

ANALYSIS 7

REDUCE THE INCOME GAP

MONEY 8

GAIL TO INVEST RS 1.05 LAKH-CR ON GAS-BASED ECONOMY INFRA

SPORTS 12

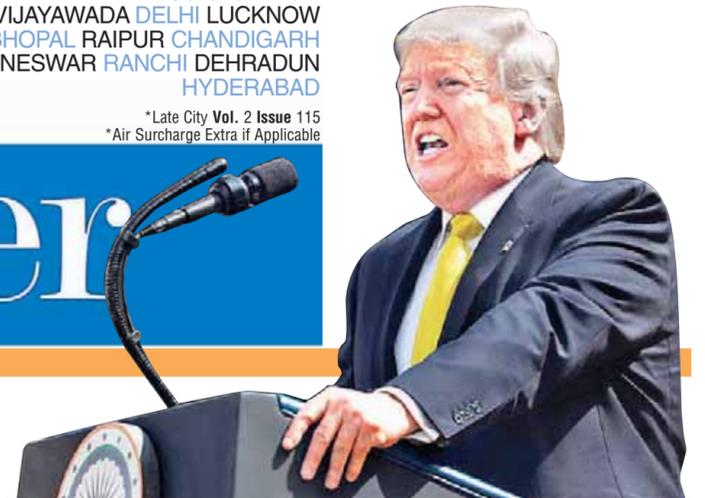
MASSI 'GREATEST' AHEAD OF MARADONA: GATTUSO

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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'Modi proved that Indians can achieve anything with hard work'

PREZ TRUMP SAYS AMERICA LOVES INDIA, VISITS TAJ MAHAL

US First Family says 'Wah Taj' at the sight of the refurbished 17th century monument

PNS ■ AGRA

US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump on Monday evening visited the iconic Taj Mahal as they marvelled at the famed 17th century Mughal-era mausoleum built as a monument of love.

Trump, accompanied by his wife, daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner, arrived here from Ahmedabad.

The Taj Mahal, which was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal who died in 1631, has been refurbished for the visit.

President Trump and the First Lady held hands as they strolled at the Taj complex and later wrote in the visitors' book. They were also briefed about the history and importance of the monument.

The US President's visit to Agra and Taj has generated huge excitement among local residents. Some shops have even displayed their own ban-



US President Donald Trump poses with his wife during their visit to the Taj Mahal on Monday.

ners, welcoming Trump to India.

Trump also took to Twitter to express his sentiments about

his first official visit to India, which began with a visit to Ahmedabad.

"First lady and I have trav-

elled 8,000 miles around the world to give a message to each citizen of this country America loves India, America respects

Trump's visit 'new chapter' in Indo-US ties, says Modi

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday hailed US President Donald Trump's visit to India as a "new chapter" in the historic Indo-US relations, adding that his ties is no longer just another partnership but a far greater and closer relationship.

Welcoming the President at the 'Namaste Trump' event at the new-look Motera stadium shortly after his arrival on the first leg of his two-day trip, Modi said a "new history" is being created and asserted that foundations of new alignments, challenges, opportunities and changes are being laid.

"India and the US relations and cooperation will play an important role in deciding the course of world in the 21st century. I am of the categorical view that India and the US are natural partners," he told an estimated one lakh-strong

audience who broke into cheers frequently.

Underscoring the strong ties between the two nations, Modi said the US is now India's largest trading partner and the Indian military is involved in its biggest war exercise with the US.

Trump's visit to India at the turn of the new decade is a big opportunity, he said.

The Indo-US ties are no longer just another partnership but have touched far greater heights, and the Trump's trip with his family shows this, Modi said.

"Welcome to world's biggest democracy," the prime minister said.

Modi said President Trump's visit is a new chapter in the relations between India and America.

Modi said a "new history" is being created, foundations of new alignments, challenges, opportunities and changes are being laid.



Jagan terms detractors 'demons', prays for help

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, in an emotional pitch, said he needs God's Grace and public support to fight the "devil force".

Addressing a massive crowd in Vizianagaram gathered to witness the launch of Jagannanna Vasathi Deevana that will provide financial assistance to ITI, polytechnic and degree students towards their hostel and mess charges, the Chief Minister lashed out a section of the media, accusing it of fueling the opposition's rumours against state government.

"We are resolute and will take forward our agenda and will not be cowed down by such tactics," the Chief Minister said.

"Our government is endeavouring to improve the lives of all, especially the poor, and also ensure development of each parts of the state through decentralisation. We are spending funds for the bright future of our children through various welfare programmes. I don't



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy addresses the crowd at the launch of the Jagannanna Vasathi Deevana in Vizianagaram on Monday.



know what mistake we have made by doing so. The Opposition is criticizing our initiatives every day," Jagan said.

He said while the state government was working towards three-capitals for decentralised development, its detractors were trying to paint a different picture.

"I am waging a war with demons. I am fighting against not just with the media chan-

nels which are focusing on negative news but also maniacs, in the guise of agitators, who were attacking the ruling party members," he said. "There are also mob attacks," Jagan said, referring to the attack on Bapatla MP Nandigama Suresh and the earlier attacks on other YSRCP leaders and MLAs.

He alleged that the Opposition was spreading false news by bribing some media outlets that the indus-

tries were leaving Andhra Pradesh. This, Jagan said, was being done in an attempt to create fear of unemployment.

"We are taking steps to ensure development of all regions equally. So, you have to think. I am not fighting opposition, but demons. Every day, they are trying to malign the image of the state government by fanning out false propaganda through newspaper and

electronic media. So, we need really God's Grace and your prayers to fight all these hurdles," Jagan told the massive crowd.

Just before the address of the Chief Minister, a student of a government school delivered a speech in English hailing the YSRCP government for rolling out programmes aiming at providing quality education to all.

Cop killed, DCP injured in fresh clashes over CAA in Delhi

Protester seen firing gun in the air in presence of police, heavy stone pelting reported

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi Police head constable was killed and a deputy commissioner of police injured as clashes over the amended citizenship law broke out again in northeast Delhi's Jaffrabad and Maujpur on Monday, with protesters torching houses, shops and vehicles, and hurling stones at each other.

Violence between groups supporting and opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) was also reported in the Chandbagh and Bhajanpura areas. This is the second day of clashes in the city where US President Donald Trump will arrive on Monday evening.

Police fired tear gas shells and also resorted lathicharge to disperse the violent crowd of protesters.



Ratan Lal, a head constable attached to the office of the ACP Gokalpuri, was killed. Several police personnel, including Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Shahdara, Amit Sharma, were injured while trying to quell the protests.

The police also imposed section 144 of the CrPc, which prohibits assembly of four or

more people, in areas affected by violence in northeast Delhi.

There was heavy stone pelting in Maujpur, while police baton-charged to disperse protesters in Jaffrabad. Shops and houses were vandalised and set on fire in Maujpur and Bhajanpura.

A protestor was also seen moving towards a Delhi Police personnel with a gun in his



hand. He shot a few rounds in the air.

According to officials, a fire tender was damaged by the protesters after it responded to a fire call in the area.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urged the Centre to restore law and order in the national capital. Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal has instructed Delhi Police

Commissioner Amulya Patnaik to ensure the situation is brought under control.

"Very distressing news regarding disturbance of peace and harmony in parts of Delhi coming in. I sincerely urge Hon'ble LG n Hon'ble Union Home Minister to restore law and order n ensure that peace and harmony is maintained.

NGOs allege destruction of VVPAT data of 2019 LS polls before expiry of mandatory one-yr period

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two NGOs alleged in the Supreme Court on Monday that the Election Commission (EC) has violated election rules by destroying the VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) data of last year's Lok Sabha polls before the conclusion of the statutory one-year period.

The NGOs -- Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Common Cause -- referred to the response received through an RTI application from the EC and alleged before a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde that the VVPAT data was needed to be preserved for a period of one year -- a rule of the Conduct of Election Rules.

"We do not look into it at the moment," the bench, also comprising justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant, said.

Appearing for the NGOs, lawyer Prashant Bhusan said the "shocking fact" had emerged in an RTI response and they would file an application in this regard.

The bench had earlier issued notice to the poll panel on the PIL seeking a probe into alleged discrepancies between the voter turnout figure and the number of votes counted in 347 constituencies during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The EC has not filed its response to the plea, which will now be hard after four weeks.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Magha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi : Dwitiya 01:39 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Purva Bhadrapada 07:10 pm

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

Rahukalam: 03:23 pm - 04:50 pm

Yamagandam: 09:35 am - 11:02 am

Varjyam: 05:57 am - 07:45 am

Gulika: 12:29 pm - 01:56 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 10:14 am - 12:01 pm

Ahijit Muhurtham: 12:06 pm - 12:52 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Clear

Temp: 34/22

Humidity: 79%

Sunrise: 06:37

Sunset: 06:21

Current Weather Conditions Updated February 24, 2020 5:00 PM

RBKs, a one-stop shop for farmers

C PRADEEP
VIJAYAWADA

Bountiful rains will yield bumper harvest, while scanty rainfall will leave farmers in the lurch. Hence, farmers are looking at the government for benefits so that they can tide over the crisis.

Therefore, the government is strengthening the farm sector in the state by providing various schemes for encouraging farmers to continuing agriculture. As a part of it, the government has introduced YSR Rythu Bharosa scheme to farmers across the State. The government was providing monetary benefit of Rs 13,500 per acre to cultivators to procure seeds, fertilizers and others for cultivation.

Now, the government has taken initiative and introduce YSR Rythu Bharosa Kendralu (RBKs) across the State, which



● These centres would be a one-stop shop for the supply of government certified agri inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, animal husbandry and fisheries inputs to farmers

● Speaking to The Pioneer, district revenue officer A Prasad said that 245 RBKs were set up in Krishna district and the remaining will be established before kharif

would help farmers as agri-input shops and farmer knowledge centres.

It would establish RBKs in all mandals in the State in a phased manner. As many as 11,158 RBKs will be established in the State by the end of April 2020 with an estimated cost of Rs 199.44 crore.

These centres would be a one-stop-shop for the supply of government certified agri inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, animal husbandry and fisheries inputs to farmers and will have an attached workshop/knowledge centre for giving advices to farmers.

Speaking to The Pioneer, district revenue officer A Prasad said that 245 RBKs were set up in Krishna district and the remaining will be established before kharif.

He said that in addition to RBKs it is proposed that five godowns will be established for stocking agri inputs in the dis-

trict in Machilipatnam, Gudivada, Kankipadu, A Konduru and Nandigama. He said that these godowns act as storage points of inputs, which would be under the control of AP Agros.

He said that agri input shops in RBKs shall be made available multi-branded quality agricultural inputs to farmers at the right price and time. It is a virtual shop with a digital kiosk for making orders from interested farmers with model products that shall be on display in shops.

He further stated that the Farmer Knowledge Centre is a training centre where agriculture and allied sector officials, scientists will provide latest and low-cost technologies to farmers. Audiovisual aids, mini-soil testing lab, demonstrations and library shall be part of the Farmer Knowledge Centre, he added.

Government rehashing Cong welfare schemes: Tulasi Reddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee working president Tulasi Reddy said that welfare schemes, which were launched by the Congress, were being re-launched by the YSRCP government.

He recalled that they had provided fee reimbursement and scholarships to students studying in government, aided and private colleges. He said that the YSRCP government was re-launching schemes with party name. He recalled that all schemes introduced by the Congress are being launched as 'Navaratnalu'.

He reminded that the government has to pay Rs 2,397 crore, which include Rs 1,431 crore for fee reimbursement and Rs 966 crore for scholarships. He further stated that under Amma Vodi



Tulasi Reddy, APCC working president

● Tulasi Reddy alleged that funds were being diverted by the government to the tune of Rs 396 crore from ST Corporation, Rs 1,271 from SC Corporation, Rs 3,432 crore from BC Corporation, Rs 442 crore from Minority Corporation and Rs 568 crore from Kapu Corporation

scheme, Rs 6,420 crore was allocated and not a penny was released till date. He alleged that funds were being diverted by the government to the tune of Rs 396 crore from ST Corporation, Rs 1,271 from SC Corporation, Rs 3,432 crore from BC Corporation, Rs 442 crore from Minority Corporation and Rs

568 crore from Kapu Corporation. Tulasi Reddy demanded that the government pay fee reimbursement and scholarships, increase in the limit of annual income from Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. He also demanded release of management grant and pending dues of mid-day meal scheme.

CAPSULE

Akila Bharat Veda Shastra Sadassu to begin today

VIJAYAWADA: The TTD has made elaborate arrangements for conduct of Akila Bharat Veda Shastra Agama Vidvat Sadassu at Sri SV Veda Vignana Peetham, Dharmagiri from February 25 to March 1. Vidyashankar Saraswati, the pontiff of Vidya Narasimha Ashram at Verur near Srirangam in Tamil Nadu, will deliver the keynote address on Tuesday morning inaugurating the six-day sadassu. The auditorium of the SV Veda Vidya Peetham is decked with flowers, while 715 students are participating in the annual sadassu.



Nunna ZPHS students to play in CM Cup Softball Tourney

VIJAYAWADA: Girl students of Zilla Parishad High School, Nunna near Vijayawada, proved their talent and selected for Krishna district under-17 girl's team for the CM Cup Softball Tournament, which will be commenced from March 4 in Anantapur. The Krishna District Sports Authority (DSA) conducted district selection trials at St Joseph's English Medium High School at Payakapuram in Vijayawada recently. In all, 100 girl softball players participated in selection trials coming from various parts of Krishna district. According to high school headmaster V Bhoopal Reddy, Tejeswani, Sriyutha, Shruthi and Rajasri have been selected for Krishna district under-17 years category team. Four players would represent Krishna in the CM Cup Softball Tournament, which is the prestigious tournament of Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP), he added. Later, he praised the physical education directors (PDs) Mutyala Venkateswara Rao and Vijaya Varma for training the players. For the first time, Nunna High School girl players would be representing the district team, he said.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 43,130 (10 gm)	
₹ 980	
SILVER	
₹ 48,300 (1kg)	
₹ 600	

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹119
Without Skin	₹135
Broiler at Farm	₹82

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	340
VIJAYAWADA	355
VISAKHAPATNAM	390
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.55

Balalaya begins at Alipiri Padala Mandapam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Three-day rituals of holy Balalaya commenced at the temple complex of Alipiri Padala Mandapam on Monday where Sri Lakshmi Narayana temple, Sri Andal Ammavari temple, Sri Perialwar temple and Sri Bhaktanjaneya temple are located.

In all, 14 rutwiks are performing Balalaya rituals - Akalmasha Homam, Laghu Purnahuti were performed on Monday and Punya havachanam with Agni Pratista and Kalakrshnan and Kumbharadhana Homam in the evening. TTDs agama advisor NK Sundara Varadan, Murali Krishna main priest of



Priests perform homam to mark the conduct of a three-day Balalaya rituals at Alipiri in Tirupati on Monday

Padala Mandapam temples are supervising the arrangements. 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 Avahana' 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. AEO Ravi Kumar Reddy, temple inspector Srinivasulu and others participated.

Provide livelihood to landless poor of Amaravati, says HRF

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Human Rights Forum has demanded that the government provide livelihood to the landless poor, construct labour intensive small scale and cottage industries in and around Amaravati.

AP general secretary of HRF K Sudha and president UG Srinivasulu, who were part of the fact finding team, also demanded handing over of cultivable land with immediate effect, engage the landless poor in restoration work and in laying of roads and a bridge on the Krishna river.

The government must provide necessary infrastructure, take immediate short term and long term measures so as to restore the economy, peace and normalcy in that region.

Sudha said the decision of the previous government to establish the capital in Amaravati was a disaster. It led to a slow death in the political economy of 29 villages earmarked for the capital. A thriving farming community was caught in an unsustainable State-sponsored speculative business. They woke up to a rude shock when the present government decided to reduce Amaravati into a legislative capital. The decision taken by the present



The government must provide necessary infrastructure, take immediate short term and long term measures so as to restore the economy, peace and normalcy in the Amaravati region, says AP general secretary of HRF K Sudha and president UG Srinivasulu

government has created a new set of problems, the HRF team said.

The special package offered to them by the State government remains an empty promise till date. So far, it has done next to nothing to improve their living conditions, especially that of the landless poor in that region.

A three-member HRF team visited Tulluru, Rayapudi, Velagapudi Vundavalli and

Nidamaru villages in Amaravati area of Guntur district on February 22 and met local people so as to elicit facts. "In 2014 itself, we had opposed setting up of the capital in Amaravati, as it was an unsustainable proposition and we stand by that decision. From the start, the previous government sold an impossible dream to people of the area and played a havoc with their lives," Sudha said.

Newly-married woman hangs herself

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A newly married woman committed suicide by hanging herself at her residence in Peda Gantyada under New Port Police Station on Monday. She was identified as K Priya, a native of Yelamanchili in the rural district of Visakhapatnam. Four months ago, Priya married a man at Gajuwaka, who eked out living as an auto-rickshaw driver. Priya was also working as a beautician to support the family income. On Sunday night, both had an argument and in a fit of rage, Priya rushed to her bedroom and hanged herself from the ceiling fan. Neighbours, who saw her body hanging from the ceiling, immediately informed police.

Senior police officers went to the spot and took Gowatham into custody. They sent the body for autopsy to the KGH mortuary after conducting an inquest.



Trump visit will benefit only US: CPI

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

US President Donald Trump's visit for building trade relations with India will benefit only America, said CPI State secretary Ramakrishna here on Monday.

He said that Farmers Associations vented their ire against imports of dairy products and chicken from the US.

He condemned the attack on farmers, who were protesting against the government for the past 68 days for shifting capital Amaravati. He demanded that the BJP-led-NDA government should intervene and put an end to the three-capital issue.

He questioned if five crore people need three capitals, how many capitals are needed for 100 crore population? He recalled that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had said if given 25 MPs, he would fight against the Central government to fulfil bifurcation promises.



Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh during his surprise visit to AKTP Municipal Corporation High School at Stayanarayanapuram in Vijayawada on Monday checking the knowledge of a girl student by asking a question

Civic body chief makes surprise visit to Municipal School

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh made a surprise visit to AKTP Municipal Corporation High School, Stayanarayanapuram, on Monday. He told teachers to impart quality education to students and transform them into good citizens.

The Commissioner inspected the school premises and

gave a few suggestions to staff on maintaining hygiene. He checked the teaching methodology being carried out in the classroom and told teachers to teach students in his presence and gave suggestions to them.

He told the headmaster and teachers to train students to get good results in annual examinations. He also interacted with students to concentrate on studies and score good marks for a better future.

Crème de la crème of healthcare for medical expo

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

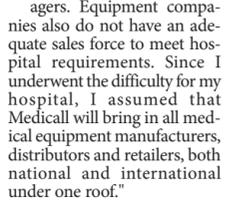
Medicall, country's largest B2B medical equipment expo, organised by Medexpert Business Consultants Private Limited, will be held from April 3 to 5 at Hitex Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad.

Medicall is truly a hospital needs super-market with A-Z of hospital requirements ranging from disposables to ambulance under one roof.

Medicall is the most popular show amongst doctors and hospital managements and attracts who-is-who of the healthcare industry. The trade fair will focus on all the needs of a hospital from surgical cotton to the latest medical equipment and surgical tools with

more than 6,000 products and services on display. Medicall is promoted by Dr Manivannan S, Managing Director, Kauvery Group of Hospitals.

While speaking about the motivation behind starting the expo, Dr Manivannan S says, "Small and medium-sized hospital owners from Tier II and III cities cannot afford to have qualified purchase managers. Equipment companies also do not have an adequate sales force to meet hospital requirements. Since I underwent the difficulty for my hospital, I assumed that Medicall will bring in all medical equipment manufacturers, distributors and retailers, both national and international under one roof."



Cheques to kin of Gulf migrants distributed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society (APNRTS) president Venkat S Medapati handed over ex gratia cheques to 12 at the Society head office here on Monday to the kin of those who died in Gulf countries.

The ex gratia is one of the many services offered by APNRTS on behalf of the Andhra Pradesh government to the families of deceased migrants. Rs 50,000 was provided as an ex gratia by the State government with an intention of providing financial assistance to the families of the victims, who died in Gulf countries due to various reasons.

APNRTS president Venkat said that the Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society was working under the directive of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy towards the development, security and welfare of migrants.

He also said a large number of expatriates in Gulf countries from Andhra Pradesh especially from East, West Godavari and YSR Kadapa districts are working in the Middle East. Most of these migrants work as drivers, contract and domestic workers in many companies and unfortunately a few victims die due to critical illness and some in accidents.

The State government aims at providing financial assistance to families, who are in dire straits, due to the death of the family head, who was the sole breadwinner.

Family members of the victims, who received the ex gratia cheques thanked Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

SEMINAR ON 'PETROLEUM, ENERGY' COMMENCES

'Think differently for exploration of industry needs'

● Director of IIPE explained the importance of energy, petroleum and natural gas

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A four-day seminar on 'Research opportunities in petroleum, energy and natural gas (ReOPEN-2020) organised by Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IIPE) commenced here on Monday. MK Surana, Chairman and Managing Director, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, graced the occasion as the chief guest.

Prof VSRK Prasad, Director of IIPE, briefed the inception of IIPE. He also explained the importance of energy, petroleum and natural gas.

Prof Mahendra Sunkara, University of Louisville, USA, in his address, highlighted the energy demand and importance of decarbonization in the present situation.

RP Patel, Asst Manager, ONGC, Rajahmundry, shed light on the importance of oil industry in the present and future. Later, in the key note address, Patel also explained wells, their operations, problems being faced and well closing.

Prof VSRK Prasad, Director of IIPE, briefed the inception of IIPE. He also explained the importance of energy, petroleum and natural gas.

He also advised youngsters to think differently for commercial exploration of industry needs, such that new ideas are developed and new fields are explored for development of alternative technologies.

Prof VSRK Prasad said, "It is the first among the series of international workshops and the next one will be organised in 2022 on the IIPE campus.

Two elaborate keynote addresses were followed the inaugural sessions. The keynote address was delivered by RP Patel, ONGC- Rajahmundry, on well control and S Bharathan, HPCL R&D, Bengaluru, on future of energy research.

The workshop will continue for four days and aims at featuring national and international professionals, who will speak on recent and future aspects in energy and petroleum sector, research and educational opportunities in petroleum and energy engineering, energy conversion and solar



Delegates light a traditional lamp to inaugurate a four-day seminar on 'Research opportunities in petroleum, energy and natural gas (ReOPEN-2020) in Visakhapatnam on Monday

energy, energy storage, fossil fuel, bio-fuel and biomass, catalysis, carbon free hydrogen production, thermal barrier coating and power generation cycle to name a few.

AP to adopt Tamil Nadu prisoner reform model

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Prisons Department is chalking out plans to adopt Tamil Nadu model of reforms to reduce the recidivism by monitoring and taking care of the released convicts after their sentence.

Director General of Prisons and Correctional Services of Andhra Pradesh Md Ahsan Reza said that they would reform the released convicts so that they did not indulge in crimes again by rehabilitating them in various trades as per the skills that they have acquired at the Correctional Service Centre and with the support of the family members of the released convicts.

"Our teams will visit some prisons in Tamil Nadu to observe the model before implementing it in Andhra Pradesh. We are also chalking out plans to allow the family members to interact with the convicts and also to organise a



● Director General of Prisons and Correctional Services of Andhra Pradesh Md Ahsan Reza said that they would reform the released convicts so that they did not indulge in crimes again by rehabilitating them in various trades as per the skills that they have acquired at the Correctional Service Centre

mela on the Central Prisons premises either on August 15 or January 26 and invite the family members to interact with serving convicted prisoners in all the central jails, Ahsan Reza added. Spices processing unit inaugurated at Vizag Central Prison.

Md Ahsan Reza on Monday inaugurated spices processing unit at Vizag Central Prison.

The unit was set up at a cost of Rs 38 lakh to make quality red chilli and turmeric powders and plans to produce other powders such as cumin, coriander, pepper and a few others.

The unit was installed by iFuture Globistic Enterprise Limited. Some convicts were trained to operate the unit to produce powders. Red-chilli

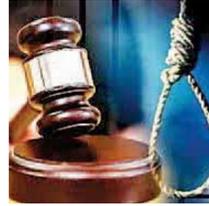
and turmeric powders were made in the Vizag Central Prison will be used in all prisons in the State and the remaining produce will be packaged and sold in retail markets in Vizag and other parts of the State under the brand name of Sudhar, Reza added.

Man gets death for rape and murder

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharitha on Monday tweeted that in a historic judgment by the Chittoor sessions court, death penalty has been announced to the accused, who was arrested in a rape and murder case of a five-year-old girl.

This is the first time that the death penalty has been announced under POSCO in Andhra Pradesh. She also tweeted that the police had filed a charge-sheet within 17 days from the day of the post-mortem report.



MP Nandigama Suresh demands Naidu's arrest

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

YSRCP MP Nandigama Suresh on Monday demanded the arrest of former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu for what he called engineering repeated attacks on him.

Nandigama Suresh, who is a member of Lok Sabha from Bapatla constituency, told reporters here on Monday that he and his staff were attacked by a mob in Amaravati on Sunday at the behest of Naidu.

He said that the opposition leader has a history laden with vindictive politics and political murders. He alleged that increasing attacks reflect the fear of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leadership after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) was ordered to probe into irregularities in land pooling and insider trading in Amaravati.

The YSRCP leader alleged that Naidu has been placing women in the forefront as a shield while party workers are carrying out the attacks. He also claimed that "TDP-friendly media is distorting facts to paint a different

● The YSRCP MP said that the opposition leader has a history laden with vindictive politics and political murders

● He alleged that increasing attacks reflect the fear of TDP leadership after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) was ordered to probe into irregularities in land pooling and insider trading in Amaravati



picture". "Unless Naidu and his son Lokesh are arrested and the sponsored agitations, pre-meditated attacks are stopped and the misplaced arrogance of Naidu

and his community is checked, chalk and cheese cannot be separated," he said. Suresh claimed that when he and his staff were going to police station to lodge a complaint about an earlier attack, a mob of 300 people attacked them again. He alleged that investors and those involved in the insider trading are sponsoring the attacks.

"If elected representatives are stopped and attacked by a mob, armed with chilli powder, using filthy language and such situations are not checked forthwith by taking stringent measures, including the arrest of the perpetrators of the agitation, the message that goes out will be different," he said.

Seized vehicles to be auctioned

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Auction of seized vehicles will be conducted on February 26 and 27, according to Deputy Transport Commissioner S Venkateswara Rao. The DTC said that vehicles, which were seized for not possessing valid documents, and not claimed by owners even after repeated notices will be auctioned.

On February 26 and 27, seized vehicles will be auctioned at Vuyuru and 30 at Ibrahimpatnam depot on February 27. Interested should pay Rs 5,000 as an EMD to participate in the auction and the highest bidder will be awarded the auction. The awardee has to pay balance amount on the same day of the auction. The DTC further stated that owners of seized vehicles can claim their vehicle by paying dues pertaining to the vehicle on or before February 25.



Cop killed, DCP injured in fresh clashes over CAA...

Continued from Page 1

Nobody should be allowed to orchestrate flagrant (sic), Kejriwal tweeted.

Taking to Twitter, Bajjal said, "Instructed @DelhiPolice and @CPDelhi to ensure that law and order is maintained in North East Delhi. The situation is being closely monitored. I urge everyone to exercise restraint for maintenance of peace and harmony."

Delhi minister and Babarpur MLA Gopal Rai also urged the people in the area to maintain peace in the wake of the clashes over the citizenship law, saying some people were purposely trying to disturb the atmosphere.

On Saturday night, a group of women blocked a carriage-way outside the Jaffrabad Metro station against the CAA. Clashes broke out on Sunday evening between pro and anti-CAA groups near Jaffrabad over blocking of the road, while similar sit-ins were launched in several other parts of the national capital including Hauz Rani. The situation escalated after BJP leader Kapil Mishra called a gathering on Sunday. Mishra demanded that police remove the anti-CAA protestors within three days. Since then northeast Delhi has been on the boil. It has also been witnessing spurts of violence. The Delhi Metro has closed entry and exit at the Jaffrabad and Maujpur-Babarpur stations as an uneasy calm prevailed in the area.

CM opens state's 2nd Disha Police Station in Vizianagaram

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday inaugurated the corporate-style and visitor-friendly Disha Police Station in the presence of Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharitha and DGP Gautam Sawang in Vizianagaram on Monday. It is the second Disha Police Station in the State after the one opened in Rajahmundry.

The Chief Minister said that such exclusive police stations would be set up across the State on a priority basis. Stations would deal with crimes against women and children. He said that the State government has introduced Andhra Pradesh Disha Act Criminal Law (AP Amendment) Act-2019.

The Disha Act mandates completion of the investigation into cases of sexual offences within seven working days from the time of record, and the trial must be concluded within 14 working days from the date of filing the charge-sheet. The appeal against the sentence passed under the new law has to be disposed of within six months, he added.



● Superintendent of Police of Vizianagaram B Raja Kumari said that a DSP-rank police officer, an inspector, five sub-inspectors and 45 constables will be stationed at the Disha Police Station.

● Unlike the normal police stations, this one looks like a corporate building. It houses a waiting hall, separate offices for senior officers, office for the public prosecutor and a forensic laboratory

Vizianagaram district administration has spent around Rs 1.2 crore for the construction of the police station. Disha Act-2019 was passed following the gruesome rape and murder of veterinary doctor 'Disha' in Hyderabad on the night of November 27, 2019.

Superintendent of Police of Vizianagaram B Raja Kumari

said that a DSP-rank police officer, an inspector, five sub-inspectors and 45 constables will be stationed at the Disha Police Station.

Unlike the normal police stations, this one looks like a corporate building. It houses a waiting hall, separate offices for senior officers, office for the public prosecutor and a forensic laboratory.

Trump's visit 'new chapter' in Indo-US...

Continued from Page 1

"A chapter that will become a new document of progress and prosperity of the people of America and India," he added. There is so much that the two countries share, Modi said.

He said the two countries also share spirit of enterprise and innovation, shared opportunities and challenges and shared hopes and aspirations. Modi also appreciated Trump administration's efforts in the field of health.

The biggest strength between two people or nations is trust, Modi said while quot-

ing an old adage that "friendship is where trust is unshakable".

In the last few years, trust between the US and India has strengthened further and has reached historic levels.

"What you have done for healthy and happy America is getting good results. What you are doing for children in society is admirable," Modi said. Modi said today 130 crore Indians are jointly building a 'new India'.

"Our youth power is full of aspirations. Setting big goals, achieving them is becoming the hallmark of new India today," he said.

'Modi proved that Indians can achieve anything...

Continued from Page 1

All over the planet people take great joy in 'bhanga' and watching Bollywood films like DDLJ (Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge) and Sholay, he said and then also referred to cricketers Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli. Modi too was all praise for the US president.

"What you have done for healthy and happy America is getting good results. What you are doing for children in society is admirable," Modi said.

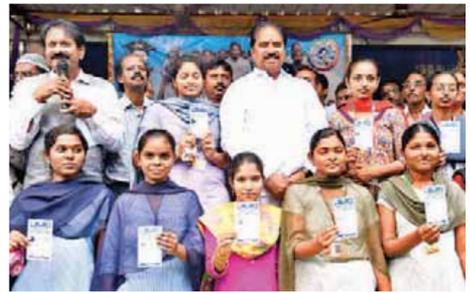
'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' a boon to students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Brahmin Corporation chairman and MLA Malladi Vishnu said that Jagananna Vasathi Deevana scheme is another prestigious programme, which would enable the poor students to pursue higher education.

Vishnu formally launched the 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme at SRR & CVR College here on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the new scheme would provide financial help to students pursuing ITI, Polytechnic, Degree, PG and Ph D courses.

He said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been taking initiatives to build



Brahmin Corporation chairman and MLA Malladi Vishnu is seen with girl students at the launch of 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme in Vijayawada on Monday

a strong future for students and introduced 'Amma-Vodi',

'Jagananna Vidya Deevana' and 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' to

support the family members of students.

He said that many students belonging to SC, ST, BC and Minority community stop their education after coming to high school especially girls due to various reasons. With the implementation of various schemes to students to encourage them and their parents', he said and added that Jagan would provide employment to the unemployed.

On the occasion a few girl student beneficiaries expressed their happiness on introducing 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' enabling them to convince their parents to pursue higher education.

24-hour non-stop rendering of Annamaiah sankeertans begin

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Annamaiah sankeertans Akhanda Maha Yajnam of 24 hours non-stop singing of Annamaicharya sankeertans organised by the TTD to highlight the significance of Bhakti culture began at the Annamaicharya Kala Mandir on Monday. Earlier, Annamaiah utsava idol was taken out in a procession on Monday with artists singing Annamaicharya sankeertans and mangala vadyams all the way from TTD administrative building to Kala Mandir.

Thereafter the non-stop Annamaiah sankeertans will be sung by devotees and artists from Monday evening to till



Classical singers rendering non-stop singing of Annamaicharya sankeertans as part of Akhanda Maha Yajnam of 24 hours in Tirupati on Monday

Tuesday 9 pm. Director of TTDs Annamaicharya Project Acharya Bhamidipati Vishwanath, eminent scholar

Dr Samudrala Lakshmiah and artists of Annamaicharya project from all regions participated.

NGOs allege destruction...

Continued from Page 1

The NGOs, in the plea, have sought a direction to the EC to formulate a robust procedure to investigate data discrepancies in all future elections. Citing the research data of a team of its experts, the ADR said there were serious discrepancies between the number of voters in different constituencies, that is the voter turnout data collated and provided by the EC and the number of votes counted. It claimed that the findings of the research revealed several discrepancies, including those in the master summary of 542 constituencies.

The ADR said the discrepancies ranged from one vote to 1,01,323 votes, which was equal to 10.49 per cent of the total votes.

Jagan terms detractors 'demons' ...

Continued from Page 1

Jagan launched the Jagananna Vasathi Deevana to thunderous cheers from students of various colleges, political leaders and others.

With a finger touch on the laptop key, the Chief Minister transferred online the benefit of Jagananna Vasathi Deevana to the accounts of the mothers of 11.87 lakh students amounting to Rs 1,100 crore.

Jagan said education was the only asset the government can

offer to the lakhs of student of the downtrodden families and the fruits will be transferred to generations to come if at least one person from the family completes a professional course and gets a good job.

He claimed that the state government has brought about revolutionary reforms in the education sector to lower the rate of illiteracy. The state has 33 per cent illiteracy rate against the national average of 27 per cent.

Under Jagananna Vasathi

Deevana, the government will help Polytechnic and Degree students with their hostel and mess charges. All the students whose parents' annual income is less than Rs 2.5 lakh will get financial assistance directly into the bank account of their mothers.

While the first installment of Rs 10,000 would be credited to their accounts by January-February, the second installment of Rs 10,000 would be deposited by July-August. All the children in each family

would get the benefit individually. While the government is spending Rs 2,300 crore every year for Vasathi Deevana, it is spending Rs 3,700 crore additionally for Vidya Deevana programme (total fee reimbursement).

Similarly, Rs 6,400 crore is being spent to provide Rs 15,000 each to 82 lakh students through Amma Vodi programme. The Chief Minister said he was proud to say that Rs 12,400 crore was being spent for all these schemes.

US President Trump says America loves India, visits Taj Mahal

Continued from Page 1

Trump and the First Lady enjoyed the view of the marble marvel in the evening as a cool breeze added to the pleasant weather.

They also posed for pictures for photographers. The couple will spend about an hour at Taj to catch the sunset from the UNESCO heritage site, before heading to Delhi.

The last US president to visit the Mughal-era wonder was Bill Clinton who had come to India in 2000. He had seen the Taj along with daughter Chelsea Clinton.

In 1959, then US president David Dwight Eisenhower had



visited Taj along with then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

From massive billboards bearing greeting messages to street roundabouts decked up

with US and India flags, Agra had waited excitedly to welcome President Trump and authorities made arrangements to present a 'lively Agra' to the visiting President, seeking to shake off the old tag of city of ghosts.

"During Clinton's visit the city streets were deserted due to security arrangements, prompting him to call it a city of ghosts." This time the excitement can be felt in the air," said Mohit Kumar, who works at a hotel in Tajganj area.

"I was very young in 2000 when Clinton visited. We are very excited and happy that another US President has come to our city due to which the

civic amenities have been improved," he said.

Trump arrived in Agra after jointly attending with Prime Minister Narendra Modi the mega Namaste Motera event at the newly built Motera cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

On his arrival at the airbase, over 250 artistes drawn from different parts of Uttar Pradesh performed Mayur dance', Rai folk dance', Dhubia folk dance' as sonorous sounds of 'bumrasia' nagada, dholak, mridang, added to the festive ambience.

A giant billboard there featuring Trump, First Lady Melania Trump and Prime Minister Modi greeted the couple with a message Grand

welcome of India's best friend to the City of Love Agra'.

Trump was received at the Khera airbase by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "From the airport, the US President's convoy travelled till the Oberoi Amarvilas hotel situated near the East Gate of the Taj Mahal complex. From there the President and his family and members of high-level delegation accompanying him moved into eco-friendly golf carts to travel into the monument premises," a senior official said.

As per Supreme Court directions, petrol or diesel-operated vehicles are not per-

mitted within 500 m of the Taj Mahal's gate. The architectural marvel inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983 is made of white Makrana marble and red sandstone, and renowned for its intricate inlay work on the stone surface.

Taj Mahal, considered one of the seven wonders of the world, stands on the bank of Yamuna, and is always high on the itinerary of visiting heads of state.

In 2015, the then US President Barack Obama was scheduled to visit the monument during his India visit. It is said he could not do so due to security reasons.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomes President of United States of America Donald Trump on his arrival at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, at Ahmedabad on Monday

White jumpsuit and green sash, Melania dazzles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accessorising her white jumpsuit with a green silk and gold embroidered sash, US First Lady Melania Trump doffed her hat to Indian textile heritage on Monday when she landed here for the first leg of the US presidential visit. The breezy white jumpsuit, by French-American costume designer Herve Pierre, was cinched at the waist with the moss green and golden metallic thread sash that was discovered by the designer in an early 20th century Indian textile documents given to him by his friends.

Her white ensemble is part of the label's Atelier Caito for Herve Pierre range

While her husband, US president Donald Trump paired his dark suit with a buttercup yellow tie, Melania opted for crepe and silk in keeping with the weather. Her white ensemble is part of the label's Atelier Caito for Herve Pierre range. "Arriving in India, the First Lady #lotus is wearing a white jumpsuit from @atelier_caito_for_herve_pierre in creme crepe. The sash was cut in an early XX century Indian textile documents I found in Paris through very good friends who are collectors. "The sash is made out of green silk and gold metallic thread. We used the border which was the most interesting piece we could use as it was a vintage piece," Pierre posted on Instagram alongside the photograph of the sketch of the outfit. Melania kept her hair loose and make up subtle for her first appearance in India.



Cultural extravaganza welcomes POTUS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US President Donald Trump landed here on Monday for his first visit to India to a grand welcome by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and thousands of people who lined the streets and packed into the Motera stadium to say 'Namaste Trump'. There were tableaux, folk dancers and musicians rolling out the cultural tapestry that is India, at the

There were tableaux, folk dancers and musicians rolling out the cultural tapestry that is India

airport, on the way and at the spanning new cricket stadium where about 1,00,000 people waited patiently since early in the morning to hear the two leaders speak.

Air Force One carrying Trump, his wife Melania, daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner landed at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel international airport here at 11.37 am, officials said. It was scheduled to

land at 11.40 am. Trump stepped out wearing a black suit and a buttercup yellow tie while the first lady was in a white jumpsuit by French-American costume designer Herve Pierre. In a hat tip to Indian textiles, the jumpsuit was paired with a green silk with gold thread embroidery discovered by the designer in an early 20th century Indian textile documents given to him by his friends. Modi, who reached Ahmedabad about an hour before Trump did, welcomed Trump and the US first lady at the airport, hugging the president and warmly shaking hands with Melania. The first stop in the Trump visit was the Sabarmati Ashram, home to Mahatma Gandhi between 1917 and 1930 during India's freedom struggle. The 22-km 'India roadshow' began as the cavalcade, with the US president's gleaming black car that has earned the moniker 'The Beast', moved out of the airport towards the Ashram and then to stadium.



Cultural troupes perform on Donald Trumps arrival

Ahmedabad rolls out RED CARPET for the TRUMPS

PNS ■ AHMADABAD

US President Donald Trump arrived in Ahmedabad on Monday for the first leg of his India trip. The Air Force One plane carrying Trump and his wife Melania landed at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel international airport here at 11.37 am, officials said. It was scheduled to land at 11.40 am.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who reached Ahmedabad over an hour before Trump did, was present at the airport to welcome the US president at the airport.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who reached Ahmedabad over an hour before Trump did, was present at the airport to welcome the US President at the airport

Huge billboards of the two leaders and replicas of historic places in Gujarat have also been placed along the roads where people greeted the two leaders.

Over 10,000 police personnel, besides officials of the United States Secret Service, and personnel of the National Security Guards (NSG) and

the Special Protection Group (SPG) have been deployed for the high profile visit.

The seventh US president to visit India, Trump on Sunday retweeted a video in which his face was superimposed on the hit Indian movie-character Bahubali, showing him as a great saviour.

MODI, TRUMP TO HOLD EXTENSIVE TALKS TODAY

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will aim to expand India-US global partnership in their extensive talks on Tuesday, a day after both lavished praise on each other and vowed to script a better future for people of the two democracies.

In an address at a massive 'Namaste Trump' rally at Motera stadium in Ahmedabad, the US president announced that deals to sell state-of-the-art military helicopters and other equipment worth over USD 3 billion will be sealed on Tuesday.

Trump, accompanied by his wife Melania, daughter

Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and top brass of his administration, arrived in Ahmedabad around noon on Monday for a nearly 36-hour-long maiden visit to India.

The US president was feted at the world's largest cricket stadium in the Namaste Trump event and was cheered by tens of thousands of people as Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited him to address them.

"We love you. We love you, India, very much," Trump said finishing his 27-minute speech in which he heaped praise on Modi and spoke highly about India's achievements in diverse areas.

Talking about defence and strategic ties between the two

countries, Trump said the US is looking forward to providing India with some of the best and most feared military equipment on the planet.

"We make the greatest weapons ever made: airplanes, missiles, rockets, ships. We make the best. And we're dealing now with India. But this includes advanced air defence systems and armed and unarmed aerial vehicles," Trump said.

The deals mentioned by Trump will include procurement of 24 MH-60 Romeo helicopters by India from the US at a cost of USD 2.6 billion. Another contract to acquire six AH-64E Apache helicopters for USD 800 million from the US is also on the table.

Trump praises only Modi in Gandhi Ashram visitor's book

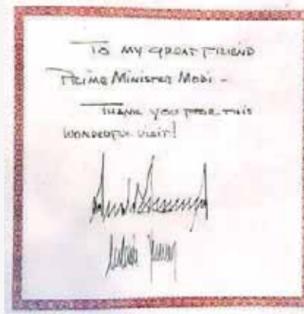
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Setting a precedence, US President Donald Trump instead of writing something on Mahatma Gandhi, praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the visitor's book at the Gandhi Ashram at Sabarmati, here on Monday.

Whenever a foreign or national dignitary or a celebrity visit the Gandhi Ashram, they express their feelings in the visitor's book.

Trump visited the Ashram with the First Lady Melania Trump on Monday. They visited 'Friday Kunj', the house in which Mahatma Gandhi lived for 13 years. They also tried their hands on Charkha, the spinning wheel.

The American couple spent around 12 minutes at the Ashram. They were informed about Gandhi and his philosophy. Modi too shared few words about the great



The American couple spent around 12 minutes at the Ashram. They were informed about Gandhi and his philosophy. Modi too shared few words about the great man with the first couple of the US.

When the visitor's book was presented, the US President wrote, "To my great friend Prime Minister Modi, thank you for this wonderful visit." The first lady also put her

signature beneath it. The President also didn't pay tribute to the Gandhi's bust with 'cotton yank', a tradition followed by every visiting dignitary to the Ashram.



US President Donald Trump writes in the visitor's book at Sabarmati Ashram as First Lady and PM Narendra Modi looks on

Donald Trump will see 'brand new India': Mukesh Ambani

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A brand new India is welcoming US President Donald Trump in 2020 -- showcasing a thriving digital economy with robust transformation that is underway

across industries -- which previous US presidents never witnessed, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani said on Monday.

The US President and his family received a rousing welcome from an estimated 1.10 lakh people at the Motera stadium in Ahmedabad, the first day of their two-day state visit to India.

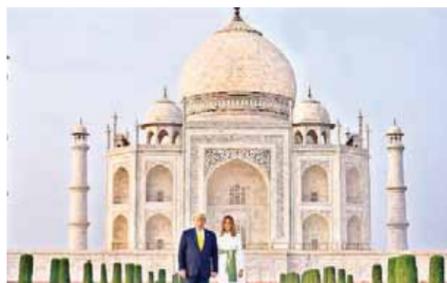
"India that he (Trump) will

see in 2020 is very different from India that either President (Jimmy) Carter saw or (Bill) Clinton saw or even (Barack) Obama" witnessed when they visited the country, Ambani told the visiting Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella during an interaction at the company's 'Future Decoded Summit' in Mumbai.

Nadella is also in India for a three-day official visit this week.

Hand-in-Hand, Trumps tour Taj Mahal

PNS ■ AGRA



Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump tour the historic Taj Mahal, in Agra

President Trump and the First Lady walked on the manicured lawns alongside freshly spruced up fountains as they were taken on a guided tour of the monument.

Agra: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump spent nearly an hour on Monday at the Taj Mahal in Agra, their second stop after arriving in India for a two-day visit. The Trumps enjoyed the magnificent marble monument in the glow of the fading sun, the complex completely cleared

of any other visitor or staff. The Trumps walked hand-in-hand into the 16th century mausoleum, known worldwide as the monument of love, built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal.

"The Taj Mahal inspires awe. A timeless testament to the rich and diverse beauty of Indian culture. Thank you India," President Trump wrote in the visitors' book soon after stepping into the complex for a private visit.

President Trump and the First Lady were unhurried as they walked on the manicured lawns, alongside spruced up

fountains, on their guided tour of the Taj Mahal.

For the job of escorting the Trumps, many guides were screened; three were short-listed and only one made it. The only other "company" for the couple was a flock of birds that vanished as suddenly as they appeared.

Half-way to the monument, President Trump - who once owned a casino in Atlantic City named Taj Mahal -- and Melania Trump stopped at the famed love seat where most foreign dignitaries pose, and smiled for the cameras, holding hands.

Trumps visit Sabarmati, try hands on charkha

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sabarmati Ashram for a few minutes after Trumps arrived at Ahmedabad airport on Monday.

A roadshow from the Airport to Sabarmati Ashram was organised during which thousands of people enroute of the cavalcade greeted the US President who is visiting India for the first time.

Trump and First Lady paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at the Sabarmati Ashram. During the brief stay here, they tried their hands on the charkha.

Trump spun charkha briefly and wrote in the visitor's diary, "To my great friend Prime Minister Modi - Thank You

"To my great friend Prime Minister Modi - Thank You for this wonderful visit," Trump wrote in the visitor's diary

for this wonderful visit." However, there was no mention of Mahatma Gandhi by Trump in his remark in the visitors' diary at Sabarmati ashram.

From Sabarmati Ashram, Trump and the First Lady arrived at Motera Stadium, in Ahmedabad where apart from Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Gujarat Chief minister Vijay Rupnai and Governor Acharya Devvrat are also present.



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump trying their hands on charkha at Sabarmati Ashram



US President Donald Trump greeting Ivanka Trump at Ahmedabad Airport on Monday

Trump all praise for Bollywood, remembers DDLJ and Sholay

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

US President Donald Trump on Monday reached out to Indians by hailing the 'genius' of the Hindi film industry and recalling two all-time favourites, 'Sholay' and 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' (DDLJ).

Addressing the 'Namaste Trump' event at the Motera Stadium here, the US president said people "take great joy" in watching Bollywood films and understanding Indian culture through them.

"This is the country that produces nearly 2,000 movies a year from the hub of genius and creativity known as Bollywood," he told the gathering of about 100,000 people packed into the stadium.

"All over the planet people take great joy in scenes of bhanga, music and dance, romance and drama, and classic Indian films like 'DDLJ' and 'Sholay'," Trump said. While the 1975 multi-starrer 'Sholay', labelled a "curry western" by many, is an action-adventure film that has stood the test of the decades, the 1995 Shah Rukh Khan-Kajol-led 'DDLJ' is an out and out romance.

This is not the first effort by the US president to use popular culture to strike a chord with



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump receiving a traditional welcome upon their arrival at Ahmedabad Airport on Monday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath can also be seen

movie loving Indians.

Ahead of his maiden visit to India, Trump shared a video in which his face was superimposed on the hit movie-character Baahubali.

"Look so forward to being with my great friends in INDIA!" Trump tweeted on Saturday alongside the 81-second clip.

Before that, Trump praised

Ayushmann Khurrana's latest release 'Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan'.

On a tweet complimenting the movie for celebrating a same-sex love story on the celluloid, Trump last week commented "great".

Former US president Barack Obama also referenced 'DDLJ' during his 2015 visit to India when he quoted Shah Rukh's

famous dialogue from the iconic film.

"Last celebration here we celebrated festival of lights in Mumbai. We danced with some children. Unfortunately, we were not able to schedule any dancing in this visit. 'Senorita, bade bade desho mein'... You know what I mean," Obama said while addressing a town hall event in Delhi.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of USA Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump at Motera Stadium, in Ahmedabad on Monday

India, US committed to defend people from radical Islamic terrorism: Trump

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

India and the US are committed to defend their people from radical Islamic terrorism, resolved to significantly expand defence ties and are working on a "fantastic" trade deal, said US President Donald Trump on Monday while asserting that his country "loves" and is "loyal" to India.

Addressing a huge crowd at 'Namaste Trump' event at the Motera stadium here, the US president, accompanied by his wife Melania and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, talked about India's great tradition of embracing individual freedom, rule of law, dignity of every human being and where people worship side-by-side in

harmony.

On his maiden visit, Trump, who was welcomed by Modi on his arrival here, said his country will remain a "loyal" friend of India and called the Prime Minister an "exceptional leader" who works day and night for the country.

"India and the US are committed to fight terrorists and their ideology; that is why my government is working with Pakistan to crack down on terror groups," Trump said in the presence of his family -- daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner -- and top brass of his administration.

"The US will always be faithful and loyal friend of India. Thank you for the spectacular welcome," he added.

'Vivekamanan' to 'vestas': twitter is ROFL over mis-pronunciations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US President Donald Trump's speech on Monday at Ahmedabad's Motera stadium left Twitter in splits over his several mispronunciations even though the American leader won some praise over his references to Bollywood and Indian public figures.

From calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi the son of a "chiwala" ("Chaiwala" or tea-seller) to mentioning "The Vestas" (The Vedas) and a botched up pronunciation of Swami Vivekananda, social media users noted several instances of Trump-isms.

Some also praised Mr Trump for speaking about the "genius" of the Hindi film industry and recalling two all-time favourites, 'Sholay' (which he called 'Shojay') and 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' ("DDLJ").

No religious matters: Sena

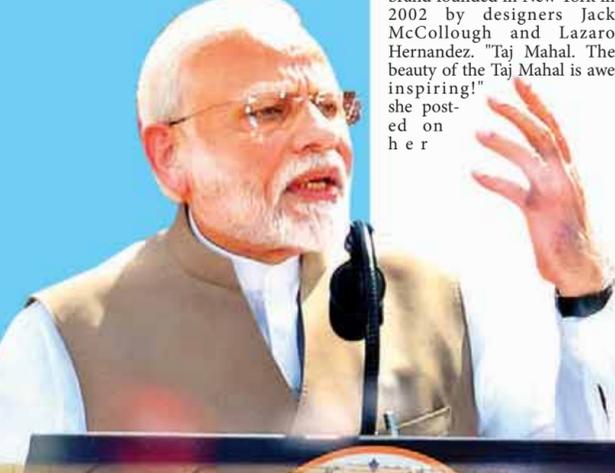
PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena asked visiting US President Donald Trump 'not to interfere' in issues pertaining to religious freedom in India as the same were India's "internal matter".

Referring to media reports that Trump is likely to express his reservations on aspects of religious freedom with Prime Minister, Sena said that besides faith, issues like Shaheen Bagh, CAA, NRC and NPR are "all domestic concerns of India" which the (Indian) government is tackling. "This country is run by a democratically elected government and needs no lessons from outsiders on matters pertaining to freedom or dignity... it will be better if the US President completes his 'sight-seeing tours' of Ahmedabad, Delhi and Agra and packs off," the Sena said. ("DDLJ").

What you have done for healthy and happy America is getting good results. What you are doing for children in society is admirable. America's commitment to defeating terrorism and the leadership of President Trump has served humanity and, therefore, I believe that a special leader like President Trump and a special friend of India coming to India at the beginning of this decade is a big occasion. His visit to this country has created a new history in Indo-US relations.

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



Ivanka puts Insta on fire with 'awe inspiring' Taj pics

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It was love in the air as Ivanka Trump, in a Proenza Schouler floral printed dress, took a stroll at the Taj Mahal with her husband Jared Kushner on Monday.

Proenza Schouler is a women's wear and accessories brand founded in New York in 2002 by designers Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez. "Taj Mahal. The beauty of the Taj Mahal is awe inspiring!" she posted on her Instagram page. "And so are you, keep fighting the good fight," posted a follower on her Instagram page. In a nod to sustainable fashion, Ivanka wore a repeat Proenza Schouler dress which she wore on her visit to Argentina back in 2019. "Kya baat hai. Beautiful," posted another follower. In a Sunday tweet, Ivanka said she is honoured to return to India. "Two years after joining @narendramodi at the Global Entrepreneurial Summit in Hyderabad, I am honoured to return to India with @POTUS and @FLOTUS to celebrate that the grand friendship between the world's two largest democracies has never been stronger!" Ivanka tweeted.



Instagram page. "And so are you, keep fighting the good fight," posted a follower on her Instagram page. In a nod to sustainable fashion, Ivanka wore a repeat Proenza Schouler dress which she wore on her visit to Argentina back in 2019. "Kya baat hai. Beautiful," posted another follower. In a Sunday tweet, Ivanka said she is honoured to return to India. "Two years after joining @narendramodi at the Global Entrepreneurial Summit in Hyderabad, I am honoured to return to India with @POTUS and @FLOTUS to celebrate that the grand friendship between the world's two largest democracies has never been stronger!" Ivanka tweeted.

Over one lakh turn out at venue to hear Trump, PM

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Over a lakh people gathered at the newly built cricket stadium in Motera area on Monday to witness US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the gathering at the Namaste Trump event.

Though Trump's address was scheduled to start after 1.30 pm, people from across the state started arriving at the stadium, touted as the world's biggest, since 8 am.

There was a continuous stream of people walking towards the stadium since morning as parking areas for vehicles were away from the stadium. While many of the attendees were transported to the venue in buses, some were from the city and were eager to see both the leaders. Many in the stadium were seen wearing masks with images of Modi and Trump printed on them. For security reasons, each invitee was given a personal invitation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures to the crowd

and police conducted their background checks.

Bollywood singer Kailash Kher and local Gujarati singers entertained the audience for a couple of hours before Trump and Modi reached the stadium, which has the capacity to accommodate 1.10 lakh people, the highest for any cricket stadium in the world. Gujarati singers like Kirtidan Gadhvi, Geeta Rabari and Kinjal Dave also entertained the audience for over two hours. The invited guests also included Non Resident Indians and

businessmen. For security reasons, no one was allowed to carry any banner or flag inside the stadium.

Prime Minister Modi, you are not just the pride of Gujarat. You are a living proof that with hard work and devotion Indians can accomplish anything, anything at all, anything they want. The life of Prime Minister Modi underscores the limitless promise of this great nation. He started out by his father's side as a chai-wallah, as a tea-seller. When he was a young man he worked at a cafeteria in this city and now, and his landslide victory like no other in the largest democratic election ever held anywhere

DONALD TRUMP
US President



Indo-China row

Beijing's selective engagement with India on the Wuhan evacuations is plain confrontationist



Desperate times call for desperate measures and when a global crisis has a new name called Coronavirus with a hydra-headed manifestation, then politics should be the last concern between nations who must unitedly fight it. Unfortunately, China, which is filtering the extent of its health crisis lest it be construed as bad propaganda for its global stakes, has let that unease creep into its bilateral ties with India. Seems like the spiralling epidemic has torn the "relative calm" in the strategic partnership. A spat that could have

been settled by discussion and mutual understanding has unnecessarily been allowed to gain traction. The current row stems from China's refusal to grant permission to our military aircraft for the evacuation of several Indians from the Coronavirus-hit Wuhan. Although China facilitated the civil flights by rescue missions, it is dragging its feet over clearances for this one, attributing it to procedural norms given the disease has reached a higher degree of criticality. But India maintains that it is precisely because of this and its responsibility to protect its citizens that it was sending in the C-17 Globemaster, equipped with medical facilities, to bring back Indians, assuming they were infected. Yet in a tit-for-tat response, Beijing accused New Delhi of being selfish and holding back essential medical equipment required by local authorities and medical workers for treating patients. More, China has called upon the Indian authorities to follow the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines that call for resumption of all trade and personal exchanges with it to restore normalcy. Yet the world knows that when it comes to humanitarian missions, India has never held itself back. So this strong-arm and negotiatory tactics by the Chinese are not warranted. In all this bickering, not least unexpected, the Chinese response was the same as it was during the outbreak of the virus, "denial." So the fate of around 100-odd Indians, who remain stuck in the Chinese city, is still undecided.

Besides, Beijing cannot justify its "selective" engagement with India on the evacuation process, allowing permission to some while denying it to others. As it turns out, in the same "critical period," three other nations were allowed to operate their evacuation flights. What is incomprehensible is that just a few days ago, the Chinese authorities applauded the "kindness" shown by New Delhi in helping them tackle the outbreak. Premier Xi Jinping had himself lauded India for offering solidarity and assistance. The mixed messages are typical of the larger Chinese strategy of keeping us on our toes by speaking in a forked tongue. Despite this blow-hot-blow-cold attitude of the Chinese, the Indian Government chose to keep differences aside and sought to aggressively push itself to help China contain the virus. From agreeing to test clinical samples from abroad in its laboratories to offering help with the evacuation of people from affected areas to lifting the ban on the export of personal protection equipment — it has done it all. The least one could have expected of the Chinese, given their continued emphasis on strategic relationship and intention to look at trade and other broader areas of cooperation, was to acknowledge the role played by other nations, including India, in fighting the epidemic. But that's too much to ask from it. In all the three sorties carried out to date, where more than 600 Indians have been airlifted, working with China has been a nightmare with the biggest hurdle coming by way of getting approvals from its authorities — Central, provincial as well as local. It must also not be forgotten that ripple effects of the spread of the virus are being felt in India, as in other nations. We, too, need to be prepared to tackle any potential crisis. India's stand with regard to restrictions on some medical devices assumes prominence on account of our fast depleting stocks and low domestic output. In fact, the crisis has led to the deep realisation of how we are heavily reliant on the Chinese for the procurement of raw materials and key ingredients for the production of medical equipment and drugs. So much so that the Government is all set to create new opportunities for Indian firms to emerge as an alternative producing destination to fill the supply vacuum. This outbreak should serve as a warning for Indian industries to diversify their supply chains and encourage the production of critical components within India. Till we are dependent on supplies from China, it will use our weakness to leverage diplomacy.

Fatty Indians

Delhi and Ahmedabad top the ICMR's study of people consuming fats above prescribed levels



That Indian cuisine is high on flavour is an undisputed fact but so is the reality that it is making us sick. Not because there's anything wrong with our food but because our eating habits are askew and we are over-dependent on coating our food with fat. We think nothing of adding more butter to our food and eating deep fried snacks, biryani, paranthas and so on, especially in the metropolitan cities where there's a culture of indulgence, easy availability of rich foods, even late at night thanks to food apps and an increasing capacity to pay for foods that we crave for. It's no surprise then that a recent survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on consumption patterns in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai shows that the average intake of added fat in all the seven metro cities pooled together was 32.6 grams per person each day, which is higher than the ICMR-recommended levels of 20 grams. Out of these seven cities, Delhi and Ahmedabad topped the list in the daily average consumption of fat. Overall, 18 per cent of the total intake of energy was obtained from visible fat and vegetarians consumed more fat at 40.7 grams per person daily than non-vegetarians at 30.2 grams. The survey also revealed that men consume more fat at 34.1 grams than women who consume 31.1 grams per day. These figures are worrying as the country's burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is escalating at an alarming rate.

While NCDs typically affect people above 55 in most developed nations, in India, they occur at least 10 years earlier. Not only are they eroding our human capital, an increasing healthcare burden is one of the major public health challenges the country is facing. And as Government spending on health is a dismal 1.2 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), this means that the burden of rising lifestyle diseases like cancer, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular complexities is increasingly being borne by individuals out of their pockets. Ludicrously, India is fighting the twin burden of undernutrition and overnutrition, which leaves the Government and healthcare professionals with the dilemma of solving both issues concurrently. Also, it is ironic that both Delhi and Ahmedabad top the list of unhealthy eaters, considering the fact that in Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been improving healthcare facilities and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who hails from Gujarat, has been an avid proponent of the Fit India Movement. Maybe, it's time Governments began looking at creating more awareness as part of their efforts to keep India healthy.

A Constitution not so fragile

Proud, natural-born citizens of the country must see through the dubious plans of selective propaganda on CAA and NPR



A SURYA PRAKASH

The agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Population Register (NPR) and related matters, triggered largely by fears that the Union Government will deprive millions of Muslims of their citizenship, is one of the most confusing agitations that this writer has witnessed over the past few decades. The CAA has nothing to do with the Indian citizens. It only seeks to provide citizenship to a limited number of people who have been persecuted in three Islamic Republics neighbouring India. The premise on which the agitation is being carried on is completely baseless and is indicative of the extent of mischief a bunch of malcontents can do when the electorate rejects their agenda.

Organisers of the agitation are calling people to the protest sites by spreading rumours that the CAA will enable the Government to snatch away their citizenship, when the fact is that the law has nothing to do with the people of this country. More importantly, anyone, who reads the Citizenship Act, 1955, (the entire Act and not just the 2019 amendment to it), will realise how water-tight the citizenship of a natural-born citizen (a person born on Indian soil) is under this Act and that in reality, no one has the power to take it away. Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, 1955, describes citizens of India "by birth." It says: "Every person born in India (a) on or after January 26, 1950, but before July 1, 1987; (b) on or after the July 1, 1987, but before the commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, and either of whose parents is a citizen of India at the time of his birth; (c) on or after the commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, where (i) both his parents are citizens of India; or (ii) one of whose parents is a citizen of India and the other is not an illegal migrant at the time of his birth, shall be a citizen of India by birth."

As can be seen, probably 99 per cent or more of the Indian citizens fall in this category called "citizens by birth" and they belong to all religions — Hindu, Muslim and Christian among others. Such people are also known as "natural born" citizens. They are distinct from naturalised citizens and indeed constitute the highest class of citizens (for example in the US, only a natural born citizen can be the President). These citizens (this writer included) do not "apply" for citizenship. They become citizens when they first breathe life. They do not make an oath, swearing allegiance to the Constitution of India because their every breath is deemed allegiance. Their loyalty is taken for granted. They can give up their Indian citizenship but no power can deprive them of their citizenship. Among such citizens, those who commit rape and murder, can be hanged for the



offence, if the law so provides, but their citizenship cannot be snatched away from them. The Act does not provide for it. They will take their citizenship to the gallows. Such is the quality of this citizenship.

The citizenship Act offers other categories of citizenship like citizenship by registration (Section 5) and naturalisation (Section 6). These are basically for foreigners who wish to settle in India and seek Indian citizenship or people of Indian origin living abroad who want to return to India and live as citizens in this country. There is another category — foreigners, who marry Indian citizens and settle down in the country. Sonia Gandhi, the president of the Congress, is an Italian expatriate who moved to India after her marriage to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1968.

Under Section 5(2), Indian citizenship can be granted to a person coming via the registration route. There is a similar provision under Section 6 (2) for expatriates who apply for Indian citizenship through "naturalisation." In both cases, citizenship is granted, subject to conditions and restrictions, and only after they make the oath of allegiance.

In the case of Sonia Gandhi, as per the law at that time, she could have applied for Indian citizenship five years after marriage but she did so only after 15 years on April 7,

EVERY MUSLIM CITIZEN, WHO IS SWAYED BY THE ANTI-CAA ARGUMENT, MUST ASK HIMSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO KNOW THE QUALITY OF CITIZENSHIP HE/SHE ENJOYS: DID HE/SHE EVER APPLY FOR CITIZENSHIP LIKE SONIA GANDHI? WAS HE/SHE EVER ASKED TO SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA, LIKE HER?

1983, and was granted citizenship on April 30, 1983. Despite being an Italian citizen in 1980, she illegally entered the electoral rolls that year and following a complaint, her name was deleted from the rolls. However, this is another story for another day. But one may ask, how is all this relevant?

These facts are pertinent because unlike natural-born citizens, Sonia Gandhi's citizenship is extremely vulnerable. Being a "naturalised" citizen, her citizenship is subject to several conditions and restrictions. Further, if she violates any of those conditions, her citizenship can be cancelled.

Section 10 of the citizenship Act lists out the situations in which a citizen by registration or naturalisation can be deprived of his/her citizenship. It says that if the registration or certificate of naturalisation was obtained by means of fraud, false representation or the concealment of any material fact; or that citizen has shown himself by act or speech to be disloyal or disaffected towards the Constitution of India as by law established; or that citizen has, during any war in which India may be engaged, unlawfully traded or communicated with an enemy; or that citizen has been ordinarily resident out of India for a continuous period of seven years, his/her citizenship can be cancelled.

Further, unlike citizens by birth, a naturalised citizen has to swear allegiance to the Constitution of India. It cannot be taken for granted. Every Muslim citizen, who is swayed by the anti-CAA argument, must ask himself/herself the following questions in order to know the quality of citizenship he/she enjoys: Did he/she ever "apply" for citizenship like Sonia Gandhi? Was he/she ever asked to swear allegiance to the Constitution of India, like her? So, this is the power and quality of the citizenship of 99 per cent of the citizens under the Citizenship Act, 1955, but the Congress, after its decimation in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll, wants the Muslims of India to believe that their citizenship is as fragile as that of its party president.

This is nothing but an attempt to spread falsehood and disaffection. It could even be seen as an attempt to overthrow a duly elected Government through guile and subterfuge. Proud natural-born citizens of India — Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Jews — must disengage themselves from this campaign which is dangerous for our democracy and for our constitutional well-being. (The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

Democracy in India gave rise to identity-based politics. From the lens of deepening democracy, this is a positive development because it leads to wider representation.



Former President —Pranab Mukherjee

There was a struggle in the beginning because very few commercial films were being made then. Today less commercial films are made but hatred has turned into love.



Filmmaker —Rohit Shetty

The US and India are the two largest democracies in the world and share many values. There is much to be gained from the friendship of Modi and Trump.



Indian-American politician —Nikki Haley

It (air purifier) helps neutralise the air but a bigger problem in Delhi is what to do with the far more toxic and harmful PM 2.0 molecules of Modi's second term.



Congress leader —Shashi Tharoor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Emulate Kerala

Sir — The Kerala Government must be lauded for its ambitious sanitation initiative as it plans to set up 12,000 pairs of public toilets on highways. The lack of public toilets on freeways causes inexplicable difficulties for people, especially women and children. Most often, travellers are clueless. There are either unmaintained public toilets on the way or people have to visit hotels and spend money on food simply because they have to use the toilet there.

The land of the Government, public sector undertakings (PSUs) and cooperative institutions will be utilised for this purpose. The Government has decided to instruct local self-Government institutions to identify land in their areas alongside the State and national highways.

The Government has further stated that those agencies willing to cooperate with the project would be made partners. There is also an idea to start small shops and snack parlours along with these complexes, which can, in turn, give employment as well as boost the economy. But the public will have to use them and

A versatile genius, really?

Supreme Court judge Arun Mishra was fulsome in his praise for the Prime Minister at the International Judicial Conference in New Delhi. His laudatory characterisation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "versatile genius who thinks globally and acts locally" flabbergasted watchers of Indian politics and judiciary. His encomium that Modi is an "internationally acclaimed visionary" left the citizens speechless in disbelief. Did the learned judge mean what he said? Did he know the meaning of what he said?

Usually, singing the paeans to a leader is left to his followers. The nature of his job has not deterred Justice Mishra from extolling the incumbent Prime Minister as a "versatile genius." He seems to have been smitten by "Modi worship syndrome." The moot question is whether a judge can lavish praise on a leader in an unbounded manner even if he is popular and has a huge cult following and risks being bracketed with sycophants. Modi bhakts abound in our country; they include television anchors, serving and ex-Army officers, yoga gurus and even Governors.

Now, a Supreme Court judge has joined the "Modi fans club." In glorifying the Prime Minister in such glowing terms, Justice Mishra has revealed his political and ideological leanings. But his praise does not alter the fact that Prime Minister Modi is a profound-



G David Milton Maruthancode

ly polarising figure with a chequered past and a promoter of the interests of privileged upper caste Hindus and corporate behemoths. In school, we learnt that Leonardo da Vinci was a versatile genius; he was a painter, a scientist, a mathematician, an engineer, an architect, a sculptor, a musician, a man of the theatre, a paleontologist, and a lot more, all rolled into one. Versatile geniuses hold a lofty place in our imagination. Modi does not.

maintain them properly. Other State Governments can follow Kerala's template.

M Pradyu Kannur

Ill-conceived decision

Sir — By ordering that bars would remain open till late in

some Haryana cities, the State Government is looking to increase its revenue from liquor sales. While increasing liquor contracts and the number of

vends will generate some employment and income for people associated with the sector, the increase in liquor consumption may also cause a spurt in crime. The sale of liquor at shopping malls will also add to the problem. This method of adding on to the State's revenue is against public welfare.

Yugal Kishore Sharma Faridabad

Stalemate continues

Sir — Rumours are rife that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi may once again take charge of the party. But more than once, the Congress scion has demonstrated that he is unsuited to lead the party. Leaders, too, are toeing the same line because they cannot be seen to be publicly writing him off. But Rahul does not seem to connect with the masses. If the Congress cannot really look beyond the family, why not persuade Priyanka Gandhi to step in? But who will bell the cat?

Srinivas Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Waiting for Godot, as usual

The military justice system is in jeopardy and is only surviving due to the efforts of the SC and serving members in the Armed Forces Tribunal



DEEPAK SINHA

It is no secret that what differentiates us from countries like Pakistan is our commitment to the rule of law. However bruised or battered our justice system may be, it still continues to be trusted and it delivers, albeit rather slowly. This, however, does not hold true for the health of the military justice system, which has been in serious jeopardy for the last three years or so. That it continues to survive on the respirator and provide justice is only because of the extraordinary efforts of the Supreme Court and serving members in the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT). This state of affairs can directly be attributed to the shenanigans of senior bureaucrats in the Defence Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office, who were caught out when they first attempted to subvert the independence and functioning of the AFT by way of enacting new rules through a Gazette Notification issued under the Finance Act, 2017. In this, they changed the selection criteria and procedures for the appointment of the chairperson and members, especially with regard to that of the administrative members. Whether this was done with the tacit approval of their political bosses, is moot.

Since the role of administrative members is to advise the judicial members on aspects of military law, ethos, customs and functioning, only military veterans meeting a specific criterion could be considered for appointment, as per the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007. However, the Finance Act, 2017 opened this up to "a person of ability, integrity and standing having special knowledge of and professional experience of not less than twenty years in, economics, business, commerce, law, finance, accountancy, industry, public affairs, administration or in any other matter useful to the Armed Forces Tribunal."

How anybody without the requisite expertise or domain knowledge could be useful in advising on matters military was not elucidated. However, it is not difficult to reach the conclusion that the intent was to provide further avenues for post-retirement sinecures for worthy members of our civilian bureaucracy. That apart, by attempting to tighten its hold on the selection process for the chairperson and members, the Government had unambiguously made clear that it expected those aspiring to be appointed to the AFT to follow its dictates. Obviously, if these amended rules were accepted, then the AFT would represent sheer tokenism of the worst kind as it would be a complete travesty of natural justice and go against the very concept of rule of law.

However, fortunately these reprehensible efforts were nullified when the Supreme Court initially stayed the matter and then subsequently struck it down on the grounds that "they were contrary to the parent Act and principles enshrined in the Constitution" (Rojer Mathews vs South Indian Bank Ltd and Others). The court further pointed serious anomalies in the rules and directed the Government to reframe them. In the ensuing stand-off between the apex court and the Government, serving personnel and veterans alike became victims of bureaucratic apathy and bloody-mindedness.

In a show of extreme vindictiveness and an utter lack of empathy for the military community, and with complete disregard of their actions on morale, the bureaucracy did what it does best, refused to move files, thereby ensuring vacant posts could not be filled. From a time when 17 Benches were functional (each Bench has one judicial and one administrative member) across the country, we are now down to two regular Benches in Delhi and one ad hoc roving Bench that moves from city to city in an attempt to try and provide some semblance of justice. The obvious implication is that the wait for justice just became even longer, with over 16,000 cases pending. If the stalemate continues, as it looks to, the situation will only get worse as administrative members complete their tenure around July, unless of course the apex court extends their terms, as it has done for the two judicial members.

That this Government has no intentions of changing course over the matter, despite all that has occurred, has been clearly brought by the issue of a new Gazette Notification in February under the Finance Act, 2017. The new rules notified therein are only marginally different with regard to selection criterion of the chairperson and judicial members but have made no attempt to change the previously-rejected selection criteria with regard to administrative members. Clearly this action on the part of the Government is not only completely brazen but also appears to be in contempt of the Supreme Court, if its directions were to be viewed in the spirit of the law. As to whether the court itself will view this matter seriously, only time will tell. However, one can be certain that there are bound to be a spate of writ petitions filed against this outrage. This implies we are back on the merry-go-round or maybe just as in Samuel Beckett's play of the same name we will continue "waiting for Godot." What a shame.

(The writer, a military veteran is a consultant with the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi and Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai)

WHILE TARGETTING US, THE BJP SHOULD SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING IN CENTRALLY-RULED NEW DELHI, WHERE TERRORISTS STORMED JNU AND BEAT UP STUDENTS.

—MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER
 UDDHAV THACKERAY

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE FREQUENCY OF ASSAULTS, IN WHICH SOME WOMEN EVEN LOST THEIR LIVES, IS SERIOUS AND CANNOT BE IGNORED.

—FORMER MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER
 DEVENDRA FADNAVIS

Reduce the income gap

The solution doesn't lie in more sops, fiscal incentives and so on. There is need for change in the way our industrialists do business and netas and babus conduct themselves



UTTAM GUPTA

Successive Governments have remained obsessed with accelerating economic growth without caring about how it impacts income distribution, forget any attempt to internalise this crucial aspect in development strategies. They believe that the fruits of growth will automatically percolate to the lowest strata of society. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This is evident from a piece of research, *Time to Care*, released by rights group Oxfam ahead of the 50th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) held in Davos (Switzerland) from January 21-24. According to the study, India's richest one per cent hold more than four-times the wealth held by the 953 million people who make up the bottom 70 per cent of the country's population. Further, the combined total wealth of 63 Indian billionaires is higher than the total Union Budget of the country for the fiscal year 2018-19.

At the global level, too, the report (for calculations, it draws upon latest data sources available, including the Credit Suisse Research Institute's *Global Wealth Databook, 2019* and *Forbes' 2019 Billionaires List*) brings out glaring inequalities in the distribution of wealth. The world's 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 per cent of the planet's population. The 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women in Africa. The report notes, "global inequality is shockingly entrenched even as the number of billionaires has doubled in the last decade".

The Governments world over are fully aware of these glaring inequalities as well as their consequences. For instance, the WEF's annual *Global Risks Report (GRR)* — which was thoroughly discussed during the brainstorming sessions at Davos — observes, "inequality underlies recent social unrest in almost every continent, although it may be sparked by different tipping points such as corruption, constitutional breaches or the rise in prices for basic goods and services". It also warned, "the downward pressure on the global economy from macroeconomic fragilities and financial inequality continued to intensify in 2019".

They also routinely pledge to address these inequalities and come out with lofty declarations at multilateral platforms, including those under the auspices of the United Nations to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, including by use of what the *GRR* terms as "deliberate inequality-busting policies". Yet, when it comes to action on ground zero, there is acute lack of political will on the part of Governments and other stakeholders; hence, the business as usual scenario and ever-increasing inequities.

Fundamentally, inequalities are intrinsic to the way businesses are planned and orchestrated. It all starts with the Government offering a policy environment in which investors are offered an opportunity to earn an attractive rate of return on investment. What that attractive rate should be is not normally defined (though in certain sectors like power, it guarantees a minimum return); so any level, howsoever high, can fall within the scope of "attractiveness." A vast majority of the businesses pursue the famous adage "profit maximisation" to the hilt. They distribute their expenses in such a manner that the least amount is given to the labour and the bulk of it comes back to the owner (or promoter) as "retained earnings." The owners/promoters also

“EVEN AS THE GOVERNMENT SHUFFLES POLICY CHOICES TO ATTUNE THEM FOR CREATING MORE JOBS AND INCREASE INCOME (BY PROMOTING LABOUR-INTENSIVE SECTORS SUCH AS TEXTILES, APPARELS, FOOD SERVICE, HOSPITALITY AND SO ON), UNLESS THE STAKEHOLDERS CHANGE THEIR MINDSET TOWARDS THE MAJORITY WHO ARE NOT SO PRIVILEGED, INEQUALITIES WILL CONTINUE TO HAUNT AND AS POINTED OUT IN THE GRR, EVEN GROWTH WILL REMAIN VULNERABLE TO THE DEEP DIVIDE BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR”



leave no stone unturned in ensuring that their tax liability is kept at a bare minimum (for this, they retain the best talent viz. chartered accountants and other financial wizards, paying them extraordinarily high salaries). Big businesses also enjoy pricing power. For instance, those operating in metals such as copper, zinc or in hydrocarbon viz. oil and gas enjoy natural monopoly. Leveraging this, they charge high prices, making windfall gains even as consumers suffer erosion in purchasing power. This also applies to banks who enjoy margins of three-four per cent (difference between the average interest earning and the average cost of funds) yielding mammoth profit. Furthermore, there are companies in the IT (information technology) and IT-enabled sector which use their intellectual prowess to post huge profits year-after-year.

Then, there are enterprises in the chemical, petrochemicals and agro-chemicals sectors who have hugely benefitted from a protective policy environment, with high tariff on imports as well as licensing and registration requirements. These companies make money at the expense of millions of consumers, including farmers (for instance, they have to pay a high price for "new" crop protection solutions for which domestic substitutes are not available).

The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) may not be so well positioned vis-a-vis large enterprises but ape the latter when it comes to distributing the proceeds of wealth generation. Their owners spend the least on payment to workers thereby boosting their retained earnings. They, too, get tax bonanza from the Government in a variety of ways (for instance, special package under composition scheme of Goods and Services Tax as well as income tax). They may not find a place in the billionaires' club but definitely earn the multi-millionaire tag.

Then, there is the trader class, particularly entities dealing in farm com-

modities. They buy products from farmers at a throwaway price — the minimum support price (MSP) notified by the Government remains mostly on paper as its agencies don't have the wherewithal to procure their produce — and sell to the consumer at a high price. Irrespective of whether there is surplus or deficit, Indian markets are so orchestrated that only traders emerge as the real beneficiaries at the expense of farmers at one end and consumers at the other.

There is yet another class of rich who are an offshoot of corruption in governance systems. This includes corrupt bureaucrats, politicians (besides dubious businessmen) who amass wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income by siphoning off funds from welfare schemes and diversion of funds borrowed from public sector banks to personal accounts or shell companies of which they are the ultimate beneficiaries.

How does the Government address income inequalities? Typically, this takes the form of giving relief to the poor by providing State assistance in cash or kind. For instance, under the PM-KISAN, the Government gives ₹6,000 per annum to each of the 145 million farmers in the country in three installments of ₹2,000 each. As for help in kind, it provides Mid-Day Meals to schoolchildren or free medical services to Economically Weaker Sections in hospitals.

There are umpteen instances of such assistance — both by the Centre and States — entailing a mountain of burden on the public exchequer. All of this goes only to help millions barely survive even as a good slice of this is siphoned off (the malice continues in substantial measure despite the Government's efforts to prevent it, using the direct benefit transfer mechanism). However, it does nothing to augment their productive capacity and prepare them for getting jobs. Even where funds are given for empowering

and increasing the income earning capacity (for instance, availability of credit at concessional rate of interest to farmers and others engaged in petty occupations, supply of agricultural inputs such as fertilisers at subsidised rate, free electricity to farmers and so on), much of the promised help either does not reach or is cornered mostly by better-off farmers. Even those who gain from these support measures are at the receiving end when it comes to interface with traders for selling their produce.

Quite clearly, despite mammoth sums spent on welfare of the poor or "empowering" them, income inequalities increase even during periods of rapid economic growth. Even when, growth decelerates (for instance, during the current year when it declined to an 11-year-low of five per cent), then also the inequalities persist as the poor lose much more than the loss experienced by the rich.

The solution doesn't lie in more sops, concessional credit, fiscal incentives and so on. There is need for a fundamental change in the way our industrialists do business and politicians and bureaucrats conduct themselves. While, the former need to shed their overzealousness for profits, charge less from consumers, distribute more to workers and pay more taxes, the latter must ensure that every rupee is spent for the welfare and empowerment of the poor.

Even as the Government shuffles policy choices to attune them for creating more jobs and increase income (by promoting labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparels, food service, hospitality and so on), unless the stakeholders change their mindset towards the majority who are not so privileged, inequalities will continue to haunt and as pointed out in the *GRR*, even growth will remain vulnerable to the deep divide between the rich and the poor.

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

Keep the momentum going to eliminate malaria

The challenges for the mammoth task — private sector partnership, increased domestic funding, surveillance mechanism, impact on the vulnerable population — need to be addressed. Till then there's no room for complacency



SANTANU MISHRA

Malaria, is known as the "disease of poverty" as it often hits those who have the least access to healthcare. Statistics show that 80 per cent of cases occur among 20 per cent of the country's population, mostly communities living in remote areas. For India, malaria has been a tricky foe with varying outcomes over the decades. It has achieved great strides in curbing the disease every time the Government has increased intensification and on the ground implementation of eradication programmes. The reverse is also true. Malaria was nearly eliminated in

the early 1960s but it soon re-emerged as a major public health problem. Early setbacks in its eradication coincided with DDT shortages and in the late '60s malaria cases in urban areas started to multiply. In the '70s its resurgence was a result of technical, financial and operational problems. As a result, in 1976, a whopping 6.45 million cases were recorded which led to the discontinuation of eradication efforts. In order to control the massive upsurge, the Modified Plan of Operation was launched in 1977 which brought the situation under control for five-six years. Malaria cases fell to 2.18 million in 1984 and climbed back to three million in 1995, with substantial mortality reported. However, since 2000, India has reduced the number of cases by more than half and the number of deaths by more than two-thirds. In the WHO's *World Malaria Report 2019*, India was lauded for strengthening its fight against the disease. These concerted efforts need to be sustained, reinvented and amplified if we are

going to end malaria by 2030.

Challenges ahead: In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared the country's commitment to eliminating the disease by 2030. Soon after, in 2016, India introduced its National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination and took several measures to end the malady. But the biggest challenge remains as India's true burden of malaria is unknown. To understand and map malaria cases and fatalities, India solely relies on data from Government hospitals. This highlights a big gap in the realities of its malaria burden when approximately 70 per cent of urban and 63 per cent of rural households use the private sector to seek medical care. In some States malaria has been declared a notifiable disease, this means that private sector establishments have to adhere to Government guidelines, WHO's recommended anti-malarial drugs and report cases to the authorities. However, it is yet to be declared a notifiable disease for many States, which amplifies the gap in mapping the over-

all malaria burden. Several concrete steps are needed to win this fight.

Disease mapping: We must take along the private sector to ensure a collaborative surveillance method to obtain malaria's exact burden. For this we need to foster a healthy partnership between the private and public sector for mapping the disease in a holistic manner. If such a mechanism for gathering data is implemented and the true burden is identified, then India will be well-placed to end the disease.

Effective partnerships: Collaboration between various stakeholders is the key to success. To cite an example, an NGO, Malaria No More, launched a Malaria Action Coalition (MAC) in September 2019. The MAC acts as a multi-sectoral coordination platform, chaired by the malaria State of Odisha, with representation from non-Government technical, research and implementation agencies as well as the private sector, donors, investors and media partners to support the National Vector Borne Disease Control

Programme.

Creating awareness: Creating awareness has been one of the major catalysts to reduce, if not completely eliminate, a disease. Advocacy, awareness and on-ground programmes go hand in hand and the public and private sector have an equal role in it. To reduce the burden of malaria it is important to empower communities by educating them. An individual has to first learn to recognise and then prevent the disease. To further this effort, it is important that the individual spread information on malaria in his/her area. This empowerment will only come with education and self-awareness.

Government's commitments: Modi and the Health Minister have echoed India's seriousness to end malaria by 2030 on national and international platforms, including during last year's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, when 52 leaders committed to halve malaria by 2023. With more Government

funding still needed, the Central Government nearly trebled the outlay for the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) over the last two years.

Ensuring adequate investment in malaria is imperative to achieving India's elimination goals. Implementing the Five Year Plan for malaria elimination shall require ₹10,653.16 crore. While the Government has increased its funding for the NVBDCP, the Central Government-allocated funds for it get divided for disease control programmes/interventions for six diseases, malaria, dengue, chikungunya, kala-azar, lymphatic filariasis and Japanese encephalitis, creating a paucity of resources. This makes private sector contributions extremely critical to bolster the Government's efforts but there is a lack of funding from it. However, sustained focus and increased funding are crucial to boost the fight against malaria. Its elimination in India is important from a glob-

al and regional perspective because the country has the highest malaria burden outside sub-Saharan Africa. Some 1.26 billion Indians are at risk of malaria and the country shares its borders with several nations aiming for malaria elimination, including Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Sri Lanka, which eliminated malaria in 2016, is separated by only a small stretch of sea, with frequent air travel occurring between the two neighbours. India also shares borders with Myanmar where a drug-resistant malaria parasite has been reported. Successful malaria control in India will enhance elimination efforts across the region and the world.

The challenges for the mammoth task — private sector partnership, increased domestic funding, surveillance mechanism, impact on the vulnerable population — need to be addressed. Till then there's no room for complacency.

(The writer is Co-Founder, Smile Foundation)

CAPSULE



GMR Infra shares soar 12% on stake sale in airport biz
NEW DELHI: Shares of GMR Infrastructure on Monday surged over 12 per cent after the CCI gave approval for the GMR group's proposed 49 per cent stake sale in its airport business to France's Groupe ADP. The stock hit a high of Rs 26.55, up 12.5 per cent, on the BSE. Later, it shed some gains to trade higher by 10.81 per cent at Rs 26.15. On the NSE, the scrip was trading at Rs 26.30, up 11.21 per cent. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Friday gave approval for GMR group's proposed 49 per cent stake sale in its airport business to France's Groupe ADP. The regulator's clearance is through the green channel, which allows for an automatic system for speedy approval of combinations, subject to certain conditions.



Microsoft, SBI join hands to train differently-abled
MUMBAI: Global tech major Microsoft on Monday announced a partnership with SBI to train differently-abled people find jobs in the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector. Over 500 differently-abled youths will be upskilled in the first year of the collaboration. "It is an ideal partnership. This is a new beginning in training and finding people with any kind of disability but employable. Our experience with them has been fantastic," SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar told reporters here. Microsoft's president of global sales, marketing and operations Jean-Philippe Courtois said there are 26 million differently-abled people in India and it is essential to use newer ways to use technology to enable them participate in the 21st century economy.

AGR ISSUE
Nobody wants to kill telecom sector, says SBI chief

MUMBAI: With the telecom firms staring at a massive Rs 1.47 lakh crore of AGR dues, SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar on Monday said "nobody wants to kill the sector". The state-owned bank is yet to hear from the government on the issue, he said, when asked if it has sought views from bankers. "Nobody wants to kill the sector, let me be very clear," Kumar said, when asked about the problems being faced by the telecom industry. It can be noted that earlier this month, Kumar had said that State Bank of India has a loan outstanding of Rs 29,000 crore to the telecom sector and another Rs 14,000 crore in bank guarantees, which can get invoked in case of a non-payment of dues by the telcos.



GAIL to invest Rs 1.05 lakh-cr on gas-based economy infra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

GAIL India Ltd, the country's largest gas utility, will invest Rs 1.05 lakh crore over the next five years to expand pipelines, lay city gas distribution network and raise petrochemical production capacity, its new chairman and managing director Manoj Jain said on Monday.

Gas pipelines are planned to take the fuel to the east and northeast regions as well as to consumers in the south as part of the government push to raise the share of natural gas in India's energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6.2 per cent, he said. "We have planned a capex of Rs 45,000 to Rs 50,000 crore in laying pipelines, Rs 10,000 crore petrochemical capacity expansion and another Rs 40,000 crore for city gas distribution (CGD) business," he told reporters here. GAIL's push for infrastructure creation is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of creating a gas-based economy that is less reliant on polluting fuels for meeting its energy needs.

India currently consumes some 160 million standard cubic meters of gas per day and the consumption has to rise to 600



mmcmd to reach 15 per cent share in the energy mix, and GAIL is laying the infrastructure to help achieve that.

At present, GAIL operates 12,160-km of pipeline network and markets two-thirds of all-natural gas sold in the country. It will add about 7,000 km of pipeline length in the next five years, Jain said.

The company is scaling up on liquefied natural gas (LNG) import capacity. Besides owning a part of Petronet LNG Ltd, India's biggest liquid gas importer, it also owns and operates a 5-million tonnes LNG import facility at Dabhol in Maharashtra.

"We have awarded the contract for construction of a break-water at Dabhol L&T and this should get completed in two-and-half-years. The completion will help operate the Dabhol terminal at its full capacity of 5 million tonnes per annum," he said.

Currently, operations are restricted during monsoon months as high tide could damage ships carrying gas in its liquid form.

Also, the company has booked capacity at Adani Group's upcoming terminal at Dhamra in Odisha, Jain noted.

Domestic gas production meets just half of the country's demand and the rest has to be



imported. Pipeline projects at hand include the ambitious Urja Ganga Project to take gas to Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand as well as Kochi-Kootanad-Bangalore-Mangalore line; and Indradhanush North East Gas Grid.

Besides pipelines, GAIL is also expanding city gas distribution (CGD) networks for retailing of CNG to automobiles and piped natural gas to household kitchens, he said, adding investments are also planned for the expansion of Pata petrochemical plant in Uttar Pradesh as well as converting a LPG recovery unit at Usar in Maharashtra into 5,00,000 tonnes Polypropylene plant.

GAIL is looking to put up 400 CNG stations and give out a record 10 lakh piped natural gas (PNG) connections to household kitchens in the next 3-5 years. The company is building a 2,655-km gas pipeline from Jagdishpur in Uttar Pradesh to Haldia in West Bengal, Bokaro in Jharkhand and Dhamra in Odisha. Jagdishpur-Haldia & Bokaro-Dhamra Natural Gas Pipeline (JHBDPL) project, also known as the 'Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga' project, was inaugurated by the Prime Minister in July 2015.

Sensex tanks 807 pts as coronavirus alarm spreads

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian equity benchmark Sensex on Monday plunged about 807 points in line with massive sell-offs in global equities as spike in new coronavirus cases beyond China spooked investors.

The 30-share BSE gauge settled at 40,363.23, dropping 806.89 points or 1.96 per cent. While, the broader NSE Nifty sank 251.45 points or 2.08 per cent to 11,829.40.

All Sensex components ended in the red, with Tata Steel cracking 6.39 per cent, followed by ONGC, Maruti, Titan, ICICI Bank, HDFC and Bharti Airtel.

In a worrying sign for the global economy, the deadly coronavirus is fast spreading beyond China. South Korea went on high alert on Sunday following a sharp jump in coronavirus cases, and Italy and Iran took their own drastic containment steps.

Further, the IMF also warned that the deadly epidemic could put an already fragile global economy recovery at risk. Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday said the coronavirus epidemic is the country's "largest public health emergency". The death toll from the deadly virus climbed to 2,592 in China on Monday.



VIRUS: EUROPEAN STOCKS FALL SHARPLY

LONDON: European stock markets sank at the start of trade on Monday, with the heaviest falls in Italy as alarm spread over the growing coronavirus outbreak, dealers said. In Italy, which on Monday confirmed its fourth fatality from the COVID-19 epidemic, Milan's FTSE MIB benchmark shares index tumbled 4.2 per cent to 23,740.11 points. London's FTSE 100 index sank 2.2 per cent to 7,239.47. Frankfurt's DAX 30 slumped 2.9 per cent to 13,187.62 and the Paris CAC 40 shed 2.9 per cent to 5,854.11 compared with Friday's closing levels.

Seoul stocks ended in deep red after South Korea reported 161 more coronavirus cases on Monday, taking the overall virus cases to 763 and making it the world's largest total outside China.

Bourses in Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong also closed with significant losses.

Stock exchanges in Europe sank in opening trade with Milan's FTSE MIB plunging over 4 per cent after Italy

reported its fourth death from the virus as the number of people contracting the virus continued to mount. Brent crude oil futures dropped 3.62 per cent to USD 55.84 per barrel.

On the domestic front, investors were eyeing US President Donald Trump's two-day visit to India for further cues on trade front. He reached Ahmedabad earlier in the day.

Indian CEOs need to build inclusive tech capabilities: Nadella

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella on Monday urged Indian business leaders to build technology capabilities that are inclusive in nature. Beginning his three-day visit to India, Nadella was addressing Microsoft's Future Decoded CEO Summit here.

"Indian CEOs need to build own tech capability and ensure that the solutions are inclusive," he said. Stating that the last decade saw emergence of the aggregators, he asserted that aggregators are not enough alone. "We need to ensure that digital interventions lead to broadening of productivity."

Nadella stated that 72 per cent of jobs for software engineers in India are outside of

the technology industry. Speaking at the same event, Rajesh Gopinathan, chief executive and managing director of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) said the company prefers to train internal talent for the changing technologies and ensure that good quality talent is retained, rather than searching for it externally.

He said the millennials possess phenomenal knowledge and are quick learners as well, but need to be trained on the same. The era of multi-year projects in IT is over; and three years ago, TCS took a bet to completely adopt Agile technologies by 2020, he said.

Indian CEOs need to build own tech capability and ensure that the solutions are inclusive

— SATYA NADELLA, Microsoft chief executive



Pradhan urges Japanese to invest in Indian steel market

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday urged Japanese investors to invest in India's steel sector, saying the country offers a fast-growing market and steel consumption will more than double in the coming years. Pradhan also assured investors that India will provide necessary support to facilitate them in setting up businesses. He was speaking at a "Workshop on Enabling Procedures for Increase of Steel Usage for the Growth of Economy" event organised by jointly ministry of steel, industry body CII and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan.

"We are here to discuss topics such as increase of steel usage in India, market in India, economic growth... we (India) aim to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25. India would spend about Rs 100 lakh crore on infrastructure. All this will result in increased use of steel," he said while addressing the participants.



We are here to discuss topics such as increase of steel usage in India, market in India, economic growth... we (India) aim to become a \$5 tn economy by 2024-25. India would spend about Rs 100 L cr on infrastructure. All this will result in increased use of steel

— DHARMENDRA PRADHAN, Union Steel Minister

Indian steel sector is a fast-growing steel market, he said adding that besides setting up 300 steel making capacity by 2030, the country is also aiming to increase its per capita steel consumption to 160 kg from about 70 kg at present.

By 2022, he said, government's ambitious housing scheme Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana will be completed. Steel in huge quantity will be required to build the houses under the scheme.

"We (India) also aim to set up new gas pipeline of 14,000-km in next 3 years. Our aim is to provide piped water to every household. So there are

lot of areas where steel finds application," he said.

Railways, highways, roadways and bridges are another key focus area of the government where steel will be required in huge quantity, Pradhan said.

"All these areas will require different grades of steel and Japan which is a master in technology can explore business opportunities in our steel sector," he said while assuring them full government support in setting up businesses in India.

Clean air programme must cover more: IMA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing grave concerns over the worsening air quality, the IMA has written to Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar, seeking inclusion of all non-attainment cities in the National Clean Air Programme and an increase in the number of monitoring stations across the country.

Non-attainment cities do not meet national ambient air quality standards and the government launched the NCAP, a time-bound national strategy to tackle increasing air pollution, in January 2019.

To Javadekar, the Indian Medical Association said clean air is the "principal prerequisite to sustain healthy lives of people" as air pollution has become the fifth largest cause for premature deaths globally.

The doctors' body said studies show the number of premature deaths due to air pollution in India is "only a fraction less" than that of deaths due to smoking.

"Polluted air from being just an environmental issue



has become a massive health and economic crisis," it said in the letter.

It said the situation is equally alarming in Delhi as the month-wise PM10 analysis of data from Delhi Pollution Control Committee (Jan to Dec 2018), indicated PM10 values were 225 µg/m³ — much higher than the prescribed annual standard of 60 µg/m³.

"We acknowledge that the ministry has launched the National Clean Air Programme in January 2019. The NCAP offers tentative targets of 20-30 per cent reduction of air pollution levels by 2024," the IMA said.

TCS, DLF seek Centre's nod for SEZs in Haryana, UP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Software firm TCS and realty major DLF have sought government nod to set up special economic zones (SEZ) for IT sector in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

These proposals will be taken up by the Board of Approval, the highest decision-making body for SEZ, in its meeting on February 26 here. The inter-ministerial body is chaired by the commerce secretary.

TCS has proposed to set up an IT/ITES SEZ at Noida in Uttar Pradesh in an area of 19.9 hectares, according to the agenda paper of the board



meeting. The total proposed investment for the project is Rs 2,433.72 crore.

Development Commissioner of Noida SEZ has recommended the proposal for grant of formal approval for setting up the zone.

On the other hand, DLF has proposed to set up two SEZs in Haryana. The proposed investments for these projects are Rs

793.95 crore and Rs 761.54 crore.

The requests of these two companies have been placed before the Board of Approval for consideration, it said.

SEZs are major export hubs in the country as the government provides several incentives and single-window clearance system.

As on November 14, 2019, the government has approved 417 such zones in the country. Out of this, 238 zones are operational. Exports from these zones grew by about 14.5 per cent to Rs 3.82 lakh crore in April-September 2019-20. It was Rs 7.02 lakh crore in entire 2018-19 financial year.

Maruti Suzuki launches petrol version of Vitara Brezza

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest car-maker Maruti Suzuki India on Monday launched the petrol version of its popular compact SUV Vitara Brezza priced between Rs 7.34 lakh and Rs 11.4 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi).

The BS-VI petrol Vitara Brezza is powered by 1.5 litre K-series engine with 5-speed manual and automatic transmission options with smart hybrid, the company said in a statement.



India at cusp of becoming premier digital society: Ambani

● To be among 3 top world economies: Billionaire

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With mobile networks better or at par with anywhere else in the world, India has an opportunity to become a 'premier digital society', billionaire Mukesh Ambani said on Monday as he saw the country becoming the third world's largest economy within the next decade.

Speaking at a fireside chat with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, he said the big change driving this transformation was the deepening of mobile net-

works which were working at a much faster pace than before.

"I can easily say that the mobile networks in India now are better or at par with anywhere else in the world," he said. "The opportunity that we have for India, really, is the opportunity to become the premier digital society in the world."

India, he said, has all the components in place to "grow and march forward".

"I have no doubt in my mind that we will become among the

top three economies in the world," he said. "We can argue about whether it will happen in 5 years or 10 years but it's going to happen, and we will be in the top three economies in the world." When that happens, he wondered: "Will we be the most technologically enabled society? Will we be having all our development enabled by all the tools of technology? Can we really be a pacesetter in terms of using all technology?"



Abbott launches quadrivalent vaccine for influenza in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global healthcare major Abbott on Monday said it has launched a new inactivated quadrivalent vaccine for influenza offering protection against four virus strains in India.

It is the only 0.5 ml quadrivalent flu vaccine in India that has been approved for use in children below three years, Abbott said in a statement.

"We are excited with the launch of the quadrivalent version of our flu vaccine, which

can be offered to both children above six months and adults. This particular type of vaccine provides good immune response with less side-effects,"

Abbott India Medical Director Srirupa Das said. This is yet another significant step in Abbott's endeavour to protect as many people as possible against the flu, she added. Influenza is a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by viruses.

In India, Abbott was established in 1910, and currently has over 12,000 employees in the country.



Otis to supply elevators to Bengaluru Metro project

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Otis Elevator Co. announces today, it has been selected to provide 112 Gen2[®] elevators for the second phase of the Bengaluru Metro project conducted by Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL). Otis — a unit of United Technologies Corp. (NYSE: UTX) — will supply the units from its local manufacturing facility in Bengaluru. The Bengaluru Metro project, also known as the Namma Metro project, is expected to be India's third longest metro network once complete. In 2018, its riding network boasted a recorded



annual ridership of 131.7 million. "We're excited to be chosen for this project and to be part of India's infrastructure

growth story," said Sebi Joseph, president, Otis India. "This project reflects our deep commitment to the 'Make in India' initiative. Further, our units will help keep the people of India moving and will support the country's efforts to drive local indigenous manufacturing by using our state-of-the-art Bengaluru facility."

Otis manufacturing facility has received several industry-renowned certifications and awards in both quality and sustainability. The facility — which is Gold rated by the Indian Green Building Council — produces a bulk of India's Gen2 elevators, reducing overall energy consumption rates up to 75 percent, and answering India's call for increased sustainability. The metro project's second phase is expected to be completed by 2023. It will cover 27 stations connecting the city's manufacturing and tech hubs of Electronics City and Whitefield. It is overseen by BMRCL, which serves as a special purpose entity between the Government of India and the Government of Karnataka.

Otis has been moving people and goods in India since it installed its first elevator in the country in 1892. Since then, Otis has played an integral role in enabling urbanization in the

area that experts widely agree to be the world's second largest elevator market.

About Otis

Otis is the world's leading manufacturer and maintainer of people-moving products, including elevators, escalators and moving walkways. Founded more than 165 years ago by the inventor of the safety elevator, Otis offers products and services through its companies in approximately 200 countries and territories. For more information, visit www.otis.com or follow Otis on LinkedIn, YouTube and as @OtisElevatorCo on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

EDUCATING ABOUT THE ENEMIES OF NATURE

Sriram who comes from an agricultural family in Kakinada understands the importance of nature and how human activities affect global weather conditions. "It was in 2012 when I first noticed widespread felling of trees for expanding roads in Hyderabad and felt very bad about it. If we fall ill, our parents take care of us. But if

nature gets affected who will take care of her? I love nature and since my childhood I have vowed to take care of it. My NGO, Earthlings, which I started in 2016 in Hyderabad is the result of that wish," said A Sriram, who started work in the field of conserving nature even before he started his NGO.

"I and my team have visited many areas in the city and cleaned up the streets there. After cleaning up the lanes, we gather the residents of the area and speak to them about the importance of nature and saving our natural resources," Sriram told *The Pioneer*.

Sriram added that, "During our visits, we found that some areas have water problems and some areas have a sanitation issue. Depending on the area we work towards fixing that particular problem that plagues the residents. We raise awareness among the residents on how to conserve water and how to dispose their garbage safely."

On Sundays, Sriram and his team visit the various marathons that are held in different times of the year. Their exercise is to pick up after the runners to make sure that the roads are kept clean.

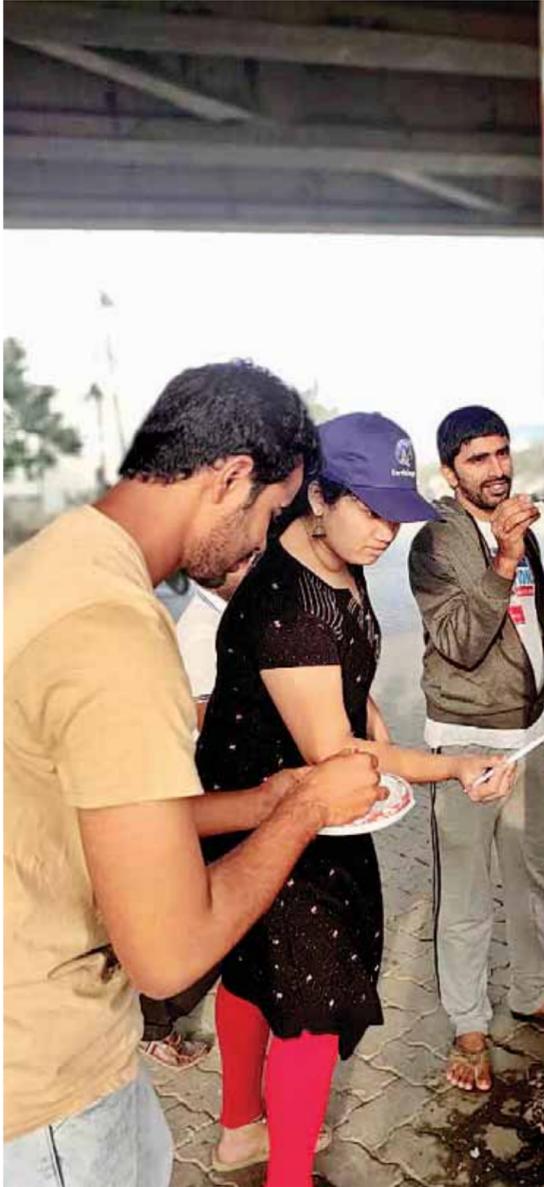
"There is a lot of plastic that is generated due to marathons. So we not only collect the waste later, but also act as partners promot-

ing ecological sustainability for many of the marathons. After collection of the waste, we segregate the plastic and the non-plastic waste and send it to government authorised recyclers. We have also tied up with the GHMC and are working on reducing the usage of plastic by individuals and organisations," he said.

Earthlings conducted various awareness activities in the city about the dangers of single use plastic covers and requested people to use cloth bags for purchases.

He says, "We also started distributing saplings in the city. This year, we feel that we might face severe water scarcity compared to last year due to higher temperatures. To tackle this, we are going to approach apartment complexes and communities to explain to them on how to use water carefully."

Apart from all these activities, the organisation also works on providing steel water bottles to government school students in the city. Sriram explained, "Most of the government schools have no proper water facilities. Some students carry their own plastic bottles to school but those bottles can cause health issues in the long run. So we are going to distribute more than 1,000 steel bottles to government school students at Langer House and Madhapur."



Hyderabad's Sriram and his organisation are working hard to save nature by spreading awareness about the factors that adversely affect the environment, writes V SATEESH REDDY



During our visits, we found that some areas have water problems and some areas have a sanitation issue. Depending on the area we work towards fixing that particular problem that plagues the residents. We raise awareness among the residents on how to conserve water and how to dispose their garbage safely

A SRIRAM SOCIAL WORKER



Affordable physiotherapy for everyone

Amrit Varsha Kapadia Centre for Physiotherapy and Yoga, which is going to start operations from February 26, claims to offer affordable physiotherapy services. The centre is a part of Sankruti Shikhar, a charitable trust. Dr Kumud Dharia, one of the founder trustees of the NGO said that physiotherapy is the need of the hour. "But, these services are not affordable by most of the lower and the middle strata of society. Keeping this in view, Sankruti Shikhar started Amrit Varsha Kapadia Centre at Prakashnagar in Begumpet," he said.

According to the doctor, the centre has state-of-the-art equipment for physiotherapy and expert physiotherapists and their guidance.

Physiotherapy isn't a treatment reserved for the elite few or for athletes alone, or even for those recovering from an injury. In fact, it can be used to improve health in many surprising ways, Dr Kumud Dharia said. — PNS

THE CENTRE HAS STATE-OF-THE-ART EQUIPMENT AND EXPERT PHYSIOTHERAPISTS



Breathing life into 2-D art

A three-dimensional art not only brings to life an expression, and extends itself to a more physical form, but also exerts the artist to create the remainder of the image; a fresh imagination in continuum. What happens when artists convert their 2-D artwork on canvas into bronze sculptures?

'Bronzed - From Paint to Patina' is a project inspired by four artists whose imagery has managed to capture the popular imagination.

Jogen Chowdhury, Ram Kumar, Krishen Khanna and Thota Vaikuntam have created a visual association with their viewers through the iconic images they have painted over time in their distinctive style.

For this project, the artists collaborated with skilled artisans to give new form to their artwork. Now it's not only the 'front' of the figure that you can see but also the previously 'invisible' sides. This provided the artists an exciting opportunity to look at their paintings afresh and constantly visit aspects they had not attended to previously.

Ram Kumar, who is known as an abstract artist, painted his figurative work in the 1950s and was immensely excited with the idea of revisiting the subject in a different dimension and seeing his work "The Vagabond" come to life six decades after it was first painted. The process began with the selection of indi-

vidual figures from their previously created paintings and drawings, which became the starting point of the project as the initial point of reference.

Hereafter, wax or clay models were shaped, upon which the artists provided their inputs on revisions and further changes that were to be made into moulds. This project was fulfilled in collaboration with Bronze Age London, a leading sculpture casting foundry in the UK, resulting in the production

of the most premium quality bronzes.

Jogen's pieces especially proved to be a challenge due to the visual cross-hatching effect being an integral part of his artwork, which is difficult to recreate in a bronze sculpture. He took printed images from every angle of the clay model so he could draw over and make alterations wherever required.

Krishen, who has explored sculpture more extensively over the years,

enjoyed seeing his *bandwalas* come to life in bronze with the assistance of his drawings and subsequent patina suggestions.

The final task was ensuring that the patination of these bronzes was in line with the artists' overall colour palettes.

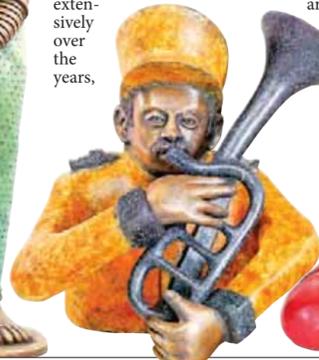
Since patina is not like paint it has its limitations with regard to the extent and tones of colours that can be used. Some of the artists specially painted

the desired patina output options with varied colour patterns, which was used as reference to ensure that the final pieces were as much in line with the artist's vision as technically possible.

Overall, this exercise turned into a symbiotic association between the artists, skilled craftsmen and Bronze Age London in creating these bronze sculptures.

Once the final model was created passing the rigorous vetting of the artist, the model was signed by the respective artist and sent to London to be cast in bronze. The lost wax process was used to create the highest quality bronze casting.

This project allowed the artists to extend themselves beyond the constraints of their most distinguished works and through a stroke of re-imagining, see their iconic figures come to life in these twenty-six bronze sculptures. — PNS



SONAM: Taapsee is quite a clutter breaker

Actress Sonam K. Ahuja has praised actress Taapsee Pannu said that she is quite a clutter breaker.

Sonam took to Twitter on Sunday and wrote: "I really like @taapsee she's quite a clutter breaker."

Thanking Sonam, an elated Taapsee replied: "Thank you so much

Sonam! So sweet of you. Big hug. It takes all of us to break the clutter we have been stuck in for years."

The *Neerja* actress's tweet comes before the release of Taapsee's upcoming film *Thappad*, which 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 inci-

dent triggers off a chain reaction that lead to self-realisation for her, leading to her walking out of the marriage.

Thappad also features Pavail Gulati, Kumud Mishra, Ratna Pathak Shah, Tanvi Azmi, Dia Mirza and Ram Kapoor, among others. The film, is slated to release on Friday.

— IANS



Chris Hemsworth to visit India in March

Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth is all set to visit India for the promotional tour of his upcoming action film *Extraction*.

He will visit Mumbai along with director Sam Hargrave, on March 16.

Extraction, which was initially titled *Dhaka*, also stars Indian actors Randeep Hooda and Pankaj Tripathi. Hemsworth shot for the Netflix film in India in 2018.

It revolves around Tyler Rake (Chris Hemsworth), a fearless, black market mercenary, who embarks on the most deadly extraction of his career when he's enlisted to rescue the kidnapped son of an imprisoned international crime lord.

The film is scheduled to release on April 24.

— IANS



Kristen Bell doesn't believe in soulmates

Actress Kristen Bell wouldn't have wed her husband Dax Shepard if they'd met five years earlier.

The *Frozen II* actress made the revelation when she appeared on the *Build Series* here when she opened up on the concept of soulmates, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

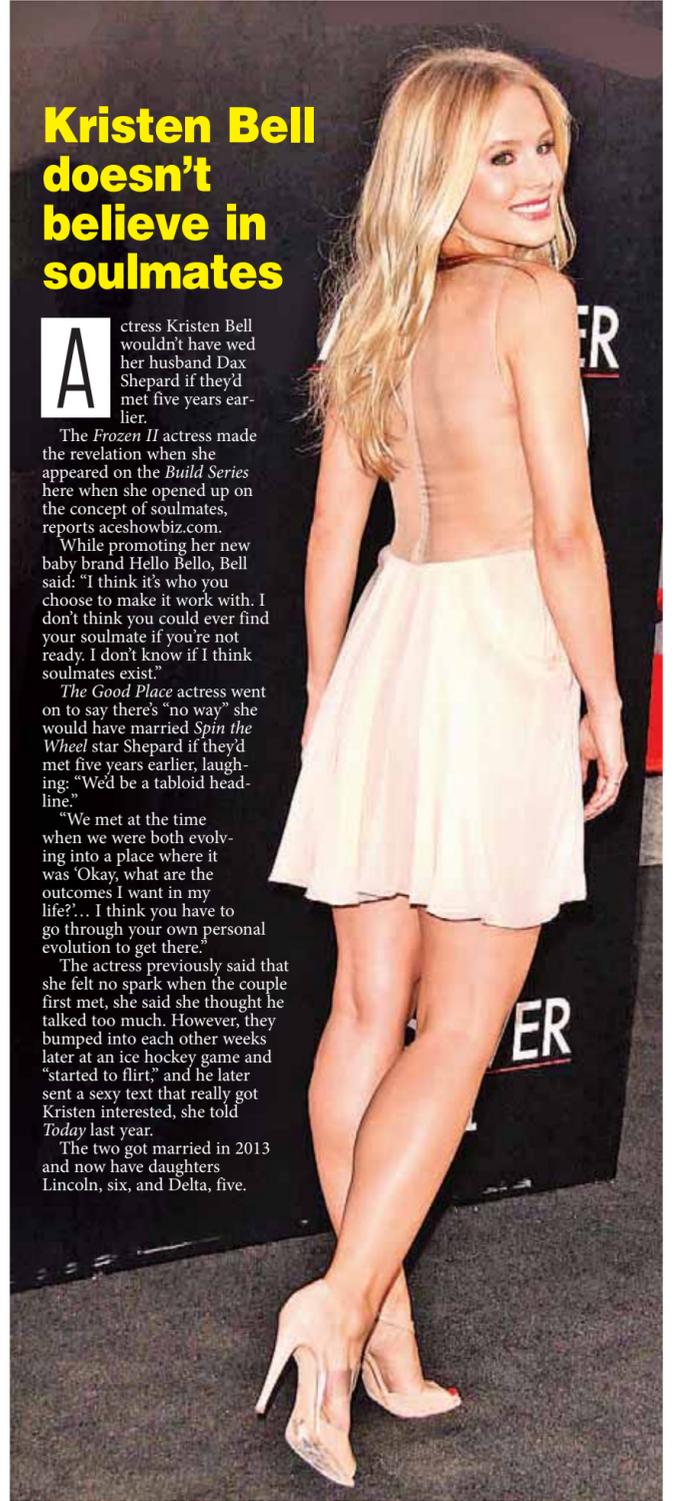
While promoting her new baby brand Hello Bello, Bell said: "I think it's who you choose to make it work with. I don't think you could ever find your soulmate if you're not ready. I don't know if I think soulmates exist."

The *Good Place* actress went on to say there's "no way" she would have married *Spin the Wheel* star Shepard if they'd met five years earlier, laughing: "We'd be a tabloid headline."

"We met at the time when we were both evolving into a place where it was 'Okay, what are the outcomes I want in my life?'... I think you have to go through your own personal evolution to get there."

The actress previously said that she felt no spark when the couple first met, she said she thought he talked too much. However, they bumped into each other weeks later at an ice hockey game and "started to flirt," and he later sent a sexy text that really got Kristen interested, she told *Today* last year.

The two got married in 2013 and now have daughters Lincoln, six, and Delta, five.



FUN

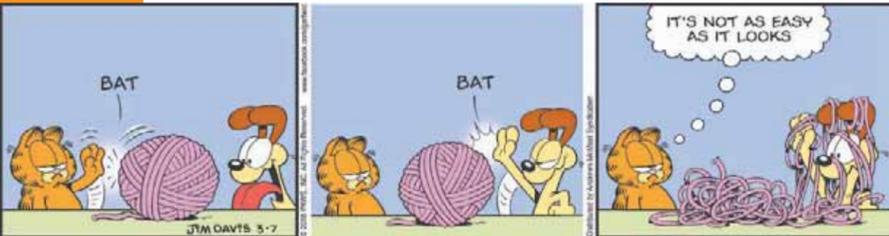
ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

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

Rules

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

- ACROSS**
- Sparkling precious stones
 - A machine for weaving
 - This vehicle has no wheels and is pulled over snow
 - Make a rough estimate
 - Clamber up
 - Prepare for a sports match
 - Where a cow stores its milk
 - A dry land with few plants
 - A long soft seat
 - A group of words which makes sense
- DOWN**
- Extremely pleased
 - Overhead
 - A bird makes this
 - Detected with the nose
 - False hair on the head
 - Bears do this in the winter
 - These spin webs
 - Die under water
 - Astound
 - A female sheep
- SOLUTION**
- | | | | | |
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| B | S | E | T | O |
| B | A | T | I | P |
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| O | R | C | H | A |
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LAKSHMI PARVATHI MAKES HER ACTING DEBUT

Lakshmi Parvathi, wife of late NTR and present YSRCP leader, is making her acting debut with a small film titled *Radhakrishna*. Filmmaker Sreenivass Redde is presenting the film while P Sagarika and K Srinivasu are producing it under the Harini Adarya Creations. Featuring Anurag and Muskan Sethi in lead roles, the film is a heart-touching

romantic drama set in the backdrop of the famous Nirmal art, which has a history of 400 years. Directed by Prasad Varma, the film has completed its shooting formalities and is right now in post-production. The likes of Ali, Krishna Bhagawan, Sampooranesh Babu and Chammak Chandra have played supporting roles in the film, an MM Srilekha musical.



Fallout between MEHREEN and Ira Creations

Recently there were reports that Mehreen Pirzada was forced to check out of an upscale hotel in Hyderabad after producers of *Aswathama* failed to clear her hotel bill. However, there's a different story that is emerging now. Production house Ira Creations roped the actress for Rs 65 lakh to be a part of the action-entertainer and except for holding back Rs 10 lakh, which they wanted to pay after she completes her promotional duties, the makers paid her full remuneration. Even though they had to foot Rs 1.37 lakh and Rs 1.40 lakh respectively as her laundry and food expenses in addition to travel expenses, the makers were unhappy when she failed to turn up for the film's major promotional events, infuriating them. "When they confronted her over it, she had excuses like skin infection and that she was not well. Upset over the makers seeking an explanation, she left the hotel without informing the hotel staff. It's another story that Ira immediately cleared the bills as they didn't want to tarnish their reputation," says a source.



With this piece of news snowballing into a controversy, Mehreen took to Twitter to present her version. Without going into details, she wrote, "Making movies on women empowerment but disrespecting them in real life doesn't make sense. I stand up when it comes to my dignity & self-esteem. I believe in mutual professionalism & respect to an individual's personal space. May God bless you all (sic)." Starring Naga Shourya in the lead, *Aswathama*, which released last month, has ended up as an average grosser.

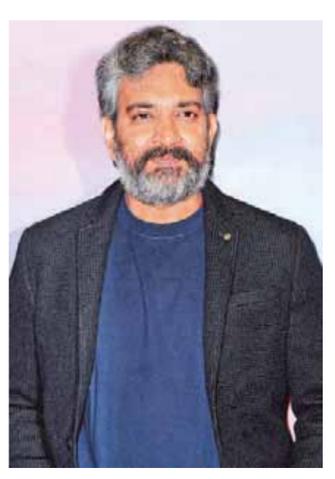
Hit is ready to hit theatres. Nani and Rajamouli talk about the future of the film and the director who helmed it

Rajamouli hopes HIT TURNS INTO A FRANCHISE

Filmmaker SS Rajamouli, who attended the pre-release event of Vishwak Sen-starrer *Hit*, produced by Nani and Prashanti Tipirneni, in Hyderabad on Sunday evening, said that he was impressed with the promotional materials of the film released so far. "The story idea looks good, so is the sneak peek. I remember watching a sneak peek of a Hollywood film, 2012. It was a clever ploy by the makers to raise curiosity around the film and it worked, as the film ended up as a big hit later. The movie *Hit* is now going to deal

with its first case and I hope it will be a hit at the box-office, spawning into a franchise," the director, who is close to Nani and Prashanti Tipirneni, said. Nani said that when the film's director Sailesh Kolanu narrated him three story ideas, he picked *Hit*. "Sailesh is a lecturer at an Australian university.

NANI SAID THAT WHEN THE FILM'S DIRECTOR SAILESH NARRATED HIM THREE STORY IDEAS, HE PICKED HIT



While encouraging him with his story ideas, I simultaneously advised him not to resign from his job given the uncertainty of the industry. I've watched the film on Sunday noon and I can proudly tell that he can resign from his lecturer post, and make films. The first thing I told him post the film was that 'he has arrived'. He has handled the film like an experienced director," the actor informed. He added that Vishwak can ace any role as he is versatile, while raving the work of composer Vivek Sagar, comparing him as the film's second hero after Vishwak. The likes of K Raghavendra Rao, MM Keeravani, Allari Naresh, Dil Raju, Anushka Shetty (in a rare appearance) and Nandini Reddy graced the event.

Nani's next with Rahul Sankrityan gets a title

As Nani turned a year older on Monday, production house Sithara Entertainments made their next project — after the acclaimed *Jersey* last year — with the actor official. Disclosing the film's title as *Shyam Singh Rai*, the makers have also unveiled a concept video of the film, which will be directed by *Taxiwaala* fame Rahul Sankrityan. Presently in pre-production,

the film will go to sets in June — immediately after Nani completes his on-sets film *Tuck Jagadish* with Shiva Nirvana. The film will be an intense love story but there's an extra layer to it, which will be the USP. Sankrityan is planning to show the actor in a complete new light. A major part of the film will be shot across Hyderabad. Names like Pooja Hegde and Sai Pallavi are bandied about for the female lead role.



Andhadhun remake to roll from June

In the news for the past four months, *Andhadhun* remake with Nithiin was launched in Hyderabad on Monday. The actor's home banner Sresth Movies is producing the film, a Merlapaka Gandhi directorial, while Tagore Madhu is the presenter. Bollywood cinematographer, who shot films like *Munna Micheal* and *Heropanti*, has been signed on as the director of photography. For the muhurat ceremony, Suryadevara Radha Krishna, chief of Haarika & Hassine

Creations, handed over the film's script to the makers. Producer Shyam Prasad Reddy sounded the clapboard for the first shot, as Dil Raju switched on the camera. Surrender Reddy directed the honorary first shot. Nithiin, who is basking in the glory of *Bheeshma*, will begin shooting for the film from June. He will mostly be completing *Rang De* with Venky Atluri and *Check* with Chandrasekhar Yeleti by then. The actor also has lyricist-turned-director Krishna Chaitanya's *Power Peta* lined up. As things stand now, it

looks like Chaitanya may have to wait a little longer. The Telugu remake is being planned for a release towards the year-end. Released in 2018, *Andhadhun* in Hindi, featuring Tabu, Ayushmann Khurrana, Radhika Apte and Anil Dhawan in key roles, was a murder drama at the center of which is a pianist who may or may not be blind. Directed by Sriram Raghavan, it was raved for its unconventional plot, edge-of-the-seat narrative style, as well as the acting of its lead and supporting characters.

Varun takes RRR's date

Although debutant director Kiran Korrapati planned to take his long-in-the-development boxing drama with Varun Tej to floors some 10 days ago, it has finally went to floors on Monday in Visakhapatnam. A source says it took time for Varun to achieve the desired look of a boxer and so, the delay. "Back to sets! Day 1 in vizag.. Need all your love, (sic)" Varun tweeted with a still of the film's cameras. He had trained with national-level boxer Neeraj

Goyat to attain the boxer's look for the film. The Vizag schedule will go on for a month nearly, post which the unit will film in Hyderabad for an outing of three weeks. National Capital region (New Delhi) will host the final schedule. Producers Sidhu Mudda and Allu Venkatesh have already locked a release date for the film as July 30. Yes, it's the same date that SS Rajamouli initially planned for his period drama *RRR*. As we've reported earlier, *Dabangg 3* girl Saice Manjrekar has been roped in to romance Varun Tej in the film, while Jagapathi Babu, Nadiya, Vennela Kishore and Satya will be seen in supporting roles.

PRODUCERS SIDHU MUDDA AND ALLU VENKATESH HAVE ALREADY LOCKED A RELEASE DATE FOR THE FILM AS JULY 30





FC Barcelona posts picture collage of Lionel Messi & Diego Maradona via Twitter

Messi 'greatest' ahead of Maradona: Gattuso

AFP ■ NAPLES

Napoli vs Barcelona
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Lionel Messi is the "greatest" footballer of all time, ahead of even Diego Maradona, Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso said on Monday ahead of his side's Champions League clash with Barcelona.

The 32-year-old Messi scored four goals at the weekend in Barcelona's 5-0 win over Eibar and has now been involved in more than 1,000 goals in his career, scoring 696 and assisting another 306.

Gattuso was quick to praise Messi, comparing the Barca star to Napoli legend Maradona.

"He's the greatest and an example for everyone," said Gattuso ahead of the sides' last-16 first leg today.

"He never says anything inappropriate. He does things that only exist on the Playstation, unthinkable things.

"But I saw him (Maradona) on VHS, or DVD. I never saw him up close, at a stadium.

"I know the champion he was and I know I missed something wonderful. I regret it. Today I see Messi doing things that Maradona was doing."

Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne was not so keen to accept that Messi has reached greater heights than 1986 World Cup winner Maradona.

"Messi is the best in the world today," said Insigne. "But for us Neapolitans, Maradona is

everything and I don't want to compare them. Maradona is sacred."

But Insigne and Gattuso agreed that their team have to be careful not to focus only on trying to stop Messi.

"We have to be careful with their whole team, because it's not just Messi," said Gattuso.

Napoli are enjoying a recent upturn in form after a dreadful start to the Serie A season which culminated in the sacking of Carlo Ancelotti following a 4-0 win over Genk that sent them into the Champions League knockout stage.

Last season's Serie A runners-up have won six of their last seven games. "Tomorrow (Tuesday), I want a Napoli side that are not afraid," added Gattuso.

"I want to see a team that knows how to battle... You need to stand up to Barcelona — you can't worry."

"I want to see a lively team that plays with joy until the end. Can Napoli win the Champions League? Never say never."

It is the first time Napoli have reached the knockout rounds since a last-16 loss to Real Madrid in 2017, while Barcelona are bidding to make the quarter-finals for a 13th consecutive season.

AFP ■ PARIS

Edinson Cavani scored his 200th Paris Saint-Germain goal and Marquinhos netted twice as the Ligue 1 leaders bounced back from their Champions League defeat by Borussia Dortmund to beat Bordeaux 4-3 on Sunday, but their victory was marred by Neymar's late sending-off.

After losing 2-1 in Germany in their Champions League last 16 first leg in midweek, PSG's defensive weaknesses were again exposed as South Korean international Hwang Ui-jo gave Bordeaux the lead at the Parc des Princes.

PSG turned it around thanks to goals by Cavani and Kylian Mbappe either side of a Marquinhos brace, but at the other end there was a bizarre goal credited to the Brazilian defender Pablo and a Ruben Pardo strike had the home side hanging on at the finish.

The evening concluded with Neymar being sent off in stoppage time for a second yellow card for grappling with Bordeaux's Yacine Adli, leaving the world's most expensive player facing a suspension.

Along with the shortcomings at the back, it is another problem for coach Thomas Tuchel to think about, even if his team are now 13 points clear atop Ligue 1 from Marseille, who lost 3-1 to Nantes on Saturday.

Tuchel's men endured a bad start against mid-table Bordeaux, with skipper Thiago Silva going off hurt just before Hwang put the away side in front on 18 minutes, heading in a corner for his sixth Ligue 1 goal.

PSG were level in the 25th minute, though, as Di Maria's cross was headed in by Cavani, allowing the Uruguayan to reach a double century of PSG goals.

He then hit the post from close range before Marquinhos put Paris in



PSG's Edinson Cavani, left, celebrates after his teammate Marquinhos scores against Bordeaux during League One match at Parc des Princes

200 & COUNTING

Cavani becomes first player to complete double century of goals for PSG

front in first-half stoppage time, using his shoulder to convert Di Maria's free-kick.

Nevertheless, there was still time for Bordeaux to equalise at 2-2 before the interval.

Selected ahead of Keylor Navas in goal, Sergio Rico's clearance from a Marco Verratti back-pass struck Pablo and the Spaniard looked on in horror as the ball ricocheted back into the net.

However, Marquinhos netted from close range for his second of the night in the 63rd minute to make it 3-2. Then, when Ruben Pardo lost possession, Cavani set up Mbappe to score PSG's fourth, and his 16th in the league this season.

Pardo made some amends with a stunning strike for Bordeaux's third, and the ninth goal Paris have conceded in three games altogether.

Icardi then had another goal dis-

allowed before Neymar was sent off for his second yellow at the death.

"They have had quite a difficult week in terms of results and their confidence has taken a knock too," said Bordeaux's Laurent Koscielny of PSG.

"When you lose points and games then your confidence can quickly disappear but they are great players and they are capable of overcoming that."

Felix back with bang

MADRID: Atletico Madrid followed up their surprise win over Liverpool by beating Villarreal in La Liga on Sunday as Joao Felix marked his return from injury with a first league goal since September.

Felix came off the bench at the Wanda Metropolitano after almost a month out with an ankle problem and the 20-year-old looked refreshed as he drove in Atletico's third in an impressive 3-1 victory.

Kieran Trippier was also back after recovering from a groin injury and he was involved in Atletico's second goal as Koke headed in.

Angel Correa had earlier cancelled out Paco Alcacer's strike for Villarreal.

Atletico's inconsistency this season means they are out of the title race, 12 points adrift of leaders Barcelona, who thrashed Eibar 5-0 on Saturday.

But momentum would be timely as Atleti bid to consolidate their place in the top four and capitalise on their 1-0 advantage against Liverpool in the Champions League last 16 next month.

Diego Simeone's side move up to third in La Liga, level on points with Sevilla, who earlier struck a superb 3-0 win away at fellow top-four rivals Getafe.

AFP

PTI ■ LONDON

India to host Commonwealth shooting, archery events

India will host the Commonwealth shooting and archery championships in January 2022 and the medals from the two events will be counted in the final tally of the Birmingham Games, an unprecedented move approved by the CGF.

However, the medals will be added one week after the conclusion of the multi-disciplinary sporting event in Birmingham, the

Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) announced on Monday.

The decision was made at the CGF's Executive Board meeting here from February 21 to 23.

It can be considered a big win for India since it had threatened to boycott the Birmingham edition of the Games for dropping shooting, an optional sport, from the

roster. Archery is also another optional sport.

A Commonwealth Archery and Shooting Championships is set to take place in India in 2022 after a proposal to stage the event was approved by the CGF Executive Board," the CGF said in a release.

The two events will be held in Chandigarh in January 2022 while the Birmingham

Commonwealth Games are scheduled from July 27 to August 7, 2022.

"The decision confirmed that Chandigarh 2022 and Birmingham 2022 will be two separately organised and funded Commonwealth Sport events. "One week following the Closing Ceremony of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, the CGF shall issue a medal table

that includes results from the Chandigarh 2022 Commonwealth Archery and Shooting Championships, as a further and final legitimate ranking of competing nations and territories from the respective competitions," the CGF added.

Rarely the sporting world has seen such an arrangement that the medals of championships held outside major

Games are counted in the final tally (of the main event).

National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) President Raninder Singh, who mooted the idea of the Commonwealth Shooting Championships, admitted that CGF's decision was a "unique and unprecedented development" as well as "truly a game changing methodology".

He was also candid in calling NRAI and IOA's proposal as "admittedly against the grain".

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