

ANALYSIS 7 MAKE NATURE'S VALUE VISIBLE

MONEY 8 WORLD SHARES SLUMP ON TRUMP'S VIRUS PLANS

SPORTS 11 INDIA EVES ENTER T20 WORLD CUP SEMI FINALS

VIJAYAWADA, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

\*Late City Vol. 2 Issue 118 \*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



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'PEOPLE ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING QUALITY IN MOVIES' Page 12

## BULLIED 9-YEAR-OLD BOY TO SKIP DISNEYLAND, WILL DONATE \$475,000

An Australian boy with dwarfism whose distress from bullying became a viral video will donate hundreds-of-thousands of dollars in donations to charity rather than a trip to Disneyland. The clip of nine-year-old Quaden Bayles showed him crying and repeatedly saying he wanted to die after being bullied at school, sparking an outpouring of support from around the world. The video was watched millions of times and prompted US comedian Brad Williams to start a GoFundMe page that eventually raised almost US\$475,000.



## KEJRIWAL ANNOUNCES RS 10 LAKH EX GRATIA FOR DELHI VICTIMS' KIN

The Delhi government will give Rs 10 lakh to the families of those who lost their lives in the communal violence in northeast Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced on Thursday. He also said that the government will bear the cost of treatment of those injured in the violence and admitted to private hospitals. Those seriously injured will get Rs 2 lakh, the CM told a press conference. Special camps will be set up for people to get essential documents which they lost during arson, Kejriwal said. When asked about the alleged involvement of AAP councillor Tahir Hussain in the riots, Kejriwal said no rioter should be spared.



## SAUDI ARABIA HALTS PILGRIMAGES OVER CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Saudi Arabia on Thursday halted travel to the holiest sites in Islam over fears about a viral epidemic just months ahead of the annual hajj pilgrimage, a move that came as the Mideast has over 240 confirmed cases of the new coronavirus. The extraordinary decision by Saudi Arabia stops foreigners from reaching the holy city of Mecca and the Kaaba, the cube-shaped structure the world's 1.8 billion Muslims pray toward five times a day.



## JAPAN TO CLOSE SCHOOLS TO CONTROL SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS

Japan will close schools nationwide to help control the spread of the new virus, the government announced Thursday. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was asking all elementary, middle and high schools to remain shut until spring holidays begin in late March. The measure affects 12.8 million students at 34,847 schools nationwide, the education ministry said. "The coming week or two is an extremely important time," Abe said. "This is to prioritize the health and safety of the children and take precautions to avoid possible large-scale infections," he said.



## Chandrababu Naidu detained at Vizag airport, sent back

YSRCP activists block TDP supremo on way to Praja Chaitanya Yatra

SUMIT ONKA VISAKHAPATNAM

YSRCP activists on Thursday scuttled TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu's plans of Praja Chaitanya Yatra in Visakhapatnam district with their strident protest.

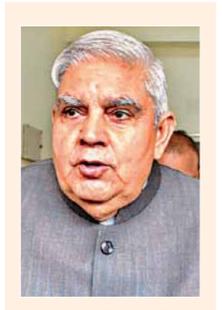
As announced by the party, several YSRCP supporters blockaded the TDP chief who landed at the Vizag as part of his yatra. This was Naidu's first visit to Vizag after the city was proposed by the YSRCP government as the Executive Capital of Andhra Pradesh.

A notice under Section 151 CrPC was served on Naidu and he was taken into preventive custody "because of his safety and security", Vizag city Police Commissioner Rajiv Kumar Meena said.



TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu squats on the ground in protest after police stopped him from exiting the Vizag airport on Thursday.

Naidu was sent back into the high-adrenaline political protest at Vizag airport saw the YSRCP activists laying down on the road in front of the convoy meant for Naidu to proceed with his years, even as slogans of 'Go back Babu' rent the air. "He cooperated with us and agreed to go to the VIP lounge at the airport. Though we initially tried to allow him to go ahead with his planned programme, there were too many number protesters and so we decided to take him into preventive custody for his safety," Meena said.



Pragya appears before special court in Mumbai



Ensure free, fair elections: Dhankhar to state EC



Trump: India is incredible, lot of progress made in bilateral ties

## YSRCP defends blocking Naidu with 2017 reminder

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The YSRCP on Thursday justified the blockade of former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at the Vizag airport by the rank and file of the party by reminding that the TDP chief had prevented their leader YS Jaganmohan Reddy in a similar way on January 26, 2017.

However, TDP leaders countered this claim of the YSRCP leaders stating that the circumstances in both the incidents were not identical.

On January 26, 2017, Jaganmohan Reddy, as part of the party's strategy to stall the TDP meeting to scout for investments, landed in Vizag. However, he was taken into custody at the airport itself and



YSRCP and TDP activists argue on the road to Vizag airport where former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was set to land, on Thursday.

refused permission to proceed further with his tour. Earlier, the YSRCP had announced its decision to stall the meeting. The government did not give permission to Jagan for his tour. Moreover, the YSRCP leadership did not apply for permission from government for the programme.

## Insurance firm told to pay Rs 2.5L, fine for refusing claim

PNS NEW DELHI

The New Delhi district consumer forum has directed Max New York Life Insurance to pay Rs 2.5 lakh along with interest and compensation to a policy holder's nominee for repudiating claim on the grounds of non-disclosure of ailments.

The firm has been asked to pay half of the repudiated claim Rs 2.5 lakh, half of the repudiated claim amount, along with 9 per cent interest and a compensation of Rs 15,000 towards "harassment, mental agony and pain" caused to the claimant.

The Forum termed the repudiation unjust.

## HC judge Muralidhar shifted hours after criticising police

PNS NEW DELHI

A row erupted on Thursday over the timing of the transfer of Delhi High Court judge Justice S Muralidhar, who had slammed the police for not registering a case against three BJP leaders for their alleged hate speeches, as the Congress said the "midnight" notification was "shameful" and the Centre accused the opposition party of politicising a routine shift.

The Union Law Ministry on Wednesday night issued three separate notifications for the transfer of Justice Muralidhar and two other judges—Justice Ranjit Vasantrao More of the Bombay High Court and Justice Ravi Vijay Kumar Malimath of the Karnataka High Court. Justice Muralidhar was transferred to the Punjab and Haryana High Court.



The transfer came on a day when a bench headed by the judge expressed 'anguish' over Delhi Police's failure to register FIRs against BJP leaders.

## Priyanka attacks Centre over transfer of Delhi HC judge

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday attacked the government over the transfer of Delhi High Court Judge S Muralidhar, saying the Centre's attempts to "muzzle" justice and "break people's faith in an upright judiciary are deplorable". Justice Muralidhar was transferred to the Punjab and Ha-

ryana High Court, days after the Supreme Court collegium made the recommendation. The judge was hearing the Delhi violence case and the late evening notification came on the day when a bench headed by him expressed "anguish" over the Delhi Police's failure to register FIRs against alleged hate speeches by BJP leaders.

## 'Gujarat model' replicated in Delhi

Amit Shah must resign, says NCP

PNS MUMBAI

Alleging that "Gujarat model" has been replicated in Delhi which witnessed large-scale communal violence over the CAA, the NCP on Thursday called for Union Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation.

The responsibility of maintaining law and order in Delhi is with the Union home ministry.

NCP national spokesperson Nawab Malik also demanded a probe into whether Shah could not handle the situation in the national capital or he had allegedly given instructions to the police to not respond quickly to the situation.

Opposition parties have accused the police of being a



Nawab Malik

silent spectator to the riots in the national capital, where the death toll has reached 34.

The Congress has already demanded Shah's resignation. The Gujarat model has been repeated in Delhi, Malik told reporters here, apparently referring to the 2002 riots in the BJP-ruled western state.

## Delimitation in AP, TS 'not so soon': Kishan

PNS NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy on Thursday said that there would be no delimitation exercise exclusively for AP and Telangana, effectively ruling out any possibility of an increase in the number of Assembly seats.

It would only take place as part of a nationwide exercise, Kishan Reddy said. He emphasised that a decision on the matter was yet to be taken.

He also told reporters that an outreach programme in J&K would be held again in May and hinted that allocation of not less than Rs 30,000 crore would be made to the state as part of a special package.

The situation in Delhi is returning to normal, he said.

## Jyoti, others airlifted from China, reach Delhi

PNS NEW DELHI

A resident of Andhra Pradesh Annem Jyoti who was stranded in the Chinese city of Wuhan, that is under lockdown due to coronavirus, on Thursday reached here on military transport aircraft along with some other Indians

stranded there. She will remain in Delhi for some days and undergo medical tests before being allowed to be on her way to her hometown Ernapadu in Bandi Atmakur Mandal.

Amarnath Reddy, to whom she is betrothed, quoting Indian embassy sources, con-

firmed Jyoti returning to Delhi. Earlier, the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry sent messages to Indians stranded in Wuhan to be prepared to fly to India since a military aircraft has been dispatched to bring them home, he said.

Jyoti had gone to Wuhan as part of her job training and was

stranded there on account of coronavirus outbreak. She spent one month there in a dormitory.

Nandyal MP P. Brahmanand Reddy took the initiative and took her family members to ministers to submit memoranda requesting their intervention and help in Jyoti's return.

## DISCOM's development charges shocker to consumers

Households having ACs or air coolers get demand notices to pay up Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000

C PRADEEP VIJAYAWADA

In a major shock, the AP DISCOM has started sending notices to people across the state, sending notices to pay "development charges" ranging from Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000 to households that have either ACs or air coolers.

With summer approaching fast, the notices have sent shockwaves among the people, who are nonplussed as they are unable to understand why they



need to pay over and above the electricity bill for the power consumed. On Monday, some people in the Vambay Colony, that was established by the govern-

ment, received such demand notices.

According to some angry consumers, the power department has sent notices demanding Rs 3,000 per AC and Rs 1,500 for each air cooler in the household. The residents of Vambay Colony said that they were poor and could barely afford to pay the electricity bills, let alone this additional demand. They said the summers are becoming increasingly harsh, and life without at least an air cooler would be

unbearable.

Following the notices, the heat is on for those who had availed of the heavy discounts and easy payment options offered by electricity appliance dealers. Quite a few of the people have opted for ACs instead of an air cooler due to the 'zero per cent loan' facility. Now, with the demand notice from the AP Discom, the overall price of the AC has proven to be costly, say consumers.

## Warner back as Sunrisers captain

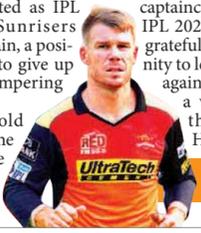
PNS NEW DELHI

Explosive Australian batsman David Warner was on Thursday reinstated as IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad's captain, a position that he had to give up after the ball-tampering scandal in 2018.

The 33-year-old Warner, who led the Sunrisers to the trophy in 2016, will take over

from New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson for the season starting March 29.

"I am thrilled to be given the captaincy for this coming IPL 2020. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to lead the side once again," Warner said in a video posted by the Sunrisers Hyderabad.



FULL REPORT ON PAGE 11

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksam: Phalguna & Shukla Paksha Panchangam:

Tithi: Chaturthi: Full Night

Nakshatram: Revati: 01:08 am (Next Day)

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

Rahukalam: 01:56 pm - 03:23 pm

Yamagandam: 06:39 am - 08:07 am

Varjyam: 11:38 am - 01:26 pm

Gulika: 09:34 am - 11:01 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritkalam: 10:26 pm - 12:14 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:05 pm - 12:52 pm

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 34/21

Humidity: 54%

Sunrise: 06:35

Sunset: 06:22

Current Weather Conditions Updated February 27, 2019 5:00 PM

CAPSULE

966th Avatarotsavam of Ananta Alwar on March 1

**VIJAYAWADA:** The TTD plans to celebrate grandly the 966th Avatarotsavam of prominent Vaishnavite and top among Alwars, Ananta Alwar at Purushavari Thota located on north east of Srivari temple on March 1. The TTD is organising the event for the past nine years. Nearly, 10 exponents on Alwar's works will deliver special lectures during the celebrations held under the auspices of the Alwar Divya Prabanda Project of TTD. This is a special occasion when descendants of Anantalwar from across the country gather at the Purushavarithota and perform Divya Prabanda Pasura Parayanam and render pravachanams. Legends say that the karpooa patch on the mula Virat idol of Sri Venkateswara Swamy was put by Anantalwar after he accidentally hit on a boy in a Tirumala garden, who turned out to be the Lord himself. Even today karpooa is applied to the chin of Lord and Prabanda Parayanam is done regularly. The Mahadwaram of Srivari temple also showcases the crowbar with which Anantwar has hit the Lord in the boy's guise. The Avatarotsavam will be conducted under the supervision of Acharya Rajagopalan, the secretary of HDP and Special Officer of Divya Prabandam Project of TTD.

Araku Utsav to begin on Feb 29

**VISAKHAPATNAM:** Araku Utsav is all set to begin on February 29. The two-day utsav will be conducted on a grand note by inviting guests from across the country to explore the beauty of Araku Valley. The festival showcases the culture and traditions of tribals in the region, while the government is making elaborate arrangements for the festival. Picturesque locations, lush green hills and dances of tribals will impress tourists. Last year's balloon festival at Araku Utsav impressed the tourists. But, this year, the government is making arrangements to entertain the tourists with different themes. Recently, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Youth Advancement Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao released a poster on Araku Utsav.

# Mango growers expect bumper yield

CH PRADEEP  
VIJAYAWADA

Mangoes, the king of fruits, will hit the market soon. Mango lovers will for onset of summer so that they can relish delicious Pedda Rasalu and Banganapalli from Nuzvid in Krishna district. Those two varieties are not only famous across the Telugu States but also country.

This year, the yield would be good compared to previous years due to timely rains and less cold wave during the flowering season. It is expected that this year there would be a minimum of five to six tonnes of mango yield per hectare, which would bring profits to farmers, according to sources.

Hundreds of people get employment during the mango season for packing, grading and segregating a large number quantity of tasty mangoes from Nuzvid, as they will be transported to north Indian States and even to the Middle and East. During the season, middle men also get a chance to



make good money. To get good yield, pruning of mango trees should be carried out before the season starts, as there will be a good scope for tender branches to grow. However, most of farmers wakeup days before the season commences, which is the reason for a normal yield. In the current year, one-third of mango trees are less than 10-year-old and growers can

expect a good harvest from those trees. For a good harvest of mangoes, the government is supplying fruit cover, which will protect the fruit from spots and scars that enables the fruit to grow spotless, which has a good demand for exports. It is estimated that the price of mangoes would be around Rs 30,000 per tonne for the current mango season in

Krishna district. To know more about the mango farming activity in the district during the current year, The Pioneer spoke to Ch Srinivasulu, additional director, horticulture department, Nuzvid-he said that this season there would be a good yield for growers. We would get mango yield across the district. Srinivasulu said to get a bet-

Koteswara Rao, a mango farmer, said that early flowering is a good sign of good yield. "This year, we are expecting a better yield compared to previous year. So far, climatic conditions are favourable"

Ch Srinivasulu, additional director, horticulture department, Nuzvid, said to get a better price to mangoes, growers should follow integrated pack house and heat treatment procedures

For the ripening of the fruit, farmers should expose fruits to ethylene gas in the ripening chamber for natural ripening, which will keep the fruit free from fungus and insecticides. If one follows the procedure, there will be good demand for mangoes

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and grading centre/integrated pack chamber by offering subsidy.

Koteswara Rao, a mango farmer, said that early flowering is a good sign of good yield. "This year, we are expecting a better yield compared to previous year. So far, climatic conditions are favourable with very less cloud breeze at the time of flowering and the rainfall in the rainy season was also good, mango farmers in this area will have a good season in the days to come, he said.

## Ganja worth Rs 2.45 crore seized in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

On a tip-off, officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Visakhapatnam, intercepted a truck and a car at NAD Junction in Visakhapatnam and seized 1.638 kgs of the banned narcotic marijuana on Thursday.

Officials found 40 bags concealed under a load of banana stalks consisting of 800 brown sugar packets. Investigation revealed that the contraband was loaded into the goods carriage near Narsipatnam and the same was being handed over to a driver near Anakapalle.

"The ganja has been procured from the Vishaka Agency area and was being sent to Bhubaneswar. The narcotic drug has been seized under the provisions of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act-1985. The value of seized ganja in the grey market would be around Rs 2.45 crore.

## Aradhhanotsavams of Carnatic music trinity from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The TTD is organising Aradhhanotsavams of Trimurthy of Carnatic music - Sri Shyama Shashi, Sri Thyagaraja Swamy and Sri Muthuswamy Dikshithulu - at SV College of Music and Dance on Friday.

Aradhhanotsavams will commence in the morning with special pujas and garlanding of the idols and portraits of Sangeeta Trimurtis. Thereafter students and teachers will sing keertans and compositions of musical giants for 14 hours without any break.

Syama Shastri was born at Thiruvarur and settled in Thanjavur. His family worshipped Goddess Kamakshi for generations and an exponent in Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit.

Also known, as Venkatasubramanian Shastri was a contemporary of Thyagaraja and Muthuswamy and also like

them a master of Bhairavi, Thodi and Yadukula ragas. He innovated a new trend in Thala and his works are Nava Ratna Malika.

Thyagaraja also hailing from Thiruvarur in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu. Thyagaraya is famous as a legend of Carnatic music. Also known as Nadayogi, he has penned and sung 24,000 lyrics but only 750 are available now. He is also credited for reciting Rama Nama for 90 crore times on the advice of Ramakrishnananda Swamy and also for having Rama darshan.

Muthuswamy Dikshithulu, a native of Thiruvarur in Thanjavur district, he was the disciple of Chidambar Nadayogi at Kashi and also an upasaka of God Sri Subramanya. His great works in Sanskrit are known as Kritis, including Kamalambanavarna, Navagraha, Vibhakti, Panchalanga and Shodasha Ganapathi.



Andhra Pradesh NGO Association leaders take out a rally in Vijayawada on Thursday demanding that the government solve their pending problems

## APNGOs step up pressure on govt to solve pending issues

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh NGO Association leaders appealed to the government to take measures to solve the long-pending demands of the employees. The APNGO leaders took part in 'All India Demands Day' programme at the Irrigation Office on the call given by the All India State Employees Federation.

Speaking on the occasion, association state president N Chandrasekhar Reddy said even nine months after the YSRCP assuming power, no action has been taken to solve the pending problems of employees. He recalled that Chief

Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had promised to cancel CPS during padayatra and included in the party manifesto, no action has been taken yet to cancel CPS and implement the old pension scheme. He recalled that employees were happy that the YSRCP government would solve all their problems, but in vain.

He pointed out that for 11th PRC, a retired IAS officer Takkar, has been appointed. Later, a committee was formed with the ministers and another committee was set up with officials, which were delaying the process, the association leaders condemned.

Employees Association Amaravati JAC State secretary

Sudhir Babu alleged that before elections, both the Central and State governments said that employees' issues will be solved on a priority basis but after coming to power, employee's issues are being ignored.

Association district president Vidyasagar said for every five years, the pay should be revised as per the increase in prices, if the government regulates the prices, there will be no need for the government to pay DA, he pointed out.

Association leaders Krupanandam, Vasanta Rao, Ratna Kumari, Md Iqbal, P Ramesh, Satish Kumar, J Swamy, Sampath Kumar and others were present.

## CPM against 'electricity devt charges'

# Govt gives 'shock' to power consumers



CPM leader Ch Babu Rao enquires with a woman about electricity development charges at Vambay Colony in Vijayawada on Thursday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPM leader Ch Babu Rao demanded that the government take back the notices served on consumers for collecting electricity development charges.

Babu Rao on Thursday took part in a protest staged at Vambay Colony alleging that the government issued notices to consumers demanding that they pay Rs 3,000 for having an air conditioner and Rs 1,500 for a cooler.

Speaking on the occasion, he reminded that the TDP government had deceived the poor by imposing excess charges; hence, people voted to the YSRCP. However, after coming to power, the YSRCP government is also walking in the footsteps of the TDP.

He alleged that the government was implementing various welfare schemes like Amma-Vodi, Rythu Barosa, Rs 10,000 to auto drivers, house sites to homeless on one hand and cancelling ration cards, pensions and scholarships creating trouble to the poor in the State on the other hand.

He pointed out that people at Vambay Colony are poor and demanded that

## CPM leaders staged a dharna at Vambay Colony demanding that the government revoke its decision

notices issued to people asking to pay development charges, should be taken back, or else people would teach a befitting lesson to the YSRCP in next elections.

He further stated that with the BJP policies artificial recession was created and buying capacity among people has fallen drastically.

In the last six months due to shortage of sand, there were no works and people suffered a lot.

He appealed to the government to rethink on collecting electricity development charges and take a wise decision.

CPM leaders K Durga Rao, K Subhani, A Ratna Kumari, K Omkar, K Murali, P Mukanti and others were present.

# Exoplanet may have right conditions for life: Scientists

IANS ■ LONDON

An exoplanet more than twice the size of the Earth may have the right conditions to host life, say scientists led by an Indian-origin astronomer, opening the search for potentially habitable planets significantly larger than the Earth, but smaller than Neptune.

The researchers from the University of Cambridge in the UK used the mass, radius, and atmospheric data of the previously identified exoplanet K2-18b, which is 124 light-years away.

The study, published in The

Astrophysical Journal Letters, determined that it is possible for the planet to host liquid water at habitable conditions beneath its hydrogen-rich atmosphere.

K2-18b is 2.6 times the radius and 8.6 times the mass of Earth, and orbits its star within the habitable zone, where temperatures could allow liquid water to exist, the researchers said.

The planet was the subject of significant media coverage in 2019, as two different teams reported detection of water vapour in its hydrogen-rich atmosphere.

However, the extent of the

The study, published in The Astrophysical Journal Letters, determined that it is possible for the planet to host liquid water at habitable conditions beneath its hydrogen-rich atmosphere

atmosphere and the conditions of the interior underneath remained unknown, they said.

"Water vapour has been detected in the atmospheres of a number of exoplanets, but even if the planet is in the habitable zone, that doesn't necessarily mean there are habitable conditions on the surface," said Nikku Madhusudhan from Cambridge, who led the new

research.

"To establish the prospects for habitability, it is important to obtain a unified understanding of the interior and atmospheric conditions on the planet - in particular, whether liquid water can exist beneath the atmosphere," Madhusudhan said.

Given the large size of K2-18b, it has been suggested that it would be more like a small-

er version of Neptune than a larger version of the Earth.

A 'mini-Neptune' is expected to have a significant hydrogen 'envelope' surrounding a layer of high-pressure water, with an inner core of rock and iron, the researchers said.

If the hydrogen envelope is, too, thick, the temperature and pressure at the surface of the water layer beneath would be far, too, great to support life, they said.

The new study showed that despite the size of K2-18b, its hydrogen envelope is not necessarily, too, thick and the water layer could have the right con-

ditions to support life.

They used the existing observations of the atmosphere, as well as the mass and radius, to determine the composition and structure of both the atmosphere and interior using detailed numerical models, and statistical methods to explain the data.

The researchers confirmed the atmosphere to be hydrogen-rich with a significant amount of water vapour.

They also found that levels of other chemicals such as methane and ammonia were lower than expected for such an atmosphere.

## VANDALISM IN DELHI

# Broken desks, burnt books bear witness to riots

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"Welcome to a very happy school" reads a half-charred board at a private school in Brijpuri area of north east Delhi, which is now home to broken desks and burnt books after it was vandalised during the violence.

Arun Modern Senior Secondary School, which is over 32-year-old, looks no less than a cemetery, say officials, who claim the damage is estimated to be over Rs 70 lakh.

"While I am yet to recover from what has happened at the school, my biggest relief is that children were not on the premises when this happened. I do not even want to imagine what

would have happened if that was the case," said school principal Jyoti Rani.

"Our security guard was there on Tuesday evening when a mob entered the precincts. Scared by the happenings, he rushed outside to save his life. Only two days later, we could gather the courage to go to the school and all I could see was vandalised desks, burnt books in library and a mess everywhere. It looks no less than a cemetery now," she added.

Bhisham Sharma, the owner of the school, said the rioters burnt books worth Rs 70 lakh.

"The school has been running since 1987. The incident happened around 5 pm on Tuesday. They came and burnt down



everything. We have lost records of 30 years. The only thing we are thankful is that there were no children at that time in the school, otherwise the loss would have been huge," he said.

Shaheen, parent of a Class VII student of the school, said, "Why did the rioters have to

burn down a school, which educates students? They are burning everything else and could have spared schools. What about the children, who are awaiting their final exams? Their year-long effort will go waste."

At Rajdhani Public School in Shiv Vihar, a few student bags,

Arun Modern Senior Secondary School, which is over 32-year-old, looks no less than a cemetery, say officials, who claim the damage is estimated to be over Rs 70 lakh

Shaheen, parent of a Class VII student of the school, said, "Why did the rioters have to burn down a school, which educates students? They are burning everything else and could have spared schools. What about the children, who are awaiting their final exams? Their year-long effort will go waste"

The main gate of the school has been damaged making it easy for anybody to enter inside.

Schools have been closed in north east Delhi and east Delhi for three consecutive days, while the CBSE has postponed Board exams in the area scheduled till February 29.

The communal violence over the amended citizenship law in northeast Delhi has claimed 34 lives so far and left over 200 people injured. Frenzied mobs torched houses, shops, vehicles, a petrol pump and pelted stones at locals and police personnel. Jaffrabad, Maujpur, Babarpur, Yamuna Vihar, Bhajanpura, Chand Bagh and Shiv Vihar are among the areas mainly affected by the riots.

CAPSULE

Kondarama Swamy temple Brahmothsavams

**VIJAYAWADA:** The annual Brahmothsavams of Sri Kondarama Swamy temple will begin from March 23 with Ankuraranam on March 22. The important days during Brahmothsavams include Dwajorahanam on March 23, Kalpavruksha on March 25, Garuda Vahanam on March 27, Rathotsavam on March 30 and Chakra Snamam on March 31. Ahead of Brahmothsavams, the TTD is performing the holy temple cleaning Koi Alwar Thirumanjanam on March 20. The artists of cultural wings of TTD HDPP, Annamacharya Project and Dasa Sahitya Project will present bhajans, kolatas and narikatha in all days Brahmothsavams.

Minor girl raped in Nuzvid

**VIJAYAWADA:** A minor was raped by an unidentified person at Nuzvid on Wednesday midnight. The incident took place when the girl was waiting outside the house for her father to return home. On noticing that the girl was lonely, a miscreant took the advantage and told the girl that he would take her to his father. Believing the words of the stranger, she accompanied him on his bicycle. The culprit took her to a lonely place adjacent to IIIT Nuzvid and raped her and fled the scene. Weeping victim reached the main road, Nuzvid Circle Inspector Ramchander Rao, who was on night-patrolling duty, noticed the girl crying took her to a hospital for treatment. As the condition of the girl was serious, she was shifted to Vijayawada hospital for better treatment. A manhunt was launched by the Nuzvid police to nab the culprit.

YSRCP defends blocking Naidu with 2017 reminder

Continued from Page 1

Citing security reasons, the police did not allow Jagan to go ahead with his tour plan. The TDP leaders contend that the current scenario is totally different. They say that prior permission was obtained for Naidu's tour and showed the relevant documents to substantiate their claims. They said that Jagan was not allowed to visit Visakhapatnam on security reasons, while Naidu was gheraoed on political grounds. The TDP leaders allege that city airport became the venue for the YSRCP to avenge for the political insult heaped on it. They allege "Pulivendula brand of factionism raised its ugly head in Visakhapatnam" and demanded to know why Jagan was afraid of Naidu if he is not at fault. "Disturbances are being created in the city to cover up for the land scams of Jagan gangs. Had the TDP conducted in the same fashion, could Jagan have successfully completed his pada yatra," the TDP leaders said.

Guv exhorts students to serve nation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan appealed to students to protect the interests of downtrodden. He said it is the responsibility of students in whatever sphere they settle in their lives to instil confidence among underprivileged that they are all equal before the law.

Addressing 35th and 36th convocations of Acharya Nagarjuna University in Guntur on Thursday, he said that students should create awareness among the poor about their fundamental rights provided by the Constitution.

The Governor explained how Mahatma Gandhi freed the country from the British rule through non-violence and lauded the role of several leaders in the freedom struggle. He said the country emerged as an atomic power during the regime of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and no other



Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan addresses 35th and 36th convocations of Acharya Nagarjuna University in Guntur on Thursday. (right) A large number of students attend to receive degrees and medals

country is dared enough to see towards our country after successfully conducting nuclear explosion. He said that the Acharya Nagarjuna University gained prominence with exclusive Centres of Excellence and Research such as Mahayana Buddhism, BR Ambedkar chair, Jagjeevan Ram's chair, Mahatma Jyotibha Phule's chair, Centre for Women's Studies, Centre for Gandhian Studies and Centre for Scientific Socialism and Centre for Afro-Asian

Philosophies. He congratulated the authorities for achieving a second rank for the university in the emerging economics university rankings-2020. The Governor called upon students to serve the nation. He said now as the nation is on the cusp of change and emerging as the fastest growing economy in the world, it truly requires the dedicated services of students. He reminded students the last words of Gautam Buddha to his disciples 'Be your own light'.

The Governor said only through innovation, research and development, India can initiate positive transformation in the world and address unemployment, racial, caste and gender discriminations. Earlier, Minister of Education and guests. Vice-Chancellor Prof P Rajasekhara presented a report on the activities of the university since the last convocation held in 2013. Minister for Education Audimulapu Suresh addressed the students.

Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan explained how Mahatma Gandhi freed the country from the British rule through non-violence and lauded the role of several leaders in the freedom struggle

He said now as the nation is on the cusp of change and emerging as the fastest growing economy in the world, it truly requires the dedicated services of students

He reminded students the last words of Gautam Buddha to his disciples 'Be your own light'

Later, the Chancellor presented PhD degrees and gold medals to students in various disciplines.

One YSR Village Clinic for 2,000 population: CM



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said that there should be a YSR Village Clinic available for every population of 2000. A B Sc nursing graduate should be available at the clinic round-the-clock in the villages where there are Village and Ward Secretariats. The Village Clinic should work like a referral point extending middle-level health services provider.

He was reviewing the activities of the health department with officials here on Thursday.

Explaining the significance of Village Secretariats in extending services at the doorstep of villagers, he hinted at more and more services are being provided to farmers through Rytu Bharosa Kendras.

He said that health services at YSR Clinics would be provided free of cost administering basic medicines to patients. The Village Clinic should immediately attend to serve the patient and treat small ailments then and there while referring the major health issues to other hospitals. Each and every district should have a teaching hospital and also one in each of the 25 Lok Sabha constituencies.

Detailed project reports are being prepared to set up seven medical colleges in the State, he said asking officials to make arrangements to provide amenities to teaching hospitals. Each teaching hospital should provide dental education service. PHCs should also provide facility of dental check-up.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said that health services at YSR Clinics would be provided free of cost administering basic medicines to patients

The Village Clinic should immediately attend to serve the patient and treat small ailments then and there while referring the major health issues to other hospitals

Under the 'Dr YSR Chirunavu' scheme, dental screening of students of classes from I to VI would be conducted soon. Under the scheme, each student should be given free of cost tooth-paste and tooth brush. The target is to screen 60 lakh students. Prior to launching the scheme, he wanted officials to study all aspects carefully and wanted them to observe how the Kanti Velugu scheme is being implemented.

The dental screening programme should be implemented on the lines of Kanti Velugu with no hiccups surfacing at any level. There should be constant monitoring of the scheme by superiors. The Chief Minister enquired from officials on the progress of Kanti Velugu. Whether, spectacles are being given free of cost to senior citizens or not. Health Minister Alla Nani and higher authorities in health department attended the meeting.

Ambati terms Naidu 'traitor'

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu proved out to be traitor, as he was not allowed to move out of the Vizag airport for four hours by the people of north Andhra region, says YSRCP MLA Ambati Rambabu.

Footwear, eggs and water bottles were thrown at Naidu by people to show their resentment over his remarks against the region. "We are not supporting the protests. But one has to realise that they protested against Naidu's stand against the Executive Capital being set up in Visakhapatnam, and Naidu's stand only to promote Amaravati as the capital. Naidu and his cronies had amassed wealth and lands in Amaravati, hence, speaking only in favour of that region," he pointed out.

It was wrong to say that it was just YSRCP activists, who protested, it was a protest by all those who wanted north Andhra to develop. Naidu's claim that 5,000 people came from Pulivendula is false. It is not a fight between the YSRCP and the TDP but a protest against Naidu who spoke against north Andhra," said Rambabu. "Today people are against



Naidu. It was the TDP government, which blocked YS Jaganmohan Reddy when he went to Vizag seeking Special Category Status for AP in 2017. Where was democracy then and where is it now? Police had the only option of sending back Naidu than stopping the thousands of protesters against him, asking him to go back. It was for the police to act to save law and order. "Vizag is a peaceful place. Naidu was trying to pollute the atmosphere there by inciting a section of the people. I laud the decision taken by the police in Vizag and it is wrong to blame the DGP, who had also worked during Naidu's rule," he said. "It is not possible for Naidu to belittle the government.

Footwear, eggs and water bottles were thrown at Naidu by people to show their resentment over his remarks against the region

"Out of frustration, Naidu was making his cronies attack Anil Kumar Yadav, Ramakrishna Reddy and Roja. But the government won't keep mum, if such acts are repeated," warned the MLA

Out of frustration, Naidu was making his cronies attack Anil Kumar Yadav, Ramakrishna Reddy and Roja. But the government won't keep mum, if such acts are repeated," warned the MLA and added that there is awareness among people, who protested in Vizag. "Decentralisation would be taken up with three capitals and nobody can stop us from doing it. The TDP MLAs from north Andhra had already passed a resolution in favour of Executive Capital in Vizag," the MLA said.

New tool developed to 'outsmart' hackers

SIANS ■ NEW YORK

Instead of blocking hackers, researchers created a new cybersecurity defence approach, which involves setting traps for hackers. The method, called DEEP-Dig (DECEPTION DINGing), ushers intruders into a decoy site so the computer can learn from hackers' tactics. The information is then used to train the computer to recognise and stop future attacks.

DEEP-Dig advances a rapidly growing cybersecurity field known as deception technology, which involves setting traps for hackers.

"There are criminals trying to attack our networks all the time, and normally, we view that as a negative thing, instead of blocking them, maybe what we could be doing is viewing these attackers as a source of free labour," said study researcher Kevin Hamlen from University of Texas in Dallas, the US. "They're providing us data about what malicious attacks look like. It's a free source of highly prized data," Hamlen added. The approach aims at solving

a major challenge to using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for cybersecurity: "A shortage of data needed to train computers to detect intruders. The lack of data is due to privacy concerns. Better data will mean better ability to detect attacks", researchers said.

"We're using the data from hackers to train the machine to identify an attack, we're using deception to get better data," said study researcher Gbadebo Ayoade. Hackers typically begin with their simplest tricks and then use increasingly sophisticated tactics, the researchers said.

But most cyberdefence programmes try to disrupt intruders before anyone can monitor the intruders' techniques. DEEP-Dig will give researchers a window into hackers' methods as they enter a decoy site stocked with disinformation.

The decoy site looks legitimate to intruders, and attackers will feel they're successful, said study researcher Latifur Khan. As hackers' tactics change, DEEP-Dig could help cybersecurity defence systems keep up with their new tricks.

Minister: Krishna, Guntur districts will be developed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was keen on development of Krishna and Guntur districts, said District In-charge and Panchayat Raj Minister Peddireddy Ramchandra Reddy. The government had taken up many development programmes in these districts, he reminded. Addressing a review meeting here on Thursday, he said that of 4,53,064 are drawing pensions in Krishna district and 64,000 new people have been selected for the pension scheme in the district.

He also said that about 11,013 persons were identified as ineligible in the district and the

cause of ineligibility was already informed through the notices, which was displayed at the Village Secretariats.

Collector A Md Imtiaz and MLAs thanked the District In-charge Minister for allocating Rs 100 crore for the Job Guarantee scheme for the district. On the occasion, MLA Kolu Pardhasaradhi, Government Whip Samineni Udaya Bhanu, MLAs Vasantha Krishna Prasad, Jogi Ramesh, Malladi Vishnuvardhan, Rakshana Nidhi, Dulam Nageswara Rao, K Anil Kumar and others thanked Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy for his support in the development of their constituencies.

HC judge Muralidhar shifted hours after criticising police

Continued from Page 1

The notifications said President Ram Nath Kovind approved the transfers after consulting the Chief Justice of India.

They came on a day when a bench headed by Justice Muralidhar, the third senior-most judge in the Delhi High Court, expressed 'anguish' over Delhi Police's failure to register FIRs against alleged hate speeches by BJP leaders Parvesh Verma, Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur in connection with the protests against the new Citizenship law.

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Justice Muralidhar was transferred on the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium and accused the opposition party of politicising a routine transfer.

He added that a "well-settled process" was followed in the

transfer. At the BJP party briefing, senior leader and union minister Prakash Javadekar said the transfer was in line with the recommendation of the Collegium. The recommendation was made on February 12.

The Congress alleged that the transfer of Justice Muralidhar was aimed at saving some BJP leaders in the Delhi violence case and exposed the government's "intimidation and vendetta politics" against the judiciary.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accused the government of making attempts to "muzzle" justice and "break people's faith in an upright judiciary". "The midnight transfer of Justice Muralidhar isn't shocking given the current dispensation, but it is certainly sad and shameful," she tweeted.

Taking a dig at the government over what he called



Muralidhar's "sudden" transfer, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "Remembering the brave Judge Loya, who wasn't transferred."

Special CBI judge B H Loya, who was hearing the high-profile case of "hit-and-run injustice" by the government.

The judge who reminded the government of its 'raj dharma' and initiated and directed action

issue of Justice Muralidhar's transfer, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the BJP government was "waging a battle of revenge" against the judiciary. He called the transfer a classic case of "hit-and-run injustice" by the government.

The judge who reminded the government of its 'raj dharma' and initiated and directed action

against the BJP leaders making inflammatory statements was transferred overnight from the Delhi High Court, he said.

Hitting back at the Congress over the allegations, Law Minister Prasad said, "By politicising a routine transfer, Congress has yet again displayed its scant regard for the judiciary."

"Transfer of Hon'ble Justice Muralidhar was done pursuant to the recommendation dated February 12 of the Supreme Court collegium headed by Chief Justice of India," Prasad said in a series of tweets.

He said a judge's consent is taken before transferring him or her.

Continuing his attack on the opposition party, Prasad said the people of India have rejected the Congress and "hence it is hell bent on destroying the very institutions India cherishes by constantly attacking them".

'Gujarat model' replicated in Delhi

Continued from Page 1

Whether the home minister could not handle the situation in Delhi or he himself had given such instructions to the police should be probed. He should resign immediately, Malik said.

Malik accused the Delhi police of not discharging their duty and falling prey to political pressure.

He also pitched for resignation of another Union minister, Anurag Thakur, and Delhi BJP leader Kapil Mishra for allegedly making provocative speeches.

Meanwhile, Malik said the Mumbai NCP will organise a meeting

of party workers on March 1.

NCP president Sharad Pawar, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and party's state unit chief Jayant Patil will attend the meeting, he added.

Speaking about the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Malik said the right of implementing the law lies with the Centre and not the state government.

"We, however, will not implement the NRC (in Maharashtra)," he said.

The NCP is the second largest constituent of the Shiv Sena-led ruling coalition MVA.

DISCOM's development charges shocker to consumers

Continued from Page 1

On Monday, activists of the Left parties staged a protest, describing the AP Discoms demand as "unfair" and seeking a rollback.

The protesters said that on the one hand, the government was implementing various welfare schemes like Amma-Vodi, Rythu Barosa, Rs 10,000 to auto drivers, house sites to homeless, moves like imposing a "development surcharge" on people would be counterproductive.

M Raj Kumar JE, Moghalrajapuram said that development charges are being collected from the customers as per their usage. Generally, the consumers do not reveal all the electrical appliances in their house and take a minimum of 1 KVA connections and later in the bill it will be clearly evident that they are using A/c or Cooler or water heater or other appliances that consume more electricity. Raj Kumar said that as the consumer takes minimum load power connection by paying less amounts will in turn reflect on the load on transformers. He said that these development charges are being collected to provide better service to the customers.

Naidu detained at Vizag airport, sent back...

Continued from Page 1

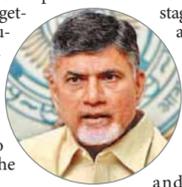
While the police personnel had arranged security for the Leader of the Opposition at the airport, the protesters managed to block the convoy and even hurled eggs and tomatoes at it, as per reports.

Several TDP and YSRCP supporters were spotted getting into heated arguments with each other. The situation led to a traffic jam on the busy Gajuwaka-NAD stretch, leaving the common public to bear the brunt of the political power play.

Naidu was scheduled to meet farmers at Pendurthi on his way to Vizianagaram. The TDP supremo is on a two-day tour of the North Andhra region. Meanwhile, TPD leaders

alleged that the protest of the YSRCP was conducted with the full support of the police as the protesters were not taken into preventive custody but were allowed to come near the airport.

Though the police denied permission to both the groups to stage any peaceful protests and deployed a large number of police personnel, leaders and supporters of both the parties managed to reach the airport road by early Thursday. Anticipating trouble and a possible clash between TDP and YSRCP workers and leaders at the Airport, the Vizag Police Commissioner refused to give permission for TDP leaders to reach the airport to greet their leader.



Insurance firm told to pay Rs 2.5L, fine for refusing claim

Continued from Page 1

The New Delhi district consumer forum said the policy was issued after conducting proper medical examination and therefore the company cannot absolve itself of its liabilities by shifting onus on the insured person. Kamla Devi had taken a policy with Max New York Life Insurance in 2010.

After her death, her nominee was denied the benefits of the claim, alleging that the policy holder was suffering from cardiomyopathy, but did not disclose it to the company while taking the insurance. The commission said it would be unjust to allow the insurance company to shirk its responsibility to record about ailment of the insured.

It also said that the insurance company in its discretion could have rejected the application, but it opted and issued the policy. "In the instant case, since the insured died and the policy was issued to her after medical examination, shifting the entire onus on the insured (now died) would tantamount to shifting of responsibility by the OP (opposite party) and does not absolve the OP of its liabilities.

"In our considered view, repudiation of claim in such circumstances is unjust," the commission said.

'Instal Ambedkar statue on Neerukonda hill'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy on Thursday wrote a letter to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy requesting him to instal BR Ambedkar statue on the hill at Neerukonda village in Amaravati. He recalled that opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu had inaugurated Ambedkar Smruthi Vanam at Iyanovolu and proposed to instal 125 feet Ambedkar statue.

He mentioned in his letter that Ambedkar Smruthi Vanam works were stopped and requested to instal a 100 feet Ambedkar statue at Neerukonda village hill and inaugurate the works on Ugadi festival.

# CBI brings back girl taken to Dubai by her dad in defiance of HC order

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday brought back a three-year-old girl from Dubai who was taken there by her father in alleged violation of Delhi High Court orders, officials said.

The girl's father, Aman Lohia, had taken Baby Raina to Dubai amid a custody battle with his wife Kiran Kaur Lohia in the high court that had asked him to deposit his passport with authorities to prevent him from leaving the country, they said.

The Supreme Court, which was apprised of the matter through a petition against a high court order in the case, had directed the CBI to visit Dubai to bring back the girl to India.

A team of CBI officials had recently gone to Dubai where it coordinated with local authorities to ensure the safe return of the girl and her father.

After the team arrived on Thursday morning, the CBI rushed to the apex court and



**The HC termed Aman Lohia's escape with his daughter on a Dominican passport and refusal to subject himself to jurisdiction of the Indian legal system as a "contempt of court"**

informed it about its compliance action, the officials said.

The girl will be produced before the Supreme Court on Friday, they said, adding that the child is at her mother's home under the agency's care.

The dramatic developments of Thursday were a culmination of a six-month long trail of a defiant father who in a desperate move escaped to Dubai with his daughter claiming he was a "victim of gender bias" of courts and that it was the "love for his daughter" which directed his actions.

Aman Lohia, son of a noted businessman, was fighting a custody battle for his daughter Raina in the high court after separating from his wife Kiran Kaur Lohia, a Delhi-based dermatologist.

The high court had granted Raina's custody to the mother with a parenting plan, according to which, Aman Lohia could meet his daughter for some hours on three days of a week. The court also asked him to deposit his passport, which he did, the officials said.

On August 24 last year,

when the girl had come to meet Aman Lohia as per the parenting plan, he took her along with family confidant Pawan Kumar and maid Shiuratia Debi to Dubai using a circuitous route via Nepal and other gulf countries.

Considering "international ramifications", the Delhi High Court had handed over the probe to the CBI which had registered a case.

The Interpol had issued a "Yellow Notice" for the girl on a CBI request, the officials said.

Yellow Notices are issued by the Interpol on the request of member countries to locate missing persons, they said.

The CBI had also filed a charge sheet on December 19 last year before a special court against Aman Lohia, his mother Meena Lohia, alleged accomplice Pawan Kumar and maid Shiuratia Debi Mahto, they said.

The agency has invoked Indian Penal Code provisions pertaining to criminal conspiracy, kidnapping from India and kidnapping from lawful guardianship among others against the businessman.

Aman Lohia had allegedly decided to flee to Dubai, where "personal laws enjoy exclusive custody upon the father", using a passport acquired from Caribbean country the Commonwealth of Dominica.

The high court had termed Aman Lohia's escape with his daughter on a Dominican passport and refusal to subject himself to the jurisdiction of the Indian legal system as a "contempt of court".

# AAP councillor denies involvement in death of IB staffer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP councillor Tahir Hussain on Thursday denied any involvement in the riots or the killing of an Intelligence Bureau staffer whose family accused him of being behind the murder, saying these are "baseless accusations".

He called for an impartial probe into the incident and said action should be taken against the guilty. "It is wrong to target me. I and my family have nothing to do with it," Hussain said.

The AAP leader also demanded strict action against BJP leaders responsible for giving inflammatory speeches.

Ankit Sharma (26), who worked for the Intelligence Bureau (IB), had gone missing on Tuesday and his body was found in a drain near his home in northeast Delhi's riot-hit Chand Bagh area on Wednesday.

His family members claimed that the local coun-



cillor and his associates were behind the killing.

Hussain has rejected the allegations. "I came to know from news reports that I am being blamed for the murder of a man. These are lies and baseless accusations. For our safety, my family and I had moved away from our home on Monday in police presence," he said.

Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh said the party's stand remains clear that strictest punishment must be taken against anyone associated with spreading violence and added that Hussain has given his statement on the matter.

## SHORT READS



### NCW chief writes to Kejriwal, asks him to include women MLAs in Cabinet

**NEW DELHI:** National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Rekha Sharma has written to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on including women legislators in his cabinet. Sharma has expressed concern over no woman being part of Kejriwal's council of seven ministers. "Various kinds of equality, including political equality, political leadership and power sharing is one of the most basic, intrinsically valuable as it is the key to equality on other realms, and all citizens are supposed to be given equal representation and leadership irrespective of gender," she said in her letter. The NCW chairperson has requested the chief minister to consider inducting a couple of women legislators or at least one in his council of ministers, the commission said in a statement.

### Rajasthan CM Gehlot questions central govt over Justice Muralidhar's transfer

**JAIPUR:** Questioning the transfer of Delhi High Court judge S Muralidhar, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday asked the central government what message it was trying to convey. The notification of Justice Muralidhar's transfer to the Punjab and Haryana High Court came late Wednesday evening, on a day when a bench headed by him expressed "anguish" over Delhi Police's failure to register FIRs against alleged hate speeches by BJP leaders Parvish Verma, Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur. "What message is central government trying to give by transferring Justice Muralidhar, who showed his resentment against police inaction during Delhi violence and in failure of police to act against BJP leaders for their hate speeches? Gehlot tweeted on Thursday. "People have so much faith in the judiciary and the government's attempts to undermine the justice system are very unfortunate," he said.

### Delhi govt to prepare 3-level action plan to curb pollution

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Thursday said the Delhi government will prepare a three-level action plan - quarterly, annually and five years - to reduce pollution in the national capital. Rai held a meeting with experts who suggested the government to issue a direction to agencies that no outdoor construction activities should be conducted in winters when the pollution levels rise. The minister said the experts also suggested that there should be an inter-state action committee to take steps to curb pollution. Rai said the suggestions will be sent to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal next week and a final action plan will be prepared.

# Gujarat's debt swells to Rs 2.4 L crore, Assembly told

PNS ■ GANDHINAGAR

The Gujarat government on Thursday informed the legislative Assembly that the state's public debt has risen by over Rs 28,000 crore in one year and now stands at Rs 2.4 lakh crore. Responding to a written query raised by Congress MLA Shailesh Parmar during the Question Hour, Deputy CM Nitin Patel said on December 31 2019, Gujarat owes Rs 2,40,652 crore, a rise of Rs 28,061 crore from 2018-19. On Wednesday, Patel had presented a Rs 2,17,287 crore state budget for 2020-21, with healthy allocations to education, health and agriculture sectors. In a written reply to a sub-question about interest paid on loans taken in the last two years, Patel said in 2017-18, the state had paid Rs 17,146 crore interest and Rs 13,700 crore as principal amount.

## MALEGAON BLAST CASE

# Pragya appears before special court in Mumbai

PNS ■ MUMBAI

BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur on Thursday appeared before a special NIA court here in connection with the 2008 Malegaon blast case, in which she is one of the accused.

This came a day after special court judge V S Padalkar directed all the accused in the case to take note of his order (passed in May last year) directing them to appear before it at least once a week.

The Bhopal MP appeared before the court around 1 pm. After taking note of her appearance, the judge allowed her to go.

Interacting with reporters outside the court, Thakur said whenever the court summons her, she will appear before it.

She had last appeared before the court in connection with the case in June 2019.



Seven persons, including Thakur and Lt Col Prasad Purohit, are facing trial in the case.

Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped on a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon, a town about 200 km from here in north Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008.

According to police, the

motorcycle was registered in Thakur's name and that led to her arrest in 2008.

The Bombay High Court had granted bail to her in 2017. Thakur was given a clean chit by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), but the trial court refused to discharge her from the case.

The court had dropped the charges against her under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), but she is being tried under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and other relevant laws.

The accused are facing trial under various sections of the UAPA, the Indian Penal Code and the Explosive Substances Act. They have been charged under UAPA sections 16 (committing terrorist act) and 18 (conspiring to commit terrorist act).



# Bangladeshi student asked to leave India

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A Bangladeshi student of Visva Bharati University has been asked by the home ministry to leave the country for reportedly engaging in "anti-government activities".

Afsara Anika Meem, an undergraduate student at the central university, has been served a 'Leave India Notice' by the Foreigners' Regional Registration Office, Kolkata — under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The notice — which has

asked Meem to leave India within 15 days from the date of its receipt — did not specify the nature of the "anti-India activities".

The woman, who hails from Kustia district of Bangladesh, got enrolled in the Bachelor of Design course at the varsity in 2018. She received the notice dated February 14 on Wednesday, one of her friends said.

Meem had allegedly shared some posts on Facebook related to anti-CAA protests in December, and has been trolled on social media since.

# Tyre burst caused Rajasthan bus accident which killed 24

PNS ■ JAIPUR

A tyre burst appeared to be cause of the bus accident that killed 24 people in Bundi district, the Rajasthan government told the state assembly on Thursday during a brief discussion which ended with an opposition walkout.

A mini-bus carrying a wedding party had hurtled off a bridge on Kota-Dausa highway on Wednesday morning.

After making a statement on the accident, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dharwal targeted the opposition BJP by asking under whose tenure the highway was built.

As BJP members protested, Speaker C P Joshi asked them to maintain order and directed the minister to end his statement. The BJP MLAs then walked out.



According to report from the relief management control room, the prima facie cause of the accident was a tyre burst, Dharwal earlier said. However, the matter is being investigated, he added.

A case against bus driver Shyam Singh, who also died in the accident, has been registered. The documents recovered from the vehicle are being examined, the minister said in the statement.

The vehicle had insurance and a temporary permit for a two-way trip from Kota to Sawai Madhopur, where the marriage party was headed. Its fitness certificate was valid till September 20.

Dharwal said the state's health and transport ministers went to Kota on Wednesday to offer their condolences to the families of the victims.

The state government has announced a compensation of Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin of those killed Rs 40,000 for the injured. The state government will also bear the expenditure on the education up to the college level of the victim's children.

Deputy Leader of Opposition Rajendra Rathore said the government should run a campaign against vehicles running without valid permit and fitness certificates.

## CORONAVIRUS IMPACT

# AIBA cancels European forum in Italy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The International Boxing Association (AIBA) on Thursday cancelled the European leg of its continental forum in Italy, citing the novel coronavirus outbreak in that country.

The forum was scheduled to be held on Saturday in Assisi, where the Indian boxing team is currently participating in a preparatory camp for next month's Olympic qualifiers in Jordan.

"Scheduled for February 29th in Assisi, Italy AIBA European Forum 2020 is cancelled due to COVID-19 (coronavirus). This decision was taken by AIBA leadership in the best interests of the delegates," AIBA Interim President Dr Mohamed Moustahsane said in a statement.

"The coronavirus outbreak in Italy worsened and Italy has



by far the highest number of coronavirus cases in Europe. Moreover, Italy has imposed strict quarantine restrictions in some regions which could last for weeks," it added.

The Indian boxers are scheduled to fly out of Italy on Friday.

Moustahsane said the AIBA will organise the Forum later in the year "when situation in Europe becomes better."

"I hope you and your families stay healthy and that the coronavirus will be eradicated soon. Your health is our priority and we will do this forum when the circumstances are better," Moustahsane said in a communication to National Federations.

Assisi is a hill town in the central Italian region of Umbria. The coronavirus outbreak in Italy has so far affect-

ed the northern Lombardy region, leaving 12 dead and 400 infected. Eleven Italian towns -- 10 in Lombardy and one in the north-eastern region of Veneto -- have been placed under a lockdown, according to various media reports.

AIBA continental forums are meant to "unite National Federations through dialogue". The forums allow for meetings between NF presidents and general secretaries to discuss and resolve all internal and bilateral problems.

The goal is to discuss AIBA reforms and future of the organisation, which has been stripped of the right to conduct the qualifying as well as the main event of the Tokyo Olympics by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The IOC has cited alleged financial and administrative mismanagement in the AIBA for its decision.

## NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

# India's women scientists want better support, fair policies in research

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the country marks the National Science Day on Friday, many leading Indian women scientists have stressed on the need for the right kind of support, equality, and gender-fair policies in the field of research.

National Science Day is celebrated on February 28 each year commemorating Indian physicist C V Raman's discovery in 1928 of the Raman effect — the scattering of photons or light particles by matter.

Raman received a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930. Of the 607 Nobel medals awarded so far in scientific disciplines globally, just 20 have gone to

women. Noting that a career in science is a demanding and tough option, Rupamanjari Ghosh, Vice-Chancellor, Shiv Nadar University, Greater Noida said there are additional barriers - often unintentional and unconscious ones -- which are put up along the career path of women in science.

"When such a career demands long hours, there are issues of lack of security and basic amenities that affect women more adversely than men in this society. We need to pay active attention to these preventable problems," Ghosh, a Professor of Physics, told.

G Geetha, Professor and Head, Division of Research



and Development at Lovely Professional University (LPU) in Punjab, emphasised on closing the gender gap, and moving towards women-led projects in science.

She noted that out of the 560 awardees of Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science and Technology, only 18 recipients have been women.

**National Science Day is celebrated on February 28 each year commemorating CV Raman's discovery in 1928 of the Raman effect — the scattering of photons or light particles by matter.**

The prize is one of the highest multi-disciplinary science awards in India.

According to Geetha, women represent only about a fifth of senior authors in all published research.

A study, published in the journal PLOS One in 2018, assessed 293,557 research arti-

cles from 54 journals, and found that "29.8 per cent of all research authors, and 33.1 per cent of the first, 31.8 per cent of the co-, and 18.1 per cent of the last authors were women."

Another study by the UK's Intellectual Property Office (IPO) noted that women inventors account for just under 13 per cent of patent applications globally.

For society to evolve with

equality, Geetha feels the state and union governments should provide women grants for startups, core research, travel, and prototype development.

"Universities should preferentially encourage women entrepreneurs and women startups. A survey has to be conducted on participation of women as chairpersons or committee member in policy making," Geetha added.

Professor Manjula Reddy, Chief Scientist, Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad believes that science in India is progressing at a rapid pace since the last decade, thanks to the focus and initiatives on education and research.

"Setting up new educational and research institutions across India has contributed to this cause," she said.

However, Reddy, who won the Infosys Prize 2019, thinks India is lagging behind in basic sciences as compared to developed countries, and needs to make serious efforts to fill the gap.

"This can be achieved with structured funding, more focus on education and research activities."

"Basic research is a developmental activity; it may not have immediate tangible benefit, but has long-term sustainability and is the bedrock for future technological advances," she explained.

DELHI VIOLENCE

# CONG LEADERS MEET PREZ, DEMAND SHAH'S RESIGNATION

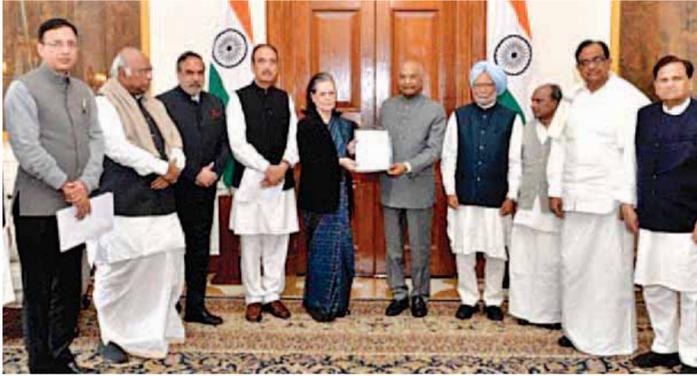
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing Home Minister Amit Shah of "abdication of duty" during the communal violence in Delhi, a Congress delegation led by party chief Sonia Gandhi on Thursday urged President Ram Nath Kovind to call for his resignation and remind the Centre of its "raj dharma".

Reading out parts of the memorandum that the party submitted to the president, Gandhi said both the Delhi government and the Centre remained "mute spectators" instead of trying to take remedial measures to control the situation. "We call upon you and the constitutional office you hold, that the life, liberty and property of the citizens is preserved, secured and protected. You should immediately call for the removal of the home minister given the gross ineptitude, abdication of duty and his inability to contain the situation."

"We owe this to the citizens who have lost their loved ones, their homes and their livelihood and most of all their long cherished amity and brotherhood. We hope you will take decisive action on this matter," she told the media outside Rashtrapati Bhavan after meeting the president. The delegation included former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ahmed Patel, P Chidambaram, K C Venugopal, Mallikarjuna Kharge, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Anand Sharma, A K Antony, Kumari Selja and Randeep Surjewala.

"Rashtrapatiji, you are given the highest possible responsibility under the Constitution of India: to act as the conscience keeper of this government and



## CONG, AAP POLITICISING VIOLENCE IN DELHI: BJP

**NEW DELHI:** The BJP on Thursday accused the Congress and the AAP of "politicising" the riots in the national capital and claimed that attempts to instigate violence had been made for two months after Congress president Sonia Gandhi gave the call for 'aar yaa par' (fight to the finish) in December last year. Addressing a press conference at the party office, senior BJP leader and Union Minister Prakash Javadekar asked why other political parties were silent on the attack on the policemen and on the death of Intelligence Bureau staffer Ankit Sharma. "In such a situation, the duty of all political parties should be to consolidate peace," he said.



Taking on the AAP which governs Delhi, Javadekar said that its MLAs should have worked for peace, but Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal identified riot victims by religion in the Assembly. He alleged that attempts to instigate violence had been made for the last two

months since Sonia Gandhi gave the call for 'fight to the finish' at a rally. Javadekar said the BJP was working to restore peace and condemned the Congress, the AAP for doing politics over the violence that claimed 34 lives in northeast Delhi and left over 200 injured. He asserted that peace was restored in two days due to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's effective handling. He said the Congress's demand for Shah's resignation was "petty politics." Earlier in the day, the Congress hit out at the government over the transfer of Delhi High Court Judge S Muralidhar, alleging that the Modi dispensation was waging a battle of revenge against the judiciary.

to remind it of its constitutional duty and the pillars of raj dharm by which any just government must abide," she said, flanked by senior leaders of her party. Questioning Shah's role,

Gandhi asked where he was as the violence spread across northeast Delhi.

"What was he preoccupied with since last Sunday that he was unable, apparently, to give

his attention to these grave events? For that matter, the Delhi chief minister, and the newly elected Delhi government were also completely missing from the scene.

## 48 FIRs lodged, SG informs HC

**NEW DELHI:** Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the Delhi High Court on Thursday that 48 FIRs have been lodged in relation to the north-east Delhi violence and there be no judicial intervention till normalcy is restored in the national capital. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar was told by Mehta that the Centre and the police need to file a reply to the plea for lodging FIRs against alleged hate speeches by three BJP leaders. Mehta informed the court that 48 FIRs have been lodged till date in relation to arson, looting and the deaths in the communal violence has erupted over the amended citizenship law.

## 'AAP's stand on violence remains clear: take action'

**NEW DELHI:** Senior AAP leaders Sanjay Singh and Gopal Rai on Thursday said the party's stand on violence remains clear that strictest punishment must be given to anyone associated with spreading it. Their reaction came after family of an Intelligence Bureau (IB) staffer, who was found dead in a drain near his home in northeast Delhi's riot-hit Chand Bagh area, accused AAP councillor Tahir Hussain of being behind the killing. Family members of Ankit Sharma, 26, alleged that Hussain and his associates were behind the killing. Hussain rejected the allegations.

# Transfer of HC judge aimed at saving BJP leaders: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday alleged that the transfer of Delhi High Court Judge S Muralidhar was aimed at saving some BJP leaders in the Delhi violence case and exposed the Modi government's "intimidation and vendetta politics" against the judiciary.

The notification of Justice Muralidhar's transfer to the Punjab and Haryana High Court came late Wednesday evening, on a day when a bench headed by him expressed "anguish" over Delhi Police's failure to register FIRs against alleged hate speeches by BJP leaders Parvesh Verma, Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hit out at the government over the transfer, saying the Centre's attempts to "muzzle" justice and "break people's faith in an upright judiciary are deplorable".

"The midnight transfer of Justice Muralidhar isn't shocking given the current dispensation, but it is certainly sad and shameful," Priyanka Gandhi tweeted. "Millions of Indians have faith in a resilient and upright judiciary, the government's attempts to muzzle justice & break their faith are deplorable," the Congress general secretary said.

Taking a dig at the government over Muralidhar's "sudden" transfer, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "Remembering the brave Judge Loya, who wasn't transferred."

Special CBI judge B H Loya, who was hearing the high-profile Sohrabuddin Sheikh fake encounter case,



## CPI(M): Justice Muralidhar's transfer 'selective response'

**NEW DELHI:** The CPI(M) on Thursday said Justice S Muralidhar's transfer from the Delhi High Court was a "selective response" to his court orders in which he rapped the city police for "trying to shield" BJP leaders who made "hate speeches". The Left party demanded the government keep the transfer order, notified late Wednesday night, in abeyance to reinforce the confidence of the people in the judicial system. Justice Muralidhar was transferred to the Punjab and Haryana High Court, on a day a bench headed by him expressed "anguish" over the Delhi Police's "failure" to register FIRs against the alleged hate speeches made by BJP leaders Parvesh Verma, Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur. The CPI (M) said in a statement that the transfer was recommended by the Supreme Court collegium, but it has been protested against by the Delhi High Court Bar Association for well-argued judicial-administrative considerations.



died in allegedly mysterious circumstances on December 1, 2014. At a press conference on the issue of Justice Muralidhar's transfer, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it seems those doing justice in country will now not be spared.

He alleged that the government was "waging a battle of revenge" against the judiciary.

Slamming the Congress over the allegations, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the judge was transferred on the recommendation of the Supreme Court collegium and accused the opposition party of politicising a routine transfer. Surjewala hit back at Prasad, describing him as the "most lawless minister" this country has ever seen.

CAPSULE



## Centre must ensure peace in violence-hit Delhi: RSS leader

**NAGPUR:** Nobody has right to take the law into their hands and the Centre should ensure that peace is restored in Delhi which has been wracked by communal violence, RSS general secretary Suresh Bhaiyaji Joshi said on Thursday. Necessary action should be taken to restore law and order in the national capital, he said. "The government should establish peace in areas where there is 'ashanti' (unrest). Nobody has the right to take law into their hands," he said. Joshi was replying to queries of reporters on the Delhi violence on the sidelines of a programme here. Communal riots, which broke out on Sunday in various parts of north-east Delhi over the amended citizenship law, have so far claimed 34 lives. More than 200 people have been injured in the riots in the national capital, where the police department comes under the Union home ministry.

## Resignation of Justice Dharmadhikari notified

**NEW DELHI:** The government has notified the resignation of Justice Satyaranjan Dharmadhikari who was the second senior-most judge of the Bombay High Court. The Law Ministry has notified his resignation, saying it is effective from February 15. He had tendered his resignation, saying he does not want to be transferred out of Maharashtra due to his "personal and family" reasons. Talking to reporters on February 14, Justice Dharmadhikari had said he resigned as he had been elevated as the chief justice of the high court of another state and he did not want to leave Mumbai. Judges of the Supreme Court and the high courts send their resignations to the president, which is accepted.

# Agonising wait for relatives outside mortuary in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Still to come to terms with the loss of their loved ones in violence in parts of northeast Delhi, relatives are anxiously waiting outside GTB hospital's mortuary for the postmortem to be conducted before the bodies are handed over to them. Family members of people, who are missing since the violence broke out, also have been asking hospital authorities to check whether were brought dead or are being treated.

Relatives of 35-year-old Mudassar Khan who have been waiting at the mortuary at GTB hospital said they are still to recover from the shock. "We have been coming here since last two days. Yesterday, the in-charge IO said that files were ready and the post-mortem would be conducted. Today, we have been waiting here since 8 am and the post-mortem is underway."

"We hope to get the body soon. We will conduct the last rites today itself," his nephew Arbaaz Khan said.

Talking about the situation in his area in Mustafabad, Arbaaz said with security deployment, it is returning to normal but there is still fear among people.

"No one is able to sleep peacefully. There is still fear.



Family members of people, who are missing since the violence broke out, also have been asking hospital authorities to check whether were brought dead or are being treated

Children are not going to school, everyone is preferring to stay indoors and we are not even using our vehicles to commute. We are in shock over what happened within three days," he said.

Mudassar was outside his house in Kardampuri on Monday when he was attacked by a mob, his family said. He sustained bullet injury on his head and was declared brought dead by doctors at GTB hospital. He used to work in a plastic scrap manufacturing unit and lived with his wife and children in Kardampuri area of

northeast Delhi. Many relatives and friends of riot-affected victims are waiting in the hospital anxiously to get details about their loved ones.

Some of them claimed that neither police nor the hospital authorities are telling them exactly when will the post-mortem be conducted.

Relatives including the mother of 22-year-old Shahbaz (25), who has been missing since February 25, are waiting anxiously outside the mortuary at GTB hospital since morning to know if their son is even alive.

## Pride of Guruvayur, Padmanabhan passes away

PNS ■ KERALA

One of the most popular elephants of the Guruvayur temple in Kerala's Thrissur district, 'Gajaratnam' Guruvayur Padmanabhan, died on Wednesday. The tusker, who had been carrying the Guruvayur Sri Krishna idol for festivals, was 84 years old.

According to the authorities of the Guruvayur Devaswom Board, which oversees the administration of the temple, the tusker had been unwell for over a month and was being treated for the last two weeks after he developed swelling in his body. Post 9 am on Wednesday, his condition worsened and was declared dead at 2 pm at the Punathoorokotta, a training centre for captive elephants near the Guruvayur Sri Krishna temple.

At the time of his death, all doctors of the Guruvayur Devaswom were present near the tusker, monitoring his health condition.



# Ensure free, fair elections: Dhankhar to state EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State Election Commissioner Sourav Das on Thursday met West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar who asked him to ensure peaceful and fair civic polls in the state, and take action to prevent a repeat of the violence that marred the panchayat elections in 2018.

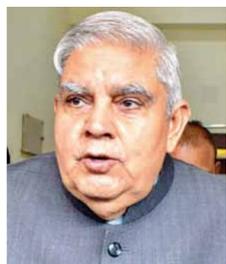
The meeting, which lasted for 20 minutes, took place at the Raj Bhavan.

In the meeting, Dhankhar told Das to ensure that the "kind of scenario noticed" in the panchayat elections held in May 2018 is not repeated and the civic polls, likely to be held in mid-April, take place in a peaceful, orderly and fair atmosphere, according to an official statement.

The governor also asked the commissioner to keep him informed about the steps taken by the poll panel.

Dhankhar underlined the need in giving all parties equal opportunities as a prerequisite to free and fair polls. He told the commissioner that if the situation arises, Das may "take recourse even to transferring officials in the interest of ensuring fair and peaceful polls".

The governor further said that the state election commissioner must take all steps to dispel fears and impressions that the poll panel is an extension of the government



Take recourse even to transferring officials in the interest of ensuring fair and peaceful polls

—JAGDEEP DHANKHAR, West Bengal Governor

and must engage in dialogue with all stakeholders. The statement further said that the commissioner needs to tell the police and administration that any partisan approach would invite exemplary consequences.

The commissioner informed Dhankhar that he will be meeting district magistrates on March 4.

Das was accompanied by secretary of the commission Nilanjan Sandilya to the meeting. He was tight-lipped about discussions in the meeting amid queries from reporters while leaving the governor's official residence around 11.50 am.

## GANGA POLLUTION

# CPCB asks UP authorities to act firmly against violators

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking strong note of effluent discharge in Kanpur drains polluting the river Ganga, the Central Pollution Control Board has asked the state pollution control body to take stern action against the non-complying industrial units and order their closure.

In a letter to the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB), the CPCB asked it to ensure that no industry discharges effluent into any drain without meeting prescribed standards, and that coloured or untreated effluent is not drained into river Ganga. It has asked the UPPCB to file



an action taken report by February 29.

"In exercise of the power conferred under the Water (Prevention and Control of

Pollution) Act, you (UPPCB) are hereby directed to take appropriate measures including issuance of directions to ensure implementation of the following pol-

**In a letter to the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB), the CPCB asked it to ensure that no industry discharges effluent into any drain without meeting prescribed standards, and that coloured or untreated effluent is not drained into river Ganga**

lution control measures in a time bound manner," said CPCB Acting Chairman R S Prasad.

In 2017, the Supreme Court had passed a judgement which directed all state pollution control boards to mandatorily carry out inspections and take appropriate action against erring industrial units. Water quality of river Ganga

and its tributaries has been threatened due to disposal of untreated sewage and sullage from drains and discharge of untreated or partially treated effluent from grossly polluting industries (GPI) which are mixed with drain effluent and reach Ganga river directly through its tributaries, said a CPCB official. The CPCB, in

consultation with the UPPCB, has inventoried over 1,000 GPI operating in Uttar Pradesh with the potential to discharge effluent in the river Ganga.

It has also been monitoring 24 drains, two in Unnao and 22 in Kanpur since March 2019 on a weekly basis, the official said.

During its monitoring between December 31, 2019 and January 7, 2020, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) found industrial effluent or sewage was being discharged in four drains in Kanpur- Sheetla Bazaar, Wazidpur, Bhudiya Ghat and Ratanpur- despite several meetings held last year over such polluting activities.

## UN rights chief expresses 'great concern' over CAA

PNS ■ GENEVA

The UN human rights chief on Thursday voiced "great concern" over India's amended citizenship law and reports of "police inaction" in the face of communal attacks in Delhi, urging political leaders to prevent violence.

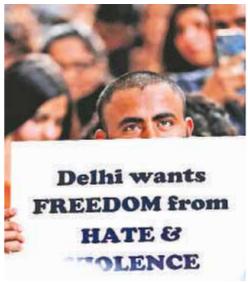
Updating the ongoing 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on human rights developments around the world, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet also spoke about the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

She said the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) adopted last year by India's Parliament was of "great concern". "Indians in huge numbers, and from all communities, have expressed - in a mostly peaceful manner - their opposition to the Act, and support for the country's long tradition of secularism," she said. "I am concerned by reports of police inaction in the face of attacks against Muslims by other groups, as well as previous reports of excessive use of force by police against peaceful protesters."

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Costlier casualty

The Delhi violence is serious because it shows that binaries have been deep-set and a panic economy has taken over



The story of the Delhi violence lies much beyond the headlines or the number of the dead. The terrifying visual of a man, whose photo of being beaten up by a violent mob simply because he wore a certain kind of clothes and sported a beard went viral, validated the pogrom-like sequence of events as the new normal and its casual acceptance in normal life. It's something as statistical as an accident on the crime charts. It is serious simply because it happened in Delhi, the nation's capital no less, and not in a far-flung town in

India clouded by obscurantism. It is a test case that could get copied elsewhere and worse, be passed off as another law and order situation that can be tamped down by Section 144. When a judge like Justice Muralidhar, whom junior lawyers call an inspiration, gets transferred overnight for daring to question the Delhi police, then we should worry, with deep furrowed brows. Simply because an independent judiciary is the only hope for citizens seeking justice and rights that the Constitution guarantees to them. If this institution is broken, then our statute books mean nothing at all and public morality simply spins out of the orbit of our nation as we knew it. Till now. If north-east Delhi, where various communities have literally lived cheek by jowl for decades and more, is torn asunder by blood-curdling rage at the mere remark of an extremist, it shows that Indians, as a people, are harbouring a tinder box in their minds. This is a separatism that has nothing to do with the unresolved wounds of Partition. But an otherisation propaganda that has been bred systematically on a fertile ground of insecurities and economic denial. The polarisation of the mind is a far deadlier poison for it blunts the edge of humanity. It also means a subterranean conflict, which may bubble up any moment and because of its smouldering nature, engulf every other human possibility of reason, wisdom and compassion. If BJP motormouth and "go and kill" instigator Kapil Mishra has not been reined in despite protests from within his own party, it legitimises the politics of hate as a yielder of fast dividends and delegitimises public service. Politically, socially and culturally, there is a sudden vacuum which nobody wants to plunge into or commit to. That explains why the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), despite winning a solid verdict, seems uncertain about the public stance it should take. It cannot stick its neck out simply because nobody, including the BJP, knows what shape panic can acquire in a vacuum. Prejudice has taken over national pride to such an extent that everybody listens to it, not without it.

The only certainty about these uncertain times is that it is not the best time to seek our place in the world. US lawmaker Bernie Sanders has expressed reservations and concern as has the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Even UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "very saddened" by the casualties in Delhi. He called for maximum restraint and violence to be avoided. Although the Modi Government sought to describe such comments as "factually inaccurate and misleading," truth is the world doesn't expect India to indulge in genocidal politics. Especially, when we use the optics of the Sabarmati ashram for visiting dignitaries but forget the non-violence mantra preached by its original resident. When it comes to the Opposition, the BJP anyway wins the battle on competitive whataboutery. So when senior Congress leaders, led by party chief Sonia Gandhi, met President Ram Nath Kovind to demand the resignation of Home Minister Amit Shah over his "abdication of duty", the party reminded it of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, another motormouth who hasn't been reined in, asked the Congress to review its role during that period. Only RSS general secretary Suresh "Bhaiyyaji" Joshi advised the BJP that nobody had the right to take the law into their hands and that the Centre should ensure that peace is restored in Delhi. Placatory, high-sounding terms that are abstract enough to spare the BJP's extreme elements, all of whom have been birthed by its ideology. In the end, it is time for the civil movement to free itself from the piecemeal appropriation of causes and issues by political parties. Or be exploited by them. For Delhiites, who have found a new identity in a city that is a melting pot of all migrants, the time for denial is over. We cannot be sporting identity cards like a curfew pass. We must stand up and be counted.

## Imperfect justice

Harvey Weinstein is convicted of third-degree rape and a criminal sexual act. He's staring at just 5 years



The battle of justice for women, who take on rich and powerful men for molestation, or worse rape, is long, lonely and hard. No matter in which part of the globe they are, whether it is India, Pakistan, the UK or even the biggest and one of the most technologically-advanced Western countries in the world, the US. What else justifies the fact that movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, who was accused by no less than 90 women of sex crimes, was convicted only in two cases whereas he was found guilty of raping one woman and committing a non-consensual sex act on another? It was imperfect justice because he was acquitted of the most serious charges — two counts of predatory sexual assault and one count of first-degree rape, which might have put him in a cell for the rest of his life. The jury only convicted him of third-degree rape and a first-degree criminal sexual act. So now he is looking at just five years in prison. And this was the man, who throughout his long career as a film producer, had silenced multiple accusations of rape and sexual assault with threats, denials, character assassinations, monetary settlements and Non-Disclosure Agreements. He had even scared off journalists who tried to expose his dastardly acts and bring him to justice, till tenacious journalists from the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* brought him down with their exposés in 2017. However, the verdict is a small victory for women around the world battling hard against their sexual predators. The Unnao rape victim, who accused former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar of rape or the law student, who tried to bring former BJP MP Swami Chinmayanand to book for raping her repeatedly, would tell you at what personal peril they managed to be heard. Weinstein's conviction is also a defeat of the most belligerent victim-shaming and blaming tactics that are used by ruthless defence lawyers in such cases. More importantly, it broke the stereotype of what a "perfect victim" is as justice was given to the two women who did not end their relationship with their tormentor simply because he was who he was. It is a small measure of vindication for the six women who testified that Weinstein attacked and sought to intimidate them as they were put through the grinder by his lawyers. They can now feel proud of the part they played in getting the predator put behind bars, where he belongs. It is also a victory for the #MeToo movement, which was fast classified as a fad than a cause.

# Some hard, home truths

It is an irony of our times that the very Government, which promised to protect the country from any divisive internal or external force, has failed to fulfill its duties



AJOY KUMAR

When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was voted to power in 2014 and then even more resoundingly in 2019, one of the pillars that the party sought to stand on was its claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will represent a strong Government and that it will protect the country from any divisive internal or external force. It is this assurance that forms the backdrop of the now-infamous belief that the Prime Minister's "56-inch chest" will provide India with a protective shield. Events that unfolded in Delhi over the past week, where clashes broke out between communities that led to the killing of 35 people (at the time of writing), have thrown cold water over the Prime Minister's hollow claims of leading a strong Government.

In fact, there will be few instances in the history of independent India where a citizen has felt more unsafe than he/she does right now. Delhi is in the midst of its worst riots since 1984. And as relevant authorities examine who exactly is to be blamed for the violence that has been unleashed, there are some issues that are indisputable and require some tough answers.

The first is, how did such a riot take place, that, too, in the capital city? Delhi is not just the capital of this country but is also home to India's most well-funded and trained police force. Let this sink in. Theoretically speaking, this means that the Delhi police, which functions under the Central Government that is controlled by the BJP and more specifically comes under the direct supervision of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is India's best equipped police force. This means that in terms of numbers and assistance, compared to other forces across the country, the law and order situation in Delhi could not have been better protected. Well, hypothetically speaking, at least.

In addition to this, Delhi is also the centre for all intelligence agencies in the country. It is home to several intelligence bodies, whose job includes to be alert about all possible acts of violence or riots that may erupt in the country. But the intelligence bodies and the police force have failed to prevent violence in not more than a 10-km radius from Parliament. How does this make those residing in other parts of the country feel? If the Government could not stop acts of mass violence in places where its base is the strongest, how exactly does it plan to protect the rest of the country?

Let's once assume that this is not true. But the element of bias cannot be denied because as per reports, the Delhi police was sent at least six alerts on Sunday (February 23), asking for deployment to be stepped up after BJP leader Kapil Mishra called for a gathering in support of the Citizenship Act at Delhi's Maujpur. Why then was the police so helpless in preventing violence? This is a greater cause for concern because if the Delhi police is better equipped to tackle violence than any other police force



in the country, why did it fail to deliver?

These are not the only questions over the conduct of the Delhi police. Why are videos of police personnel destroying CCTV cameras doing the rounds? The only way to get answers and to ensure that such riots do not happen again is to dig deep and find out as to what exactly happened. But how will the destruction of CCTV cameras help answer that question?

What I am concerned about and what should concern all of us is the establishment of truth and the delivery of justice to all those people who have been affected by this senseless violence. This can be done only by taking appropriate action against those involved in the violence. Perpetrators include leaders of political parties of every hue and any official, who allowed such violence to go unabated for three days.

The more serious concern is that slowly but steadily, we have reached this shameful place. There are a few reasons for this. One is the lack of resistance by the bureaucracy. I have some sympathy for the bureaucrats here though. Governments of the past have often shown — and the BJP Government has mastered — how adept they are in the art of abuse, twist and wrangle. This is in contrast to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's vision of the civil services being the "steel frame" of good governance. Bureaucrats are now routine-

“IF THE STATE MACHINERY IS FAILING US AND INSTITUTIONS ARE DISPLAYING A LACK OF BACKBONE, THE ANSWER AND BURDEN (UNFORTUNATELY OR FORTUNATELY) FALL ON EVERYDAY PEOPLE. IN THIS FIGHT, THE ONLY THING WE MUST MAKE SURE IS THAT WE FIGHT, NOT WITH VIOLENCE, BUT WITH VIGOUR, VOICE AND VOTE TO UPHOLD THE RULE OF THE LAW”

ly being threatened with transfer orders, raids by income tax authorities or the Enforcement Directorate or any other agency which is at the Centre's disposal with a degree of reckless abandon. I don't think we would have to go more than a few weeks behind to find an instance of such abuse. It has permeated all institutions, including the Election Commission of India.

More recently came the brazen example of Justice S Muralidhar of the Delhi High Court, who received a presidential order transferring him to the Punjab and Haryana High Court. This order came a day later after he pulled up the Solicitor General and the Delhi police for inaction during the riots in north-east Delhi. Coming down heavily on the Delhi police, he pulled it up for its failure to register FIRs against alleged hate speeches by three BJP leaders, Anurag Thakur, Kapil Mishra and other usual suspects from the BJP.

While pressure by a Government on the bureaucracy and the judiciary is not an invention of the BJP — there are obvious examples of the Emergency, 1984 and 2002 — rarely has there been as concerted an effort by a Government to undermine all institutions, all at once. Circumstances are not helped by members of these institutions either. So often, we see bureaucrats being asked to jump and respond back with, "How high?" In the judiciary, too, we have recently seen a sitting

Supreme Court judge lavish heavy praise on the Prime Minister even as serious allegations of abuse of State power were being examined by the very same court.

Such acts and comments by individuals in positions of authority — whether in the bureaucracy or in the judiciary or any other institution — have chilling effects on the citizens. It erodes their faith in the institutions and the Constitution. This poses a greater risk to India's democratic health in the long term than individual acts of abuse of power by the BJP that I have highlighted in this article.

So what do we do? If the State machinery is failing us and institutions are displaying a lack of backbone, the answer and burden (unfortunately or fortunately) fall on everyday people. Unfortunately because this is a great burden that the civil society must now discharge when its institutions appear to be found wanting. Fortunate because there is rarely a time in history when any Government or institution can suppress the will of the people. The only thing we must make sure is that we fight, not with violence, but with vigour, voice and vote to uphold the rule of the law and the Constitution. Victory then will be undeniable for everyone who wants to live in a unified, peaceful and prosperous democracy.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

## SOUNDBITE

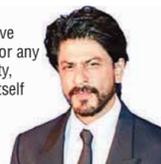
When the US President was here lakhs of policemen were deployed. How could a riot happen? Had the Government and police wanted, it would not have happened.

SP chief —Akhilesh Yadav



I am a big believer in education. I truly believe that the way forward for any country, any family, city, state is by educating itself more and more.

Actor —Shah Rukh Khan



Ongoing incidents in Delhi are more concerning in the context of efforts to target and potentially disenfranchise Muslims, in clear violation of international human rights standards.

USCIRF Chair —Tony Perkins



Instead of taking active steps to remedy or defuse the situation, the Central government as also the Delhi Government have remained mute spectators.

Congress president —Sonia Gandhi



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The science of prayer

Sir — Every year, the country celebrates February 28 as the National Science Day in remembrance of Dr CV Raman, who discovered the scattering of light, also known as the "Raman effect." It is fascinating that great scientists strongly believed in the power of prayer, which helped them discover the secrets of nature. This reminds me of a story about a young businessman sharing a compartment on a train with an elderly gentleman. When he noticed that the old fellow was quietly and intently praying with his Rosary, the young man chided him for his "superstition" and told him that science had rendered the beliefs of religion irrelevant. "How did you come to discover that?" the old gentleman asked. His companion didn't really know how to answer the question then and there, so he offered to send him a few texts and public lecture notes on the subject for his enlightenment. "What's your address?," he asked, "I'll send you the material via the post." The old man rummaged in

### Amid chaos, heroes still exist

This refers to the editorial, "Delhi aflame" (February 26). Blood, violence and hate sum up the last few days in Delhi. This cauldron has been going on for four days and counting, and citizens, along with the rest of the country, can only helplessly look on in horror. The visuals have been so graphic that they would make one shut out the disturbing imagery and news headlines making their way onto the screen. But despite the flood of negativity, glimmers of hope remain. Even as rioters and hateful, communal bigots give us a glimpse of India's ugliest underlying tendencies, there are still people in the city who can restore faith in humanity. Still, there are heroes as the city burns. These heroes are the people who have chosen to put humanity first at a time that demands that religion be prioritised. They are the people who stood up for their neighbours and fellow citizens, even while the State machinery failed to contain the bloodshed. They are those, who after the destruction had passed, were there to pick up the pieces, hand-in-hand with their neigh-



hours and friends. They have also fought to ensure that daily life continues, despite the upheaval. Their actions are a soothing balm in these tumultuous times, a reminder that India and its children still remember and honour the spirit of the Constitution — one that promises to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for its citizens.

Jawvadi Lakshmana Rao Andhra Pradesh

### Shun prejudice

Sir — This refers to the report, "CCPD issues notice to central medical institutions for denying job to Divyang doc" (February 26). The office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) has made

the right intervention by stepping in to issue notices to the Delhi-based central medical institutions, Safdarjung Hospital and VMM College. They allegedly denied a teaching job to Dr Nonita Gangwani, an MD in physiology and a wheelchair user with 70 per cent disability due to multiple sclerosis, despite her

clearing an exam and interview for the post. At a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given special status to the physically challenged and called them Divyang to emphasise their special place in the society, such discrimination is condemnable. Action should be taken against the officials responsible.

Lalit Adesara Pune

### Dirty political game

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "The court rap" (February 27). The violence in the capital, a result of political manoeuvres, was avoidable. It reflects badly not only on the police force but also on the functioning of the high echelons of bureaucracy. Keeping the Delhi police under the control of the Union Government has provided much space for shameless and dirty politics. To make governance accountable, the command of the police must be given to the State Government.

Vineet Keshri Via email

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

**FIRST COLUMN**

## India's baptism by fire

The nation is passing through a transitional period in its history, from a feudal agricultural society to a modern industrial one



MARKANDEY KATJU

Few people in India or for that matter, outside the country, are able to understand what is happening in the nation, particularly after the recent mindless violence in the national Capital in which as many as 38 people lost their lives and a whopping 150 were injured, apart from the massive destruction of private and public property. So let me try and explain this as best as I can. India is passing through a transitional period in its history, from a feudal agricultural society, to a modern industrial one. At present it is not entirely feudal nor entirely modern but stuck somewhere in between. Though there was a limited degree of industrialisation in India after 1947, it was not complete, like in Western countries (or even anywhere near that of China). Feudal remnants in the form of casteism, communalism, religious bigotry, superstitions, gender discrimination and so on are still powerful and well-entrenched.

A transitional period is always a very painful time in history as it is full of turbulence and strife. If we read the history of Europe from the 16th to the 19th centuries, when Europe was passing through its transition from a feudal to modern society, we find it was full of turbulence, turmoil, wars, revolutions, chaotic conditions, intellectual ferment and so on. It was only after going through this fire that modern society emerged in Europe. At present, India is going through this fire and we are emerging through a very painful epoch, which might last another 15-20 years or so.

For what is a transitional period? It is a time when the old society is being totally uprooted and torn apart, when ancient values are being challenged and destroyed but new values are yet to be created. Can such a historical transition be achieved peacefully? One wishes it could be so. However, historical experience shows otherwise. The vested interests in the old order always put up a fierce resistance to any fundamental change in the political and social order, as that would endanger their interests. So this change can only be achieved by some kind of revolution.

People ask when and how such a revolution will come about in India. Who will be its leaders? No one can say for sure. One can never be rigid about historical forms. But this much can be said with certainty: Some kind of revolution is inevitable in India because everything has collapsed here. All our State institutions have become hollow and empty shells, while on the other hand the Indian economy is sinking and the people's distress is growing. Nature does not like a vacuum and chaos cannot continue forever. So some alternative to the present political and social system is bound to emerge.

At present we have a parliamentary democracy in our country but this runs largely on the basis of caste and communal vote banks. Casteism and communalism are feudal forces which must be destroyed if India is to progress. However, parliamentary democracy further entrenches them. So we have to have an alternative. What that alternative system will be has to be thought out by intellectuals and for this they have to use their creativity. Intellectuals are the eyes of society and without them a society is blind. However, the test of every political system or act is one and only one: Does it raise the standard of living of the people? Does it give them better lives?

Before an actual revolution there has to be an intellectual revolution. For instance, before the French Revolution of 1789 there were several decades of intellectual struggles by great thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau and the other thinkers of the Enlightenment, who attacked the feudal system, religious bigotry and so on. This intellectual revolution is needed to change the mindsets of the masses who are at present steeped in feudal ideas and feudal practices.

So the present stage in Indian history is the pre-revolutionary stage, i.e. the stage of the intellectual revolution. All patriotic, broad-minded intellectuals must contribute to it. In particular, they must attack the poison of communalism which has gripped India, and which is being promoted and fostered by our medieval-minded political masters.

All forces which divide our people and spread religious or caste hatred must be strongly combated, for only a mighty united people's struggle can lead to the revolution which will transform India into a prosperous, highly developed and highly industrialised country. It will also get rid of the scourge of poverty, record and rising unemployment, appalling level of child malnourishment, almost total lack of proper healthcare and quality education for our masses, atrocities and discrimination against minorities and Dalits, widespread corruption, gender discrimination, female infanticide, child marriage farmers distress and so on, which have bedeviled Indian society for long.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India)

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

THE ARMY SHOULD BE DEPLOYED IN DELHI AS THE POLICE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION AND INSTILL CONFIDENCE.

—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

ARVIND KEJRIWAL



CM WAS READY TO COOPERATE IN MAINTAINING PEACE IN DELHI BUT TODAY HE TALKS ABOUT CALLING THE ARMY. THE POLICE IS WORKING 24X7

—DELHI BJP PRESIDENT

MANOJ TIWARI

# Shouldering responsibility

South Asian nations face a water crisis which poses a threat to agriculture and industries. Given its increasing influence, is India willing to become a provider of water security in the region?



SANDEEP KUMAR DUBEY

On May 23, 2013, while speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the Indian National Defence University, Gurugram, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh exuded confidence that India was well-positioned and willing "to become a net provider of security" in its immediate region and beyond. In 2015, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), New Delhi, came out with an assessment report titled, *India as a Security Provider*. The report highlights India's growing military capabilities and its proactive responses to the human and non-human threats to the littoral nations of the Indian Ocean, which corroborates the country's image and positioning as a benign power and net security provider in the region. But the question here is: Is India also willing to play the role of net security provider when it comes to ensuring water security in the region? The above-mentioned IDSA report points out, "While traditional security threats limit India's role; cooperation on non-traditional threats opens up a new opportunity for India to play a regional role." Thus, it is a geostrategic imperative for India to focus on non-traditional security threats in the region emerging from sectors such as water and energy.

Today all the nations of South Asia face a water crisis in one form or another due to a range of factors — population growth, urbanisation, inefficient use, bad management and lack of governance, among others. The unfolding water crises pose a serious threat to sustainable development, agriculture and industries, poverty reduction and the ecosystem. Climate change has exacerbated the brewing water crises like never before. The United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has termed climate change as "the most systematic threat to humankind."

Water is a common resource and managing and governing it has always been a challenge at any scale, be it local or regional. A participatory robust institutional architecture for water governance is needed to manage and govern resources in a systematic and efficient way. Many of the important water bodies in South Asia are transboundary and thus their basins spread in more than one country. Integrated basin management would not be a reality without regional cooperation at the South Asian level.

Most of the water treaties in South Asia are bilateral in nature, which form the core of the South Asian political ecology of governance. Be it upper or lower riparian, nations in the region are apparently not content with the existing treaties. For example, India, an upper riparian nation, does not seem to be happy with the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, a lower riparian nation in this case. Between Bangladesh, a low riparian nation and India, the Teesta river issue still remains unresolved, with Dhaka asking for an increase in water share. People in Nepal, an upper riparian nation, think water treaties with India produces environmental injustices to the riverine people of Koshi river. Along with this kind of political ecology of the region, the issue of sovereignty in South Asia is a very sensitive topic. South Asia represents a typical case of the Westphalian concept of sovereignty, where each nation has exclusive sovereignty over its territory and the natural resources, including water. No nation would like to be seen as compromising its sovereignty. However in reality, in the face of globalisation and trade integration, each nation is bargaining its sovereignty with the other nations and regional and international actors. These two factors — the existing South Asian political ecology and the power politics played out in the name of sovereignty — both

“WATER WOES COUPLED WITH THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE HAVE RESULTED IN A DISTINCT SET OF CHALLENGES THAT CALL FOR INDIA'S PROACTIVE ROLE IN THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION. WHAT IS REQUIRED TODAY IS A CONTINUOUS REGIONAL COOPERATION IN PROVIDING WATER SECURITY, WHICH IS AT PRESENT MARRED BY THE ABSENCE OF AN INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE FOR WATER GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA. INDIA SHOULD PLAY A LEAD ROLE IN INSTITUTIONALISING REGIONAL COOPERATION BY ESTABLISHING A ROBUST ARCHITECTURE”



hinder and open up opportunities for regional cooperation at the same time. Some may think that regional cooperation compromises on the sovereignty of a State. However, the notion of sovereignty can be broadened to accommodate and facilitate the idea of cooperation, which is not about imposing suzerainty of one nation on another.

India has been quite active in the region in terms of coming to the rescue of its neighbours when they are in trouble. A case in point is when Maldives faced a water crisis in December 2014, India launched Operation NEER to immediately provide Maldives with it. The people and the Government of Maldives were appreciative of India's quick response and help. Having said that, one must be mindful that those were more of a response to a crisis that emerged and similar exercises could be useful to tackle future contingencies of that sort. However, water woes coupled with the effects of climate change have resulted in a distinct set of challenges that call for India's proactive role in the South Asian region. What is required today is a continuous regional cooperation in providing water security, which is at present marred by the absence of an institutional architecture for water governance in South Asia.

India should play a lead role in institutionalising regional cooperation by establishing a robust architecture. It has already set an example with the launch of South Asian Satellite in 2017, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his tweet termed as a "symbol of South Asian cooperation" and "a journey to build the most advanced frontier" of regional cooperation and partnership. With India looking for a larger regional role, it cannot afford to be a security consumer. It has to metamorphose itself into a credible security

provider. Benjamin Kienzie, a faculty member of Defence Studies at King's College London, elucidates, "A security provider has a stronger interest in the immediate security of a third party, rather than in direct security gains for itself...the action of a security provider easily lead to a win-win situation...A security consumer, on the other hand, is primarily interested in its own security and is largely indistinct towards the security needs of third parties...In general, security consumers create easily win-lose situations..." Notwithstanding, he makes it clear that a security provider in no way compromises its own security interests.

Domestically India has made some progress to improve water governance. The then Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti) constituted a committee led by Mihir Shah to suggest institutional reforms for water governance to deal with the water challenges that India faces in the 21st century. In July 2016, the Committee came out with a report titled, *A 21st Century Institutional Architecture for India's Water Reforms*. The report makes a number of critical suggestions to strengthen the governance of India's water resources. One of them is about its shape and structure. The report underlines that "polycentric governance regimes characterised by a distribution of power but effective coordination structures perform better." Considering water as one of the sectors most vulnerable to climate change, the report stressed that the ability to respond to it is strengthened by polycentric governance regimes.

The existing political ecology of South Asia makes the space of water resources a geopolitically contested zone. Governance is needed to protect the envi-

ronment, to save the ecology and to manage water resources in an integrated and holistic manner. Polycentrism is inherent in South Asia and by default distribution of power is effected by the very nature of South Asian sovereignty. What is missing essentially is the effective coordination to realise and unlock water governance potential in the region. Effective coordination can be established only through a well-structured institutional architecture involving all the actors and stakeholders. With the emergence of non-State environmental actors and groups in the region, the role of governments has receded in water governance and self-organised governance networks have found prominence.

In their article "Reflections on Actor-Network Theory, Governance Networks, and Strategic Outcomes", Ludmilla Meyer Montenegro and Sergio Bulgacov caution that, "self-organised governance networks can impede (policy) implementation...or they can enhance the efficiency of policy implementation...Thus, it is important to determine how these networks are formed, who forms them and how they function, since they have such direct impacts on governance. The more we know about networks, the better we understand governance dynamics and its relationships with the Government, informal mechanisms, and private actors."

India should painstakingly study the governance networks that exist today in South Asia for conceptualising a regional institutional architecture for water governance in the region, to not repeat another SAARC which is failing under its burden.

(The writer works as a Senior Programme Manager for climate and water projects at a German foundation and is a policy commentator)

# Make nature's value visible

If bureaucrats could accept poverty-alleviation as a mainstream agenda to make a powerful diminution of rural poverty, accounting for the GDP of the poor can be the way forward



MEGHA JAIN

It has taken the world a while to reach the understanding that nature can never be taken for granted. Unfortunately, in India, this is not the case and utilisation of common natural resources like forests, green cover, oceans, rivers, fish stocks and so on, doesn't reflect anywhere in our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounting, as these are difficult to chronicle. This economic inconspicuousness of nature's services becomes an underlying concern, which has generated debate and discussions like

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiated by the United Nations in 2007. TEEB is a global initiative focussed on "making nature's value visible". Its main objective is to mainstream the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services into decision-making at all levels. It aims to achieve this goal by following a structured approach to valuation that helps decision-makers recognise the wide range of benefits provided by ecosystems and biodiversity, demonstrate their values in economic terms and where appropriate, capture them in decision-making.

Although conservationists like Pavan Sukhdev and Gretchen C Daily — pioneers in illuminating and quantifying the economic value of our natural environment — who are awarded with the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement in 2020, have clearly put forward the same opinion, acceptance remains elusive. The economic invisibility of nature to

drive humanity and dependence upon market-based economic systems, remain at the heart of deserved recognition to account for nature in the GDP, especially in relation to the survival of marginalised sections of society. This invisibility somehow hampers the cognition to acknowledge the GDP of the poor via negative externalities. Often, in the process, the secondary sector (industrial) omits to make the required debt due to an invisible characteristic attached to the transformation, from sourcing of raw material to processing of finished product.

Think-tanks and economists realised the requirement for true demonstration of environmental economics or "greenomics" for its invisible values much earlier and American biologist and philosopher Garrett Hardin's *The tragedy of the commons* is an exemplar to this. For the uninitiated, the tragedy of the commons is a situation in a shared-resource sys-

tem where individual users, acting independently according to their own self-interest, behave contrary to the common good of all users by depleting or spoiling the shared resource through their collective action. It is quite worrisome that big business houses and people at large are not able to value the gratuitous support provided by nature due to imprudence and the incompetence to distinguish private goods from public goods.

Greenomics is all about economic factoring of public and non-marketed (those not made by man and not transacted in the market) goods in computation of the national domestic product of an economy. It is definitely essential (and poses a challenge in a way) to evaluate the intrinsic economic value, as most of the business minds have tried to comprehend today. One such endeavour comes through the Global Initiative for a Sustainable Tomorrow (GIST) platform to quantify the impact of nega-

tive externalities by allocating economic values to invisibles to make it a plausible option for inclusion by the bureaucrats and corporates.

The concept of GDP accounting of the poor appears to be crucial in that it has to blend sustainability along with big data that is accessible to all. The TEEB framework facilitates all of the above by merging it with data analytics, technology and sustainability. Certainly, it is not about placing a price on nature, rather it is about recognising, demonstrating and valuing nature's services to people. Nobody is buying or selling a cloud. The reality is that forests can generate rainfall that is vital for agricultural productivity. However, recognising and demonstrating that true scientific value is the reality now.

The idea propagated by TEEB's Indian members, "GDP of the poor", holds relevance especially in a fragile atmosphere of everlasting ecological uncertainties that undoubtedly will

decide the future placement of the nation on the global map. Their report signals that the rural production system would suffer the most, given the destruction of our ecosystems. The question that we must ask ourselves is, that if nations like Vietnam, Indonesia and so on, can separately compute the GDP of the poor, why not India, despite three of the members on the board of the TEEB being Indian. Initiatives like zero-budget natural farming in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are welcome and the need of the hour. If bureaucrats could accept poverty-alleviation as a mainstream agenda to make a powerful diminution of rural poverty, accounting for the GDP of the poor can be the way forward.

(The writer is Assistant Professor and Senior Research Scholar, DRC/FMS, University of Delhi. Inputs by Kushankur Dey, Assistant Professor, IIM Lucknow. The views expressed are personal.)



## A NATION ON FIRE FOR ITS FREEDOM

Over 30 people have died and hundreds have been injured in New Delhi. The Prime Minister talks of peace and brotherhood, but he has led his country here. The political opposition is enfeebled. He continues efforts to muzzle civil society. Yet it is fighting back. Indian citizens have expressed their revulsion at the country's direction.

(The Guardian editorial)

SHORT READS

Gold rises Rs 78 on global cues, silver up by Rs 35

**NEW DELHI:** Gold prices on Thursday rose by Rs 78 to Rs 43,513 per 10 gram in the national capital on positive global trend as worries over spread of coronavirus raised yellow metal's safe haven appeal, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 43,435 per 10 gram in the previous trading session. Silver prices also gained Rs 35 to Rs 48,130 per kg from Rs 48,095 per kg. "Spot gold for 24 karat in Delhi gained Rs 78 with recovery in international gold prices. Gold prices traded higher on coronavirus worries with increase of new cases," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said.

Skoda Auto launches Octavia Rs 245 priced at Rs 35.99 lakh

**NEW DELHI:** Skoda Auto India on Thursday launched its limited edition Octavia RS 245 model priced at Rs 35.99 lakh (ex-showroom) with online bookings scheduled to open on March 1. The car can be booked against a fee of Rs 1 lakh and a limited 200 units of the model 245 will be sold exclusively through its centralised platform www.buyskodaonline.co.in, the company said in a statement. Commenting on the launch, Skoda Auto India Brand Director Zac Hollis said, "With the Octavia RS 245, we translate our century-long motorsports legacy into the fastest 'koda offering in India.' It offers a combination of high-performance engine, sporty appearance and dynamic driving capabilities along with class-leading safety and intelligent connectivity features, he added.

Vatika leases 50K sq ft to Decathlon in Gurugram

**NEW DELHI:** Realty firm Vatika has leased about 50,000 sq ft area to retail chain Decathlon in its project at Gurugram. Vatika has leased this space to French firm Decathlon, which is into retailing of sports goods, at its project 'Shopper's Village INXT' in New Gurugram, Haryana. The project, which is part of a large township, will have a leasable area of around 1.2 million sq ft. Alok Mehta, Head Product Strategy, Vatika, said Decathlon has been pre-leased about 50,000 sq ft area in this project to open its flagship store in New Gurugram.



New Zealand for trade pact with India

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
New Zealand on Thursday said it will look forward to a bilateral trade agreement with India in case New Delhi does not join the China-backed mega trade deal RCEP. The Narendra Modi-led government in November decided not to join Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) deal as negotiations failed to satisfactorily address New Delhi's "outstanding issues and concerns". However, the possibility of India joining the trade pact is open provided its concerns are addressed by the member nations. "I met with your minister of commerce (Piyush Goyal) yesterday and we discussed those issues. Of course, New Zealand and India have been busy for some years negotiating through the rubric of RCEP and we will know by the end of the year as to whether India chooses to stay out or participate in RCEP. "But if they don't participate in RCEP then we will obviously want to pursue a trading relationship through a different means," New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Export Growth David Parker said at a Fici conference. Responding to issues concerning the opening of domestic dairy sector, he said New Zealand appreciates the concerns of the Indian dairy industry but expressed hope that some solutions could be arrived at through negotiations. "We know it is an issue of sensitivity to the Indian government on behalf of the people. We know that there is a real issue for India. The only way that a deal is eventually done is if it is mutually beneficial. How might that be done in respect of dairy. Well it would be good if it were a fact based argument". India's dairy industry -- the largest in the world -- had expressed apprehension that the RCEP trade pact would severely impact dairy farmers because of cheaper imports from Australia and New Zealand.

World shares slump after Trump announcement on virus plans

PNS ■ LONDON

Shares fell in Europe and Asia on Thursday after President Donald Trump announced that the US was stepping up its efforts to combat the virus outbreak that began in China, as the number of cases surpassed 81,000. Germany's DAX lost 2.2 per cent to 12,498.88 and the CAC 40 in Paris dropped 2.3 per cent to 5,599.99. In London, the FTSE 100 lost 2.5 per cent to 6,869.80. The future for the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.5 per cent to 26,779.00 and the future contract for the S&P 500 was 0.6 per cent lower, at 3,092.20. Trump told reporters late Wednesday that he was open to spending "whatever is appropriate" to fight the virus, after the Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York suggested USD 8.5 billion instead of the requested USD 2.5 billion. He put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of the response to the virus outbreak. Trump said he didn't believe a pandemic was inevitable, though health officials standing beside him warned more infections are coming. And shortly after Trump spoke, the government announced that another person in the US was infected -- someone in California who appears not to have the usual risk factors of having travelled abroad or being exposed to another patient. Traders are concerned the global economy could stumble as major industrial countries struggle to contain the outbreak. News of hundreds of new infections in China and elsewhere helped pull share prices lower Thursday in Asia. "Previous crisis playbooks have all revolved around buying the dip in equities, so I wonder just how much further the fire sale will go before the market at least starts to scale in again," Stephen Innes of AxiCorp said in a report. "But based on last night's price action, it does appear that any bounce in stocks is likely to be short-lived. And eventually, the markets could fall deeper as investors start to think what's the point of trying to pick the bottom in the short term." Japan's Nikkei 225 index lost 2.1 per cent to 21,948.23, while in Australia, the S&P ASX/200 dropped 0.8 per cent to 6,657.90. Hong Kong's climbed 0.3 per cent to 26,778.62. In South Korea, where 334 new cases of the virus were reported, the Kospi dropped 1.1 per cent to 2,054.89. The central bank downgraded its growth estimate for 2020 to 2.1 per cent from 2.3 per cent and said the virus outbreak would have a short-term impact on business activity, after the economy expanded at its slowest pace in a decade last year.

The Bank of Korea kept its key policy rate unchanged, at its current record low 1.25 per cent. The Shanghai Composite index rose 0.1 per cent to 2,991.33, while shares fell in Taiwan and most of Southeast Asia. Thailand's benchmark rose 1.5 per cent after tumbling 5.1 per cent on Wednesday following reports of newly discovered virus cases. Investors have been moving more money from stocks into bonds in the wake of the outbreak. The yield on the 10-year Treasury was at 1.29 per cent Thursday, down from 1.34 per cent. The yield on the three-month Treasury bill edged up to 1.51 per cent. The inversion in the yield between the 10-year and the 3-month Treasuries is a red flag for investors because it has preceded the last seven recessions.



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price action, it does appear that any bounce in stocks is likely to be short-lived. And eventually, the markets could fall deeper as investors start to think what's the point of trying to pick the bottom in the short term." Japan's Nikkei 225 index lost 2.1 per cent to 21,948.23, while in Australia, the S&P ASX/200 dropped 0.8 per cent to 6,657.90. Hong Kong's climbed 0.3 per cent to 26,778.62. In South Korea, where 334 new cases of the virus were reported, the Kospi dropped 1.1 per cent to 2,054.89. The central bank downgraded its growth estimate for 2020 to 2.1 per cent from 2.3 per cent and said the virus outbreak would have a short-term impact on business activity, after the economy expanded at its slowest pace in a decade last year.

Trump: India is incredible, lot of progress made in bilateral ties

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has described the US relationship with India now as "extraordinary" and said a lot of progress was made in bilateral ties during his maiden official visit to the "incredible country" where America is going to do a lot of business. Trump's remarks came even as his likely Democratic Party rival in the November presidential elections Bernie Sanders criticised the US president for what he claimed was a "failure of leadership" on the issue of human rights in the light of the communal riots in Delhi. President Trump and his family visited India from February 24 to 25 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Trump was accompanied by top brass of his administration, including National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien. Talking to reporters after his return from India on Wednesday, Trump said, "He (Prime Minister Modi) is a great gentleman, a great leader. It's an incredible country." Trump visited Ahmedabad, Agra and New Delhi. During his stay, he addressed a massive rally in Ahmedabad along with Modi, visited Agra and held official meetings in New Delhi. The US president was

feted at the world's largest cricket stadium in the "Namaste Trump" event in Ahmedabad and was cheered by tens of thousands of people. "We were treated very, very well and we really enjoyed it. A lot of tremendous progress was made in terms of relationship -- our relationship with India is extraordinary right now," Trump said. "We are going to be doing a lot of business with India, they are sending billions and billions of dollars now to the United States," Trump said in response to a question. But in the midst of the positive comments on India by Trump, his family and administration officials, his likely Democratic Party rival in the November 3 presidential election, Sanders slammed the president and said the Trump's statement regarding the violence in New Delhi during his visit was a "failure of leadership".

Talking to reporters after his return from India on Wednesday, Trump said, "He (Prime Minister Modi) is a great gentleman, a great leader. It's an incredible country."

India visit was a "failure of leadership". Asked about incidents of violence during his India visit, the US president had said, "As far as the individual attacks, I heard about it, but I didn't discuss that with him (Modi). That's up to India." Reacting on Trump's statement on the issue, Sanders on Wednesday tweeted, "Over 200 million Muslims call India home. Widespread anti-Muslim mob violence has killed at least 27 and injured many more. Trump responds by saying 'That's up to India'. This is a failure of leadership on human rights." Sanders is the second Democratic presidential nominee after Senator Elizabeth Warren to speak against the violence over the Citizenship Amendment Act in New Delhi. Meanwhile, President Trump's daughter Ivanka noted that the president announced that the US International Development Finance Corporation (USIDFC) will open an office in India. The USIDFC will establish a permanent presence in India to strengthen our economic ties, improve development plus further women's economic empowerment through WGDP (Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative)!"



Jason Kothari reveals mantra of turnaround success in book

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jason Kothari, who has the distinction of transforming several distressed Indian Internet firms, shares the turnaround story of his journey from a rebel, train-wreck kid to one of the top ten paid young executives in the country. As a college student at Wharton, Kothari scraped together money from family and friends to save his childhood favourite comic book company, Valiant Entertainment, from bankruptcy and bring it back to life. A few years later, he transformed Valiant into the third-largest superhero entertainment company in the world after Marvel and DC Comics and sold it for USD 100 million. Jason then became a professional turnaround leader and went on to transform distressed Indian Internet firms Housing.com, FreeCharge and Snapdeal, and advise giants like technology investor Softbank and real estate developer Emaar. In his book "Irrationally Passionate: My Turnaround



Jason Kothari

from Rebel to Entrepreneur", Kothari shares his turnaround story and the many learnings from it with students and young entrepreneurs to help them in their journey. Published by Harper Business, the book tells how Kothari started as an assistant to Jackie Chan in Hong Kong, learned strategy from champion Muay Thai fighters in Thailand, tackled huge personal setbacks and became a CEO in 60 seconds, among many other stories. As the CEO of Housing.com, Kothari is credited with leading the transformation of the distressed company and a merger with News Corp's PropTiger to create the USD 350 million industry leader.

Sensex drops 143 pts on coronavirus jitters

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Extending its losses for the fifth consecutive session, equity benchmark Sensex declined 143 points on Thursday tracking a global selloff amid rising fears of the coronavirus outbreak turning into a pandemic and hitting the world economy. The expiry of domestic derivatives contracts too kept market volatile, traders said. After plunging over 465.69 points during the day, the 30-share BSE barometer finally settled 143.30 points, or 0.36 per cent, lower at 39,745.66. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty fell 45.20 points or 0.39 per cent to end at 11,633.30. ONGC was the top loser in the Sensex pack, followed by HCL Tech, SBI, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, Hero MotoCorp and M&M. On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Titan, Asian Paints and Axis Bank led the gainers' chart. Market opened in negative



India is at risk of getting severely impacted by the epidemic economically because of its high reliance on Chinese imports for various goods, he noted

tracking its Asian peers as the rapid global spread of the coronavirus kept investors on the edge and made them seek safety in gold and bonds, said Narendra Solanki, Head Fundamental Research (Investment Services) - AVP Equity Research, Anand Rathi Shares & Stock Brokers. India is at risk of getting severely impacted by the epidemic economically because of its high reliance on Chinese imports for various goods, he noted. Benchmarks also remained volatile on account of monthly expiry of derivatives contracts, he said, adding that sentiment remained sluggish amid reports that GDP growth is likely to stay flat at 4.5 per cent in October-December 2019.

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'Indian economy will bounce back'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy will soon bounce back from its worst showing in 11 years as a steep cut in taxes will help attract investments and the massive infrastructure spending revives economic activity, mining baron Anil Agarwal said. Besides spending on building infrastructure, the government should focus on exploiting natural resources the country has and look at stake sale in most PSUs. Public sector firms have the potential to produce three-times more than the current output and should be operated independently, he told PTI here. "I think it (economy) will bounce back. It has tremendous potential. I see light at the end of the tunnel, it is not far. The economy will kick start soon," he said adding the roll-out of Goods and Services Tax (GST) had a temporary impact but it is being straightened now. Indian economic growth plunged to an 11-year low in the July-September quarter when it clocked 4.5 per cent expansion. The government has

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ANIL AGARWAL

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HMSI launches BS-VI compliant Unicorn bike model

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMIS) on Thursday launched BS-VI compliant version of its Unicorn bike model with price starting at Rs 93,593 (ex-showroom, Delhi). The Unicorn BS-VI is powered by a 160cc engine providing greater performance and superior efficiency, HMSI said in a statement. "Unicorn was the first motorcycle introduced by Honda in India. Since its launch, it has always been the benchmark when it comes to engine refinement and smooth performance," HMSI President, CEO & Managing Director Minoru Kato said. The Unicorn model has been in the market for more than 2.5 million customers, he added. HMSI Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing Yadvinder Singh Guleria said with the new advanced 160cc engine delivering more power, Unicorn BS-VI "will raise the bar for seamless refined performance along with the trust of Honda reliability".

Can pay dues if Centre adjusts GST credit: Voda Idea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Troubled Vodafone Idea has written to the telecom department expressing its inability to pay full AGR dues unless the government takes urgent measures, including allowing staggered payment, reduction in levies and implementation of floor prices in the crisis-ridden sector. The letter to the communications ministry comes at a time when the company is confronted with AGR dues of over Rs 53,000 crore and has paid a mere 7 per cent of its liabilities so far. Warning that it is "not in a



sound financial state", Vodafone Idea said the company would be in a position to meet its liabilities only if the government initiates steps including allowing set offs for GST credit accumulated so far, and permitting staggered mechanism for payment of balance amount of interest,

The company has sought a moratorium of three years on payment of interest and penalty, and subsequent payment timeline of 15 years at an interest of six per cent

penalty, and interest on penalty. It said adjustment of GST credit due from the government could help in meeting its AGR payment. Citing its losses over last few years, the company said the financial stress in the telecom sector is widely acknowledged. The company underlined its current subscriber base of 300 million, and employee base of 10,000 direct staffers while making a strong plea for "urgent support from government". Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) said it can settle the balance of its self-assessed principle if the Centre allows set-offs of Rs 8,000 crore worth of GST credit lying with the govern-

ment. In fact, the amount when fully set off will even pay in part the self assessed interest, it said in the letter to the telecom department seen by PTI. The company has sought a moratorium of three years on payment of interest and penalty, and subsequent payment timeline of 15 years at an interest of six per cent. The letter, similar to the one written by industry body COAI, has also batted for grant of loan, equal to AGR amount at six per cent interest rate "so that the AGR liability may be discharged immediately".

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**T** nubhav Sinha recently declared *Thappad* is meant to be the concluding feature of his 'discrimination trilogy' — the other two being *Mulk* (2018), and *Article 15* (2019), his manifesto on oppression on the basis of caste. *Thappad* trains focus on gender discrimination to complete the picture.

## THAPPAD resonates with impact

Sinha's biggest credit as far as *Thappad* goes is that he maintains a balance in tone, never getting overly preachy with what his narrative has to convey. *Thappad* merely utilises a random, impulsive act of slapping to lay out an intricate portrait of marital exploitation that could be happening within the confines of any household that might maintain a picture of calm on the outside.

Importantly, the film questions the male entitlement of superiority in a relationship.

Sinha and co-writer Mrunmayee Lagoo set the tone for that idea right from the early frames, long before the film's highlight, titular act of violence actually happens. We spot it in little things that define the life of protagonist Amrita (Taapsee Pannu). It is a given, for instance, that she is the one who must wake up to turn off the alarm clock that her husband Vikram (Pavail Gulati) sets, so that he can get up on time for work. If he must work all night, she should be around to fix the printer, and she must also be there to brew the perfect cuppa for her in-laws early next morning.

For Amrita, according to that advantage to Vikram would seem like a natural thing, mainly due to the superior stature of his family that is unsaid in the script and yet subtly portrayed. She is okay with the idea of

being a housewife who has given up her dream of being a dancer, and is now satisfied putting her talent to use only in giving dance tuitions to the neighbour's daughter.

Amrita's sole purpose in life, it would seem, is to be happy and proud about the fact that Vikram is all set to be transferred by his firm to London, where he will take up a top job and they will set up home in a house with a cute blue door.

The trigger that sets off turmoil in her seemingly content life is the slap that Vikram lands on her cheek, at a house party to celebrate their London transfer, in an uncharacteristic and frustrated fit of rage.

The very brief scene, masterfully written and executed, resonates for the sheer sense of disparity it so simply conveys. You understand the deep-seated chauvinism about Vikram, an otherwise sophisticated guy with a pleasant demeanour, which drives him to instinctively take umbrage when his wife tries stopping him as he enters into an aggressive showdown with a colleague at the party. Amrita, on the other hand, is expected not to make too much of the incident because, as her mother-in-law (Tanvi Azmi) says, there are guests outside waiting to be entertained.

*Thappad* digs deep to establish the fact that gender dis-

crimination is an outcome of the upbringing that not just men, but also women, get in our country. The screenplay is quietly effective in the way it shows how the thought of saying sorry, even long afterward, never quite crosses Vikram's mind. For Amrita, his lack of remorse sparks off the realisation that her marriage was always built on Vikram's ego and not love.

For maximum impact, the story draws up subtexts utilising prop female characters. As Amrita decides to walk out of her marriage, we meet her lawyer (Maya Sarao). She is a successful career woman who fights for women's rights and yet cannot escape her husband's (Manav Kaul) brutish ways in the privacy of their posh bedroom. At the other extreme is Amrita's domestic help, who suffers physical abuse regularly at the hands of her husband because he feels it is only right that a man beats up his wife. If these subplots appear too familiar while setting up a broader picture, Sinha does well to execute them with authenticity.

Yet, despite the film's overall profundity, you get a sense that not everything about *Thappad* is perfect. The only man who seems to have a sense of gender equality is Amrita's father (Kumud Mishra), but he does

not get anything substantial to do in the film apart from being there for her. We understand Amrita's awakening happens primarily because she is slapped in public. Does that mean she would have glossed over the issue had Vikram assaulted her in private? Also, gender equations in a marital relationship cannot always be explained in black and white. The film never quite delves into the grey areas of Amrita and Vikram's marriage. Still, *Thappad* resonates with impact. It is without a doubt one of the finer films you will see this year, simply because it tackles a difficult and powerful subject with credibility. A cast of proven talents excels in well-

**CAST:**  
 TAAPSEE PANNU,  
 PAVAIL GULATI, KUMUD  
 MISHRA, RATNA PATHAK  
 SHAH, TANVI AZMI, MAYA  
 SARAO, DIA MIRZA, MANAV  
 KAUL; **DIRECTION:** ANUBHAV  
 SINHA  
**RATING:**  
 4/5



— IANS

## Stressed over board exams? Spend 10 mins daily with nature

**A**mid the ongoing board exams, spending as little as 10 minutes in a natural setting like the neighbourhood park can help students feel happier and lessen the effects of both physical and mental stress, say researchers.

The team from Cornell University in the US found that 10-50 minutes in natural spaces was the most effective to improve mood, focus and physiological markers like blood pressure and heart rate.

The study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, aims to provide an easily-achievable dosage that physicians can prescribe as a preventive measure against high levels

of stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health issues college students face.

"It doesn't take much time for the positive benefits to kick in — we're talking 10 minutes outside in a space with nature," said study lead author Gen Meredith from the Cornell University.

"We firmly believe that every student, no matter what subject or how high their workload, has that much discretionary time each day, or at least a few times per week," Meredith added.

For the findings, the research team reviewed studies that examined the effects of nature on people of college age (no younger than 15, no older than 30) to discover how much

time students should be spending outside and what they should be doing while they're there.

They found that 10-50 minutes in natural spaces was the most effective to improve mood, focus and physiological markers like blood pressure and heart rate.

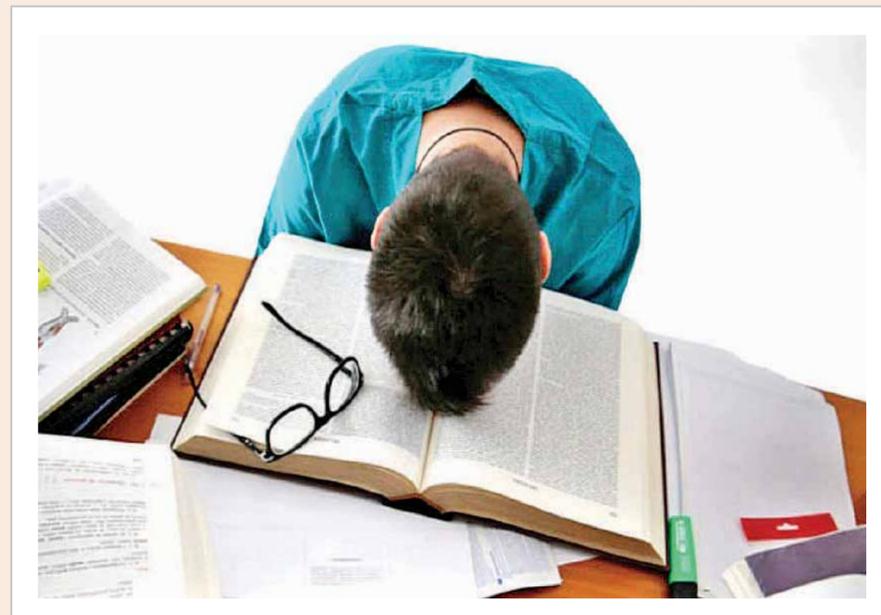
"It's not that there's a decline after 50 minutes, but rather that the physiological and self-reported psychological benefits tend to plateau after that," said study co-author Donald Rakow.

To enjoy the positive effects of being outside, students need only to be sitting or walking, the two primary activities the researchers examined in an effort to provide accessible recommendations.

"This is an opportunity to challenge our thinking around what nature can be. It is really all around us: trees, a planter with flowers, a grassy quad or a wooded area," Meredith said.

The impetus for this work is a movement toward prescribing time in nature as a way to prevent or improve stress and anxiety, while also supporting physical and mental health outcomes.

**SPENDING 10-50 MIN IN NATURAL SPACES WILL IMPROVE MOOD, FOCUS AND PHYSIOLOGICAL MARKERS LIKE BLOOD PRESSURE AND HEART RATE**



## RADHIKA MADAN: Clothes don't define us

**A**ctress Radhika Madan says she gets baffled when she finds how women are still made to feel "judged" for something like a bra-strap.

The actress has come forward to lend her support to women, shamed for their peeking bra straps. She has come on board as the face of *Baar Bra Dekho*, an unique initiative by MTV to spread the word against strap shaming and normalise conversations around it.

"Awkward stares, nasty glances, unwanted touch — almost all of us have been subjected to such instances while travelling in public transport or otherwise. It baffles me to see how women are still made to feel judged for something like a bra-strap showing that should have been normalised long ago," Radhika said.

"Clothes don't define us and it's simply a woman's call on

what she chooses to wear and how. I am glad to lend my voice to a thought provoking initiative like *Baar Bra Dekho* that lets women give back and be at comfort. Let's celebrate this Women's Day differently and

choose not to feel awkward for our bra straps showing. Straps don't shame, so you shouldn't also," she added.

Sharing her story, Radhika said: "I was in school, and it was that phase when you're growing up and you start wearing new bras. I went to school one day, wearing a coloured bra. *EK ladka aaya mere pass and usne mujhe kaha, 'arey, your bra strap is showing.'*"

"And at that time I realised, I was so embarrassed. I went home and decided that I will now wear nude bras under my school uniform. But now when I think about it, I feel like get a life dude, it's just a bra strap. A bra strap — that is it. You don't have to be embarrassed about it, it's just there."

Through the initiative, Radhika will be asking women to share their stories of shaming to trigger attention and awareness.

— IANS



# Eva Mendes wants to play a Disney Villain

**A**ctress Eva Mendes has revealed that she would like to play a Disney villain. In an interview to *Entertainment Tonight*, Mendes spoke about how motherhood has limited her choices on screen, and also spoke of desire to do a Disney project, reports [femalefirst.co.uk](http://femalefirst.co.uk).

"Acting is something that I will always love. It's just like now that I have children, I'm kind of extreme. There's just so many things I won't do. Like I won't do most of the movies I've done in the past. A lot of things are off that list. I don't want to do anything too violent. Of course, I don't want to do anything too sexual or sexual at all."

"So I'm basically like, 'Disney, I'm all yours, Disney'. That's all that's left," she said. And she prefers doing the role of a Disney villain, rather than that of a princess. "I'm more of the villain kinda type of girl. I'm more of the Ursula type ... I like the villains of the Disney movies. They're fun," Mendes added.



# Ashish Vidyarthi to make his debut on podcast

**A**ctor Ashish Vidyarthi, who works predominantly in Bollywood, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu and other languages, is all set to make his podcast debut. He is coming up with the show *Begin*

*The Journey*. "I am an actor and a communicator who loves exploring different forms of communication which are exciting. Podcast, today is a form which is finding a lot of traction and I am excited to explore this new genre. My show

*Begin The Journey* itself is a new journey for me as an artist. I hope to connect with my audiences on a personal level as I share experiences on this new medium," Ashish said. The show will air on IVM Podcasts from March 2. — IANS



# A.R. RAHMAN ON TURNING PRODUCER



**O**scar-winning composer A.R. Rahman says turning producer is like being born again as a new man.

He has turned writer and producer with his movie *99 Songs*. "I feel like I have been reborn since the time I have decided to turn producer. It's an entirely new feeling," Rahman said.

Opening up about the challenges of making a film, he said, "It's like being born again as a new man. When I started as a film music composer, I already had ten years of experience."

"But as a producer, it felt so new and seemed like I was starting all over again and I wanted to leave no stone unturned in giving it my best. Also, since I was working with other debutants — the director and the actor — I was reminded that I have a completely new team and we had a modest budget. I didn't want to spare any effort in presenting it well and try to make our own epic."

Asked if he was a regular on sets during the shoot, he said, "I knew that if some important scenes needed to be expanded, I ensured I would be present on set. Our executive producer would tell me that we have time constraints and will have to wrap the scene in a day while I was keen on four because those are the scenes that need love and complete justice. It's an art to balance between creative and commercial. However, if you get too creative then you may have to sell your property."

"It is a first attempt and I hope we have done our best. My wife and daughters have been a great support," he added.

The movie is directed by debutant director Vishwesh Krishnamoorthy and will release in three languages, including Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. *99 Songs* will also introduce Ehan Bhat. Presented by Jio Studios, the film is produced by A.R. Rahman's production company YM Movies and co-produced by Ideal Entertainment.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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

**Yesterday's solution**

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

**Rules**

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

### ACROSS

- To go back and forth in a crooked line
- Exchange for another
- Wet weather
- A member of a ship's crew
- Another name for pudding
- Opposite of sister
- A large country just south of the USA
- Dotted cubes used when playing board games
- Animals like large mice
- Animals with humps
- The side of a building
- A sea robber
- These birds might talk
- A large, flightless bird
- The hottest season
- Instructions for making a cake
- The way out of a building
- Pleads

### DOWN

- The number nothing
- This type of aeroplane has no engine

### SOLUTION

J	E	L	L	F	I	S	H		
A	O	I	T						
S	I	G	N	S	L	V	I	N	G
T	H	E	M	L	L	O			
R	A	R	E	J	E	T	L	A	G
E	S	D							
T	I	S	S						
C	C	N	P	L	E				
H	E	A	D	S					
R	E	A	V						
S	E	P	T	E	M	B	E	R	

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

India entered the semifinals of the women's T20 World Cup after Shafali Verma's 34-ball 46 followed by a superlative performance from the bowlers helped the team notch up a narrow four-run win over New Zealand here on Thursday.

Invited to bat, India posted a below-par 133 for eight in the group A match with Shafali top-scoring with a 34-ball 46 and Taniya Bhatia chipping in with a 25-ball 23.

They, however, produced a disciplined performance with the ball to restrict New Zealand to 129 for six and register their third successive win in the tournament and seal a last-four spot.

With this win, India topped Group A, having beaten Australia and Bangladesh in their last two outings.

"It is a great feeling when your team is performing like that," India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said after the match.

"We did the same mistakes, we got a good start in the first 10 overs and we didn't carry the momentum. We did bowl well in patches and some times, we were not up to the mark and have to focus on those areas," she added.

Defending a below-par total, India introduced spin straight away but Deepti Sharma bled 12 runs with opener Rachel Priest (12) hitting her for two boundaries.

But experienced pacer Shikha Pandey removed Priest in the next over when she had her caught at mid wicket.

With Shikha and left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad bowling in tandem, New Zealand played with caution to reach 28 for one.

Back into the attack, Deepti then cleaned up Bates with a beauty of a delivery as New Zealand slipped to 30 for two.

Poonam Yadav and Radha Yadav then mounted the pressure on the Kiwis and soon the Black Caps were 34 for 3 when the former dismissed skipper Sophie Devine (14).

Maddy Green (24) and Katey Martin (25) then tried to resurrect the innings with a 36-ball 43-run stand.

However, Gayakwad returned to

# THREE IN A ROW

Shafali's 46, bowler's economical spell help Harman & Co book last 4 place with narrow four-run win over White Ferns



Indian team celebrate their win over New Zealand in their third game of Women's T20 World Cup in Melbourne

## We read & handle situations better now, says Taniya



Poonam Yadav celebrates with Taniya Bhatia after she later stumped out opposition player

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Wicket-keeper batswoman Taniya Bhatia says the Indian team has got better at reading and handling different situations, which was evident during the recent tri-series in Australia.

India on Thursday became the first team to seal a semifinal spot at the T20 World Cup following a narrow four-run win over New Zealand here.

"In the last 12 to 14 months, we have improved a lot as a unit. We're in a really positive position. We've been playing well ever since the tri-series. I think we've got a lot better as a team in working out how to handle and read situations well," Bhatia said at the post-match press conference.

but we need to keep up the momentum. If we do that, we will do well and hopefully we can win the final," Bhatia added.

Bhatia is optimistic that their batters will definitely come good in the remaining matches of the tournament.

"We're playing well, it's just one or two odd games where our batters failed to perform. Shafali is giving us a good start and the rest of us batters will take up responsibility," she said.

Bhatia said she is open to bat at any position for the team's cause.

"I can bat well up the order and I know I'm capable of scoring runs there," she said.

India will play Sri Lanka in their last Group A game on Saturday.

remove Green, who danced down the pitch only to end up with an outside edge as Bhatia did the rest.

Radha then dismissed Martin to leave New Zealand at 90 for 5 in 16.3 overs.

Needing 44 off 21 balls, Kerr (34) blasted four boundaries to accumulate 18 runs in the penultimate over bowled by Poonam to bring the equation down to 16 off six balls.

In the final over, Heyley Jensen (11) and Kerr cracked a four each but Shikha held her nerves in the end to ensure India's win.



## Aus thrash B'desh

PTI ■ CANBERRA

Alyssa Healy and Beth Mooney hit attacking half-centuries in a dominating 151-run opening stand as Australia hammered Bangladesh by 86 runs in their ICC Women's T20 World Cup match, here on Thursday.

The partnership between Healy (83) and Mooney (81 not out) is Australia's highest for any wicket at the Women's T20 World Cup.

Australia's 189 for one, the highest total of the tournament, proved too much for Bangladesh who could manage only 103 for nine.



Virat Kohli plays a pull shot

## Kiwis look to exploit sideways movement against Kohli

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Virat Kohli will be itching to make a comeback in the second Test and the best chance for New Zealand will be to exploit the sideways movement which can spell trouble for the Indian captain, feels opener Tom Latham.

Kohli had an indifferent tour of New Zealand so far. He was out for 2 and 19 in the first Test in Wellington.

"When Virat comes out to bat we will be ready. He is a quality player and there is a reason why he is up around that No 1 rank for such a period of time," Latham said at the media conference on Thursday.

"He has done it for long time and done it in all conditions. If the surface is conducive to sideways movement we will try and exploit that," said Latham.

Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami might have had a below par game in Wellington but Latham said they remain world class bowlers and the team would be certainly wary of them.

"We have played those guys really well in the first Test. But they are World class performers and we will be wary of them. Certainly they would be on top of their game and if we play well it will give us a good chance. We need to be consistent for long periods," he said.

Latham is sure that Neil Wagner's comeback will add firepower to the side.

"I haven't yet seen him but when he rocks up for training he will be absolutely fizzing up to get going and obviously he will be raring to go. He is been a quality performer for a number of years for us," Latham said.

The Hagley Oval surface will have bounce and Latham expects Wagner to be more than a handful.

"It's something that Neil has obviously been so good at for so long and he is second to none in terms of accuracy.

"He is a short guy and that makes him harder to play. If the surface is up for that plan he will be looking to go round with that."

The first day will be important reckoned Latham.

"Generally, it's a good surface and surfaces in NZ have been on the greener side at the start and then flatten out. So we need to do well on day one."

## Aggressive intent & clear mindset against pace will help us: Rahane

CHRISTCHURCH: Ajinkya Rahane wants to take on the New Zealand pace battery with more intent in the second Test and his foolproof strategy includes countering the awkward angles which became a nightmare for Indian batsmen during the first Test.

Rahane, who top-scored with 46 in the first innings of the opening Test, is hopeful that a turnaround will happen on a green top at the Hagley Oval, which he reckons will be better for batting compared to the one they got in Wellington.

"I am not saying (we have to be) more aggressive but having that intent and clear mindset will help us," Rahane told reporters on Thursday.

New Zealand pacers Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson used the short ball liberally after coming wide of the crease with an angle that was disconcerting for the batsmen.

"I think they used that angle really well in Wellington. Bowling wide of the crease or from the centre, they changed angles while bowling the short balls. I think their plan was completely clear.

"As a batsman, if you going to think about a particular shot, then you need to back yourself and play that shot. You cannot doubt yourself. We need to forget what happened in Wellington," the Indian vice-captain said.

According to Rahane, the two net sessions

at the Hagley Oval is being used to practice negating the awkward angles that Neil Wagner and company can create.

"That's what I said: try and learn what mistakes we did as a group, what can we learn. I think we have to practice those angles. We had a practice session and we have one more tomorrow. And you have to practice that and trust your ability in the middle," Rahane said in a reassuring tone.

While net sessions are important, it's the instincts in match situations that counts, he said.

"But to change or adjust those angles there are times you need to be instinctive while you are batting. It can mean standing on off-stump, or standing outside the crease or staying deep inside the crease - like if it is a pitch for cut shot then you can stand deeper in the crease. This is the mental side of the game," Rahane said.

"For me, as a batsman it is important you show your intent to the bowler, if you stand in one spot then the bowler doesn't need to change anything. These are small things we have been working on in practice and how to use the crease and the angles. Doesn't matter how much you practice you must trust or have the belief to be able to do it in the middle," he added.

PTI

## Jaffer advises Indian batsmen to score big

NAVI MUMBAI: Wasim Jaffer, a domestic cricket giant, says unless the Indian batsmen build on their starts and put a big total on the board, bouncing back in the Test series against New Zealand will be extremely difficult.

"Virat has a lean patch for a while, so I am expecting him to come back stronger. Pujara needs some runs under his belt. Most importantly they need to convert their starts into three figures, if that doesn't happen and if we don't put score of 350-400 runs then it is difficult," Jaffer told PTI.

"In 200-250 (runs) you can't win a Test match unless there is much help from the pitch. When we bat first or bat second, we need to score 400-450 runs," Jaffer said.

Jaffer also felt that the team getting bundled out for below 200 in the first Test was not befitting of its number one rank in the longest format of the game.

"They kept our run-rate in check and kept our batsmen under pressure for long periods. I felt that in the first innings the conditions were favourable for bowlers, but they worked out an strategy of bouncers and we should have batted better in the second innings. To get out both times under 200 is unlike the number one Test team," he said.

PTI

## Warner, Finch power hunt Proteas



Australian players pose with winners' trophy after win in 3rd T20

AFP ■ CAPE TOWN

David Warner and Aaron Finch launched a brutal assault on the South African bowlers to set up a comprehensive 97-run Australian victory in the series-deciding third Twenty20 international at Newlands.

In a near-repeat of Australia's record 107-run win in the first match of the series in Johannesburg, South Africa captain Quinton de Kock's decision to bowl first backfired spectacularly.

Led by opening batsmen

Warner (57) and captain Finch (55), Australia piled up 193 for five — three fewer than they made in Johannesburg.

They then bowled out South Africa for 96, just seven more than the host country's record low in Johannesburg.

As in Johannesburg, left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc bowled De Kock, South Africa's star batsman, in the first over of the home team's reply.

He followed up by dismissing former captain Faf du Plessis in the third over and was named man-of-the-match after taking

three for 23.

Finch was named man of the series for his aggressive batting and astute captaincy.

"The guys have bought into the roles they have been asked to play," he said.

It was the first time Warner and Steve Smith had played at Newlands since both were banned for a year after a ball-tampering scandal at the same ground two years ago.

South Africa were never in the game after Warner and Finch thrashed 120 for the first wicket off 74 balls.

Apart from some powerful hitting by both players, they forced the South Africans into fielding errors with their aggressive running between wickets.

"It's something we pride ourselves on," said Finch.

"It's quite disappointing the way we lost," said De Kock. "We have to keep our heads up and keep looking forward."

Although Finch said he would have batted if he had won because of the dryness of the pitch, De Kock said he would make the same decision to bowl again.

He said he still thought chasing a target at Newlands was a preferred option, but admitted: "Australia were 20 runs above par."

## Warner back as SRH captain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Explosive Australian batsman David Warner was on Thursday reinstated as IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad's captain, a position that he had to give up after the ball-tampering scandal in 2018.

The 33-year-old Warner, who led the Sunrisers to the trophy in 2016, will take over from New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson for the season starting March 29.

"I am thrilled to be given the captaincy for this coming IPL 2020. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to lead the side once again," Warner said in a video posted by the Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"I'd like to thank Kane (Williamson) for the way you guys led the team throughout the last couple of years and I'd be leaning on you guys for support and insight to the game as well," he said.

"To the management thank you for the opportunity and I'm sure I'll be doing my very best to try and lead us and lift again the IPL trophy this coming year," he added.

## Prithvi skips practice with swollen foot

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Young opener Prithvi Shaw missed Thursday's training session due to a swelling on his left foot, increasing Indian team management's worries ahead of the second Test against New Zealand beginning on Saturday.

According to sources, Shaw will undergo a blood test on Thursday to ascertain the reason of the swelling.

In case the medical report is favourable, a call will be taken during Friday's practice session on his availability for the second Test. If Shaw is not comfortable while batting, he will not make it to the playing XI.

Shubman Gill had a good net session on Thursday and it is expected that he would be asked to open the innings alongside Mayank Agarwal if Shaw is unable to make it.

During Thursday's nets, head coach Ravi

Shastri was seen paying extra attention to Gill's session. At one point, Shastri walked up to Gill and was seen giving some technical inputs about foot-work to Gill and what's required to check his uppish drives.

The Indian team management is hopeful that the swelling will not be a serious concern for Shaw.

The Mumbai opener didn't even take part in the customary warm-up session where players had a good time playing touch rugby.

Shaw had a poor outing in the first Test in Wellington, getting dismissed cheaply in both the innings.

## Guwahati will host 2 games of RR in IPL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

April, Guwahati," Rajasthan Royals wrote on their official twitter handle.

Last year, Rajasthan Royals had made a request to play few of their matches in Guwahati and have been in talks with the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) for quite sometime. The move, which is backed by the IPL Governing Council, was however challenged by a PIL at the Rajasthan High Court earlier this year.

The reason behind such a move was Royals' unhappiness with the ailing cricketing ecosystem in the state and also their poor relation with the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA).

The Royals also had been incurring losses due to reasons such as high demands for free tickets and mandatory allotment of seats to RCA.

Inaugural edition winners Rajasthan Royals had earlier played at Ahmedabad in 2010, and Ahmedabad and Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium in the 2015 season.

The Steve Smith-led Rajasthan Royals will open their campaign with an away match against Chennai Super Kings on April 2. "The Royals are bringing the IPL to the Northeast for the very first time, expanding cricket's footprint in the region. See you in

# ARJUN RAMPAL to make his T'wood debut

The Bollywood model-turned-actor, who was last seen in *Paltan*, has been cast as the antagonist in Pawan Kalyan's next with Krish, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

Joining the likes of his colleagues like Boman Irani, Arbaaz Khan and Ronit Roy, who have dabbled in Tollywood in the recent past, Arjun Rampal will soon be seen in a Telugu film. *The Pioneer* has reliably learnt that the model-turned-actor, who was last seen in JP Dutta's *Paltan*, has been cast as the antagonist in Pawan Kalyan's next with Krish. The film was launched in a low-key ceremony in Hyderabad last month.

"Discussions with Rampal went for over a month and it was only recently that the actor has agreed to

come on board. He was offered Telugu films in the past but he was reluctant to take them up because of language issues among other factors. However, he felt the role in Krish's film was something any actor would give his arm and leg for and decided to simply trust the director with his lines. He is excited to meet Pawan Kalyan in the second schedule which will commence next month," confirms a source close to the unit.

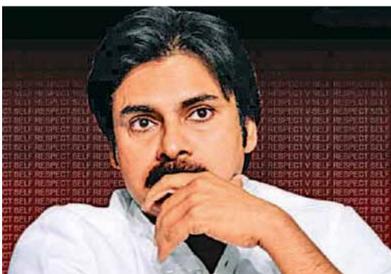
The source further adds that Rampal, who is known for his roles in films like *Rock On!!*, *Raajneeti* and *D-Day*, is the second noted face from Bollywood to have joined the

film. "Jacqueline Fernandez has agreed to do a supporting role in the film. Some reports have claimed that she is the film's leading lady but it's not true," informs the source.

A period-drama, the untitled film is being made on a budget of over Rs 100 crore by producer AM Ratnam.

Multiple sets have been erected for the shoot at the Aluminum Factory in Lingampally.

— NG



## Bunny, Trivikram to team up again

After establishing 'non-Baahubali' records at many territories across Telugu states with Ala Vaikunthapuramlo, the combination of Allu Arjun and Trivikram Srinivas will be coming together again. Wait! Before you jump into crazy conclusions, the news is that they will be teaming up for a commercial to promote the latest streaming service to hit the market, Aha. This OTT platform is co-owned by the stylish star's father Allu Aravind. With Vijay Deverakonda doing his bit for the app in the first phase of promotions, it's now Bunny's turn to spread a word

about his father's ambitious digital foray. "The ad will talk about Aha being the only digital platform which streams pure Telugu content. It's been interestingly conceived with Trivikram providing his creative inputs. With Bunny headlining it, expect the commercial to grab eyeballs. It will be shot in Hyderabad, before Bunny joins the sets of Sukumar's next on March 13. Samantha too will join the second phase of Aha promotions as she is doing a talk show for the app, whose glitzy launch is slated for Ugadi," says a well-placed source close to the development.

— NG



## Kalyanram's plate is full

Set to shoot Mallidi Vasisth's fantasy drama shortly, Nandamuri Kalyanram has lined up interesting projects for the next year. While producer Mahesh Koneru, who produced the actor's successful film *118*, a couple of years ago, announced a new project with the actor sometime back last year, we've now learnt that it will be directed by VI Anand of *Ekkadiki Pothavu Chinnadava* fame. "The film will be a commercial entertainer but will be set in an innovative space like most Anand's films. Work on the script is in full-swing," says a source.

Then there is another film for Dil Raju, who has distrib-

uted most of the actor's films in Nizam territory in the recent past. "Kalyan agreed to do a film for Raju a couple of years ago and he will be honouring his word later this year. Cinematographer-turned-director Guhan has been chosen to direct the film," informs the source, further adding that the actor has recently been narrated an action-entertainer by Mythri Movie Makers. "He evinced his interest but is yet to take a call on the project as his plate is already full."

The actor, whose last release, *Entha Manchi Vaadavuraa*, was the box office turkey, is also producing his younger brother Jr NTR's next with Trivikram Srinivas along with S Radha Krishna.

## Ruhani roped in for Naga Shaurya's next

Chi La Sow fame Ruhani Sharma, who will be next seen in Friday release *Hit*, has been signed on by East Coast Productions for their next venture with Naga Shaurya. To mark the directorial debut of Raja, the project was announced earlier this month.

A source close to the development says, "Raja was impressed with Ruhani's nuanced role in *Chi La Sow*. As the role of the film's leading lady has a lot of scope for performance, he felt that Ruhani is a perfect fit. Producer Mahesh too echoed a similar opinion. After she approached with the role Ruhani was impressed with the story, her

part and the names behind the project. So, she gave her nod." The source further adds that Mahesh has roped in Sameer Reddy for cinematography and Mahati Sagar for music. To be officially launched today in Hyderabad, Dil Raju, Kalyanram and Harish Shankar will grace the muhurat as guests. — NG



## 'PEOPLE ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING QUALITY IN MOVIES'

Actor Dulquer Salmaan speaks to the media about his latest movie *Kanulu Kanulanu Dochayante*, his wish to do more than five films a year, his take on period movies and more, reports V SATEESH REDDY

Actor Dulquer Salmaan, who is known among the Telugu audience for his movies *OK Bangaram* and *Mahanati* says that it is always tricky to make a movie simultaneously in multiple languages. "Not all bilingual films work well and it's a tricky situation. The sensibilities and tastes differ for each region and the language. Hence, I love to learn new languages for my films and expand my knowledge to various dialects within a language. Our films must convey something meaningful to the audience and I'm very thankful to the Telugu audience for encouraging my work," says Dulquer, whose latest movie, *Kanulu*

*Kanulanu Dochayante*, a bilingual, is scheduled for release today. About the movie, he says, "It is not my regular kind of movie. It has all the commercial elements like suspense, thrills, and love. It keeps the audience guessing until the end with lots of twists and turns. It was shot in Tamil Nadu and I dubbed for myself in both languages. "My team always helps me when it comes to learning a language. The unit of *Mahanati* helped me a lot with this and I trust them. Telugu is a beautiful language and I love learning it," he adds. Directed by Desingh Periyasamy, actors Ritu Varma and Gautham Menon played in pivotal roles in the film. "It is a very young team and I

had a nice experience working with them. I love to interact with new people and know about them. Desingh Periyasamy is very talented and he presented the film in a unique way that will keep the audience engaged," says the actor. Dulquer is quite active in the industry doing more than five films a year. He says, "My father used to do six to seven films a year and I'm close to his numbers. I'm very choosy about my scripts but I make sure I do at least five films in a year. Doing only two or three films doesn't feel I am doing justice to my work so I try to do as many as I can."

Speaking about his interest to do period movies, Dulquer says, "I haven't been offered any epic period dramas. I don't see myself in that space yet. My choice of period movies would be the ones related to pre or post-independence of India. If I get a script like that then I will take it up." Dulquer says that people are actively seeking quality in movies, irrespective of the language. He says, "We are at a time where people are seeking quality content. There is a lot of content being generating every year on various entertainment platforms. People bother more about the quality of the movie than about the lead roles. This is what I keep in mind when I go through scripts as I don't want to miss out on a good story."

“My father used to do six to seven films a year and I'm close to his numbers. I'm very choosy about my scripts but I make sure I do at least five films in a year. Doing only two or three films doesn't feel I am doing justice to my work so I try to do as many as I can”

