

ANALYSIS 7 ACT, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

MONEY 8 ZOMATO ACQUIRES UBER EATS BUSINESS IN INDIA

SPORTS 12 SHARAPOVA HITS ALL-TIME LOW

HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 22, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



PINK REMAKE IN THE MORNING, POLITICS IN THE EVENING

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BISHNOI TAKES 4 WICKETS FOR NO RUNS AS INDIA BOWL JAPAN OUT FOR 41

Teen spin sensation Ravi Bishnoi displayed a brilliant spell of bowling as India bowled Japan out for just 41 runs in the Under-19 World Cup in South Africa. Seamer Kartik Tyagi did the early damage, removing Japan's opener Marcus Thurgate and No.3 Neel Date in consecutive deliveries in the fifth over of the match. It was then that Bishnoi stepped in. The wily 19-year-old leg-spinner, in his first two overs, took four wickets - including that of Japan's top-scorer Shu Noguchi - without conceding a single run.



'INDIA NEEDS INVESTMENT': IMF'S GITA GOPINATH ON SNUB TO BEZOS

India needs a lot of investment and it is important to encourage it, Gita Gopinath, Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund or IMF told media on Monday, in reference to the government's cold-shoulder to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos during his visit last week. The IMF yesterday slashed India's growth forecast to 4.8 per cent, a cut of 1.3 per cent in just three months, and said the country's sharp slowdown was also a drag on the world economy.



AP SHIFTS VENUE OF R-DAY CELEBRATIONS TO VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh decided to celebrate Republic Day in Vijayawada instead of Visakhapatnam, indicating a change of heart by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. The CM is reported to have asked the government officials to make arrangements accordingly. The CM is keen to give a strong message to the people of Amaravati region by preferring Vijayawada over Visakhapatnam to celebrate the Republic Day celebrations. The officials are making arrangement to celebrate the event at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium.



RAJINIKANTH 'WON'T APOLOGISE' FOR 'PERIYAR' RALLY REMARKS

Superstar Rajinikanth today said he would not apologise for his comments on social reformer EV Ramasamy 'Periyar', over which a police complaint has been filed by a political group. Accused of 'defaming' Periyar, Rajinikanth said his comments were based on news reports. Addressing the 50th anniversary event of Tamil magazine 'Thuglak' on January 14, Rajinikanth had said: "In 1971, Periyar took out a rally against superstition in which naked images of Lord Ramachandramoorthy and Sita - with a garland of sandals - were displayed and no news outlet published it."



Nirav Modi's assets to be auctioned at Saffronart's two upcoming sales

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State Election Commission Commissioner V Nagi Reddy addressing media persons on Tuesday

Polling today for municipal bodies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

State Election Commission (SEC) Commissioner V Nagi Reddy has asserted that not only Election Commission but also political parties have a responsibility to curb the distribution of money as inducement to voters during elections.

Speaking to media persons

at his office on Tuesday, Nagi Reddy asked people to be vigilant and expose via mobile phones political parties distributing money.

The authorities would cancel voting or annul the election of the candidates should people send photos of candidates distributing money, he said.

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Sample Census, NPR in TS and AP 'success'

- People came forward to furnish personal details for NPR sample Census conducted in six districts
- Officials send feedback to Centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Notwithstanding the nationwide controversy surrounding the Citizenship Amendment Act, National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens, a sample Census and NPR conducted in six districts of Telugu states between September and October 2019 on an experimental basis turned out to be a 'success'.

The sample census was reportedly conducted in two wards of Nizamabad and in four villages of Valeru mandal in Warangal urban dis-



The sample Census and NPR was conducted in six districts of Telugu states between September and October 2019

trict as well as in four villages of Nawabpet mandal in Telangana. In AP, the sample census was held in eight villages of Bhogapuram mandal of Vizianagaram district, in

all villages of Atmakur mandal of Anantapur district, and in six wards of Narasaraopet of Guntur district.

Continued on Page 4



The team of TS officials discussing NRI policies and measures with officials of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs Department on Tuesday

Telangana NRI Policy soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State government has expedited the formulation of Telangana State NRI Policy. Based on instructions of Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Reddy, a team of senior officials visited Kerala on Tuesday.

The team, comprising Chief Advisor Rajiv Sharma, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and Chief Minister's Principal

- KCR directs officials to study NRI policies of other states
- TS officials team visits Kerala

Secretary S Narsing Rao, had meetings on Tuesday with Non-Resident Keralites Affairs Department - NORKA Secretary Elangovan and NORKA Roots Organisation's CEO Harikrishna Nambudoori.

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JD(U)'s Pawan Varma speaks of Nitish's 'private apprehensions'

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Stray dogs go on biting spree in Ameerpet, 50 children injured

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stray dogs went berserk on Dharam Karam Road in Ameerpet on Tuesday afternoon and bit nearly 50 school children. The incident happened when students of the Government school in Ameerpet had come out of the school during lunch break.

Around 1 pm, the pack of stray dogs suddenly started biting children and passersby in the lanes and bylanes at Satyam Theatre, HDFC Bank and other areas. Residents immediately alerted the GHMC dog catching squads. Some locals chased and killed one of the stray dogs



One of the dog bite victims being treated on Tuesday

near HDFC Bank around 5 pm. The squads caught nearly five dogs from the area.

All the injured persons were initially treated at private hospitals. Some of them later vis-

ited the Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM) at Narayanguda. GHMC veterinary officials said the situation was under control.

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Hyd in top 20 on global list of realty value

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Knight Frank in its latest report - Global Residential Cities Index Q3 2019 - has featured Hyderabad as the only Indian city in top 20 among 150 global cities tracked, in terms of appreciation in residential real estate prices, standing at the 14th spot with a healthy nine per cent year-on-year (YoY) rise in home prices. Price growth has been strong in the Hyderabad residential market as shortfall in launches diverted homebuyers towards the ready unsold units giving developers a bargaining edge, says the report.

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Disclosure of information in NPR voluntary: Kishan Reddy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst strong opposition by some non-BJP ruled states, the Centre on Tuesday made it clear that the disclosure of information in the National Population Register (NPR) exercise is not mandatory but voluntary.

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy also said the NPR was first initiated by the Congress-led UPA in 2010 and it was a constitutional obligation.

"Disclosure of information in NPR is voluntary only," he told reporters here.

Reddy said since NPR is a constitutional obligation, state



governments should not oppose it.

The minister also said the central government will keep sensitising states about various aspects of the NPR exercise that will be carried out along with the house listing phase of the Census 2021 from April 1 to September 30, 2020.

A few state governments have declared that they will not participate in the NPR exercise, saying it is prelude to a country-wide National Register of Citizens (NRC).

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has appealed to her counterparts in the northeast and non-BJP states to carefully study the NPR form, its questions and criteria before taking a decision on updating it.

"Dubbing the exercise as 'a dangerous game', Banerjee said the form, which seeks birth details and residential proof of parents, was nothing but a precursor to NRC.

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AI has replaced atom bomb as biggest fear: Huawei CEO

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CAA will not be withdrawn: Amit Shah

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Attacking the opposition for "misleading" people on the Citizenship Amendment Act, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the law will not be scrapped despite the protests over it.

Addressing a rally here in support of the CAA, Shah also declared that the construction of a Ram temple touching the skies in Ayodhya will begin within three months.

The minister accused the Congress of not implementing the suggestions that came from its own leaders in the past on granting citizenship to minority Hindus in Pakistan, Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) and Afghanistan after Partition.

He also targeted West Bengal chief minister and Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee, saying she is now opposing Indian citizenship for Dalit Bengalis.

At the same meeting, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath alleged that the Congress is shelling out money for arson and protests over the CAA.

Amit Shah said there is no provision in the amended law for taking anyone's citizenship away. A canard is being spread against the CAA by the Congress, SP, BSP, and



Shah challenged opposition leaders to hold a discussion with him on the CAA at a public forum

Trinamool Congress.

The CAA is a law to grant citizenship, he added.

I want to say that irrespective of the protests it will not be withdrawn," he added.

Shah challenged opposition leaders to hold a discussion with him on the CAA at a public forum.

He named Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party's Mayawati and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee while throwing the challenge.

BIODIVERSITY FLYOVER MISHAPS

Techie's licence suspended for a year, while Rao walks free

DAVE BENNETT SILVERY ■ HYDERABAD

The Road Transport Authority (RTA) Kukatpally on Tuesday suspended the driving licence of techie Abhilash Pedakotla, following a request from the Cyberabad Police. Pedakotla was involved in a road mishap in November last year at the Biodiversity flyover, where he was found driving drunk. His negligent driving allegedly led

to the death of two motorists on the flyover.

The driving licence has been suspended for a period of one year from November 15, 2019. The Raidurg Police had registered a case against Pedakotla on November 11 when he drove his car in a drunken condition and hit a bike at the flyover junction. Due to the impact, two riders, Vamsi and Praveen, fell down from the flyover level-2 and died on the spot. Four other motorists on the flyover also suffered injuries.

The Police have booked Pedakotla under sections 304A, 337 and 279 of the IPC and Section 185 of the Motor Vehicles Act.

Pending full investigations, the Raidurg police sent a proposal to the RTA to suspend or revoke the driver's licence of Pedakotla.

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Ganja worth Rs 2 crore seized by DRI on ORR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized marijuana worth Rs 2 crore that was being smuggled in a lorry carrying 'paddy husk' at Pedda Amberpet Toll Plaza on the Outer Ring Road here on Monday.

The Hyderabad Zonal unit of DRI busted the ganja smuggling racket and seized contraband weighing 1,335.4 kilos of ganja. The officials intercepted a goods carriage heavy



motor vehicle and found the contraband concealed among paddy sacks. The approximate value of the contraband in the grey market was put at Rs 2 crore.

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Next million jobs from nation's start-up ecosystem, not Fortune 500 companies: KTR at Davos WEF

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Industries K T Rama Rao has asserted that the next million jobs would be generated by Fortune 500 companies, but the next wave of industries thriving from the country's start-up ecosystem.

The Minister's studied observation came during an interactive session in Davos on Tuesday with a news channel in which top industrialists and government officials participated. KTR is participating in the 50th World Economic Forum in Davos.



IT and Industries K T Rama Rao and IT Secretary Jayesh Rajnani at World Economic Forum at Davos on Tuesday

"The way innovation as an ecosystem is emerging is very promising and we have had some brilliant unicorns coming

up even in the unlikely of locations in India," Rama Rao said, adding that both the Centre and the Telangana gov-

ernment would look to leverage this aspect.

Mentioning that India was one of the most compelling business stories that the world had started to believe in and look at, the Minister said that

one of the huge advantages the country enjoyed was the "engine room population" comprising 40 per cent of the country's youth segment in the age group of 20 to 40 years. "This is a huge, huge advantage which India has that no other country possibly has at this point in time," he observed.

KTR, while appreciating the support extended by the Union government to the State, pointed out that the Centre could play a major role in infrastructure development.

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TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Paush & Krishna Paksha Panchangam

Tithi : Trayodashi: 01:48 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Mula: 12:19 am (Next Day)

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

Rahukalam: 12:27 pm - 01:51 pm

Yamagandam: 08:16 am - 09:40 am

Varjyam: 07:55 am - 09:33 am, 10:41 pm - 12:19 am

Gulika: 11:02 am - 12:25 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 05:46 pm - 07:24 pm

Ahijit Muhurtham: NIL

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 30/17

Humidity: 55%

Sunrise: 06:49

Sunset: 06:05

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

PIN POINT
While Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan's decision to strike an alliance with the BJP may set off a buzz in political circles in AP, a closer look into the pact tells us that there has been a lot of thought behind the decision.

Contrary to the belief of Jana Sena cadre and the general public, the deal that Pawan clinched with the BJP is significant for him; coming as it did in the backdrop of his recent 'dalliance' with the Left parties and his promise of fighting for various people's issues against the governments at the Centre and in the state.

Thus far, Pawan's policy had been maintaining individuality in politics without getting too close with major political forces. However, after observing the outcome of the 2019 elections, and getting a mere 7 per cent of the popular vote, the Jana Sena chief has obviously applied thought on the future course of action.

Pawan realises he can't achieve the results he wants if he takes up the stir of farmers of Amaravati who are on the

Going behind the scenes of Pawan-BJP pact

warpath in protest against the decentralisation of administration and the government's decision to set up three capitals for executive, judicial, legislative purposes.

Even as the YSRCP government has set in motion the three-capital process by getting the idea approved by the Assembly, and focus shifting to the Legislative Council where the ruling party lacks sufficient numbers, Pawan is powerless to do anything as he has no say in either of these Houses (Jana Sena's lone MLA has already spoken in favour of the three-capital decision).

The thought about how to take on the YSRCP government with his meagre strength and becoming a viable alternative by 2024 when elections are due surely must have crossed Pawan's mind.

Pawan knows that he has to take on Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy who had swept the polls, bagging 86 per cent of the Assembly seats (151 of the 175), if he wants to remain relevant. The result has

After failing to get power in the last elections, probably due to strategic mistakes on his part, Pawan has realised that he needs to strengthen his own hands with a viable force. This viable force can help him corner the state government on the issue of capital relocation as the Centre had contributed hundreds of crores of rupees so far for the construction of Amaravati.

forced Pawan to come to a conclusion that he wouldn't be effective against Jagan unless he gets support from a viable force that is capable of controlling the state government over specific issues.

The only such viable force is the Union government.

This was surely the idea behind Pawan going for a pact with the BJP. Pawan had declared his unconditional support for Narendra Modi, the BJP's prime ministerial candidate ahead of the 2014 elec-

tions. Modi also expressed his gratitude at a popular film actor giving his unconditional support and remained silent after Pawan distanced himself from the BJP for some reasons.

Pawan is also looking at ways to impress the Centre and get the rulers in Delhi to issue a direction in this regard. If successful, he can hope to be seen as a strong leader who has the Centre's backing. To achieve this, he has opted for friendly ties with the BJP, a party that he had criticised



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

hitherto on issues like Special Category Status.

Thus far, the YSRCP government has managed to benefit from the decisions taken by Union government.

For example, the YSRCP took up the issue of appointment of the CBI Joint Director at Hyderabad. It managed to block the appointment of Venkatesh to the post since he is considered close to former JD VV Lakshminarayana, who had investigated a number of DA cases filed by the CBI

against Jagan, leading to the latter's arrest.

YSRCP managed to prevail upon the Centre and successfully blocked Venkatesh's appointment, well aware that the cases investigated by Lakshminarayana are still pending with the CBI.

The Centre accepted Jagan's request and appointed a Gujarat cadre IPS officer to the post.

Pawan naturally considers Jagan his political opponent and his ultimate goal is to unseat Jagan in 2024. To achieve this goal, Pawan decided to tie-up with the BJP which is capable of boosting Pawan's image as a strong leader in AP particularly in his Kapu community that is almost one-third of the state's population.

Hitherto, two major political parties headed by two ruling castes (Kamma and Reddy) have been effectively managing to bag this huge chunk of Kapu votes. If one goes by the numbers, the political party that manages to swing the Kapus towards it would

have the last laugh at the hustings!

Another important matter behind this political pact is to keep Jagan from getting the Centre to dilute the cases he faces. If the BJP has a tie-up with Jagan's rival, he would obviously be able to approach the Centre for help in his personal cases, is the theory.

In fact, Naidu was in a similar position when the TDP was in the NDA, sharing power with the BJP.

Naidu had prevailed upon the Modi-government to frame charges of economic offences against Jagan so that he would be behind bars by the 2019 elections. However, after carefully weighing its options, the Centre didn't act as per Naidu's wishes. The former CM didn't hide his dissatisfaction that his wish of seeing Jagan behind bars during election time was not fulfilled.

Presently, Jagan has the advantage of numbers in Parliament; the Modi government wants overwhelming support from MPs on key issues.

The "Muslim factor" doesn't come into play, since Pawan knows that at one point or the other, both Naidu and Jagan have had supported the BJP.

Pawan remembers well how his elder brother Chiranjeevi, who formed the Praja Rajyam Party, merged it with the Congress despite winning 18 Assembly seats. Pawan realises that the Jana Sena has bagged a lot less number of seats and votes, and he obviously doesn't want to go Praja Rajyam Party way.

To do so, Pawan has managed to convince the brass in Delhi that an electoral alliance works in their favour as he is an "insider" while Jagan is the "outsider" as far as BJP is concerned.

With the alliance, BJP too hopes to gain by tapping into the Kapu vote, with Pawan campaigning for it.

The question is will Pawan succeed in his well-designed plan of creating legal impediments in Jagan's way?

Also a matter of interest is which issue - the disproportionate assets cases against Jagan, or the Chief Minister's policies - will come in handy for Pawan in the next four years to fulfil his goals.

Rs 2cr worth ganja seized by DRI on ORR

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They revealed that the approximate value in the grey market for the stash is Rs 2 Crore.

Upon further investigation, it was revealed that a fake registration number was pasted on top of the actual registration number of the vehicle in order to avoid detection.

The driver along with an associate also stated that the Ganja was loaded near Bhadrachalam and that the Ganja was being transported to Bidar. The duo were arrested under the provisions of the NDPS (Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act) 1985. Further investigation is in progress. Cannabis/ganja is a Narcotic Drug covered under the NDPS Act, 1985.

Telangana NRI Policy soon

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The team discussed the policies and measures adopted in Kerala for the welfare of Keralites living in various countries. The team perused several policy papers in this matter.

Chief Minister K Chandrababhu Naidu has decided to reach out to people from Telangana State who had migrated to several countries in search of employment but were facing several problems and challenges abroad. He wants to help Telangana NRIs by bringing a comprehensive NRI policy.

The Chief Minister had asked the officials concerned to study various policies schemes being implemented in other States with regard to respective NRIs.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	₹ 40,360 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 46,700 (1kg)
	₹ 130
	₹ 100

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹152
Without Skin	₹173
Broiler at Farm	₹105

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	382
VIJAYAWADA	420
VISAKHAPATNAM	420
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.82

WINDING UP OF CHECK-POSTS

Transport department to seek KCR's clarification

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The transport department officials are gearing up to take the letter to the notice of Chief Minister K Chandrababhu Naidu from Centre to the department asking why it did not do away with its check-posts, which the Centre said became stumbling block for inter-state movement of goods.

The Centre, in a letter informed the transport department that some states, responding to the letter, did away with the check-posts and sought to know what happened to the Government of Telangana. With the advent of the GST regime, tax evasion during transportation has been checked. Therefore, the Centre felt that the check-posts near the inter-state borders were redundant and decided to bid good-bye to the practice of inspection of goods



near the borders. The GST council adopted a resolution in this regard, leading to states doing away with the commercial tax department check-posts near the borders. The Centre also decided to wind up the check posts of the transport department and proposed the same to the states. Some states already wound up the check-posts

up, but some states, including Telangana, is continuing them as it would have adverse impact on the state's revenue.

The Chief Minister had directed the transport department officials to modernise the check-posts at the borders and strengthen them. But the officials were confused as the state government wanted them to be strengthened while

the Centre wanted them to wind up.

They are preparing a file to submit to the CM informing him of the Centre's decision and will take a decision only after ascertaining the CM's stand on it. Telangana shares borders with AP, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh and has check-posts at Adilabad, Vamkidi, Bhainsa, Kamareddy, Saluru, Madnuru, Zaheerabad, Alampur, Krishna, Nagarjuna Sagar, Vadapalli, Kodad, Aswaraopet, Paloncha and Kalluru.

In all, 200 personnel were deployed at the check-posts. They inspect travel permits.

The check-posts net at least Rs 100 crore to the state government. In 2018, they yielded Rs 111 crore revenue, while it was Rs 120 crore last year. The revenue is expected to touch Rs 150 crore-mark by the current fiscal year's end.

Happy employees are pillars of TSRTC: Sunil Sharma

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TSRTC managing director and principal secretary of Telangana Transport, Road and Buildings Department Sunil Sharma IAS, inaugurated the training programme for depot managers, accounts officers, probation officers of TSRTC. Sunil Sharma advised depot managers to solve any issues of the employees, which comes to their notice. He advised the officers to take the support of representatives of Employees Board of each

depot to identify the genuineness of the problem faced by the employees.

He said, "Happy employees are the pillars of TSRTC".

Sunil Sharma told them that initially teething problems will be there but they should overcome them as soon as possible. He appreciated the officers, supervisors, employees for their excellent work during Sankranti festival which gave them good earnings and it should become a regular future by which RTC will have sufficient funds.

Next million jobs from start-up...

Continued from Page 1

"From the State's perspective, while the policy decisions are made in New Delhi, the action is in the States. While the States continue to lead in innovation, the Centre can come to the rescue of the States on infrastructure development," he remarked.

The Telangana government had been focusing on three factors: Ease of Doing Business, in which the state has been topping consistently over the past five years; lowering the cost of doing business and improving the quality of doing business. "By this, I mean focus should be on

the quality of talent, quality of human resources, and quality of infrastructure," he amplified.

Pointing out that he firmly believed in the 3 'I's' mantra - innovation, infrastructure and inclusive growth - KTR said these factors would help States emerge stronger, and stronger States automatically meant a stronger nation. "I had brought this to the notice of Prime Minister Narendra Modi too," he added. KTR said that the Top Five valued technology companies in the world had their second-largest base outside their headquarters in Hyderabad that include - Apple, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and

Amazon. Among all Indian cities, Mercer had rated Hyderabad as the city with the best quality of living for five years in a row. According to the recent JLL report, Hyderabad had emerged as the world's most dynamic city among 130 cities globally, he noted.

Guruprasad Mohapatra, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Deepak Bagla MD & CEO Invest India, Vikram Kirloskar, President, CII, Tiger Tyagarajan CEO, Genpact, were the other panelists who shared their thoughts during the session.

Telangana Police on their toes for elections

Flying squads seize Rs 51,36,090 cash and liquor worth Rs 21 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the elections to the urban local bodies to be held on Wednesday, the TS Police is all geared up to ensure the conduct of elections peacefully.

"As a part of pre-election preparations by police department, instructions have been issued to all the unit officers on possible MCC violations and other guidelines of SEC to be followed by police personnel during elections. Addl. DGP, L&O was designated as nodal officer for the conduct of municipal elections- 2020. Coordination meetings were held with various state departments for effective enforcement as well as to meet manpower requirements for proper planning of bandobast for the elec-



tion," said Mahendar Reddy, Director General of Police, Telangana.

A total of 50,000 force is deployed for fair and peaceful conduct of elections. Sufficient

forces were also mobilised from other departments viz. Excise, Forest, etc. Special forces like TSSP and other specialised forces are also kept as striking reserve. Route

mobiles and striking forces have been strategically located as per the guidelines of SEC. Special arrangements have been made for Left Wing Extremist Districts. Area domination exercises have been carried out extensively to prevent untoward incidents in the area. Adequate measures are being taken in communal sensitive areas by providing additional resources. A close watch is being kept in such areas, said the officer.

Adequate force is deployed for security of poll material. Security will be provided for guarding of polled material as per SEC guidelines. Special arrangements will also be made for counting of votes and security at counting centers.

"The process of election has

been transparent with registration of 131 FIRs against different political workers for violence or MCC violations. As per the guidelines of the SEC, close watch has been kept on the movement of cash, liquor, gifts, contraband and other articles meant as inducement for voters. An amount of Rs 51,36,090 and liquor worth Rs 21,22,933 was seized by the flying squads and SSTs formed across the State. 1,122 cases were booked under preventive sections of law for 4,969 people. 1,745 licensed weapons were also deposited as a preventive measure," said the official, adding that no major untoward incidents related to municipal polls is reported so far in any part of Telangana State.

Disclosure of information in NPR voluntary: Kishan Reddy

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The Kerala government has announced that it will implement the census exercise but will not cooperate with the NPR.

At a recent special cabinet meeting of the Kerala government chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, it was decided to communicate to the Registrar General of India (RGI) and Census Commissioner about the state's opposition to the NPR. "As the NPR is a process that leads to the NRC, there is a sense of fear among the people. If the NPR and NRC are implemented in Kerala, it will lead to widespread anarchy. That is the experience of the state where the NRC was implemented," said a statement released by the Kerala Chief Minister's Office.

At a meeting of about 20 opposition parties led by Congress president Sonia Gandhi about a fortnight ago, it was decided that the parties will urge all chief ministers who have decided not to implement the NRC in their

Assam has been excluded from NPR because the NRC exercise has already been conducted in the state

states to also consider suspending the NPR enumeration "as this will be a prelude to the NRC".

The NPR is a register of usual residents of the country. It is being prepared at the local village/sub-town, subdistrict, district, state and national levels under provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955, and the Citizenship Rules, 2003.

For the purposes of the NPR, a usual resident is defined as a person who has resided in a local area for past six months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months. The data for NPR was last collected in 2010 along with the house listing phase of

the Census 2011. The data was updated in 2015 by conducting door to door survey. The government had then asked details like Aadhaar and mobile number of residents.

This time, the information related to their driving licence and voter ID card may also be gathered. PAN card details will not be collected as part of this exercise. The law compulsorily seeks to register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card.

Assam has been excluded from NPR because the NRC exercise has already been conducted in the state. The demographic details of every individual are required for every usual resident: name, relationship to head of household, father's name, mother's name, marital status, spouse's name (if married), sex, date and place of birth, nationality (as declared), present address of usual residence, duration of stay at present address, permanent residential address, occupation, educational qualification. The Union Cabinet has approved Rs 3,941.35 crore for the NPR exercise.

TSRTC to run 500 special buses for Medaram jatara

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TSRTC is welcoming intending pilgrims to Medaram tribal festival, scheduled to be held from February 5 to 8, to book buses for Medaram so that they can board buses at their doorstep provided a group of 50 persons to attend the festival. The Rangareddy district RTC regional manager Vara Prasad informed people that the transport undertaking is running at least 500 special buses to the biennial biggest tribal festival from February 2 to 8 rising up to meet the demand. The buses will be operated from Dilsukhnagar bus station, Jagadgirigutta, Neredmetta, KPHB, Miyapur, Lingampalli and Lal DArwaza area of the city.

To monitor activities like erection of queue lines, setting up of booking counters, movement of buses and cope up with the passenger rush, depot



managers, traffic supervisors and security personnel will be vested with additional responsibilities. Passengers have been provided with online advance reservation facility.

As the devotees are thronging the venue in advance because of the unprecedented rush of people during the festival days at Medaram, the TSRTC runs at least 40 buses for Medaram on January 26 from various parts of the city. Of them, 18 buses will start from MGBS bus station, seven from the JBS, three each from Jagadgirigutta, KPHB, Lingampalli, Miyapur and Neredmetta.

NARAYANA DEGREE COLLEGE

COLLEGE CODE: 1260, AFF/H-UG/2012-13, ACAD/IV-3
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CONTACT: 9912342320

WANTED
Lecturer for Mentioned Subject

SUBJECT	VACANCY
GEOGRAPHY	2

Rescued leopard makes full recovery: Zoo official
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The leopard, which was rescued in Shadnagar town after straying into the residential area and ending up taking a nap on a building on Monday, has become active and consuming food at Nehru Zoological Park.

According to zoo officials, the male leopard, which is 5-years-old, is under observation for 48 hours.

"The big cat has recovered fast and his health condition is stable and is physically fit. It will be released to its habitat after a few days," said an official on Tuesday.

The leopard was found on the roof of a house near the railway station of Shadnagar giving anxious moments to the locals. The leopard was tranquilized and shifted to zoo for observation.

Meanwhile, another leopard which got trapped in a snare kept for wild boars in an agricultural field in Nalgonda on January 14 has been recuperating fast in the zoo park and will be soon released by forest department.

Staff crunch hits emergency services in Gandhi Hospital

● Patients facing problems due to inadequate beds in wards

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

It may sound strange but true! An emergency ward in the government-run Gandhi Hospital remained unopened due to shortage of doctors and nurses in the hospital.

The 50-bedded state-of-the-art emergency ward remained non-functional reflecting the lackadaisical attitude of the medical and health department drawing flak from all quarters.

Currently, the hospital is running the emergency ward with just 22 beds. Patients requiring emergency medical care have been facing problems because of inadequate bed strength in the ward.

Officials say that patients in need of emergency medical care are approaching Gandhi Hospital because of the excellent work culture. The hospital is even drawing patients who otherwise would have approached private hospitals.



FIGURE THE FACTS

- The hospital receives at least 4,500 to 5,000 people as out-patients
- The bed strength is limited to 1,050, but those getting admitted to hospital as in-patients is more than 2,300
- The strength of doctors for the past several years is limited to mere 350

- The hospital needs 250 doctors additionally because of the increasing number of patients
- The Medical and Health Department is not appointing new doctors in place of those who have retired
- The hospital has security staff of only 200 and requires an additional 500 members

Last year, it was decided to upgrade the bed strength in the emergency ward from 22 beds to that of 50. Accordingly, the ward has been upgraded providing it with the equipment. Since it is an emergency ward, at least one nurse should attend a bed round the clock and also it should have adequate number of doctors. To start the emergency ward, the hospital requires at least 50 doctors and 100 nurses additionally.

1 lakh students yet to be reimbursed tuition fees
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At least one lakh students will have to forego tuition fees reimbursement this academic year because of the RTC strike and murder of Hayatnagar MRO and its aftermath.

Because of these reasons, students have failed to apply to the government within the stipulated deadline, December 31.

In the past, the government extended the deadline to February-end unlike this year, causing worry to the students. The government stopped receiving applications after the deadline.

The most affected students would be those who have joined the college recently. The college managements have been urging the government to give chance to the students by extending the deadline.

Over 13.75 lakh students have applied for the tuition fees reimbursement during 2018-19 as against 12.65 lakh applicants during 2019-20.



RedBus opens carpool for Metro commuters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

HMRL managing director NVS Reddy has launched redBus carpool services for Hyderabad Metro rail commuters in the presence of redBus CEO Prakash Sangam, HMRL chief electrical engineer DVS Raju here on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, NVS Reddy said, this facility would enable last mile connectivity for daily commuters of the metro rail and the service would be provided through rPool, an in-app ride sharing service from redBus.

Mr Prakash Sangam, CEO of redBus said, collaborative efforts go a long way in our quest to offer sustainable solutions to commuting in cities. Our agreement with L&TMRHL to facilitate easy access to people availing carpooling through redBus (rPool), from and to metro stations, is one such step that is set to streamline end to end connectivity.

L&TMRHL has offered dedicated space within stations for rPool to set up kiosks for customer service, apart from parking facilities for ride givers on rPool, for easy pick-up and drop of commuters. In addition to this, rPool's customer service executives posted at the stations will provide 1000 metro smart cards of Rs 75 to its customers, on a first come, first served basis.

Man stabs friend with broken beer bottle

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An argument broke out between Sudheer and his friend while boozing when Sudheer addressed him in a rude manner. Irrked over this, the man broke a beer bottle and stabbed Sudheer in the neck following which he sustained injuries and died.

Based on a complaint by Sudheer's mother, a case has been registered by the Kukatapally police and investigation was taken up.

Cops arrest painter for theft of gold bag

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police arrested a painter from Moosarambagh on Monday and recovered 18 tolas of gold ornaments.

The accused has been identified as Manchina Karunakar, 39, a painter from Malakpet.

The police received a complaint from a dietitian who had lost her gold that she kept in a bag. The victim kept the gold in a bag and was on her way to Kothapet, when a two wheeler hit her bike from behind. The person who crashed and her scooter fled. However, when she reached Dilukhnagar, she noticed that the bag was missing. Based on the complaint, the police registered a case and verified the CCTV footage and identified the person and apprehended the accused.

While Karunakar was on his way to Dilukhnagar, he found the bag stole it.

CM KCR has check-up at Yashoda hospital

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had gone to Yashoda hospital at Somajiguda in Hyderabad for treatment following fever and cough on Tuesday.

However, the TRS leaders have said that it is part of a general check-up and nothing to worry about the Chief Minister's health.

However, with doctors suggestion, KCR was admitted in Yashoda hospital. After the tests, KCR reached Pragati Bhavan on Tuesday.



General Officer Commanding of Telangana and Andhra Sub Area, Major General RK Singh meets MD of Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited NVS Reddy at HMRL office in Begumpet on Tuesday

TS Police seek 7-day custody of OU professor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Police has filed a petition in a local court in Siddipet district seeking seven-day custody of the associate professor of Hyderabad-based Osmania University who was arrested earlier this week for his alleged links with Maoists.

According to sources, the accused, C Kasim, 46, was arrested on Saturday following searches at his house and produced before court, which remanded him to judicial custody. He is presently lodged in Sangareddy District Jail.

A petition seeking seven-day custody of Kasim for custodial interrogation as part of further probe into the case has been filed in a local court, a senior police official said, adding the matter has been posted to January 22.

In a related development, a bail application was also filed in a court at Siddipet and the court may take up the petition in a couple of days, the defence counsel said. The Telangana High Court on Sunday had directed the state police to furnish 'evidence' it had against Kasim's alleged Maoist links after he was produced before it.

Hearing a petition challenging Kasim's alleged illegal detention, Chief Justice RS Chauhan had recorded his statement and ordered the police to furnish all details, including the evidence against him, by January 23. The CJ had on Saturday directed the police to produce Kasim after an urgent hearing of a Habeas Corpus Petition (HCP) by the president of the Telangana unit of the Civil Liberties Committee Gaddam Lakshman. HCP is filed to seek production of a person in court.

Police had earlier said Kasim was involved in a 2016 case registered under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, among other sections.

Government of Telangana Revenue Department

Office of the District Collector, Karimnagar, dt: 13-01-2020.

FORM - C
(Under Section 11(1) of the Act, 2013, where exemption given U/s 10A of the RFLCTARR (Telangana Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act No. 21 of 2017) (See Rule 6(12))

NOTIFICATION
Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana / Collector, Karimnagar that a total of (3321) acres of land is specified in the 'Schedule' below situated in the limits of Kurukya villages of Gangadhara Mandal of Karimnagar district is required for public purpose for construction of New Railway B.G. line from Kothapalli to Mancharambad project purpose between Kothapalli and Vondra station.

SCHEDULE
Name of Village, Kurukya / Name of Mandal, Gangadhara / Name of district, Karimnagar

Sy. No.	Type of land (Wet, etc)	Area under Acquisition (in acres)	Name (s) of Patidar(s) with Father's / Husband's Name	Name (s) of Enjoyer (s) with Father's / Husband's Name	Details of Structures, Trees etc.
1			Uppu Lingaiah S/o Rajamallu Rendra Shrinatha S/o Narasiah	Uppu Lingaiah S/o Rajamallu Rendra Shrinatha S/o Narasiah	2-Pipeline
403	Dry/ Patta	1-30	Rendra Laxminarasiah S/o Narasiah	Rendra Laxminarasiah S/o Narasiah	24Inns, 1Alandro, 2Chitha, 1-Pipeline, 1-Coconut, 1-Sapota
405	Dry/ Patta	3-01	Uppu Rajamallu S/o Maliah Rendra Kankalaxmi W/o Raj Reddy Rendra Srinivas S/o Narayana Reddy	Uppu Rajamallu S/o Maliah Rendra Kankalaxmi W/o Raj Reddy Rendra Srinivas S/o Narayana Reddy	2-Aneem, 6-Tak, 2-Mango, 2-Regu, 1-Tadi, 1-Pipeline
406	Dry/ Patta	1-11	Rendra Chiranjeevi S/o Muthaiah Rendra Eliaiah S/o Baliah Rendra Anjiah S/o Muthaiah	Rendra Chiranjeevi S/o Muthaiah Rendra Eliaiah S/o Baliah Rendra Anjiah S/o Muthaiah	5-Tadi, 1-Tamarind, 5-Aneem, 5-Tak, 14-Pipeline
408	Road	0-03	Thornikonda Chandraiah S/o Veeramallu	Thornikonda Chandraiah S/o Veeramallu	-
415	Dry/ Patta	2-21	Thornikonda Narsiah S/o Komuriah Rendra Srinivas S/o Muthaiah	Thornikonda Narsiah S/o Komuriah Rendra Srinivas S/o Muthaiah	4-Neem, 2-Pipeline
418	Dry/ Patta	6-24	Thornikonda Narsiah S/o Komuriah Rendra Srinivas S/o Muthaiah	Thornikonda Narsiah S/o Komuriah Rendra Srinivas S/o Muthaiah	1-Pipeline
419	Dry/ Ceiling Patta	3-08	Shangaram Maliah S/o Bhucaiah	Shangaram Maliah S/o Bhucaiah	-
421	Dry/ Patta	1-00	Pudari Srinivas S/o Maliah	Pudari Srinivas S/o Maliah	-
422	Dry/ Patta	7-18	Puturi Kani Ramiah S/o Maliah	Puturi Kani Ramiah S/o Maliah	-
423	Dry/ Patta	0-01	Nimma Lakshmi Reddy S/o Kishan Reddy	Nimma Lakshmi Reddy S/o Kishan Reddy	-

416	Dry/ Ceiling Patta	0-15	Ramesh S/o Kondaliah	Ramesh S/o Kondaliah	-
420	Dry/ Ceiling Patta	6-34	Uppu Rajamallu S/o Maliah Rendra Kankalaxmi W/o Raj Reddy Rendra Srinivas S/o Narayana Reddy	Uppu Rajamallu S/o Maliah Rendra Kankalaxmi W/o Raj Reddy Rendra Srinivas S/o Narayana Reddy	-
421	Dry/ Patta	1-00	Puturi Srinivas S/o Maliah	Puturi Srinivas S/o Maliah	-
422	Dry/ Patta	7-18	Puturi Kani Ramiah S/o Maliah	Puturi Kani Ramiah S/o Maliah	-
423	Dry/ Patta	0-01	Nimma Lakshmi Reddy S/o Kishan Reddy	Nimma Lakshmi Reddy S/o Kishan Reddy	-

Passengers screened for corona virus at RGIA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following confirmation of outbreak of corona virus in China, airports in India are on high alert to curb the spread of the virus.

Latest reports suggest that officials in China are racing to contain the spread of a new virus that has left at least six people dead and sickened more than 300. Authorities confirmed that the infection can spread between humans. Wuhan, the Chinese city where the corona virus was first detected, unveiled new measures on Tuesday, including the cancellation of the upcoming Lunar New Year celebrations.

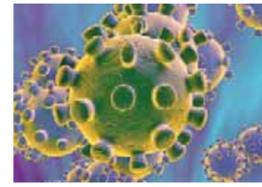
Scanning to detect the virus began on Monday at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kochi airports. Nearer home, the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Shamshabad on Tuesday began thermal screening of passengers coming from Hong Kong.

Officials said that though Hyderabad does not have a direct flight from China, passengers travel via the flight from Hong Kong will be scanned at the airport.

"These thermal scanners are shaped like a TV, and they will help to detect the presence of the corona virus, following symptoms like fever, cough and a runny nose. Passengers will be scanned once they alight," said Dr. Anuradha Reddy, head of Airport Health Organisation.

As of now, no suspected or confirmed cases have been detected at the Hyderabad airport. Precautions had been taken to prevent panic among passengers. "If any suspicious cases are found, their samples will be taken to the specialized lab in Pune for investigation and detailed diagnosis. We have asked airlines to give out self-declaration forms from which we can get an idea of the places of origin of passengers."

Meanwhile, World Health Organisation (WHO) has called for an emergency meeting regarding the corona crisis in China. The corona virus, first discovered in China in 2002, has been a cause of alarm since it may lead to a life-threatening pneumonia. The disease killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.



A petition seeking seven-day custody of Kasim for custodial interrogation as part of further probe into the case has been filed in a local court, a senior police official said, adding the matter has been posted to January 22.

In a related development, a bail application was also filed in a court at Siddipet and the court may take up the petition in a couple of days, the defence counsel said. The Telangana High Court on Sunday had directed the state police to furnish 'evidence' it had against Kasim's alleged Maoist links after he was produced before it.

Hearing a petition challenging Kasim's alleged illegal detention, Chief Justice RS Chauhan had recorded his statement and ordered the police to furnish all details, including the evidence against him, by January 23. The CJ had on Saturday directed the police to produce Kasim after an urgent hearing of a Habeas Corpus Petition (HCP) by the president of the Telangana unit of the Civil Liberties Committee Gaddam Lakshman. HCP is filed to seek production of a person in court.

Police had earlier said Kasim was involved in a 2016 case registered under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, among other sections.



24 visually impaired UoH students receive scholarships

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Help the Blind Foundation working for the educational upliftment of the visually impaired through a rigorous selection process identified 24 visually impaired students/scholars of University of Hyderabad (UoH) for an annual scholarship.

The Empowered Committee for Differently Abled Persons at UoH had an opportunity to coordinate with the foundation in this matter. After a due process of certificate verification and a personal interview with the students, the foundation has selected 24 visually impaired students for scholarship, in respect of which, they deposited an amount of Rs 5 lakh to the varsity account. Vice Chancellor, Prof P Appa Rao along with N Sivaji Rao, co-founder of Foundation distributed the cheques to the eligible students.



URBAN POLL 22 2020



Edge for TRS as Telangana set for municipal elections

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi is looking to score another electoral victory as it appears ahead of the opposition in the elections to urban local bodies scheduled on Wednesday.

The TRS is confident of scoring yet another electoral victory as the main opposition Congress seems to be in disarray, still reeling under the defections of a dozen MLAs to the ruling party and the defeat in the by-elections to Huzurnagar Assembly seat last year. A year after retaining power in the state with a landslide victory, winning majority of Lok Sabha seats and sweeping the village, 'mandal' (block) and district level polls and also wresting an Assembly seat from the Congress in the by-election, the TRS aims to tighten its grip further by winning majority of seats in 129 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

A total of 12,898 candidates are in fray for 2,727 wards in 120 municipalities and 325 wards in nine municipal corporations. Polling will be held from 8 am to 5 pm in over 7,700 polling stations on Wednesday. Nearly 80 lakh voters are eligible to cast their



votes. As many as 59 new municipalities were created last year by upgrading gram panchayats following creation of 23 new districts.

While all 120 municipalities and eight corporations are going to polls on Wednesday, elections for 60-member Karimnagar Municipal Corporation will be held on January 24.

The corporations going to polls exclude the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) as its tenure is not yet over. Ten other ULBs, including Khammam and Warangal corporations, are also not going to polls. In an indication that the TRS

has an edge, its candidates were elected unopposed in 77 wards. All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), also won three wards without contest.

While the TRS is contesting all the wards on its own, AIMIM has fielded candidates in 276 wards.

The confident TRS is seeking the votes on the basis of its performance during last six years. Such is the TRS confidence that its chief and Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Reddy did not campaign for the party. His son and TRS working president KT Rama Rao addressed a few meetings in his Sircilla Assembly constituency.

A confident TRS is seeking the votes on the basis of its performance during last six years. Such is the confidence that its chief and Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Reddy did not campaign for the party

Ministers and MLAs led the campaign in their respective districts. However, the TRS is facing the rebel problems in some ULBs. KTR, however, said such problems were common in a party with large number of aspirants.

Congress state chief Uttam Kumar Reddy and other party leaders participated in the campaign. They alleged that TRS has an 'undue' advantage as the election schedule and reservation quota was designed in a way to benefit the ruling party.

The BJP, which suffered humiliating defeat in Huzurnagar by-election, will be fighting to salvage its pride. After making huge inroads to win four Lok Sabha seats, the party faced a drubbing in MPTC and ZPTC polls and even forfeited its deposit in Huzurnagar. The party faces a tough task

of winning the ULBs falling under four Lok Sabha constituencies represented by it. State BJP chief K Laxman and its MPs campaigned aggressively for the party candidates. They even whipped up the sentiments over Citizenship Amendment Act targeting those opposing it.

AIMIM's campaign also revolved around the CAA, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR). Its chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi led the campaign. The Telugu Desam Party, which had stayed away from Lok Sabha polls, fielded candidates in 401 wards. Its state President L Ramna excluded confidence of the party doing well.

The Telangana Jana Samithi, the Communist Party of India and other smaller parties are also in the fray.

Oppn parties fail to compete with TRS poll management

PV KONDAL RAO ■ WARANGAL

Opposition parties including Congress and BJP gave up their efforts to win the urban local body elections in almost all the municipalities in the erstwhile Warangal districts.

The major parties like BJP decided to slow down the adoption of poll management techniques in certain municipalities. A senior leader in the opposition has advised the municipality in-charge in Mahabubabad district to wait for the next elections as he opined that the party is unlikely to gain anything at the present hustings.

The BJP has put up its candidates in some new areas including Maripeda, Mahabubabad, Thorrur and Narsampet this time and there was some intense campaign from the party leadership about the emergence of BJP as a force in the coming days. The party in-charge feel that the BJP would emerge victorious in some wards and divisions as they focused on these areas only.

The congress party leader Donthi Madhava Reddy has reportedly discouraged the candidates in certain wards including Narsampet, where the party is supposed to give a stiff challenge to the ruling TRS

The BJP in-charges adopted poll management techniques in ten wards in some municipalities. The leaders conducted door-to-door campaigns in certain wards of Narsampet and Maripeda. The BJP in-charge Kapilavai Ravinder excluded that the party would secure at least two wards in Maripeda municipality. He suggested the high command to provide some poll management support to the party nominees. But the in-charge of the segment reportedly discouraged the municipality in-charge to stay silent in the last minute.

The same act of remaining silent at the last minute was evident in the Congress circles in the Parakal municipality of Warangal rural district as the

Congress leader in this segment has deliberately kept aloof from the electioneering.

There are two seniors in this segment in Konda Surekha and Inugala Venkat Ram Reddy. Reddy is maintaining a low profile after Konda Surekha was preferred ahead of him in the Assembly polls. There was a talk that he has roped in his followers to secure B-forms and apparently sent them to withdraw from fray in favour to the TRS nominees.

The remaining nominees too have kept silent in the fray here. In Narsampet where the Congress is supposed to give some stiff challenge, the party sole leader Donthi Madhava Reddy has reportedly discouraged the candidates in certain wards.

Municipal elections may not spring any surprise

BAKKA TENNYSON ■ NALGONDA

Urban local body elections, popularly regarded as the mini general election in the urban parts are unlikely to spring any surprise in the three districts of Nalgonda this time.

The election came after the surprising victory of the TRS in the Huzurnagar segment, is sure to repeat the victories of TRS in almost all the segments of the erstwhile Nalgonda district.

The TRS is likely to make surprising gains even in the Congress erstwhile bastions too, particularly in Suryapet.

The party is likely to rout the Congress in all the municipalities in Nakrekal,

Thungathurthi and Munugode. Munugode segment may witness a major surprise. The local legislator Rajagopal Reddy is maintaining a low profile in the Congress from which he is hailing from and the BJP for which he is showing inclination to join is unable to put up my challenge in that region.

The mini general election may not revive the strengths of Congress which put up some brave challenge in the Lok Sabha elections and won the two seats of erstwhile Nalgonda. The segments like Nagarjunasagar, Miryalaguda, Deverakonda, Nalgonda and Aleru along with Bhongir are unlikely to give any stunning results.

ELECTION SEASON

Sale of gift articles on the rise

AVINASH DEEPAK PULI ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Mahabubnagar district has seen a sudden increase in sale of gift articles and home appliances this election season.

The political party leaders and candidates have purchased home appliances like mixers, grinders and cookers on a large scale to woo voters during election campaign as poll management tactics in the municipalities of erstwhile Mahabubnagar districts.

Electronic gadgets including mobile phones were also purchased in large numbers by the political leaders to woo the voters in Narayanpet and Nagarkurnool districts.

Gift articles ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 were pur-



chased in bulk by the political party leaders in many wards that have minimum number of votes in the urban local bodies. Almost all the political parties have adopted the same process in the Gadwal and Makhtal municipalities where a stiff challenge seemed imminent.

Usually political leaders buy cricket kits and other sports material to attract the voters even in urban parts. The election campaign this time seemed different as youths were also offered costly gifts and materials. The leaders used the same tactic of gifting kitchenware and utensils to attract female voters in the urban parts.

Almost all the municipalities have witnessed the same process. There was no exception for the political parties either opposition or the ruling party.

The candidates relied on distribution of the gift articles and those gift articles were mostly distributed on the eve of Sankranti festival in 338 odd municipal wards.

Hyd in top 20 on global list of realty value

Continued from Page 1

Among other Indian cities which have seen an appreciation in home prices, New Delhi stood at the 73rd rank globally, with a home price appreciation of 3.2 per cent YoY; Bengaluru at the 94th rank with a 2 per cent appreciation and Ahmedabad at the 108th rank with a 1.1 per cent rise.

Among the Indian cities which have seen degrowth in home prices, Kolkata was ranked at the 130th spot with a decline of 2 per cent, Mumbai at the 135th rank with a degrowth of 3 per cent and Chennai at the 136th rank with a fall of 3 per cent. Pune was the lowest-ranked Indian city standing at the 138th spot, registering a 3.5 per cent decline in home prices. The Index tracks the movement in mainstream residential prices across 150 cities worldwide using statistics. Budapest in Hungary leads the Global Residential Cities Index Q3 2019 with the highest annual growth rate of 24 per cent, followed by Xi'an in China and Wuhan in China.

Sample Census, NPR held in TS, AP, success

Continued from Page 1

Conveying the feedback to the Center, officials said that they did not encounter any bitter experience while gathering personal details of people in the sample, considering that they came forward to furnish details for inclusion in the National Population Register.

Encouraged by the success of the experiment, the Center has ordered the department concerned to make arrangements for conduct of full-scale Census, due sometime in April this year. The first phase of the Census would be held during April-September to gather information about families and their abodes. The second phase will begin in February 2021 and last up to March-end the same year.

People refuse to share PAN
Reports suggest that people refused to share their Permanent Account Number during the sample Census con-

ducted in other states. Therefore, the Centre is seriously thinking about whether to include data collection of PAN number during the Census or not. A clear picture will emerge soon. Details of families are going to be included in the NPR during the Census operations to be held during April-Sep period. For the first time data was collected for inclusion in the NPR during the Census 2011. The NPR was revised in 2015. During the forthcoming Census, enumerators will update NPR further.

For example, enumerators show the person the entry in the NPR against his name and register any subsequent updates, if any. Names of dead persons in the family will be struck down.

Names of the newborn will be included with all particulars like name, age, Aadhaar card, passport number. They also include details of driving licence held by parent (s).

'3-capitals is because of KCR'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao alleged that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy brought 3-capitals proposal issue on to the screen with the advice of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao.

Ridiculing the decision of AP Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on three capitals, Hanumantha Rao said that he never saw three capitals policy across the nation. "With the deficit budget, how would the government raise funds to develop three capitals?" Hanumantha Rao questioned.

He demanded that the BJP government in the centre intervene in the capital; issue in Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking to the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, Hanumantha Rao demanded the High Court to respond on the attitude of the police, who obstructed him from erecting Ambedkar statue at Punjagutta Chourwasta. He lamented that it was sad on the part of Telangana Congress leaders as they remained silent on the

HANUMANTHA RAO INAUGURATES T-20 LEAGUE CRICKET CHAMPIONSHIP-2020

HYDERABAD: Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao inaugurated 36th Rajiv Gandhi All India Under-19 Twenty-20 League Cricket Championship-2020 at Amberpet Water Works Grounds on Tuesday. Tamilnadu State Youth Congress President JM Hassan, CFI General secretary Amarjit Kumar, CFI President Sadiq Pasha, CFI Hyderabad President M Uday Raj, General Secretary S Srikanth Goud, PCC Spokesperson R Laxman Yadav and others participated in this programme. On first day, two matches were held.



Congress leader V Hanumantha Rao plays cricket after inaugurating 6th T-20 Cricket Championship-2020 at Amberpet Water Works Grounds on Tuesday

issue of Ambedkar statue.

"Telangana Congress leaders, who were demanding the state government to set up YS Memorial Park, are not responding on the issue. It is disrespect to Ambedkar. Whether Telangana Congress is Indira Congress or YSR

Congress? The leaders have to answer to my question", he said. Reacting on TRS Rajia Sabha member D Srinivas's statement that he left Congress facing insult due to Digvijay Singh, Hanumantha Rao said that Srinivas would have fought continuing in the party.

"Even I am facing insults in the Congress but I am not leaving the party", he said.

Hanumantha Rao asked the party leaders to respond on Ambedkar statue issue at least now or else he will announce his action plan on Ambedkar statue issue after January 25.

Nagi Reddy said that arrangements had been made for the municipal elections to be held on Tuesday. Elections would be held to 2,647 wards and 382 divisions and polling would be held from 7AM to 5PM. Elections were unanimous in 20 wards and 3 divisions. He said that 11,179 candidates in municipalities and 1,747 candidates in corporation were in the fray. He said that 40,36,346 voters in municipalities and 13,13,909 voters in corporation would exercise their franchise in the present elections.

Nagi Reddy said that arrangements had been made for the municipal elections to be held on Tuesday. Elections would be held to 2,647 wards and 382 divisions and polling would be held from 7AM to 5PM. Elections were unanimous in 20 wards and 3 divisions. He said that 11,179 candidates in municipalities and 1,747 candidates in corporation were in the fray. He said that 40,36,346 voters in municipalities and 13,13,909 voters in corporation would exercise their franchise in the present elections.

Stray dogs go on biting spree...

Continued from Page 1

People expressed anger at the apathy of GHMC officials in addressing stray dog menace in their locality, despite people lodging multiple complaints. Parents said they were afraid of sending their kids outside due to stray dogs.

Techie's licence suspended for a year, while Rao walks free

Continued from Page 1

Police officers said that they would issue a proposal for permanent cancellation of his licence. According to the Police, Pedakotla was headed home at Gachibowli after a party at Langar Houz. Vamsi and Praveen were taking selfies at the flyover's curve. Pedakotla who was drunk and over-speeding lost control of his car and hit the bike, which tumbled from

the flyover leading to their death. Pedakotla's friends ran away, but he was caught by the locals who handed him over to the police. Abhilash's car, without stopping, went on to hit two other motorcycles on the flyover, causing injuries to four others.

On checking Abhilash for drunk driving, the Blood Alcohol Content was found out to be 223mg/100ml, whereas the legally permissible limit is only

30mg/100ml. He was subsequently arrested and remanded in judicial custody.

"The RTA responded to our request and suspended the driving licence for a year till the end of 2020. A proposal will also be sent for permanent revocation of his driving licence in due course," said SM Vijay Kumar, DCP. The Licence of the persons found driving any vehicle under the influence of alcohol will be seized by police and for-

warded to RTA with a proposal to take action.

Meanwhile, Kalvakuntla Krishna Milan Rao, who was driving his car way over the speed limit when it flew off the flyover and killed a person below, has not yet been arrested by the police, following a stay order from the TS HC.

The accused, a businessman, was driving a car at four times the speed limit on the Biodiversity flyover on

November 23 when it careened off the flyover and landed on a person, killing her and injuring two others in the mishap.

The Raidurg Police had filed a case against Rao under various sections of the IPC. Officials have registered cases under relevant sections. However, Rao's lawyers filed counter arguments, stating that Rao was not speeding and that the flyover's design was at fault. A team constituted by the government then

found that there was no fault in the design of the flyover and a speed trap camera had clearly captured the car speeding at 104 kmph on the fateful day.

Police sources said that the matter was posted in the HC, which postponed hearing to a later date. Although Rao's lawyers are trying to get him off the hook by involving him in weaker sections of IPC, the Police are firm on charging him under appropriate sections.

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SHORT READS

Kerala CM seeks assistance of External Affairs ministry

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has sought the intervention of External Affairs minister S Jaishankar to render all assistance to the families of the eight keralite tourists who died at a resort in Nepal. In a letter to the minister, Vijayan said "we have heard the shocking news of the death of eight persons from Kerala who were on a visit to Nepal. I request your Ministry to kindly intervene for rendering all possible assistance to the families and friends of the victims".

Two J-K youths among National Bravery awardees

NEW DELHI: Two youths from Jammu & Kashmir and Karnataka boy, who guided an ambulance during floods in the state, are among those who have been chosen for the National Bravery Award this year, officials said on Tuesday. The names of awardees — 10 girls and 12 boys — were announced by the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) on Tuesday. Sixteen-year-old Muhammed Muhsin from Kozhikode in Kerala, who drowned while saving three of his friends in the rough sea in April last year, has been chosen for the ICCW Abhimanyu Award posthumously, the officials said. Kupwara native Sartaj Mohidin Mugal, 16, and Mudasir Ashraf, 19, from Budgam are among the awardees for performing acts of valour in Kashmir in 2019. Venkatesh, 11, from Karnataka, who guided an ambulance carrying a body and relatives of the deceased, during the floods last August will also receive the award, officials said.

ISRO provides consultation to Qualcomm on NavIC

BENGALURU: The Indian Space Research Organisation on Tuesday said it has provided "consultation" to San Diego-based chipmaker Qualcomm towards enabling NavIC capability in their Snapdragon mobile chipset platforms. The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), also called NavIC—Navigation with Indian Constellation—is reportedly on par with US-based GPS, Russia's Glonass and Galileo developed by Europe. "These chipsets are being released by Qualcomm Technologies, Inc., and the release will help accelerate the adoption of NavIC by smartphone OEMs," ISRO said on its website.

Pondy CM warns Centre on hydrocarbon project

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Tuesday cautioned the Centre against going ahead with the proposed hydrocarbon project in the delta district of Karaikal and Bahoor block here and warned of "big protests" if it was not dropped once and for all.

Addressing a hurriedly convened press conference here, the Chief Minister said the Centre was acting in an "autocratic and unconcerned" manner by letting the Vedanta group take up drilling operations both offshore and onshore in Puducherry and Karaikal regions for the hydrocarbon.

He said he had received a letter a couple of days ago from the Centre stating that the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2006 has been amended exempting hydrocarbon project proposed in the Cauvery delta region from public consultations.

He also said the Union Petroleum Ministry had informed the Puducherry government that the Vedanta group of company had been



sanctioned permission to take up drilling operations in the Union Territory in addition to Villupuram and Nagapattinam in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

While 39 sq km in Karaikal would be taken up for drilling, an extent of two sq km land would be brought under exploration on shore in Bahoor in Puducherry.

Narayanasamy said he had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan registering his government's strong protest

against the Centre's "autocratic and unconcerned" approach in letting a private firm to take up the drilling operations.

He said he had also taken strong exception to the recent amendment to the EIA notification.

"I have very strongly opposed the Centre's stand that no prior permission or clearance is necessary for the drilling operations from the concerned State government."

If the Central government went ahead with its decision to let the private firm to take up drilling operations in the

He alleged that the Centre was acting with utmost grudge and rancour against the Puducherry government and has been planning to disturb the fragile environmental zone in Puducherry and Karaikal districts through the hydrocarbon project

Union Territory despite the objection by the territorial administration, the Chief Minister said, "we would stage a big protest and this would include an agitation to protect fishermen and farmers."

Narayanasamy called upon the Centre to drop the proposal for the project in the Union Territory as it was an "injurious threat to farmers and fishermen."

He alleged that the Centre was acting with utmost grudge and rancour against the Puducherry government and has been planning to disturb the fragile environmental zone in Puducherry and Karaikal districts through the hydrocarbon project.

NGT summons CGWA CEO over water extraction

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the CEO of Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) to appear in person after noting several deficiencies in compliance of conditions while granting NOC for ground water extraction to real estate developers in Ghaziabad and Noida.

The order came after the a bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel was informed that although the proponent has been granted NOC for ground water extraction, it has not complied with the conditions.

"We find that though there are several deficiencies in compliance of conditions imposed by the CGWB while granting NOC for ground water extraction, the CGWB has failed to take necessary action even after the deficiencies have come to their notice," it bench said.

"Since such situation is happening in number of cases, it is necessary to require presence of the CEO of the CGWA to ensure that there is effective monitoring mechanism to



The order came after the a bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel was informed that although the proponent has been granted NOC for ground water extraction, it has not complied with the conditions

remedy such violations without which the regulatory functions entrusted to the CGWA will have no meaning," it said in a recent order.

The tribunal was hearing a plea filed by UP resident Mahakar Singh alleging illegal

cutting of trees, extraction of ground water and construction without environmental clearance for the project of Wave City at Ghaziabad and High Tech City at Noida by real estate developers.

The UP pollution control board (UPPCB) told the tribunal that presently, 40-50 families are residing in Wave City township in area which has been developed in phase 1 of the project.

"Unit has installed eight compact Sewage Treatment Plants presently for treatment of sewage generated from domestic processes. STP's were not found in operation. No sewage was found at inlet of STP," UPPCB said.

'No encroachment can be allowed on forest land'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NGT has directed the Delhi government to remove illegal constructions in south Delhi's Jaunapur and Dera Mandi forest areas, saying no encroachment can be allowed on forest land.

A bench headed by National Green Tribunal (NGT) Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said the monitoring has to be at a higher level so that the encroachments are removed and the land is restored to its original condition.

It also directed the Delhi government to file a status report before the next date by email. "Let further steps in the matter be taken expeditiously," the bench said.

The tribunal was hearing a plea by south Delhi resident Amarjit Singh Nalwa and others seeking execution of a 2015 NGT order directing the Delhi government to remove encroachments.

The plea stated that unauthorised constructions are going on in the said area and the authorities are not taking any steps to stop them.

JD(U)'s Pawan Varma speaks of Nitish's 'private apprehensions'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

JD(U) leader Pawan Varma on Tuesday sought ideological clarity from party president Nitish Kumar over aligning with the BJP in the Delhi elections, referring to the Bihar chief minister's "private apprehensions" on how the saffron party is leading the country. In remarks that may embarrass Kumar, Varma claimed in a letter to him that despite his alliance with the BJP in 2017, his "private apprehensions" regarding the party and how it was leading India into a "dangerous space" did not change. "I remember your confessing to me in private how the current leadership in the BJP party has humiliated you. You maintained, on more than one occasion, that the BJP is leading India into a dangerous space,"

the former RS member and JD(U) general secretary wrote.

In the letter, which he shared on social media, Varma said, "It was your personal view, as conveyed to me, that the BJP is destroying institutions, and that there is a need for democratic and socialist forces within the country to regroup, a task for



Nitish Kumar

which you actually assigned a senior party official."

The JD(U) or its president have not reacted to Varma's claims and swipe at Kumar, who has been a frequent critic of the Modi government's policies and had asked his party to stand against its citizenship measures.

The JD(U)'s decision to broaden its alliance outside and join hands with the BJP for the Delhi polls has left him "deeply perplexed", Varma said, adding that he looked to Kumar for ideological clarity.

"On more than one occasion, you have expressed your grave apprehensions about the BJP-RSS combine, he said in his let-

The JD(U) or its president have not reacted to Varma's claims and swipe at Kumar, who has been a frequent critic of the Modi government's policies and had asked his party to stand against its citizenship measures

ter to the Bihar chief minister. "If these are your real views, I fail to understand how the JD(U) is now extending its alliance with the BJP beyond Bihar, when even long standing allies of the BJP, like the Akali Dal, have refused to do so. This is especially so at a time when the BJP, through the CAA-NPR-NRC combine, has embarked on a massive socially divisive agenda..." he said.

Varma said there is an urgent need for the JD(U) to harmonise what the party's constitution says, what the leader of the party feels in private, and what actions the party takes in public.

'Cong joined Maha govt as Muslims insisted'

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

A video of Maharashtra minister and senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan purportedly saying that his party joined the Shiv Sena-led government on "insistence" of the "Muslim community" to stop the BJP from returning to power has gone viral on social media.

The remarks were purportedly made by the PWD Minister while addressing an anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) rally in Nanded in Maharashtra region of the state recently.

Chavan said on Tuesday that he didn't specifically mention Muslims in his speech.

"We have a (coalition) government in place in the state. The Congress decided to join the government to avoid the (repeat of) losses the state had suffered in the last five years (when the BJP was in power). Our Muslim brothers also insisted that we join the government to keep the biggest enemy, the BJP, away from power," Chavan said in Hindi.

The senior Congress leader, who had served as a chief minister of Maharashtra during December 2008 to November 2010, also said the new citizenship law will not be imple-



Ashok Chavan

Chavan said on Tuesday that he didn't specifically mention Muslims in his speech Calling for extensive debate on the CAA, Chavan said nobody's Constitutional rights should be allowed to be violated

mented in the state as long as the present dispensation in at the helm.

The Congress is a part of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government comprising the Shiv Sena and the NCP.

Calling for extensive debate on the CAA, Chavan said nobody's Constitutional rights should be allowed to be violated.

BJP MLA calls Mamata 'cruel-hearted' woman

PNS ■ BALLIA (UP)

In provocative remarks, Uttar Pradesh BJP MLA Surendra Singh has called West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee a "cruel-hearted" woman and also said if illegal Muslim migrants are allowed to stay in India, there will be Kashmir-like stone-pelters everywhere.

The Baira MLA who last week compared Banerjee with "a demon", accusing her of protecting those "who killed thousands of Hindus", on Monday told newspapers, "She is not with the people of West Bengal but is standing alongside the 'shaitans' (devils) of Bangladesh."

"She is a cruel-hearted woman who will be removed from power in the coming assembly polls," Singh claimed. Referring to Muslim immigrants from neighbouring countries, the BJP MLA said, "If the Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslims are allowed to stay, every street in the country will have stone-pelters like in Jammu and Kashmir."

To a question, he said he stands by his earlier statement that Hindus should give birth to five children.

Proposed cut in duty-free liquor, cigarettes decried

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian airports are likely to incur a revenue loss of Rs 650 crore per annum if the reported recommendations of the Commerce Ministry on duty-free sales are put in place, private airports operators body APAO said on Tuesday.

Vehemently opposing the proposed move to reduce liquor allowance from two litres to one litre and to do away with import of cigarettes presently one carton of 100 sticks, the Association of Private Airport Operators (APAO) in a statement said the move will have "disastrous"



effect on the domestic aviation industry.

The Commerce Ministry, as part of its proposals to the

finance ministry ahead of the budget, has recommended restricting purchase of tax-free alcohol to one bottle at

duty-free shops as part of steps to reduce import of non-essential goods, sources had said earlier. The ministry, as per the sources, has also recommended to the Finance Ministry that purchase of cigarette cartons at duty-free shops should be prohibited.

"Such a move will have disastrous effects on the Indian aviation industry across all stakeholders including airports, airlines, passengers and duty-free operators," APAO said.

According to the Association, the proposed restrictions will lead to increase in passenger charges, hurt air-

port industry and may "encourage smuggling," besides a revenue loss of about Rs 650 crore per annum at all airports.

Liquor imports for duty-free sale stands at around USD 97 million as against country's total import bill of USD 460 billion, according to the APAO. The revenue loss at airports will impact the operators' financial ratings and consequently hamper expansion plans, it said.

The proposal, if accepted will increase in aeronautical charges of around Rs 200 crore per annum, which in turn, will lead to higher air ticket prices, it added.

PNS ■ MANGALURU

The investigation to trace the suspect who placed the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) at Mangaluru International Airport on Monday has revealed that the man detected in the CCTV footage was carrying another bag which he left behind at a shop before going to the airport.

The suspect, before going to the airport, had two bags with him when got on to a bus from the bus stop near State Bank of India here and alighted at Kenjar airport stop.



He went to a nearby salon and asked the staff to keep his bag there for some time, which they allowed and told him to keep it outside the salon, police sources said.

He then hired an auto rickshaw with the other bag with

the IED to reach the airport.

After leaving the bag in the airport premises, he went back and collected the bag from the salon. He left by the same auto rickshaw towards Kavoore, they said.

It is yet to be ascertained to which place he went from there and what he did with the other bag.

It is also not clear whether he had really wanted to detonate the explosive planted at the airport as the wires of the IED had not been properly connected and the timer was not in the 'on' position, the sources said.

UPSRTC signs pact with transport firm

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh State Road Corporation (UPSRTC) has signed an agreement with a private transport firm in Nepal for running buses on the Ayodhya-Lucknow-Janakpur Dham route, officials said on Tuesday.

The pact was signed between UPSRTC and M/s Shree Matarani Yatayat Samiti in Janakpur Dham in Nepal.

"The memorandum was signed in Lucknow on Monday," Rajsheshkar, MD, UPSRTC said on Tuesday.

Under Indo-Nepal Cross border transport facilitation agreement 2014, a new route

from Janakpur Dham to Ayodhya was created.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nepalese counterpart KP Sharma Oli had jointly inaugurated the bus service in May 2018. UPSRTC has already started its bus services on this route from Lucknow.

As no Nepalese bus operator was selected by the Nepal government, the return service could not start.

The proposed bus service will be AC Janath whose fare will be Rs 1,350 from Lucknow to Janakpur Dham (Nepal) and Rs 950 from Ayodhya to Janakpur Dham, Rajsheshkar said.

'Bright future awaits J-K after abrogation of Article 370'

PNS ■ JAMMU

Stating that Article 370 was the "biggest obstacle" in the development of Jammu and Kashmir, Union minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday said the future of the Union Territory is bright and its youth can now have a dream to "touch the sky".

Rijiju was the part of the latest batch of nearly a dozen Union ministers who reached Jammu on Tuesday on the fourth day of the massive outreach campaign launched by the Centre to disseminate information about the implementation of its policies and programmes for the overall development of Jammu and Kashmir.

"We are here to act like wings for the youth to fulfil their



dream and the central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is determined to take the region to the new heights of development and progress," the minister of state for youth services and

sports said. Addressing a gathering after dedicating the upgraded indoor stadium to the people here, Rijiju said the momentum of the developmental activities witnessed "three to four times increase" after the

The future of Jammu and Kashmir is bright and the younger generation is lucky and can have a dream to touch the sky

nullification of Article 370. "The future of Jammu and Kashmir is bright and the younger generation is lucky and can have a dream to touch the sky," he said.

The Centre had on August 5 last year abrogated Article 370 provisions of the Constitution, which guaranteed special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and bifurcated the state into Union territories.

Rijiju said Article 370 was the "biggest obstacle and was stand-

ing like a wall" in the way of development of Jammu and Kashmir.

"After its abrogation, the speed of development increased by three to four times. If the development continues like this, I believe that Jammu and Kashmir will be the most developed region of the country in the near future," he said.

Rijiju said he is on a two-day tour of the UT and "will look at how my ministry will con-

tribute in the developmental progress". He assured more indoors stadiums for the region and said "we will provide the local sports persons all facilities and support to make them champions". The minister said had successive governments carried forward "such type of development" as it is happening today", Jammu and Kashmir would have touched great heights. "Better late than never...Article 370 is gone and the prime minister's development plan for the UT will set an example not only for the country, but the entire world to see," he said. Rijiju said when he was in the home ministry, the erstwhile state received the "highest funds" under the leadership of PM Modi.

Capital gain or loss?

Jagan Mohan Reddy may want to develop Andhra uniformly with 3 capitals but the human cost might impact his politics



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should remember his father YSR Reddy's overarching nature of politics, one that was about social welfare and uplifting backwards and one that gave him a bankable legacy. So he should stop over-obsessing about setting up three capitals in a now truncated State, focus on its cash-strapped economy and optimise its resources rather than engaging in a competitive one-upmanship with his predecessor and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief Chandrababu Naidu.

True, the latter had built his persona by creating futuristic cities as a measure of good governance, be it by redeveloping Hyderabad and giving it a new moniker called Cyberabad or, after losing that to Telangana, attempting a Singapore-style new capital at Amaravati. But considering that much work had progressed on the new capital and was largely acceptable to the gentry for whom it wasn't too far out of Hyderabad, Reddy might have to pay a political price for stalling the project. For there is a constituency he cannot ignore, that of farmers. The Naidu Government had cracked a land deal with them, whereby they pooled 34,000 acres of farmland in return for stakeholderhood of developed land. Now with global investors out of the city, its status reduced to just a legislative capital and unfinished towers turning it into a ghost town, the human cost would bear heavy on Reddy. As it is the crashing prices have meant that farmers have lost out on the land value. They can't reclaim their old land which has become fallow ever since they were acquired in 2016. Promised doles like annuity for crop loss, they feel cheated although the Reddy Government has increased the pension amount from the existing ₹2,500 to ₹5,000. With protesters at his doorstep and his intransigence, Reddy has a man-made crisis that he can ill-afford. His plan of devolving power across the State by developing Amaravati as the legislative, Visakhapatnam as the executive and Kurnool as the judicial capitals may be well-intentioned and help him assuage all his constituencies, particularly catapulting the cosmopolitan Visakhapatnam as a top-tier city, but is ridden with challenges. With the functions of the executive, legislature and judiciary being interconnected, requiring swift approvals and quick transfer of files, governance is bound to suffer a time lag while efficiencies will be compromised. The exchequer, too, will be under additional fiscal stress owing to logistical expenses. The infrastructural costs of building new spaces will make a further dent in the State Budget, though Reddy insists that firming up Amaravati would have been much more expensive. Most importantly, the movement of staff for allied or overlapping issues could end up disturbing the bureaucracy. Then there is the larger issue of a loss of face among investors, both global and domestic. Allegations of malpractices that the Reddy regime has been levelling against Naidu's contracts have scared prospective investors. The repudiation of past contracts has raised doubts about their sanctity in the State, which would henceforth be dependent on regime change and new governance priorities. This has already spooked most business houses. At the moment, Andhra Pradesh has topped the official ease of doing business index, relegating Telangana to the second spot. But given the decentralisation move, it may not be able to hold on to this advantage for long.

Decentralising capitals, though new to India, has been experimented in 15 countries across the world. In South Africa, for example, Pretoria is the administrative capital, Cape Town is the legislative capital and Bloemfontein is the judicial capital. In Sri Lanka, too, while Sri Jayawardanapura Kotte is its official capital and seat of national legislature, Colombo is the de facto seat of national executive and judicial bodies. Moreover, India, too, is not alien to having twin capitals because of seasonal reasons in Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and the former State of Jammu & Kashmir. The constitutionality of having diversity of governance within the States through just distribution of powers, thus, stands the test. So long as it is kept within the realm of pragmatism than political sabre-rattling. Reddy's test will now be in the Upper House where his party does not have absolute majority and where the TDP is a thorn in the flesh. All the more reason for him to act in a prudent manner, so that his moniker of Bhramaravati (illusionary city) for Amaravati doesn't end up being used against him. The BJP with Pawan Kalyan, is waiting for him to make a mistake.

Inequality rules

The way to grasp the current political climate is by understanding how inequity has grown over the decades



The British charity Oxfam has come out with another annual report at a time when the World Economic Forum (WEF) held at the Swiss resort town of Davos is under way. The report gains eyeballs, loaded as it is with some stunning statistics to highlight "inequality" across the world. This year's report has some stunning numbers — the top one per cent of India's billionaires owns four times as much wealth as the poorest 70 per cent. On the global front, the top 22 richest men in the

world have more wealth than all the women in Africa. The details are quite shocking. While the calculations of the report have been questioned in the past, make no mistakes about the message it sends out: The world is a deeply iniquitous place. The extremely rich are the ones who are exponentially richer than those at the bottom of the human pyramid. With or without a report, evidence is there that the world is becoming more unequal, the rich are getting richer and the poor, well, poorer.

And when someone needs to decipher why there has been such a rise in a nativist Right-wing polity across the world, particularly in democracies, it would be wise to understand that people feel like they have been left behind by globalisation. But they blame other social constructs, too, multi-culturalism for example. Ergo, the leaders they vote for are the ones "who say it like it is." Of course, many of these elected men, and they are almost always men, do not have the necessary talent to do much about it. They, thus, blame previous administrations and on that front, their point must be accepted. For years, peace dividend allowed sycophancy, nepotism and corruption to bloom and far from making the world a better place, inequality accelerated. The technology revolution has propped up many billionaires but it has also started treating human beings as mere data points — their information being bought and sold without their knowledge. But what can be done about this? The breakdown in trust is massive but other than motivated philanthropy schemes, it would be prudent for the very rich to actually start contributing more to society. Governments have to realise that unmitigated development is not always a good thing, even if some people can become very rich. The poor will be hurt due to the impacts of climate change much more; they will suffer from societal breakdowns far more. While clinking their champagne glasses at Davos later this week, leaders need to realise that they might soon lose control of the narrative.

Preventable reality

The comprehensive listing of threats that can emerge this year, published by the Astana Club, is specific to Eurasian countries but has lessons for the entire world



RK PACHAURI

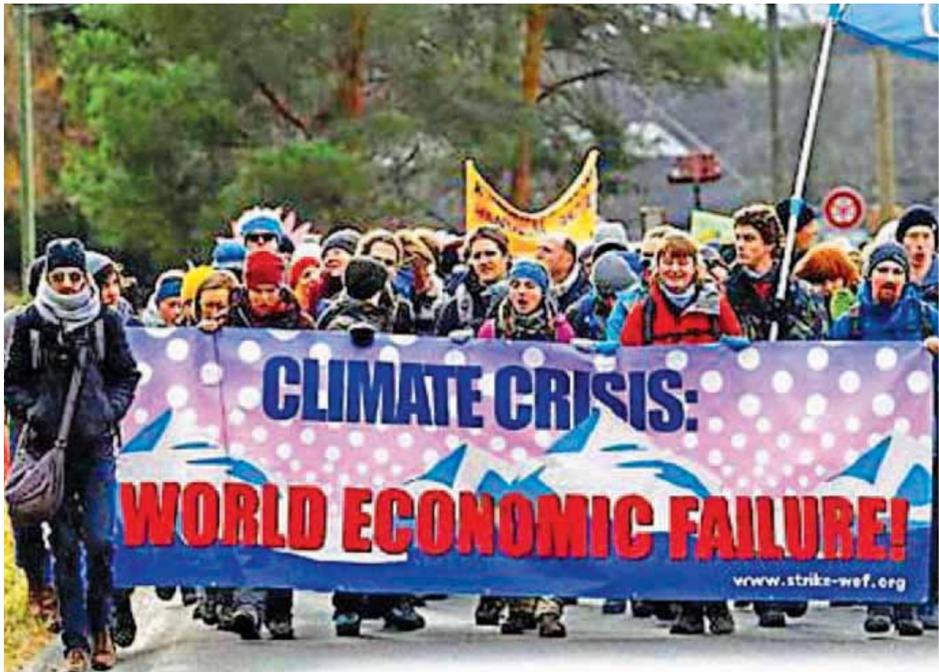
The Astana Club based in Kazakhstan has brought out a useful document which assesses the top 10 risks for Eurasia in 2020. There are contributions from researchers and thinkers from all over the world, which have been incorporated while carrying out this assessment. Although the risks identified are specific to Eurasia, in effect, one could identify these as being applicable to almost any other part of the world.

The foreword of this document identifies China emerging as a new potential superpower. It also draws attention to China's economic strength as signified through the Belt and Road mega initiative. Eurasia being in the vicinity of China sees the changes in the balance of power that are now developing. It also expresses the fact that Russia has finally recovered from the chaos and devastation of the 1990s despite several sanctions and restrictions. As a result of this phase of recovery, it is expanding its influence far beyond post-Soviet borders. Concurrently, leaders such as India, Japan, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been identified as showing bold intentions to influence the international order. The document observes that no geo-political game can now play out without the participation of these new players.

The first of the 10 risks, which is identified, deals with the aftershock of the US presidential campaign. It looks at developments within the US and the efforts of the current administration to move in the direction of nationalism with possible isolation from global affairs and developments. The prediction made is that in the coming year, there will be more apparent manifestations of the unilateral approach to foreign policy, which obviously will have erratic consequences in a negative sense. In effect, the assessment of this first risk can be seen as not entirely related to aftershocks of the US presidential campaign but possibly more in terms of leading up to the presidential election, which implies several risks during the campaign itself.

It is obvious that the current process of impeachment, which the US Senate will be pursuing, will have major implications for the presidential election in November, 2020, as well as some risks for candidates running for the US Senate. It is also obvious that global developments initiated by the White House would be targeted, keeping in view the 2020 elections. While this Astana Club assessment was produced before the killing of Iranian Major General Soleimani, it can be concluded that to some extent, this attack on a very popular and respected general in Iran was clearly a "macho" act, which was perhaps designed to blunt the impacts of the current impeachment process against US President Donald Trump.

This document also highlights the fact



that as far as Iran is concerned, Trump will increase sanctions and the pressure that would be imposed on Tehran. On the other hand, the likelihood of a US-Iran military conflict, which posed certain danger in the summer of 2019, will decline this year. The opinion is also expressed that Trump is unlikely to initiate a military campaign against Iran, which could have uncontrollable consequences. There are other possible developments related to the Middle East, which could also constitute a risk politically to Eurasia. But, of course, there will be serious implications for other parts of the world, particularly for South Asia, with its proximity to both Eurasia and the countries of the Middle East.

The other risks identified in the study include the effects of global economic recession, escalation of the US-China confrontation, a new stage of the nuclear missile race, exacerbation of the battle for technological dominance, military escalation of the conflict around Iran, nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula, a new wave of terrorism, aggressive nationalism and populism as well as large-scale climate change problems.

The prospect of a global economic recession is very real and this, combined with an inward looking policy of nationalism such as in the case of the US, could cause economic complications worldwide.

“
WHILE THE BACKBONE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE (IS) HAS GENERALLY BEEN DECIMATED, IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT RE-GROUPING BY THIS TERRORIST ORGANISATION COULD LEAD TO SEVERAL DANGERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD. INDIA IS CONFRONTED BY STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM IN OUR VICINITY AND THIS IS A SUBJECT THAT THE ENTIRE GLOBAL COMMUNITY AND INDIA WOULD NEED TO DEAL WITH
 ”

Also, in the case of the US, there is the real prospect of a further division between the Democrats and the Republicans, those who are supporters of Trump and those who are strongly opposed to his continuation as President. In the case of the Middle East, it seems unfortunate that Iran and the US have been at loggerheads for over 40 years now, which is affecting all developments in the wake of the Iranian revolution. Developments in 2020 will continue to be affected by an obvious bias on the part of the US openly favouring some Middle Eastern nations.

The issue of terrorism is also alive. While the backbone of the Islamic State (IS) has generally been decimated, it is entirely possible that re-grouping by this terrorist organisation could lead to several dangers in different parts of the world. India is confronted by State-sponsored terrorism in its vicinity and this is a subject that the entire global community and it would need to deal with. The extent of this threat is likely to increase as a result of frustration within a country which is our neighbour. We have to be alive to this as well as other terrorist threats across the globe.

With respect to climate change, we need to come up with scenarios on how we may be able to bring about a transition from fossil fuels to low carbon sources of energy. Far

more immediate is the issue of impacts of climate change, which would pose increasing risks across the globe. Projections of extreme events, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had clearly brought out 11 years ago, is the increase in intensity and frequency of disasters and extreme events. A typical but unfortunate example of this is provided by the raging forest fires, which recently affected several parts of Australia, followed immediately by extreme precipitation events which led to flooding and excessive damage.

All in all, it is important that the Astana Club has come up with a comprehensive listing of threats, which can emerge during 2020 and, therefore, extending into this decade as a whole.

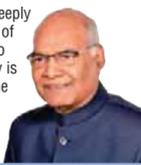
Kazakhstan and several Eurasian countries may lie beyond the Himalayan range but in terms of proximity, they are in some cases very close to us in terms of geographical distance. India should, perhaps, engage far more closely with countries of the region and exercise its soft power, including the flow of knowledge, education and research on issues that have a bearing on the region. The threats for Eurasia apply equally to India as well.

(The writer is former chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2002-15)

SOUNDBITE

A democracy like ours deeply relies on the uncovering of facts and a willingness to debate them. Democracy is meaningful only when the citizen is well informed.

President — Ram Nath Kovind



There's right and there's wrong, and there's common sense and there's abuse of power and as a citizen I have every right to voice my opinion.

Hollywood veteran — Robert De Niro



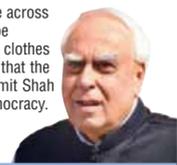
People are more generally aware now. The climate and the environment is a hot topic. But from another perspective, pretty much nothing has been done.

Climate campaigner — Greta Thunberg



Protests of people across India (who can't be recognised by the clothes they wear) reflect that the duo Modi/J and Amit Shah are a drag on democracy.

Congress leader — Kapil Sibal



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Technological feat

Sir — An Australian developer has produced an app that allows people to upload a photo of someone else and match it with other photos of people and their location. Police in America have already tested and successfully used it to arrest one person. The introduction of cameras on mobile phones has led to millions of photos being taken and far too many being put online for us to ignore. The Instagrammers and influencers may not realise that by default, the location is embedded in their photos. The technology that allows facial recognition is under attack from privacy advocates, but why? If you have done nothing wrong, then you have nothing to hide. Although the reality is that some people err in their life choices. The concern of people being recognised in photos has gone too far with google maps and street view blurring number plates on cars and people's faces. People should be happy to be known and seen although not obsessively. Live a good life and be seen doing it.
Dennis Fitzgerald
 Melbourne

Indian foreign policy takes a beating

None will dispute the fact that the foreign policy as is pursued by the ruling dispensation has dented the good relationship India has been maintaining with other nations, particularly immediate neighbours. Maintaining cordial relations with other nations, even after effectively recording dissent on matters affecting us, requires a lot of suave diplomacy, which is lacking in present-day leaders. Though he is a career diplomat and has also served as the Foreign Secretary, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is found to be undiplomatic in his deliveries. He has also been more aggressive, muscular in his thoughts, words and deeds, particularly after sporting the BJP party cap.

At a time when the BJP Government is hell-bent on implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC), it has become inevitable on the part of the External Affairs Minister to play second fiddle and hand sell the schemes despite the damage such accusations of persecution of minorities are going to cause to our relationship with



Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It appears that Indian diplomacy has gone for a toss and has suffered an irreparable damage. Jaishankar has failed to handle the sensitive issue with utmost care. This is also evident from the strong statements made by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai against the CAA.

Tharcius S Fernando
 Chennai

Recognising Nadkarni

Sir — Bapu Nadkarni, who passed away recently, leaves behind an incredible legacy in bowling. In 1964, he bowled 131 consecutive balls without conceding any runs during a Test innings against England. He had similar

economical bowling averages in earlier matches against Pakistan in Kanpur and Delhi in the 1960-61 series. His economy rate across his first-class career was less than two.

He was one of the finest all-rounders of the time. His maiden over tally is difficult to match. It is unfortunate that the present

cricketers, who play at a time of immense money and fame in the sport, are honoured frequently while players of yesteryear are forgotten. It would be even better if a series of postage stamps of older cricketers with notable contributions could be issued.

SC Agrawal
 Delhi

Challenges ahead

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "BJP's new chief" (January 21). Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah wanted someone to take charge of the party who would be a non-challenger to them and JP Nadda was best suited for this. What, however, must be complimented is that Nadda is one leader who grew from the grassroot level to make his way to the top.

Nadda has taken charge amid protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). More importantly, will he be able to stop the reverses the party has seen in States? Surely, the BJP is on a weaker footing and the winning the forthcoming elections in Delhi and West Bengal will be challenging. One thing that will come handy for him is that he has been part of the Modi Government and knows both the organisation and the Government well. Can be a good catalyst between the two?
Bal Govind
 Noida

Send your feedback to:
 letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The enigma named Putin

What the Russian Premier needs is a position that gives him the final say when big changes loom but lets him abjure from daily exercise of power



GWYNNE DYER

Five years ago somebody posted photographs on the internet showing a man who looked a lot like Vladimir Putin in photographs from 1920 and 1941. In both shots he was in military uniform, defending the interests of the Russian people then as he still does today. But how can this be? He wasn't even born until 1952. So the wave of faux speculation starts that Putin is an immortal hero who returns at intervals to save Russia. Or maybe just that he's an immortal vampire. At any rate, he'll be around forever. It was nonsense then and it's nonsense now.

Last week the Russian President announced a wave of constitutional reforms and the vast majority of foreign observers, especially in the West, immediately jumped to the conclusion that Putin is changing the system so that he can stay in power forever. Twenty-five years in power (his current term as President expires in 2024) is not enough for Putin, the foreign pundits insist. He can't risk leaving power, they explain, or Russians would start asking where his vast illicit wealth came from. And then the pundits spin off into lengthy tirades about how he is Evil Incarnate, even comparing him to Joseph Stalin, who ruled the old Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953. Stalin was a mass murderer without a conscience. Nobody was safe from his paranoia: He even killed most of the other heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution. He was probably responsible for the deaths of ten million Russians.

And Vladimir Putin? Here's the opinion of Simon Tisdall, columnist and former foreign editor of *The Guardian*: "Like Stalin, (Putin) has made many enemies and caused untold misery...cronyism and corruption on a vast scale...military aggression and disruption abroad....Again like Stalin, retirement is not a safe option for the ex-KGB spy who normalised assassination as a modern-day tool of state policy."

Where to start? Perhaps with the obvious point that Stalin killed tens of thousands for every death that can be attributed to Putin. Moreover, corruption in Putin's Russia is far less than it was in the 1990s under the first post-Communist President, the Western-backed Boris Yeltsin, a drunken puppet who made ordinary Russians cringe.

"Military aggression and disruption abroad?" Guilty as charged, in the illegal restoration of Crimea to Russian control (though most people in Crimea welcomed it) and in backing anti-Government rebels in two provinces of eastern Ukraine. But there is a litany of Western invasions and military interventions (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Serbia, Syria, Yemen) that didn't meet the highest legal standards either and had equally messy outcomes. Nor do Western Governments lag behind on the assassination front.

More importantly, Russia's western border is a 1,000 km east of where it was in 1914. It is a minimum of 300 km east of where it was as recently as 1991. Putin has not challenged that new frontier once (with the partial exception of Ukraine) in 21 years in office. You could have a much more frightening and disruptive person than Putin in the Kremlin.

The old KGB was a ruthless organisation but also a rational and realistic one. Putin is a man steeped in that tradition, not an adventurer or a fantasist, and we should probably be grateful for that. So what are the odds that he will still be running things after 2024? He will be 72 years old in 2024. Definitely time to start thinking about what happens after he's gone. And I'm going to make a bold assumption here: That he is a Russian patriot. Being Russian means that he fears disorder above all else: Russians sometimes call themselves "Italians of the North" and they don't mean it in a good way. So he wants a strong state, run with a firm hand, even after he has retired, which means that a clear and orderly succession is very important. However, living on under somebody else's firm hand is not an attractive prospect for Putin. He may or may not have fabulous sums of stolen money tucked away — the evidence for that is unclear — but you make a lot of enemies in a quarter-century in power and they could hurt you badly after you have relinquished it. So what Putin needs is a position that gives him the final constitutional say when big changes loom but lets him withdraw from the daily exercise of power. Something like the chairmanship of a strengthened State Council that can overrule both President and Prime Minister when necessary (but does so very rarely). And lo! That appears to be exactly what he has in mind. The details of his proposed reforms are not yet clear but a weaker President, a stronger Prime Minister and a State Council presiding serenely from afar are all part of the package. I'm not saying that's what will actually happen, but I think it's what he'd like to happen.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work*)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THEY HAVE GONE TO THE SUPREME COURT (OVER THE CAA) WITHOUT INFORMING ME. THAT IS AN UNLAWFUL ACT. NOT LEGALLY CORRECT.
 —KERALA GOVERNOR
ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN



THE CHIEF MINISTER WAS NOT DUTY-BOUND TO HAVE INFORMED THE GOVERNOR BEFORE MOVING THE SUPREME COURT ON THE CAA.
 —FORMER KERALA GOVERNOR
P SATHASIVAM

Act, before it is too late

Taking a 'fair' and 'realistic' view of all receipts and expenditure of the Govt, its fiscal deficit is turning out to be almost double the three per cent target sought by the NK Singh panel



UTTAM GUPTA

Having achieved the fiscal deficit (FD) target for three years in a row, the Narendra Modi Government missed it in 2017-18 and 2018-19. During 2017-18, the actual FD expressed as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 3.5 per cent against the target of 3.2 per cent. For 2018-19, the then Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley had set a target of 3.3 per cent as against three per cent sought by a committee under NK Singh, former Expenditure Secretary and current Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission.

The committee was set up in 2016 to review the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003, with a mandate to revamp it and recommend a path for the next six years. It advocated a FD target of 2.5 per cent, revenue deficit 0.8 per cent, combined Centre-State debt ceiling of 60 per cent and a Central debt ceiling of 40 per cent for 2022-23. It recommended three per cent FD for 2018-19. It also allowed the Government to breach the target in case of "far-reaching structural reforms with unanticipated fiscal implications."

Vide the Finance Bill, 2018-19 the Government amended the FRBM Act to allow it to achieve three per cent FD by 2020-21 instead of 2018-19 recommended by the committee. Further, it sought the debt limit of 40 per cent for the Centre (60 per cent for Centre and States) to be reached by 2024-25 instead of 2022-23 mandated by the committee.

During 2018-19, the Government posted 3.4 per cent (against the target of 3.3 per cent), that too by taking recourse to what is termed as "financial engineering." It paid ₹60,000 crore less to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) towards food subsidy as reimbursement of the excess of the cost of procurement, handling and distribution over the sale price to the beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). It paid ₹32,000 crore less to State-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) viz. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and so on, for selling LPG and kerosene at subsidised prices. Likewise, short payments to manufacturers for fertiliser subsidy were about ₹40,000 crore.

The above three so-called "deferred payments" add up to ₹1,32,000 crore. In addition, public undertakings like the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), National Housing Bank (NHB), Rural Electrification Corporation (REC), Power Finance Corporation (PFC), National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) borrowed on behalf of the Government to fund welfare schemes such as rural and urban affordable housing, sanitation and irrigation projects, rural electrification schemes (including free electricity connections to households) highways and railway projects. Termed Extra-Budgetary Resources (EBRs), these totalled ₹280,000 crore.

All put together, the money, a whopping ₹412,000 crore, should have been paid by the Government from its Budget. But it decided to make other entities pay for it or borrow on its behalf. This translates to about 2.3 per cent of the GDP.

“
 IN THE BACKDROP OF THE SLOWDOWN IN GROWTH, EVEN AS COMMENTATORS ARE ADVOCATING SOME LENIENCY IN THE FISCAL CONSOLIDATION DRIVE, THE REALITY IS THAT ALREADY, THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL RELAXATION THROUGH IT IS GOING UNRECOGNISED. UNDER THE 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' SCENARIO, THE ECONOMY MAY FACE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECOGNISE THAT THE PROBLEM EXISTS AND STOP FUDGING ITS ACCOUNTS. BUT THIS BY ITSELF WON'T HELP
”



Including this, the FD for 2018-19 would have been 5.7 per cent instead of 3.4 per cent reported in the Budget. During 2017-18 also, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the FD was suppressed by 2.4 per cent, courtesy EBRs.

The current year for which the FD target is kept at 3.3 per cent (same as the target for 2018-19), will also end up with a repeat of the scenario in the previous two years.

Let us look at how slippage from the target is likely to pan out. First, at the time of the Budget presentation, the FD projection at 3.3 per cent or about ₹700,000 crore in value term was based on a nominal GDP growth of 12 per cent — from ₹188,00,000 crore during 2018-19 to ₹211,00,000 crore during 2019-20. Against this, the actual growth is estimated to be 7.5 per cent implying a GDP of about ₹202,00,000 crore during 2019-20. Even if the deficit were to be kept at ₹700,000 crore, as percentage of the lower than initially projected GDP or ₹202,00,000 crore (or "denominator" effect), this will be 3.46 per cent.

That apart, even in absolute terms, the deficit is expected to be much higher than ₹700,000 crore. First, given the slow pace of tax collection so far till November 2019 — both direct and indirect — and little prospect of any major recovery in the remaining four months, the collection during the year is expected to fall short of the Budget estimate by about ₹200,000 crore. Second, the proceeds of disinvestment are expected to miss the target by a whopping ₹80,000 crore (the Budget estimate of ₹1,05,000 crore was based largely on strategic sale of BPCL, Air India and so on which is unlikely to materialise before March 31, 2020).

So, the total shortfall in collection — on both these counts — adds up to ₹2,80,000 crore. Add to this, fertiliser subsidy arrears of about ₹60,000 crore (according to the industry body Fertiliser Association of India); unpaid food sub-

sidy bills of the FCI at ₹60,000 crore and about ₹30,000 crore as unpaid fuel subsidy bills to OMCs. That takes the grand total to ₹430,000 crore. This will push the actual deficit to ₹1,130,000 crore which translates to 5.6 per cent. This does not capture the EBRs used to fund the Government's welfare schemes. If that is included then, the deficit would be even higher.

Taking a "fair" and "realistic" view of all receipts and expenditure of the Union Government, its fiscal deficit is thus turning out to be almost double the three per cent target handed out by the NK Singh Committee. Though, in the balance sheet, it may still show a figure close to the target and brandish that it is sticking to the fiscal consolidation glide path, that is made possible through an act of skulduggery. But, this is not a sustainable situation.

Apart from the spillover effect on PSUs, other agencies of the Government such as the FCI and others, through whom subsidy is administered (e.g. fertiliser manufacturers) who are made to bear the brunt by way of liquidity problems, interest cost, recurring losses and so on, the most serious damage is done due to the "complacency" this breeds with regard to fiscal management. When, the target is achieved without actually bringing about reduction in expenditure or boosting revenue or a combination of both, why would our planners and policymakers take credible measures in that direction?

For instance, a major reason for the ballooning subsidy on urea is its ridiculously low MRP (the current price is just 10 per cent higher than it was in 2002). This is despite the recommendation of the Expenditure Reforms Commission (ERC) in 2000 to increase steps to eliminate the gap between the cost and price over five years. No action on this front implies increasing subsidy in the face of ever-increasing cost. But, by rolling over payments year-after-year and showing less in the Budget, the man-

darins in the Finance Ministry skirt the real issue.

Likewise, by not releasing food subsidy dues to FCI and showing less expenditure in the Budget, they run away from dealing with the real factors viz. ridiculously low selling price of food grain, high inefficiency in handling operations by agencies and giving millions of non-deserving access to the food security system.

The same holds for oil subsidy (mainly LPG and kerosene).

In the backdrop of the slowdown in growth, even as commentators are advocating some leniency in the fiscal consolidation drive, the reality is that already, there is substantial relaxation though it is going unrecognised. Under the "business as usual" scenario, the economy may face catastrophic consequences. The Government should act before it is too late. For that, it should recognise that the problem exists and stop fudging its accounts. But, this by itself won't help.

This has to be followed up by some hardcore reforms such as removal of controls in key areas such as fertilisers, food, fuel and power, giving subsidy through direct benefit transfer (DBT), substantial pruning of the number of beneficiaries under welfare schemes and removing inefficiencies at various levels in the supply chain. This will require shedding populism and cracking down on vested interest (especially corrupt politicians and bureaucrats who are gaining a lot from the existing dispensation) with alacrity.

Modi should show the gumption to crack the whip. Having an absolute majority in the Parliament and four-and-a-half years to go, he can afford to do. Even so, time and again, he has reiterated his commitment to do things in the overall national interest even if it leads to a political backlash. Hence, he should go ahead.

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

Unlock the Capital's economic potential

Regularising unauthorised colonies is a long-standing issue that needs to be resolved soon because not only will it benefit the people living in these areas but will also add to the Government's coffers and provide an entry point for residents into the formal financial markets



PRERNA PRABHAKAR

Delhi's urban planning policies have been characterised by the inability of the agencies concerned to facilitate adequate supply of affordable, formal housing stock for its residents. As a result, informal housing has crept up across large parts of the national Capital. Unauthorised Colonies (UACs) are one form of such informal housing categories and have grown at an unprecedented rate — from 110 in 1961, to nearly 1,800 colonies today. These UACs cater largely to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Low Income Groups (LIG) that reside in the city. While numerous efforts have been made to regularise these colonies to

address problems emanating from their informality, the situation has barely improved. This has been a result of institutional multiplicity coupled with the political motives of elected representatives at various levels.

Political establishments target the UAC population for garnering votes and make promises about regularisation and development. However, once elected, they fail to deliver on them.

In 2008, just before the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the then Central Government issued a notification to regularise UACs and invited applications from these colonies. However, the process went nowhere post applications.

This time, the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government at the Centre, close to the Delhi Assembly elections in February 8, has passed a Bill in the Parliament to confer ownership rights on 40 lakh people living in unauthorised colonies. In this regard, Prime Minister Modi addressed a rally in New Delhi and said, "We took the initiative to do the work which many previous Governments did not do."

As per the Bill, these rights will be conferred for built-up plots as well as

vacant plots on payment of nominal charges.

Subsequently, any owner of a 100 sq mt residential plot in an unauthorised colony will have to pay at least ₹19,980 (depending on the zone in which the colony falls) to acquire the ownership certificate. This addresses the affordability concern in case of the UAC population while attempting to recover the land cost from the residents of these colonies.

This measure can have positive benefits for the city's economy. Implementing this notification can provide an entry point for the residents into the formal financial markets. This affirmed ownership can enable property owners to seek collateral against their houses. Such a move is expected to add around 800,000 potential customers to the housing loans market, providing the necessary push to the national Capital's economy.

With the registration of UAC households, the decision is likely to boost further formal transactions, hence adding to the Government's stamp duty revenue.

However, the Bill does not offer any clarity on the status of transaction of a plot/house/property in the existing colony.

This clarity is important to solve the issue of creating a formal and affordable housing market in these colonies. In the absence of clear information, it may be assumed that with the conferment of the ownership rights to a UAC plot owner, the subsequent registration of sale deed will take place at the conventional circle rates of the colony.

In this case, the resident living in an UAC household acquires the ownership rights of a 100 sq mt plot for at least ₹19,980; however he/she would be selling the same property for ₹1.6 crore, based on conventional circle rates.

This begs the question — do properties in these localities really merit this price, given the inadequate infrastructure? In this regard, to maintain a balanced buyer-seller dynamics, policymakers should reconsider the transaction prices for these households. Without this necessary revision, it is possible that these prices create an excess supply condition and consequently distort the market.

Another route through which this Bill is likely to inflate the Government's revenue is through Property Tax obligation for the registered UAC households.

Although the notification is silent on the issue of Property Tax collection from these colonies, the forthcoming Bill is likely to offer clarity in this regard. With legal ownership, the UAC residents will be obliged to pay the annual property tax, which will be a significant contributor to its maintenance services.

To reap these possible economic gains from the Bill, it is vital that the implementation of the entire process is not complex. From the perspective of the applicants, the suggested process involves certain tools and techniques that are likely to be beyond their understanding, given their socio-economic profile. Thus, training and awareness would be required to make the programme successful and the Delhi Government must take the lead on it by substantiating the need for institutional coordination.

Discussions with a few residents of UACs in Delhi have brought out that given their past experience, residents are still apprehensive about the actual implementation of the Bill and have not gone ahead with the application process on the online portal. In some cases, people are not even aware of the procedural require-

ment.

This is reflected by the fact that there are only a handful of applications on the DDA's portal — 166 out of around 800,000 households in the city. Against this pessimistic situation, it is imperative that for the desired success rate of this policy, volunteers are appointed to assist the UAC residents in the process. As of now, there are only 25 help desks and they are very unlikely to serve the purpose of efficiently facilitating the process.

Effective implementation of this proposed policy can unlock the substantial economic potential of the city's land and housing markets.

The issue of UACs in Delhi has gone on for far too long and it is high time that it gets resolved for better economic outcomes. Whether the vicious circle around policy implementation for unauthorised colonies — with vote bank politics being the central point — will be broken this time around is likely to get clear after the Delhi Assembly elections.

(The writer is an Associate Fellow at the National Council of Applied Economic Research. The views expressed in this article are personal)

CAPSULE



Atanu Das is MD and chief executive Bank of India

MUMBAI: State-run Bank of India (BoI) on Tuesday said Atanu Kumar Das has been appointed as its managing director and chief executive officer for a period of three years. Das was serving as an executive director at the bank since February 2017. His appointment was announced by the personnel ministry on Monday. In his 26 years of banking experience, Das has been involved at both policy and operational levels. In BoI, he assumed the charge as Delhi regional head in January 2015. Prior to BoI, he was heading Vijaya Bank's Lucknow Region for more than three years. At Vijaya Bank's he has handled key departments as planning and development and also was posted as executive secretary to chairman and managing director for more than two years.



RS Singh government director on SJVNL board

NEW DELHI: State-owned power firm SJVNL on Tuesday said Himachal Pradesh's Additional Chief Secretary Ram Subhag Singh has been appointed as its part time government director. "Ministry of Power on 20th January, 2020 has appointed Ram Subhag Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (MPP & Power), Government of Himachal Pradesh as part time Government Director on the Board of the Company with immediate effect," the firm said in a BSE filing. He is appointed as nominee director of Himachal Pradesh on the Board of SJVNL Ltd (SJVNL) from January 20, 2020, the statement said. Singh is a 1987 batch Indian Administrative Services Officer of Himachal cadre. He is a doctorate in social sciences and also holds, post graduate diplomas in Human Resource Management and Public Administration.

Sensex ends 205 pts lower; Nifty slips below 12,200

Mumbai: Market benchmark Sensex dropped 205 points on Tuesday, led by losses in auto, banking, metal and FMCG stocks amid a sharp fall in other Asian markets on concerns over a deadly virus in China. After trading on a volatile note, the 30-share BSE index settled 205.10 points, or 0.49 per cent, lower at 41,323.81. Likewise, the broader NSE Nifty fell 54.70 points, or 0.45 per cent, to 12,169.85. Tata Steel was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding 3.01 per cent, followed by M&M, Maruti, Asian Paints, PowerGrid, ITC and Axis Bank. On the other hand, Ultratech Cement, HDFC, Kotak Bank, ONGC and TCS ended with gains.

AI HAS REPLACED ATOM BOMB AS BIGGEST FEAR: HUAWEI CEO

PNS ■ DAVOS

Tech giant Huawei's founder and CEO Ren Zhengfei on Tuesday said atom bombs were the biggest fear once, but now there is fear over artificial intelligence, but people must realise that the development of technology is for good.

Speaking at a session on 'A Future Shaped by a Technology Arms Race' here at the WEF Annual Meeting, Zhengfei said AI is not as damaging as atom bombs. Speaking during the same session, historian Yuval Noah Harari, however, said the danger is not so obvious in AI as compared to atom bombs and there are benefits for some actors. "You can win the race and dominate the world. It's a conversation in Beijing and San Francisco - in Washington they don't really understand what's happening," he said. Harari said there is state surveillance in China, and surveillance capitalism in the US, with no serious third player in the arms race.

"On the most shallow level it could be a repeat of the nineteenth century industrial revolution, when the leaders had the chance to dominate the world



economically and politically... I understand the current arms race as an imperial arms race... You don't need to send the soldiers in if you have all the data on a country," Harari said. "To hack human beings, you need a lot of biological knowledge, enough computer power, enough data about me. You can hack my body, my brain, my life, you can reach a point where you know me better than I know myself," he said. Zhengfei is for good. Development of technology is for good, not for bad." Over the last thousands of

years, technological advancement was very much in synch with people's evolution and people's fears over innovations like steam ships and the mechanical age were gradually overcome, said. "I believe in the face of new technologies humanity will be able to use them to benefit us. Most people aspire a good life, not a miserable life," the Huawei CEO said. "Atom bombs were the biggest fear when he was a boy. Today, we're seeing fear over AI but it's not as damaging as atom bombs," he said. "At Huawei, our research is so-called 'weak AI', where there are

44 You can win the race and dominate the world. It's a conversation in Beijing and San Francisco - in Washington they don't really understand what's happening

— REN ZHENGFEI
Huawei's founder and CEO

clear boundaries in terms of where AI can be applied," he said.

On the US fears of China, Zhengfei said, "if you look at the education system in China, it's designed for the industrial age, so AI can't grow rapidly in China... The US is over-concerned. The US has got used to being the world number one."

"Huawei used to be an admirer of the US, we learned a lot from them. We hired dozens of American consulting firms to learn how to manage our business. The US should feel proud of it, they have the US management system exported and implemented. They should not be overly concerned about Huawei and our position in the world."

Zomato acquires Uber Eats business in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Zomato on Tuesday said it has acquired the Indian business of Uber Eats in an all-stock deal that will give Uber 9.99 per cent stake in the Indian food delivery and restaurant discovery platform.

Uber Eats app in India will discontinue operations and direct restaurants, delivery partners, and users of the Uber Eats apps to the Zomato platform, effective Tuesday, Zomato said in a statement.

The deal marks possible consolidation in the highly competitive and price-sensitive online food delivery market where most players are in the red.

In a regulatory filing to the BSE, Info Edge (India) - a shareholder in Zomato - said its shareholding in Zomato will stand reduced to about 22.71 per cent on fully converted and diluted basis upon closing of the transaction. The deal comes days after Zomato had raised USD 150 million in funding from existing investor Ant Financial, an Alibaba affiliate, at a USD 3 billion valuation.

Post money valuation of Zomato is USD 3.55 billion, sources in know of the matter



Uber Eats app in India will discontinue operations and direct restaurants, delivery partners, and users of the Uber Eats apps to the Zomato platform, effective Tuesday, Zomato said in a statement

said, adding that this transaction will add to a total of over 50 million orders per month on its platform, giving it around 55 per cent market share.

"We are proud to have pioneered restaurant discovery and to have created a leading food delivery business across more than 500 cities in India. This acquisition significantly strengthens our position in the category," Zomato Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said.

Uber Eats, which entered India in 2017, has about 26,000 restaurants listed on its platform from 41 cities.

On accessing Uber Eats app, users were shown a message saying they can still use Uber Eats if they are travelling outside India. Discussions between Zomato and Uber have been on for months. Facing stiff competition from Zomato and Swiggy, Uber Eats had been making losses.

GAIL ferries LNG in trucks over 1,700 km to push gas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, state-owned gas utility GAIL India Ltd is ferrying imported LNG in trucks from Gujarat coast to Bhubaneswar in Odisha as part of a government push for a gas-based economy to reduce emission and carbon footprint.

With gas pipelines yet to reach most parts of eastern India, GAIL has hired specialised cryogenic bullet trucks to transport imported liquefied natural gas from Dahej in Gujarat to Bhubaneswar, where it is used as CNG to fuel automobiles and piped gas as cooking fuel in kitchens, company Chairman and Managing Director Ashutosh Karnatak said.

LNG is environment-friendly natural gas turned into liquid at minus 160-degree Celsius for ease of transportation in ships and trucks.

"We started transporting LNG through trucks from Dahej to Bhubaneswar and have broken-even on the business," he told PTI here.

It takes about a week for the LNG truck to move from west coast to the east and on reaching Bhubaneswar LNG is regasified or converted back into its gaseous state at

Gas so supplied is cheaper than alternate fuels such as diesel. LNG can also be used as a fuel directly in trucks and buses but there are only a handful of vehicles currently operating in the country using such fuel



an LNG Satellite Station, which was set up at a cost of Rs 10 crore. Following regasification, gas is moved in cascades to CNG dispensing stations and piped natural gas fuelling points.

Gas so supplied is cheaper than alternate fuels such as diesel. LNG can also be used as a fuel directly in trucks and buses but there are only a handful of vehicles currently operating in the country using such fuel.

"Gas is a happy fuel. It not just cuts vehicular emissions (caused by use of liquid fuels such as diesel) but also is an environment-friendly

replacement for coal," he said.

The government is targeting raising the share of natural gas in India's energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6.2 per cent.

Karnatak said the use of natural gas for generating power and producing fertilizers as well as fuel in steel and aluminum plants, besides city gas operations such as CNG to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households can help achieve the target.

Globally, natural gas constitutes 24 per cent of primary energy consumption. In Gujarat, the share of natural gas in its energy basket is 25-26 per cent because of a network of pipelines that takes the fuel from import or production source to consumption points.

Gas pipelines in India are presently concentrated in west and north, and GAIL is now laying new lines to the east, north-east, and south.



Mutual funds add 68 lakh folios in 2019

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mutual fund industry added 68 lakh folios in 2019 taking the total tally to 8.7 crore, which suggests investors' understanding about market risks associated with such schemes. However, the pace of growth in folio numbers dropped in 2019 as compared to preceding three years. Industry experts attributed the trend to decline in investors account in debt oriented schemes as they were spooked by credit events in fixed income market.

Folios are numbers designated to individual investor accounts. An investor can have multiple folios.

According to the data available with markets regulator Sebi, the number of folios with 44 fund houses rose to 8.71 crore at the end of December 2019 from 8.03 crore at the end of December 2018, registering a gain of 68 lakh folios. In comparison, over 1.38 crore investor accounts were added in 2018, more than 1.36 crore in 2017, nearly 70 lakh in 2016 and close to 56 lakh in 2015, the data showed.

Mercedes to launch AMG GT 63 S

● Showcase A-Class limousine at Auto Expo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz India on Tuesday said it will launch AMG GT 63 S 4MATIC 4 door Coupe in the Auto Expo next month.

Besides, the company will unveil all-new A-Class limousine, showcase the new GLA and EQC Edition 1886 during the biennial show.

"Participation in Auto Expo reflects our unwavering commitment to our customers who want to associate with a winning and fundamentally strong brand," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO Martin Schwenk said in a statement.

The brand showcase planned by the company will not only fascinate its customers and enthusiasts, it will also send a strong message of excitement and positive sentiment, he added.

"As leaders in the luxury car industry, our investments at the Auto Expo firmly reiterate Mercedes-Benz's confidence in the long-term prospect of the luxury car market and the bullishness of its customers; it also underline our responsibility to drive the industry and provide a positive stimulus to the market," Schwenk noted. The 15th edition of India's



44 Participation in Auto Expo reflects our unwavering commitment to our customers who want to associate with a winning and fundamentally strong brand

— MARTIN SCHWENK
Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO

biennial flagship automobile show, Auto Expo, will be held from February 5-12 with many Chinese companies set to make their debut.

While the likes of Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors will continue to make their presence felt, notable absentees from the expo will be Honda, BMW and Ford, among others. Audi, Lexus, Volvo and Jaguar Land Rover are also reportedly not participating in the Auto Expo 2020.



Apollo Hospitals, Bajaj Finserv unveils Health EMI Card

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Healthcare major Apollo Hospitals on Tuesday unveiled co-branded health EMI card in association with Bajaj Finance Ltd to ensure patients undergo hassle-free payment during hospitalisation. "Users of this co-branded healthcare card will be able to convert their medical expenditure into no cost EMIs that can be repaid over a period of 12 months", officials said here.

The Apollo Hospitals-Bajaj Finserv Health EMI (Easy Monthly Instalment) card offers financing and quick loan processing with minimal paperwork avoiding documentation.

Apollo Hospitals Group and Bajaj Finserv had previously joined hands to offer 100 per cent finance on all healthcare and diagnostic services.

Tuesday's launch would help people facing medical emergency, as well as those who are not able to bear the cost upfront.

Embassy Group forms new firm Olive to enter co-living

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leading realty firm Embassy Group on Tuesday announced an investment of up to Rs 1,000 crore to develop six greenfield co-living properties across major cities to meet the growing need of shared rental homes for students and co-living professionals.

Bengaluru-based Embassy Group, which last year launched India's first real estate investment trust (REIT) and runs co-working business WeWork India, will operate co-living business under a separate firm 'Olive by Embassy'.

"We are launching a new firm and brand 'Olive' for our co-living business which is

● To invest Rs 1k crore to build 6 centres



now emerging as a separate asset class. The objective is to disrupt the PG (accommodation) market which is unorganised and poorly managed,"

Embassy group Chief Operating Officer Aditya Virwani said. The company has identified two land parcels to develop co-living centres in

Bengaluru and Chennai, said Virwani, who is also co-founder of Olive. "We are targeting to start development of 5-6 greenfield co-living properties this year with capacity of 5,000-10,000 beds," he said, adding that the company would operate in a price range of Rs 10,000-20,000 per bed. The first centre is expected to be operational by middle of the next year. Asked about investment, Virwani said the total project cost could be around Rs 800-1,000 crore, including land cost. Embassy group would invest fund in the co-living

business. "We will go to the market to raise funds after establishing the brand," he said. The company plans to expand co-living business in cities like Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune and Delhi NCR. The first phase will see the launch of 20,000 beds — Bengaluru 15,000, Chennai 2,500 and Pune 2,500. It is also open to tie up with land owners to develop co-living centres.

Virwani said the yield in co-living business is almost similar to commercial properties of 7-8 per cent.

"The shared economy concept has percolated all aspects of society, creating unprecedented disruptions as well as opportunities.

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Reliance answer to trio of Exxon, AT&T, Amazon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries is India's answer to US giants Exxon, AT&T and Amazon - all rolled into one, Bernstein Research said on Tuesday.

"Reliance has disrupted the energy and telecoms industry in India and is on the cusp of doing the same to retail, fintech, and media," it said in a report adding the company has an enviable track record of innovation and execution.

For the oil-to-telecom conglomerate, energy remains core business and is expected to further expand as India is forecast to be the fastest-growing market for fuel and chemical products over the next decade, it said adding the company's partnership with BP of the UK and Saudi Aramco will support this. Reliance owns the world's largest single-site oil refining complex and has multiple petrochemical plants. Three years back it forayed into telecom business and has reached 34 per cent share of market revenue.

"Based on the current net add run-rates it will likely reach 44 per cent share by the end of the next financial year," Bernstein said.

On its retail foray, it said Reliance is the offline leader with USD 18.5 billion of revenues coming from 11,000-plus stores. "The company is best positioned in New Commerce - digitizing the neighbourhood stores and in e-commerce (grocery/fashion categories)."

Also, fintech is another area in which Reliance is well positioned, it said identifying digitizing the kirana stores to accept digital payments and distributing mutual funds through Fio Money (payment app) as business opportunities.

Stating that media offers unique opportunities and synergies with telco, the analyst said Reliance has the dominant OTT platforms in India with content partnerships with Disney and Viacom.

"With activities spanning oil and gas, telecoms, retail media and fintech, Reliance is one of the most diversified conglomerates in India if not the world. There is simply no other company like it," Bernstein said.



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'Staff spend over 3 hrs a day on easily automatable tasks'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Office workers are ready to welcome automation of repetitive digital tasks, as on an average employees spend more than three hours a day on mundane computer tasks which are not part of their primary job and are ripe for human error, a survey said on Tuesday.

According to a global study commissioned by Automation Anywhere, in India, out of 1,000 participants surveyed, 88 per cent believe humans should not be carrying out repetitive administrative tasks if they can be automated.



With an 8-hour workday being the global norm, according to the survey, the average employee loses 60 hours per month to easily automatable tasks

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By deploying a digital workforce and automating these repetitive tasks, employees could be given back a quarter of their annual work time (4.5 months) to focus on more

meaningful work, boosting productivity and overall business value.

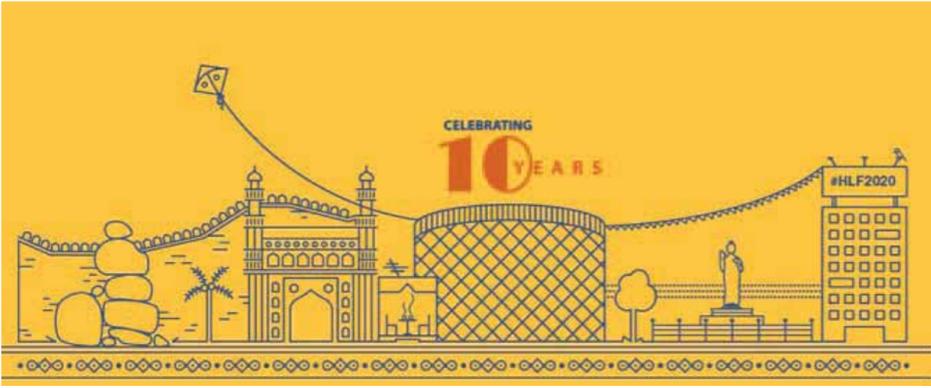
At the very top of the "hated task" heap is general data entry - manually inputting data into a computer or other devices, followed closely by managing e-mail traffic and filing digital documents - such as docu-

ments, spreadsheets, images or PDFs - into the correct digital folder.

Compiling reports from IT and software systems and invoice management round out the top five most hated tasks, the survey noted.

"Close to 80 per cent of the participants in India believe that admin work is an obstacle for them to do their main job," said Milan Sheth, Executive Vice President India, Middle East & Africa, Automation Anywhere.

Sheth further said "workers can focus on higher value tasks if the mundane repetitive tasks can be automated".



The 10th edition of the three-day Hyderabad Literary Festival will be held this Friday at Vidyaranya School. V SATEESH REDDY writes about the highlights of HLF this year that include a variety of literary programmes scheduled and the other attractions bound to draw in a large crowd



Literary bug ready to BITE HYDERABADIS



All is set for the tenth edition of the Hyderabad Literary Festival which is scheduled to be held from January 24 to 26 at Vidyaranya School, Hyderabad.

The festival, that began 10 years ago, remained as a platform for literary lovers across the country. The HLF is organised by the Hyderabad Literary Trust in association with the Government of Telangana and with the support of several academic, literary, cultural organisations and publishing houses from across the country.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Amita Desai, one of the festival directors of HLF said, "This year, the festival has begun ten weeks early. We have been conducting events on Festival Fridays across various locations in Hyderabad. We have completed nine of these events till date and the tenth one begins with the inauguration of the tenth edition of HLF this Friday. During these past Fridays we have conducted various literary events such as musical evenings at venues where people gather like Lamakaan, Goethe Zentrum, Phoenix Arena and more."

The venue of the festival this time was changed from Hyderabad Public School, Begumpet to Vidyaranya School, near the Secretariat. The reason being that many have said that they have to walk a lot to reach the events from the HPS main gate. Another reason from changing it to Vidyaranya is because there are a lot of indoor activities planned.

For this edition, the guest nation is Australia and the language in focus is Malayalam. Around 30 per cent of speakers at the festival are said to be from various countries. Amita Desai informed that the events at the festival include literary sessions, Kaavya Dhaara, stage talks, storytelling, interludes, cultural events, workshops, exhibitions, moving images talks, film screenings, Youngistaan Nukkad, Nanha Nukkad, and more.

About Youngistaan Nukkad, Amita shares, "The fourth edition of Youngistaan Nukkad at the Hyderabad Literary Festival 2020 focuses on celebrating the aspirations of youth. It will be an amalgamation of how creative art forms is performed in an exclusive corner dedicated to the youth at the most happening festival of the city. This edition of Youngistaan Nukkad will see new elements in the form of featured acts, street gallery, and open mic ensuring an entertaining variety. It will be a corner for glorifying art, dreams, passions and fun."

She informed that filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan will be the keynote speaker this year. She adds, "Many important interludes such as Girish Karnad: In Memoriam, will be a part of the festival. Another highlight is the play, Framed as a Terrorist by Vijit Singh. The story is a theatrical adaptation of a real-life incident about a student who travels to Karachi to meet his sister. He gets framed as a

terrorist and the play is about his time in jail and his struggle against the false case with an unwavering spirit." On a concluding note, Amita shares, "The HLF is a festival by the citizens and for the citizens; free for all. Last year around 12,000 people participated and this year we are expecting more than 15,000. We are also requesting people to carry their own water bottles to reduce plastic wastage."



TICKLING THE FUNNY BONES

Glendale Academy International celebrated theatre over the weekend by staging its annual play *Charley's Aunt* at its campus. Written by Brandon Thomas, the original play holds a record of 1,466 shows and has been adapted and performed by many till date. Directed by Abhimanyu Acharya, the three-act play is a hilarious drama revolving around love stories, mistaken identities, impersonation and endless confusions. There is never a dull moment in the

play. Even the emotional sequences can't keep you from cracking up. To bring the best on stage and do the justice to a well-crafted script, the student artists of Glendale invested their two months in rehearsals. With a total of 15 crew members, including 10 on stage artistes and five technicians, everything was well managed by students and faculties. The ensemble gave its 100 per cent to make the performance look magical on stage. Not only the students but also the parents, the theatre-goers and others con-

tributed to the cause. It was a houseful show with nearly 500 showing up to witness the performance. Writer and director Jagadeesh Daneti was the chief guest of the event. The writer-director who has collaborated with many in the West is now ready to add one more feather to his cap by collaborating with Johnny Martin next. After the performance, a male and a female artist were awarded as best actors in the memory of late Bashiruddin Khan, founder of Glendale Academy International. — PNS

Bringing back smiles

Eleven students of renowned Mohiniyattam dancer Anita Peter, founder of Lasya Drutha and disciple of Sreedevi Unni, performed for the elderly over the weekend. Anita says, "Dancing is an art where one adorns the jewels of humility, respect and wisdom through their learning and experience and this is the greatest blessing that my students and I will carry through the years for being able to express through dance." Dancers Sharanya

Kedarnath, Rukmini Kedarnath, Pooja Nair, Prabha Satiraju, Dr Sandhya, Vyapti Nair, Meera Eashwaran, Anita Biju, Kruti Nair, Aadya Kurup and Amritha danced along with their Anita Peter. Little Aadya began the evening by performing Ananda Ganapathy in Ragam Puraneer, Jathiswararam in Ragam Chenchurutti, Padam Krishna Nee Begane Baro in Ragam Kalyani, Shiva Stotram in Ragamalika, Navarasanjali in Ragamalika, Ashtapadi in Ragam Revagupti. The dances were followed by the ballet

Mohaname Gandhi with the lyrics in Telugu. The ballet is based on the Father of our Nation, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and portrays his life and how he continues to inspire millions of people. "I have heard the story of Lord Vishnu transforming into Mohini for the distribution of Amrut during the churning of the ocean for eternal life. Today I have seen so many Mohinis in front of my eyes and we have all been given the Amrut through their beautiful performance," said the eldest resident who himself is a Carnatic music and Telugu scholar. — PNS



what's brewing?



● Pooja



● Sashi Mahata



● Manisha

PARTY



● Syed Mohsin, Syed Yasin and Moszuddin

WEDDING BELLS

The wedding ceremony of Syed Mohsin Peer Hussaini, son of Syed Yasin Peer Hussaini, former MLA, Raichur, Karnataka, with Masooma Maleeha, daughter of Nawab Moizuddin Khan was held recently at Paigah Palace, Begumpet. Several prominent personalities from various fields attended the ceremony to bless the newlyweds.



● Konda Vishveshwar Reddy



● A K Khan



● Farooq Hussain



● Talasani Srinivas Yadav and Jabbar Patel



● Naini Narshimha Reddy

CITY GUIDE

EVENTS

SPEAK UP

“SPEAK UP” is an intensive weekend workshop on effective Communication and Public Speaking skills. With theatre-based exercises, group activities and stage time, this program helps you break out with confidence and discover your own voice. The focus here is on verbal, non-verbal and written communication. The workshop will be conducted on January 25 from 11 am to 5 pm.



BEYOND THOUGHT

In a world full of constant change, we are always aware of what's going on and what we think about it. Cinephiles Film Club is presenting a documentary titled 'Beyond Thought' tomorrow at 7 pm at Lamakaan.



VIVEK MURALIDHARAN LIVE



Banyan Tree's Splendor of Masters aims at showcasing a bouquet of maestros from the world of Indian music in combinations that are not only rare but also aesthetic and enriching. Every year this festival has received an overwhelming response from music lovers in various cities. The event will be organised at Shilpakala Vedita on January 25 at 6 pm.

GET YOUR EVENT LISTED: To get your events listed, send your details along with a poster and contact number to pioneer.features@gmail.com



● Sowmya and Simran

Photos by SV Chary

FASHION FIESTA

Aakriti Elite exhibition and sale, organised by Sashi Nahata is back in the city offering its guests an opportunity to revamp their wardrobe with the latest designs. Guests attending the event were pleasantly surprised to see the wide variety of clothing and accessories. The exhibition will be held till tomorrow at Hotel Taj Deccan.

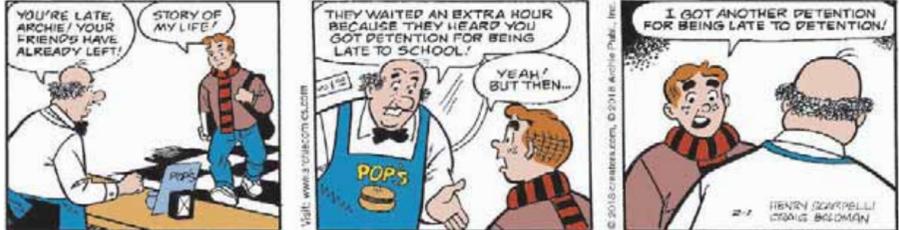


● Renu

● Disha

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



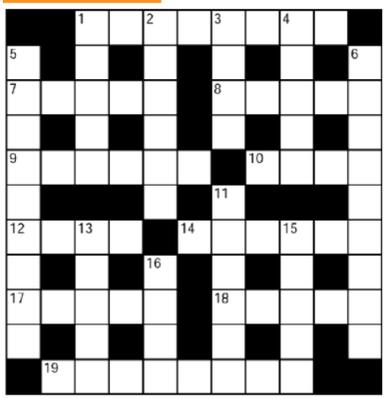
SPEED BUMP



NANCY



CROSSWORD



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Replied
- A tool for boring holes
- Part of a poem or song
- Required
- Iranians live here
- A horse's fastest pace
- By yourself
- Liked very much
- Someone who writes news for a newspaper
- One of the planets
- Exactly the same
- A small creature with many legs
- Carry your money in this
- Higher than
- A body organ
- The number nothing

DOWN

- Similar
- Worked out the solution to
- Jealousy

SOLUTION



DEVGN'S SOUTH INNINGS BEGIN



Rajamouli's *RRR* team gets a boost of inspiration with Bollywood Superstar Ajay Devgn joining the sets, reports NAGARAJ GOUD

More than 10 months after S.S. Rajamouli announced that he would be casting Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn in a pivotal role in *RRR*, the actor joined the sets in Hyderabad on Tuesday. The actor, who is basking in the afterglow of his recent box-office smash *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, landed in Hyderabad on Monday and drove straight to Rajamouli's house.

A source close to the development says, "Devgn had a detailed discussion about his part and what Rajamouli is expecting of him. He also wanted to know how he will go about his Telugu lines as this is his first time doing a South Indian film. Rajamouli had sorted out everything. On day-one, it was business as usual for the acclaimed actor. He had a great first day and was extremely pleased with the hospitality shown by cast and crew."

The source further informs that producer Danayya and Rajamouli are extremely thankful to Devgn for making it to the sets, especially with *Tanhaji* still drawing crowds to the theatres. The film has minted more than Rs 175 crore and is counting. "He couldn't stay with promoting his Hindi film but he chose to honour his commitment for *RRR* and the team is extremely grateful for his presence," adds the source. The actor will be seen in the flashback portions of *RRR* and has allotted 25 days in total.

Releasing stills of Devgn and Rajamouli, production house DVV Entertainment, which is investing close to Rs 500 crore on the film, tweeted, "All of us are super charged and ecstatic to kickstart our schedule with @AjayDevgn ji today... Welcome Sir! (sic)." Set in early 1920s, *RRR* is a fictional story based on two real-life heroes and freedom fighters — Alluri Seetharama Raju and Komaram Bheem. Tarak is playing the younger Bheem, with English actress Olivia Morris paired alongside him, while Charan will be seen as younger Ramaraju, with Alia Bhatt as his love interest. In all likelihood, the film, which has Keeravani's music, will open in 10 languages simultaneously this October.

tollywood

Miss India for Women's Day

There has been no significant development about Keerthy Suresh-starrer *Miss India* after the film's impressive first teaser released online last August. Initially planned for a release last year itself, the film's makers are now considering releasing it on March 6 in honour of International Women's Day (March 8). The film's theme-an underdog who

becomes a leading restaurateur-celebrates a women and her achievements, which is why Mahesh has decided to pitch it in March first week. He believes it will be a perfect Women's Day viewing, a source told us. "Every woman comes across situations that Keerthy faces in the film, a factor which will help them connect to her story more,"

Mahesh had said at the film's launch last year. Newcomer Narendra Nath, who is a gold medalist from the Satyajit Ray Film Institute, is the director, while S.S. Thaman is the composer. The supporting cast is stacked up with the likes of Rajendra Prasad, Naresh, Nadiya, Naveen Chandra, Kamal Kamaraju and Poojita Ponnada.



PINK REMAKE IN THE MORNING, POLITICS IN THE EVENING



Pawan Kalyan, who was expected to begin shooting for the Telugu remake of the Hindi film *Pink* next month, sprung a surprise by joining the sets of the film on the first day itself. Usually, it has been a practice for him to join his films after it's shot for some days. The actor has filmed for the untitled film at old Bowenpally, Secunderabad briefly on Monday. With the shoot happening at a public place, the actor's look got leaked. He left the shoot venue in the noon, catching a special flight to Amaravati at the Begumpet airport. He participated in multiple activities of his party Jana Sena in the evening. He didn't shoot for the film on day-two though, restricting himself to the current political scene in AP.

Meanwhile, buzz doing the rounds indicate that Pawan's next with *Krish* will be launched on January 27. It remains to be seen whether the actor will grace the muhurat ceremony or not. For the untitled period drama, massive sets are being erected at different studios across the city. Work on this film as well is kept under wraps. A.M. Ratnam is the producer.

BUZZ DOING THE ROUNDS INDICATE THAT PAWAN'S NEXT WITH KRISH WILL BE LAUNCHED ON JANUARY 27

Filmmaking is a tedious process: NIVETHA

Darbar might have not lived up to the expectations but Nivetha Thomas has walked away with rich accolades for her turn as Rajinikanth's daughter in the action-drama. Recalling an interesting anecdote from the film, she said that a particular sequence that she had shot for a whole day lasted just two seconds in the final cut. She took two flights to reach the location for the said shot. "A shot lasting two seconds in the film took a journey of two flights, a day's shoot and a night's stay to work. Filmmaking is a tedious process. Cheer the feeling it creates! Be kind :) Every word you say spreads & it definitely matters. This particular setup was from #Darbar (sic)," she posted on Twitter on Tuesday along with a still from the film.

Nivetha, whose next release in Telugu would be Nani-starrer *V*, also has *Pink* remake and Sudheer Varma's next — which is a remake of 2017 South Korean action comedy *Midnight Runners* — in her kitty.



Bobby likes 'negative space' more



Bobby Simha has done a handful of Telugu films like *Ram, Size Zero, Edaina Jaragochu* but hadn't tasted success similar to that of his Tamil career. He is right now looking forward to the release of Ravi Teja-starrer *Disco Raja* where he is playing a full-length supporting role Burma Sethu. The film's success determines his future here. "Disco Raja title sounds commercial but director Vi Anand packed it with a lot of content. I've done close to 45 films till now and I rate him as one of the best. His approach to filmmaking is different and he carries a cool head. Another great trait about him is that he is a good listener. When you tell him that you want to approach a scene in a certain way, he would politely tell he had conceived it in a different way. The discussions are often healthy," Bobby tells.

For someone who is selective with his work, it's *Disco Raja*'s story and his character that drove him to sign it. "I had two variations in my role — a young guy and a middle-age man. It was a nice challenge. The other reason was the retro episode in the film where most of the film's characters go back to 1980s and don't wear bottom pants. Like Ravi Teja garu, even I was

excited to shoot for those episodes. There's a lot of content in it," he informs, adding that he likes to explore negative space as he believes a bad character has no limitations unlike a positive character. However, he is quick to mention that Disco Raja will help him shed his antagonist image as it's a complete role which has both positive and negative shades.

He admits to have rejected many Telugu offers in the past for lack of a good story and characterisation, saying that he doesn't differentiate between small films and big films as long as he finds content interesting. "Edaina Jaragochu was a small film but I've done it because I liked the content. I don't even know whether it did good or bad in the cinemas. I'm getting good number of roles in Telugu but I just don't want to associate with run-of-the-mill stuff," he asserts.

Having rubbed shoulders with his inspiration superstar Rajinikanth in *Petta*, Bobby has now shared screen space with another Tamil stalwart

Kamal Haasan in Shankar's *Indian 2*. He states it's a big learning curve for him to have watched Kamal go about his job.

"He knows everything about every craft of filmmaking and acts according to the lenses the cameraman uses. For his knowledge on cinema, he needs a bigger word than universal to describe him. To see him acting and learn from it is a gift to me," he raves, clearly in awe of the celebrated actor.

The Hyderabad-born Telugu guy who settled in Chennai started his career as a junior artiste to reach where he is right now. He believes with the advent of social media, the struggles of aspiring actors to bag that one elusive opportunity and prove their talent has become less painstaking as they can now send their acting skills through videos or short films. "In fact, when an assistant director of a big director asked me to send my pictures back then, I've given him a short film and asked his director to check out my acting skills. I felt proud that day," he signs off.

BOBBY SIMHA ACTOR

SHARAPOVA HITS ALL-TIME LOW

Maria fails to overcome first round hurdle in third consecutive Slam; Nadal launches record bid with easy win

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Top seed Rafael Nadal turned on the style as he launched his bid for a record-equalling 20th Major title at the Australian Open on Tuesday, but falling star Maria Sharapova hit a career low. Australia's Nick Kyrgios also cantered into the second round, but fourth seed Daniil Medvedev had to fight his way past American Frances Tiafoe in four sets. Nadal, one shy of Roger Federer's Grand Slam mark, dropped only five games as he swatted aside Bolivia's Hugo Dellien 6-2, 6-3, 6-0 in just over two hours at a sunny Rod Laver Arena. "It was a positive start," said the reigning Roland Garros and US Open champion, wearing a bright pink singlet and matching trainers. "What you want in the first round is just to win, and it's better if it's in straight sets." He joins Federer and defending champion Novak Djokovic in



Spain's Rafael Nadal makes a backhand return to Bolivia's Hugo Dellien during their first round singles match at the Australian Open

round two as the Big Three look to tighten a stranglehold that has brought them all but one of the last 14 Australian Open titles. Nadal, the first player to be world number one in three different decades, is still thriving at 33 but it's a different story for five-time Grand Slam winner Sharapova. The 32-year-old, playing on a wildcard as she wrestles with a shoulder injury, lost 6-3, 6-4 to Croatian 19th seed Donna Vekic, making her an opening-round loser at three straight Grand Slams for the first time. The future looks uncertain for the former world number one, who won Wimbledon when she was just

17 but has not reached a Grand Slam final since she lifted the 2014 French Open trophy. "I can speak about my struggles and the things that I've gone through with my shoulder, but it's not really in my character to," Sharapova said. "I was there, I put myself out there (playing). As tough as it was,

I finished the match — it wasn't the way that I wanted." Britain's Johanna Konta, a two-time Slam semi-finalist, also fell at the first hurdle as she battles to overcome a knee problem, losing 4-6, 2-6 to unseeded Tunisian Ons Jabeur. **STORMY FOGNINI**

On a bumper day of 88 first-



Maria Sharapova makes a forehand return to Croatia's Donna Vekic

AP

round matches, after rain wiped out half of Monday's schedule, former US Open champion Marin Cilic and Milos Raonic both moved safely through. Italy's Fabio Fognini, two sets down against America's Reilly Opelka when their match was suspended on Monday, returned to win it in five after a stormy encounter when both players argued furiously with the umpire. A new star emerged in 18-year-old Italian Jannik Sinner, last year's NextGen champion, who earned his first Grand Slam victory against Australia's Max Purcell. Australia's Kyrgios, who has spearheaded fundraising efforts for the country's deadly bushfire disaster, kept his notorious temper in check despite being taken to two tie-breaks in a 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7-1) win over Lorenzo Sonego of Italy. "I feel super-comfortable, you guys are the best. I feel the support.... I am ready to go again,"

Kyrgios told the crowd. Medvedev, the narrow loser to Nadal in September's US Open final, dropped the second set against Tiafoe before recovering to win 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2. Austria's Dominic Thiem, who has reached the last two French Open finals, went through in straight sets against Adrian Mannarino, while 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka needed four to get past Damir Dzumhur. Seventh seed Alexander Zverev beat Marco Cecchinato in straight sets but there was disappointment for France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the 2008 finalist, who retired with a back injury against Australia's Alexei Popyrin. Elsewhere, women's fourth seed Simona Halep survived some painful-looking falls to beat America's Jennifer Brady, and 2016 champion Angelique Kerber dropped only four games against Elisabetta Cocciaretto of Italy.

Ankle tear rules Ishant out of NZ Test series



Samson replaces Dhawan for T20s; Shaw in ODIs

PTI ■ DELHI

Wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson and talented opener Prithvi Shaw replaced injured India opener Shikhar Dhawan for the upcoming T20 and ODI series against New Zealand respectively.

Dhawan dislocated his shoulder while fielding in the third ODI against Australia in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Shaw returns to the senior team after a gap of one year following an ankle injury and an eight-month doping ban. Samson, who played in the T20 series against Sri Lanka earlier this month, was back as a reserve opener cum keeper.

India's T20I squad: Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma (VC), Sanju Samson, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (WK), Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur

India's ODI squad: Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma (VC), Prithvi Shaw, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (WK), Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur, Kedar Jadhav.

However, the Indian cricket board is yet to issue a statement on Ishant's injury.

"It's a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in BCCI as we will again do his MRI to ascertain degree of tear and decide on his rehabilitation," a BCCI source said.

Fellow Delhi pacer Navdeep Saini is likely to



Akash Singh in a file Photo Twitter

India outplay Japan by 10 wickets in mismatch

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

Defending champions India outclassed debutants Japan by 10 wickets in their second match to all but secure a spot in the quarterfinals of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Tuesday.

Opting to field first, four-time champions India bowled out a hapless Japan for 41 runs in 22.5 overs with leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi taking four wickets. It was the joint second lowest total by a team in the Under-19 World Cup and joint third lowest in the under-19 cricket history.

Pacers Kartik Tyagi and Akash Singh shared five wickets among themselves as none of the Japanese batsmen entered double digits.

India needed just 4.5 overs to complete the formalities with Yashasvi Jaiswal and Kumar Kushagra remaining unbeaten on 29 and 13 respectively.

India captain Priyam Garg, however, said his fast bowlers could have done a better job.

"Very happy with the performance. The spinners were good, but the lines and lengths could have been better from the pacers. There's no pressure as such. We want to do well, we take every game as it comes," said Garg.

'NZ need to win 2 out of 3 formats to get pass marks'

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand are up against a "powerhouse" in the visiting Indian cricket team, says former all-rounder Craig McMillan who feels the Black Caps will have to win in two out of three formats to be eligible for at least the "pass marks".

New Zealand will host India for five Twenty20s, three ODIs and two Tests beginning here on January 24 and the hosts will be desperate to bounce back from the recent 0-3 Test drubbing at the hands of Australia.

"It's big. This whole Indian tour is big after what happened in Australia," McMillan was quoted as saying by *Radio Sport Breakfast*.

"This Indian side are a powerhouse. Doesn't matter if it's Tests, ODIs, T20s, they are the real deal so it's going to be a really intriguing tour. For New Zealand to get a pass mark for this tour they need to win two of the three series."

The series against India will start with the T20 rubber on Friday and McMillan feels with the ICC T20 World Cup scheduled to be held later this



Ross Taylor poses for a photo

Black Caps/Twitter

year, it is imperative for New Zealand to win this assignment.

"Five Twenty20s to start and I know it's not everyone's favourite format of the game but we've got a T20 World Cup

later in the year in October in Australia so straight away these five matches become important. Because of the performance in Australia we need to start winning again and get that support

De Kock replaces Faf as ODI skipper

AFP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Quinton de Kock was on Tuesday named as South Africa's one-day international captain as part of a long term transition plan.

His first assignment will be to lead the team in a three-match series against World Cup champions England, starting in Cape Town on February 4.

Test and Twenty20 captain Faf du Plessis was not in a 15-man squad named by Cricket South Africa on Tuesday despite committing himself to the organisation until the World Cup T20 in October and November.

Independent selector Linda Zondi said Du Plessis' omission did not signal the end of his ODI career.

"We decided to rest Faf and Kagiso Rabada for this series because they have both played

a lot of cricket," said Zondi. "A different squad will be picked for a T20 series against England after the one-day games and after that there are still T20s and ODIs against Australia."

Zondi said the appointment of De Kock was part of succession planning leading up to the 2023 Cricket World Cup.

In his press conference after the third Test against England on Monday, Du Plessis said there was an opportunity to relieve some of the pressure on his captaincy.

quad includes new ODI caps in batsmen Janneman Malan and Kyle Verreynne, all-rounder Jon-Jon Smuts, fast bowlers Lutho Sipamla and Sisanda Magala and left-arm spinner Bjorn Fortuin. Of these Magala and Verreynne have yet to play at any international level.

and there's an opportunity for some young guys who performed in that to be given a chance," McMillan added.

Character of pitches in NZ has changed: Tendulkar



Indian team celebrates after winning the match Twitter

The pitches in New Zealand have become a lot more batting-friendly over the years, says iconic former batsman Sachin Tendulkar, insisting that India have the "ammunition" to trouble the sprightly hosts during the upcoming series.

Tendulkar, who has been on a record five New Zealand tours since 1990, feels that from seaming tracks during his early trips years, the tracks became high-scoring hard ones during his last tour back in 2009.

"Of late, the Tests in New Zealand have been high scoring and surfaces have changed," Tendulkar told PTI during an exclusive interview.

From 2002, when India played

ODIs and Tests on green tops, to 2009, when India won only their second Test series in 32 years, Tendulkar has seen it all in New Zealand.

"I remember when we played in 2009, the Hamilton pitch was different compared to other pitches. Other pitches got harder (Wellington and Napier) but not Hamilton. It remained soft."

"But Napier became hard with passage of time (where Gautam Gambhir scored an epic match-saving 12-hour hundred in 2009). So, from my first tour (in 1990 till 2009), I realised pitches got harder with passage of time," Tendulkar said.

Tendulkar is confident that the

Indian bowling attack, spearheaded by Jasprit Bumrah, has the ammunition to put New Zealand in trouble.

"We have a good bowling attack with quality fast bowlers as well as spinners. I believe we have the ammunition to compete in New Zealand."

However, in Wellington, Tendulkar wants the team to be well-prepared to counter the breeze factor.

"Wellington, I have played and it makes a huge difference if you are bowling with the wind or against the wind. The batsman needs to be judicious in the choice of which end he wants to attack, it is very important," he said.

Sarfراز hits unbeaten ton as Mumbai fight back against UP

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Young Sarfraz Khan hit an unbeaten century as Mumbai fought back on the third day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group B game against Uttar Pradesh here on Tuesday.

UP had posted a mammoth 625/8 declared in their first essay, courtesy Upendra Yadav's unbeaten double hundred (203 not out).

Mumbai resumed the day on their overnight score of 20/2 and had a mountain to climb.

Thanks to Herculean effort by 'crisis man' Siddhesh Lad (98 off 174 balls; 10x4x1x6), who lived up to his billing and 22-year-old Sarfraz (132 not out off 160 balls; 14x4; 4x6), the duo gave Mumbai the confidence that UP's first-inning score could be overhauled.

Overnight batsmen Bhupen Lalwani (43 off 80 balls; 5x4) and Hardik Tamore (51 off 94 balls; 10x4) had an uphill task on hand of surviving the morning session against the experienced Ankit Rajpoot and Yash

Dayal. They negated the challenge well and stitched a crucial 75-run stand for the third wicket.

Pacer Wajid Ali gave the visitors the much needed break-through after he trapped Lalwani in front of the wicket as Mumbai lost their third wicket at 91.

Tamore then notched up his maiden first-class fifty by driving Ali through the covers for a four, but could not convert it into a big score.

BENGAL ROUT HYDERABAD IN 3 DAYS

Kalyani (WB): Rookie spin all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed shone with a first-innings hat-trick in a six-wicket match haul as Bengal thrashed a sloppy Hyderabad by an innings and 303 runs for their first win of the ongoing Ranji Trophy season, here on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old, who was bought by Royal Challengers Bangalore for the 2020 edition of the IPL, claimed the feat in his seventh Ranji appearance.



Sarfraz Khan reacts during the third day of Ranji Trophy Match against Uttar Pradesh

PTI

Shahbaz (4/26) ran through the Hyderabad lower order to help his side bundle out the visitors for 171 in their first innings. Following on, Hyderabad were all out for 161 with Shahbaz (2/51) accounting for two batsmen.

Shahbaz became the seventh player from Bengal, and first since India pacer Mohammed Shami, to claim a Ranji Trophy hat-trick. Shami had achieved the milestone against Madhya Pradesh in 2012-13.

Rookie pacer Akash Deep (4/38) was the star in Hyderabad's second essay as Hyderabad were bundled out in 46.2 overs.

Bengal had scored 635 for seven declared in their first innings after electing to bat.

J&K POSTS WIN OVER ODISHA

Cuttack: Jammu & Kashmir bounced back superbly after conceding first innings lead to pull off a four-wicket win over Odisha on the third day of the Ranji Trophy Group C match here on Tuesday.

BCCI says 'no' to Saha's Ranji test

PTI ■ KALYANI (WB)

Indian wicketkeeper batsman Wriddhiman Saha, who is recovering from a finger surgery, has been asked to skip Bengal's next Ranji clash against Delhi to keep himself ready for the upcoming Test series in New Zealand.

The 35-year-old sustained a fracture on the ring finger of his right hand during the historic

Day/Night Test Test against Bangladesh in Kolkata in November and consequently underwent a surgery in Mumbai.

"Wriddhi will not be available for Delhi match (at Eden Gardens from Sunday). I think the Board (BCCI) has said no to him," Bengal coach Arun Lal said after they scripted an innings and 303 win over Hyderabad to brighten their qualifying hopes.

Resuming its second innings at 136 for seven, Odisha could add only 30 runs as Umar Nazir picked up the last three wickets—Rajesh Mohanty, Suryakant Pradhan and Rajesh Dhuper.

Chasing 204 for a win, J&K opener Suryansh Raina (69) and Shubam Pundir (45) added 79 runs for the third wicket to lay the platform for an easy win. Abdul Samad with a knock of 30

not out and the first-innings bowling hero Aquib Nabi (26 not out) too the side over the finish line.

For the home team, Basant Mohanty bowled his heart out and picked up four wickets in the second innings but could not prevent J&K from romping home.

In Delhi, Services pulled off an exciting one-wicket win over Haryana despite being shot out for 97 in the first innings.