourage women to come together, not for a political or religious purpose, but to celebrate being a woman. Soon it expanded to many cities and became quite popular." "Pinkathon is not just about running. It's a tool to improve one's mind and body and do anything what one wants to," he added.

When asked about how long he works out in a day, he replied with a laugh saying, "Only for three minutes." He continued, "I have never been to a gym. My set of exercises include planking, push-ups and burpees." When asked about the exercise regimen for pregnant women, he said, "Consulting the gynecologist is the first step and one has to work out during pregnancy for a healthy childbirth. Women in their seventh month of pregnancy also run marathons but everyone has their

own way of doing it." He also said consistent exercise is necessary to drop that post-pregnancy weight. Milind said that he doesn't believe in diet plans and he eats everything. He doesn't consume supplements and instead prefers eating fruits and vegetables. His favourite sweet is *pootharekulu* and also lists Hyderabad biryani as one of his top favourite things about the city. It was a first time for most of the participants of this edition of the Pinkathon which they said they thoroughly enjoyed and would definitely return for the next edition.

The sixth edition of the Pinkathon campaign was organised on Sunday at the KBR Park to promote the cause for good health and spread awareness about breast cancer. The event witnessed families coming together to participate actively. The attendance included babies as young as a couple of months old. Some of the women did the walk along with their babies strapped



Pouring life into storytelling

Is one image enough to create a story? MESHAEL SALEEM writes how stories can be created even from random objects at *Sheher-e-Ishq*

Sheher-e-Ishq, organised its fourth season at The Chalet in Jubilee Hills over the weekend. The event was about the art of storytelling in all types of format, be it graphic novels or just individual images. Jai Undurti, a writer, shared interesting facts with the crowd, packed in the room, on

how to create a narrative by just looking at a picture. He showed some pictures and narrated stories about them. Many from the audience also contributing in building stories about the same photographs. Origin stories, historical events, mythological stories and other forms of narrative were discussed at the event. One image at a time was presented to the audience and

everybody came up with a story that can go along with the image. "One of the pictures that was shown at the event included a painting on the wall of a cave. This sparked a healthy debate on what made prehistoric humans to create such art. Is it to depict reality as it is show the fear they felt back then? These were some of the questions that were raised. Speaking about comics, Jai Undurti said that one can get really creative with comics. "Our minds tend create ideas by looking at random stuff. And this, when broken down into panels becomes a comic book," he said. "Boredom plays a crucial role. It is when one is bored that the mind starts creating stuff and pushes one to do something interesting. It is important for a creative person to have a notebook with them at all times to jot down important ideas," he added. Sheher-e-Ishq is also going to start a campaign 'Swachh Virasat' where people can go for a walk through heritage monuments while cleaning up the garbage.





Karan Singh Grover launches his art website, YouTube channel

Actor Karan Singh Grover, who turned a year older on Sunday, launched his art website and YouTube channel. For the uninitiated, Karan is an artist too. So, on his birthday, the *Dill Mill Gayye* fame actor has come up with the art website *starinfinityart.com* and his YouTube channel *Starinfinityart* to share his artwork among his fans. "I often get told that I seem to age regularly while doing shows or films and I get asked why there are times that I'm missing. The reason is that I paint. There are many worlds inside my head that sometimes restrict me from doing other things because I need to put them out on the canvas," the actor said. "As long as the expression is not complete, I can't focus on anything else. And now, I'm ready to showcase my work. The website and the channel are getting launched on my birthday. Why you ask — It's just the birth of me as an artist. I have lots of pieces that are complete. The exhibition is going to happen soon," Karan said. Karan is currently celebrating his 38th birthday with his wife Bipasha Basu. — IANS

DEEPIKA PADUKONE: Working with Ranveer in '83 a refreshing change

Real-life couple Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh are back as an on-screen couple. The actress says considering the kind of movies the pair has done in the past, doing '83 was a refreshing change. Deepika will be seen as Romi Dev, wife of cricket legend Kapil Dev, played by Ranveer in the upcoming film '83. Asked about sharing screen space with her husband once again after movies like *Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela* and *Bajirao Mastani*, Deepika told IANS. "It was good. It was a refreshing change because of the kind of films that we have done before. It was a completely different setting, era, characters, costumes and dialogues. It was refreshing to work with him in this capacity." "We were both surprised. We had to remind ourselves that we had worked with each other before because these characters were so different from what we had already done before and we look forward to working with each other in contemporary films a lot more," said the actress. The film, based on India's historical 1983 Cricket World Cup victory, also has Deepika donning the hat of a producer. *Chhapaak*, based on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal, was her first film as a producer. On the kind of stories she is looking for as a producer, she shared: "My choices will always be made as an actor. When I am approached for a film as an actor, if I feel like certain films need an additional hand holding then I will step in as a producer. Right now, it is not like we have a big slate of films. We will take it as it comes." She has also announced another film production — *Mahabharat*, to be made from Draupadi's point of view. Do regional films interest her as an actor and a producer? "Of course. Language has never been a barrier. I think at the end of the day, what I look for as an actor is exciting content. In fact, there are a lot of south film directors and writers who approached me. Eventually, I think it's about finding the right content," said Deepika, who made her acting debut with the 2006 Kannada film *Aishwarya*. — IANS



PAVAIL GULATI says that *Thappad* was a risky role for him

Actor Pavail Gulati gets his big Bollywood break as Taapsee Pannu's on-screen husband in Anubhav Sinha's upcoming film *Thappad*, and he says that working with the maker helped him to gain confidence as an actor. "Anubhav (Sinha) sir allows actors to make mistakes and give inputs in the creative process. If I do something wrong, he won't humiliate me. I would say that it helped me to gain my confidence as an actor. Usually, sir does not cast any actor without auditioning but I am the lucky one who has been cast as one of the leads in his film! Initially, I was a little sceptical because he has that aura of a serious man," Pavail told IANS. "He is a well-built, well-read man, and has made serious films like *Article 15* and *Mulk*, and I thought what if he intimidates me? I was a little nervous. I have to say he is younger than me at heart!" smiled the 21-year-old actor. *Thappad* features Taapsee Pannu and Pavail with Kumud Mishra, Ratna Pathak Shah, Tanvi Azmi, Dia Mirza, and Ram Kapoor, among others. The film, slated to release on February 28, revolves around a young married couple and how one day, when the wife is slapped by the husband in front of guests at a house party, the incident triggers off a chain reaction that lead to self-realisation for her, leading to her walking out of the marriage. Pavail is cast as the career-obsessed husband who misbehaves in public with his wife, essayed by Taapsee. On taking up such a role with negative shades, he said: "It was risky for me. People might just dislike me because I play a character who slaps a woman. But once I started reading the script, I realised that he is a victim of the situation too. This film shows both sides of the story, on why we often take our loved ones for granted and how social conditioning is responsible for our actions. It questions many age-old practices." Pavail says although he tend to associate domestic violence with the lower class, that is not always the case. — IANS

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



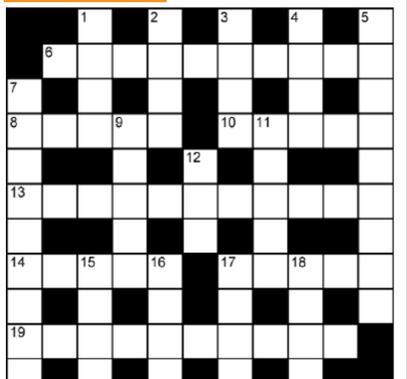
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

- 6 A large naval ship
- 8 Feeling very annoyed
- 10 A South American dance
- 13 A very wealthy person
- 14 Gets closer to
- 17 A soft type of hat
- 19 A grower of fruit trees

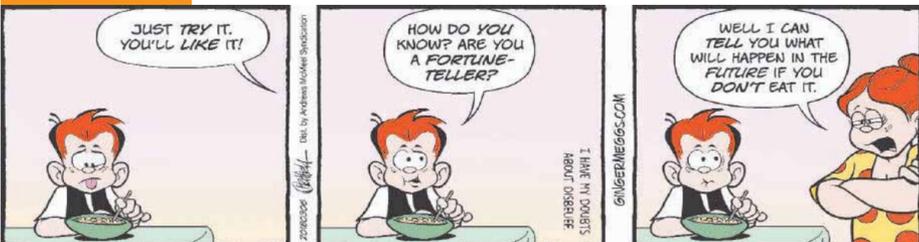
DOWN

- 1 Gun sound
- 2 Don't go
- 3 A strap for trousers
- 4 Skinny
- 5 The people you play against in a game
- 7 A court game played with rackets and a shuttlecock
- 9 A measuring stick
- 11 Astonish
- 12 Female deer
- 15 Curved part under a bridge
- 16 A sewed joint in material
- 17 Hospital patients lie in these
- 18 Go quickly

SOLUTION!



GINGER MEGGS



Paidipally out, PARASURAM IN FOR MAHESH'S NEXT



Though director Vamshi Paidipally was supposed to direct Mahesh Babu's next he is no longer in the picture, at least for now. NAGARAJ GOUD finds out more about the sudden change in plans

In an unexpected development, Vamshi Paidipally is no longer attached to direct superstar Mahesh Babu's next. According to multiple sources in the know, the actor has advanced Parasuram's story and it will be his immediate next, with Mythri Movie Makers set to bankroll it. His own production house GMB Entertainment will associate with the film as a production partner. The development has come as a bit of shocker, as Mahesh had officially announced the project with Paidipally while promoting his Sankranti release *Sarileru Neekevvaru*, saying that he will start it after a break of a couple of months. The film was touted to be a gangster drama set in Visakhapatnam. So what went wrong? "The script didn't shape up to Mahesh's liking. The actor endorsed the plotline and some portions of the script but overall he felt there were some issues. Paidipally understood his Maharshi actor's concerns and wasn't in a rush to

push the project now. He decided to take more time to fine tune the script. Meanwhile, Mahesh had a word with Mythri and they immediately sent Parasuram to the actor. The director pitched a story to the actor last year successfully but with Mahesh Babu giving his word to be a part of Paidipally's next, he couldn't commit to the project straightaway. Both decided to team up some other time but as luck would have it, it's happening this year itself for Parasuram," said a source. With his wish of directing a star of Mahesh Babu's repute set to be fruition later this summer, Parasuram has decided to shelve his earlier project *Nageswara Rao* (tentative title) he was supposed to do with Naga Chaitanya

and 14 Reels Plus production house. "Chay had no issues as such with Parasuram opting out. He, in fact, is happy that the director is realising his dream. Both promised to join forces for a film in the future," adds the source. The source further mentions Parasuram's film with Mahesh will be love story laced with family emotions, plenty of humour and action. "In short it will be a signature Parasuram film but with Mahesh headlining, expect it to be a whiff of fresh air. The romantic portions have come out very well and the actor's fans will be in for a treat to see lover boy Mahesh after a long time. The bound script is in place for the film," concludes the source.

THE NEWS IS A SHOCKER AS MAHESH HAD ANNOUNCED HIS NEXT WITH PAIDIPALLY WHILE PROMOTING SARILERU NEEKEVVARU



Pressure Cooker gets KTR's thumbs-up

IT and Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao heaped high praise on *Pressure Cooker* which released last Friday, calling it "refreshingly breezy entertainer with a nice message embedded in it". He was speaking on Saturday evening after watching a special screening of the film at the Ramanaidu Studios, Filmm Nagar. Recalling his association with one of the film's directors Sujai Karampuri, who is the CEO of T-Works and Director (Electronics), T-Fiber Grid, the minister noted that he has known the director for 15 years after he had connected to him through his blogs. "After the for-



mation of Telangana, I asked him to come down from Bengaluru and work for me. Over the course of my journey with him, I got introduced to his artistic side. He has shown me his photographs which he captured uniquely and had a certain edge to them. He is a painter as well. On one fine day when he told me he is making a movie, I was surprised. I was like, 'Am I giving him too much freedom?'" KTR stated, armed with a smile.

He informed that the director could make a good film with limited resources at his disposal. "I was told that he registered seven-eight titles for his next set of films. I hope he will make many more movies and continue to make us proud," he said. He appreciated the film's music composed by Sunil Kashyap, Rahul Sipligun and Harshavardhan Rameshwar and lead actors Sai Ronak and Preethi Asrani for acting their roles.



Chiru's look from his next leaked

Despite best efforts from the makers to plug leaks, a video and some stills of Megastar Chiranjeevi from his next with Koratala Siva have been doing rounds since Saturday evening. This is the latest high-profile film project to face the problem of leakage. The film's makers have swung into action and managed to remove the video from different platforms while the pictures continue to go viral. Fans of Chiru though were a happy lot, seeing their favourite hero in a commercial avatar after a gap of three years. Rumours are doing rounds indicate that director Koratala Siva has asked Mahesh Babu to play a key supporting role in the film. Yes, it is the same role that was conceived with Ram Charan in mind. While we don't know what prompted the director to consider Mahesh, the news about the actor's participation in the film, a social-drama, is flying thick and fast. It seems he was highly impressed with the part. Koratala and Mahesh's is a formidable combination, having delivered successful films like *Srimanthudu* and *Bharat Ane Nenu* in the past. Which is why, the buzz is stronger. If indeed this happens, nothing gets bigger than this.

Teja picks Rana for a social drama



As he turned a year older on Saturday, filmmaker Teja has announced two new projects — *Rakshasa Raju Ravanasurudu* and *Alimelu Manga Venkata Ramana*. Although he announced Rana Daggubati and Gopichand as his actors, he refused to dis-

close who will spearhead which film. However, a little digging told us that Rana, who is awaiting the release of Hindi, Telugu and Tamil trilingual *Aranya*, will be the face of *Rakshasa Raju Ravanasurudu*, while Gopi will front *Alimelu Manga Venkata Ramana*. A source chips in, "Teja film's with Rana will be socio-political drama where Rana will be seen in an edgy character with dark shaded. Suresh Babu will shepherd it under his esteemed Suresh Productions. With their earlier film, *Nene Raju Nene Mantri*, striking gold at the box-office, the combination will be a hot commodity in the market. On the other hand, Teja's film with Gopi will be a women-centric family-drama where the leading lady has equal importance to that of the leading

man. With his recent films drawing cinegoers ire for being in tired and tested zone, Gopi felt that his role in Teja's film will be a welcome change for him and his audience, immediately driving him to give his in-principle nod. However, there is a problem on who will produce it. Following the dismal performance of Chanakya, Gopi has recently shelved a project of BVSN Prasad's after it was launched. So he is obligated to do a film for the producer. Simultaneously, he has given his word to producers like KK Radhamohan and TG Vishwa Prasad. So it remains to be seen who the actor will choose." The source further adds that depending on the immediate availability of his actors, Teja will take a call on which film to take to sets first. — NG



Bheeshma opens big

The dry spell at the Telugu box-office this month has ended with Nithiin-starrer *Bheeshma*. After registering a career-best opening for the actor on Friday, the film consolidated on its positive word-of-mouth and good reviews on Saturday, emerging as the No.1 choice for moviegoers during the weekend. In the process, it packed a share of Rs 4 crore from the Telugu states on Saturday. A trade source adds, "The

film has minted Rs 6.30 crore (approximately) on day-one, while on day two there was no major dip. Overall, the film's tally for the first two days stood at Rs 10.30 crore with overseas figures touching the half-million dollar club by Saturday. Sunday has been packed to capacity in all centres across Telugu states and going by the trend, the film, which did a pre-release business of Rs 19.60 crore in the Telugu states, will break-even by Tuesday. The makers have already made over Rs 9 crore profits from the film

and at the rate at which it is going, chances are that they may get additional revenue from overflow. It's likely the film will sail past the Rs 50 crore mark in less than 10 days." While the film has offered nothing new terms of the story, the way it was packaged, the crisp run time, the humour and the production values are working in its favour. Directed by Venky Kudumula, the film is a production venture of S Naga Vamsi under Sithara Entertainments.



Jitender ensures place in Indian team for Olympic Qualifiers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jitender Kumar sealed his place in the Indian team for the Olympic Qualifiers with a silver medal at the Asian Championship here on Sunday, a result that could slam the Tokyo Games door on veteran Sushil Kumar.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sushil had skipped the continental event citing an injury.

A Gold eluded India on the second day of the men's freestyle competition with Deepak Punia (86kg) and Rahul Aware (61kg) finishing with Bronze medals.

Up against Kazakhstan's Daniyar Kaisanov, Jitender showed tremendous defensive skill, but was lacking in attack. The Indian lost 1-3 to the defending champion.

However, his performance was enough to convince the national federation that he should travel to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan for the Olympic Qualifiers, without a re-trial.

It means that Sushil, who also competes in 74kg, will have to wait and see how Jitender fares in Bishkek, where the finalists will directly qualify for the Tokyo

Games.

If Jitender reaches the Gold medal bout there, it will affect the prospect of Sushil, who has been struggling since the 2018 Asian Games.

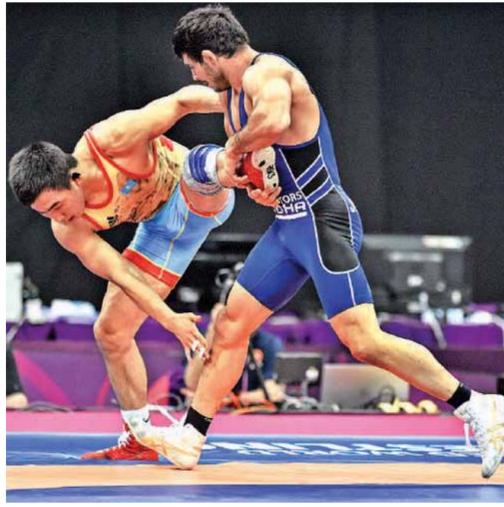
If Jitender fails to seal an Olympic quota in Bishkek, the last chance would be through a World qualifying event in April.

"I tried one move towards the end but could not execute it properly, it could have got me the Gold. There are improvements in the my game and it could be seen. This Silver is special. Now I will try harder to get Olympic quota," said Jitender.

His attacking moves from a distance were not good enough to get a good grip on his rivals. Largely, he was defending from standing position.

In fact, in the semifinal against his Mongolian opponent, all three points were scored on passivity and the bouts lacked flare.

Before that, Jitender had won his qualification bout rather easily but just about managed to win his following bouts against Iran's Mostafa Mohabbali Hosseinkhani (2-2) and Mongolia's Sumiyabazar Zandanbud (2-1).



Jitender Kumar in action against Kazakhstan Daniyar Kaisanov during 74 kg match PTI

"We will not have trials in any category in men's free style. We will see how our wrestlers perform in Bishkek," Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh said.

Much to the disappointment of the home fans, world championship Silver medallist Deepak lost his 86kg semifinal to Japan's Shutaro Yamada.

His style was identical to Jitender's and his moves from dis-

tance did not yield the desired result.

Against Yamada, the only points he scored from a takedown were removed after a successful challenge from his opponent's camp.

In the fight for Bronze against Issa Abdulsalam Abdulwahhab Al Obaidi, the Indian looked a different man, winning it easily. He defeated his Iraqi rival by technical superiority.

"I had not trained enough because of an injury I suffered during training after I arrived in India from Russia. I had six stitches just above my right eye," Deepak, who won a Silver at 2019 Worlds, said.

In the non-Olympic 61kg category, Rahul, who won a Bronze at the Worlds in Nur Sultan, paid the price for being overconfi-

dent as his unnecessary challenges cost him dearly.

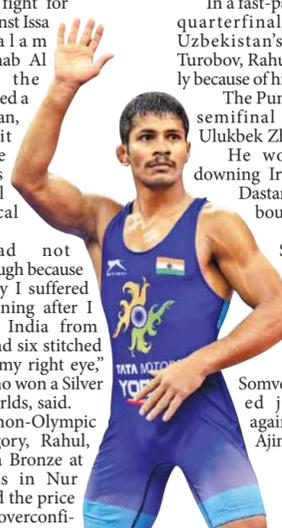
His movement was terrific and so were his attacks but untimely challenges resulted in him losing points in both the quarterfinal and semifinal.

In a fast-paced, high-scoring quarterfinal bout against Uzbekistan's Jahongirmirza Turobov, Rahul won 11-9, largely because of his superior defence.

The Pune grappler lost his semifinal to Kyrgyzstan's Ulukbek Zholdosbekov 3-5. He won Bronze after downing Iran's Majid Almas Dastan 4-2 in an exciting bout.

In the 125kg, Satender won his qualification bout but later lost his quarterfinal and repechage rounds.

In the 92kg, Somveer's challenge lasted just 24 seconds against his Uzbek rival Ajiniyaz Saparniyazov.



Sharath, Sathiyana settle with Silver

BUDAPEST: Indian men's doubles pair of Achanta Sharath Kamal and Gnanasekaran Sathiyana settled for a Silver medal at the ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open after losing the summit clash to German combination of Benedikt Duda and Patrick Franziska.

The Indian pair, which defeated top seeds Ho Kwan Kit and Wong Chun Ting of Hong Kong 3-2 in the semi-finals, put up a strong effort in the summit clash but eventually went down fighting 5-11, 9-11, 11-8, 9-11 to the 16th seeds German pair in a 30-minute showdown on Saturday.

It is Sharath Kamal's second medal from the prestigious tournament. He also won a Bronze with Manika Batra in mixed doubles. PTI



Gnanasekaran Sathiyana & AS Kamal pose with the Silver medal Sharath/Twitter

Tsitsipas defends Marseille trophy

MARSEILLE: Stefanos Tsitsipas successfully defended his Marseille title on Sunday with a straightforward victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Greek star Tsitsipas eased to a 6-3, 6-4 win to leave Felix still waiting for his maiden ATP title after his fifth final defeat.

Tsitsipas, who had arrived in southern France with a 3-4 losing record this season, enjoyed an emphatic return to form as he clinched his fifth ATP trophy.

"I did well mentally," said Tsitsipas. "I didn't crack when I was under pressure."

Auger-Aliassime would have been confident of finally ending his wait for tournament success after two wins from his three previous meetings with Tsitsipas, but has still failed to even win a set in his five



Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates with the trophy after winning the men's singles final AP

Tour-level finals.

"Playing a final is wonderful, you have to have that perspective, remember that everything is going in the right direction despite everything," said Auger-Aliassime.

"It's heavy, losing every time in the final. There is a little doubt... when will it be my turn?"

World number six Tsitsipas, the ATP Finals champion, broke in the third game and saved three break points to serve out the opening set. The second seed got the better of a run of three successive breaks in the second set to move 4-3 in front and only dropped one more point on serve.

He will now travel to the UAE for the Dubai C'ships, where he is second seed behind number one Novak Djokovic. AFP

SINGLES

FURY CRUSHES WILDER IN WBC REMATCH

LAS VEGAS: Tyson Fury reigns again as a heavyweight world champion after battering Deontay Wilder to a stunning seventh-round stoppage in their World Boxing Council title rematch. Fourteen months after their dramatic split-decision draw, Britain's Fury dominated the American champion — who had blood dripping from his left ear and leaking from his mouth when referee Kenny Bayless called a halt as Wilder's corner threw in the towel. "The king has returned to the top of the throne," said Fury, who had dropped Wilder in the third and fifth rounds as he remained unbeaten while handing Wilder the first defeat of his career.

NISHIOKA REACHES DELRAY BEACH FINAL

MIAMI: Unseeded Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan rallied for a 1-6, 6-4, 6-0 victory over sixth-seeded Ugo Humbert to reach the ATP Delray Beach final. Nishioka, apparently refreshed by a second rain delay, roared through the final set to advance to his second career final. He won his only prior title match at Shenzhen in 2018.

THIEM THWARTED IN BID TO PASS FEDERER

RIO DE JANEIRO: World number four Dominic Thiem of Austria missed a chance to reach a career-best third in the ATP rankings with a Rio Open quarter-final loss to Italy's Gianluca Mager. Mager, a 128th-ranked qualifier playing in only his eighth career tour-level match, defeated 2017 Rio champion Thiem 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 in a match that was halted on Friday by rain. Had Thiem reached the semi-finals in his 2020 clay-court debut, he would have overtaken Roger Federer for third in Monday's ATP rankings.

GOA TO HOST ISL FINAL: NITA AMBANI

MUMBAI: Margao in Goa will host the final match of this season's Indian Super League on March 14. Football Sports Development Limited's founding chairperson Nita Ambani said. The summit clash will be held at 7:30 pm on March 14 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium at Fatorda in Margao. "Goa deserves to host the ISL final. There is no denying that Goa loves its football and we would like to bring the most crucial football event to the city for the people of Goa," Ambani said.

WINDIES RECALL RUSSELL FOR SL T20S

COLOMBO: West Indies recalled big-hitting all-rounder Andre Russell for their upcoming T20I series against Sri Lanka. The 31-year-old Russell, who played a key part in the Windies' 2016 World T20 triumph, last played internationally at last year's 50-over World Cup and has not featured in a T20I since August 2018. Shimron Hetmyer, who along with fellow batsman Evin Lewis was left out of the ODI squad in Sri Lanka for failing to meet minimum fitness requirements, is also back in the squad. The Windies face Sri Lanka in two games in Kandy on March 4 and 6.

HANSINI WINS BRONZE IN ITTF EVENT

NEW DELHI: In her maiden appearance at an International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) junior circuit event, Chennai's table tennis prodigy, Mathan Rajan Hansini put up an impressive performance by bagging the Bronze medal in the Mini-Cadet Girls' Singles category at the Swedish Junior and Cadet Open in Orebro, Sweden. AGENCIES

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