

**OPINION 6**  
 ILLOGIC AND  
 THE SHOWMAN

**MONEY 8**  
 SEBI BARS EQUICOM  
 FINANCIAL, DIRECTORS

**SPORTS 12**  
 BLACK &  
 BLUE

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY JANUARY 24, 2020; PAGES 12-13

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SAI TEJ BOARDS  
 SANKRITYAN'S  
 TIME-TRAVEL  
 ADVENTURE  
 Page 11



## AFTER UDDHAV AND ADITYA, ANOTHER 'SON-RISE' IN THACKERAY CLAN

Setting political circles aflutter, MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Thursday formally launched his 27-year-old son Amit Thackeray into politics at the party's first mega-convention here. Amit Thackeray's name was announced by a senior leader BalaNandgaonkar and greeted with a standing ovation by the 20,000 plus gathering at the NSE Ground, Goregaon. Humbly acknowledging the 'abhishek' honour, Amit Thackeray folded his hands -- and taking a leaf out of his uncle Uddhav Thackeray's book -- stepped forward on the stage, bowed and prostrated, and expressed gratitude to party workers.



## NURSE WORKING IN SAUDI 1ST INDIAN INFECTED WITH CORONAVIRUS

A nurse working at a hospital in Saudi Arabia is the first Indian to be infected by the deadly Coronavirus that originated in China and has killed 17 so far. V Muralidharan, the Minister of State for External Affairs, said about 100 Indian nurses, mostly from Kerala have been tested and none except one nurse was found infected by Coronavirus. The minister said the Indian nurses had been quarantined due to the Coronavirus threat. "Affected nurse is being treated at Aseer National Hospital and is recovering well," he tweeted.



## SNAKES MAY BE THE SOURCE OF CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK IN CHINA

Snakes may be the original source of the newly discovered novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) that has triggered an outbreak of a deadly infectious respiratory illness in China, according to a new study. The finding, published in the Journal of Medical Virology, provides important insights on the potential origins of the most recent outbreak of viral pneumonia in China, which is now spreading to Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and Japan. "Results from our analysis suggest for the first time that snake is the most probable wildlife animal reservoir for the 2019-nCoV," said researchers.



## PAK CONDUCTS TEST LAUNCH OF BALLISTIC MISSILE GHAZNAVI

Pakistan on Thursday conducted a successful test launch of surface to surface ballistic missile Ghaznavi, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. "Ghaznavi missile is capable of delivering multiple types of warheads up to a range of 290 kilometres," the ISPR said, adding that the training launch was part of a Field Training Exercise of Army Strategic Forces Command aimed at rehearsing operational readiness procedures during day and night. The training launch was witnessed by Lieutenant General Nadeem ZakiManj.



**Municipal elections: All set for polling in Karimnagar today**

**4**

### MUNICIPAL POLLS

## TRS set for a landslide victory

Ground reports indicate ruling party set to bag all the 9 municipal corporations and 100-plus municipalities ■ TRS comfortably placed in 121 out of 129 ULBs ■ Opposition failed to stop pink party juggernaut yet again

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) is set to register yet another landslide victory, this time in the elections to urban local bodies in Telangana. Going by ground reports obtained from all the municipalities and corporations on the voting pattern in urban local bodies where polling was held on Wednesday, TRS would make a clean sweep by bagging all the nine municipal corporations as well as 100-plus municipalities out of the 120 that went to polls. In contrast, the opposition parties, all put together, would be confined to a single-digit tally of victories.

**Enthusied by the ground reports, TRS party sources said no party or leader could match the stature of TRS and KCR**

The Congress is expected to win just two municipalities (Vaddepally, Nandikonda), AIMIM is expected to win two municipalities (Jalpally, Bhainsa) and BJP is expected to win just a single municipality (Tukkuguda). Field reports suggest that no opposition party in Telangana can come anywhere near TRS. Out of 129 urban local bodies (ULBs), comprising 120 municipalities and 9 municipal corporations, TRS is expected to win 121 comfortably. The pink party is expected to win another five municipalities with the support of its MPs, MLAs and MLCs, who are ex-officio members and have voting rights in the election of mayors and chairpersons. With this, TRS is bound to win 125 out of total 129 ULBs. The counting of votes will be

## Lesson from CS: Education director transferred

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

A meeting is a meeting and going to it without preparation means asking for trouble. Telangana Director of School Education T Vijay Kumar learnt it the hard way on Thursday. The CS had convened a pre-budget meeting with all the officials concerned. Vijay Kumar reportedly attended the meeting without any preparation due to which the Chief Secretary became furious. In a fit of rage, he transferred Vijay Kumar. Late on Thursday evening, an official note was issued stating that Janardhan Reddy, Secretary, has been appointed as the in-charge official in place of Vijay Kumar. The note said: Vijay Kumar is "transferred with immediate effect" and directed to report to General Administration Department.

## Minor girl gang raped on city outskirts

Due to 'power holiday' no CCTV footage evidence to trace culprits, says SP

**NAVEEN KUMAR ■ HYDERABAD**

In a terrible repeat of Disha-like incident in broad daylight, a teenaged minor student was allegedly kidnapped and raped by three youngsters at Ameenpur in Sangareddy district on the outskirts here on Thursday. The incident comes despite supposed tightening of police vigil and enhanced surveillance systems following the sensational brutal gang-rape and murder of a 26-year-old veterinarian at Shadnagar in November 2019. According to sources, the Ameenpur victim, aged about 16, had migrated to the place 15 days ago along with her parents for livelihood. Both her parents are working - father as watch-



**Pavan Varma free to leave JDU when he wants: Nitish**

**5**

## Over Rs1,000 cr sweetened municipal elections!

**K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD**

Call it inducement, bribe, facilitation sum or whatever, like the money given under the table to sweeten business deals, more than Rs 1,000 crore changed hands during the just-concluded elections to urban local bodies in Telangana. Besides, gold and silver ornaments, flight tickets, and truck loads of liquor found their way inconspicuously to voters' homes across the state. Those who were caught in the act, so to speak, were unfortunate specimens; others simply laughed their way to polling booths. Mind you, all of this happened despite elaborate systems in place to check the flow of money and liquor in elections as well as expenditure limits laid down by the election authorities. The individual amounts may vary, but candidates belonging to all political parties and independents spent huge amounts in cash and kind in these elections. In all, about 12,900 candidates contested the municipal elections from 2,647 wards and 382 divisions.

- This time voters adopted unique technique to suite the techniques of candidates
- Took money from all the candidates with the idea of not to disappoint any one
- Voters divided within the house and cast their vote to different parties to do equal justice
- Winners to be jubilant...losers have to face defeat and loss of money



Indicative file photo

## KTR gets rare honour in Davos

Invited to a coveted gathering of world leaders

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

In a rare gesture, the organizers of World Economic Forum have invited Telangana Minister K T Rama Rao to 'Informal Gathering of World Economic Leaders (IGWEL): Keeping Pace - Technology Governance at a Crossroads' in Davos. Noticeably, KTR is the only state-level (provincial) Minister to be invited to this coveted gathering. At WEF, KTR has been granted a special badge, which gives entry to the hyper exclusive Davos-within-Davos known as IGWEL meetings. This badge is given only to senior government policymakers and heads of the state.



TS Minister K T Rama Rao with Coca Cola CEO James Quincey at Davos on Thursday

**Indian economy poised to take off, says Goyal**

**8**

## AP Govt indicates it may abolish Upper House of Legislature

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

After it suffered a humiliation by not getting two crucial bills on its plan of having three capitals passed by the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government on Thursday indicated it may abolish the Upper House of the Legislature. "We need to seriously think whether we need to have such a House which appears to be functioning with only political motives. It is not mandatory to have the Council, which is our own creation, and it is only for our convenience. So let us discuss the issue further on Monday and take a decision on whether or not to continue the Council," the Chief Minister told the Assembly on Thursday evening.

## AIMIM denied permission for anti-CAA protest at Charminar

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Hyderabad police on Thursday rejected permission for a poetry and protest meeting against the CAA, NPR and NRC at the historic Charminar on the night of January 25 after BJP lodged its protest with the Police Commissioner. The poetry and protest along with hoisting of the national flag at Charminar, the symbol of Hyderabad, was planned by the United Muslim Action Committee, of which All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) is a part. However, hours after a delegation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders called on Hyderabad Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar, the organizers announced that the venue has been shifted to the Khilwat Ground.



national flag at Charminar, the symbol of Hyderabad, was planned by the United Muslim Action Committee...

## Cheating case booked against Azhar

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

A case of cheating has been registered against former Indian cricket captain and incumbent president of Hyderabad Cricket Association Mohammad Azharuddin and two others at Aurangabad district of Maharashtra Police Station for allegedly duping a travel agent to the tune of Rs 20.09 lakh. Shahab, owner of Danish Tours and Travels agency, located in Maharashtra's Aurangabad alleged that on the request of Azharuddin's personal assistant Mujib Khan, his firm had booked international flight tickets, amounting to Rs 20.96 lakh. Azharuddin and his associates were to travel on these tickets. Mujib Khan told Shahab that the amount would be transferred online after the booking. But, the personal assistant failed to do.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**  
 Month & Paksham: Paush & Krishna Paksha Panchangam  
 Tithi : Arravasya: 03:11 am (Next Day)  
 Nakshatram: Ulara Ashada: 02:46 am (Next Day)  
 Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)  
 Rahukalam: 11:04 am - 12:28 pm  
 Yamagandam: 03:15 pm - 04:39 pm  
 Varjyam: 09:49 am - 11:30 am  
 Gulika: 08:16 am - 09:40 am  
 Good Time: (to start any important work)  
 Amritkalam: 07:59 pm - 09:41 pm  
 Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:05pm - 12:50pm

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**  
 Forecast: Clear with periodic clouds  
 Temp: 30/17  
 Humidity: 41%  
 Sunrise: 06:49  
 Sunset: 06:06  
 Current Weather Conditions Updated January 23, 2020 7:00 PM

## MANUU students write to KCR against CAA, NRC

Urge him to pass resolution in Assembly

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Students of the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) here on Thursday wrote a letter to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, urging him to ensure that the state's Legislative Assembly passes a resolution against the Centre's controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The students mentioned that CAA is against the spirit of the Constitution, which defines and protects the rights of citizenship of Indians and guarantees equality before law without prejudice to religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. According to the MANUU Students' Union, the newly-designed National Population Register (NPR) could be considered the first step towards NRC. It is "creating distress and anxiety among the common people."



MANUU Students' Union, the newly-designed National Population Register (NPR) could be considered the first step towards NRC. It is "creating distress and anxiety among the common people."

## OU & UK researchers to conserve 'critically endangered' Kolar leaf-nosed bat

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

In an attempt to conserve the endangered Kolar leaf-nosed bat, researchers from the Osmania University in Hyderabad and the UK's University of Bristol have collaborated to initiate long-term conservation actions. The Kolar leaf-nosed bat has been found only in one place in India named Hanumanhalli, located in the Mulbagal taluk of Kolar district, Karnataka. The leaf-nosed bat, classified as 'critically endangered', is one of the rarest bat species in India. According to zoologists, the leaf-nosed bat is one of the species that was discovered by accident, when bats were collected for virus research in 1994. It was re-discovered in 2012 by zoologists from Osmania University. Since then, studies have been conducted to better understand the species. This led to the declaration of Hanumanhalli as a Conservation Reserve in January 2019. Dr Chelmala Srinivasulu, an OU professor who headed the research, said, "After re-discovering the leaf-nosed bat in the year 2012, we have been working on understanding the species' ecology and biology."



rarest bat species in India. According to zoologists, the leaf-nosed bat is one of the species that was discovered by accident, when bats were collected for virus research in 1994.

# TRS GOVT RESTORED PAST GLORY OF RYOTS: HARISH

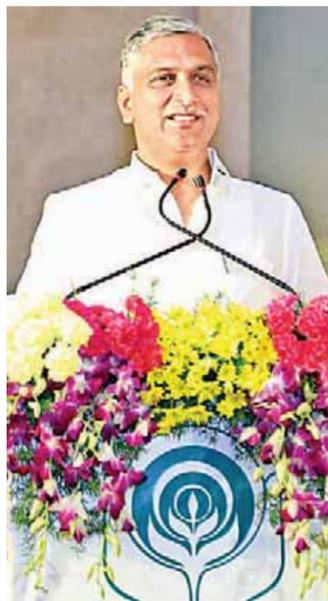
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Finance Minister T Harish Rao has said that the state government is spending 30 per cent of the budgeted funds on agriculture, which is unprecedented in the country, and recalled how the TRS-led government borrowed Rs 1,056 crore from NABARD to build godowns and Rs 874 crore from it to develop micro-irrigation facilities.

Participating as chief guest in the State Credit Seminar-2020 at Radison Blue Hotel in Banjara Hills here on Thursday, he called for strengthening sectors ancillary to agriculture like agriculture processing, storage, marketing and export. Telangana is the only state in the country to have extended various subsidies to agriculture sector.

He said the agriculture had lost its sheen during regimes of successive governments in undivided Andhra Pradesh leading to farmer deprived of his due honour.

K Chandrashekhar Rao, during his first regime as the Chief Minister focused on resolving farmers' problems and with the assistance of NABARD, the government built a chain of godowns and developed micro irrigation. Besides allocating a major chunk of budgeted funds to farm sector, the state government is extending an input



Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao, during his first regime as the CM focused on resolving farmers' problems and with the assistance of NABARD, the TRS government had built a chain of godowns in the state

**HARISH RAO**  
Finance Minister

subsidy of Rs 12,000 per acre to farmers per annum, he said.

Also, Rs 5 lakh insurance cover facility is being extended to the bereaved farmers' families, which is unprecedented in the country. The state government is paying Rs 1,136 crore per annum as premium to the insurance company, he said.

The State government during its first regime implemented the crop loan waiver scheme and has earmarked to spend Rs 6,000 crore per annum under the scheme during its second regime. Besides energising agricultural pump sets and wells free of cost, the state government has been supplying power free of cost to major lift irrigation schemes - Kalemwaram, Nettempadu

## Home Minister to visit Janpahad dargah today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali will visit Urs-E-Shareef, Dargah Hazrath Syed Mohiuddin Shah at Janpak Shaheed in Janpahad village of Suryapet district on Friday. On the occasion, the Minister would offer chadar, flowers, garlands at the holy dargah and pray for the wellbeing of people and overall development of Telangana.

He said, he would offer special prayers to seek blessings for the record victory of TRS in the recently concluded municipal elections and good health and long life of Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao.

## HMDA keen to acquire more lands

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The HMDA is likely to issue notification for land acquisition in Dandumalkapuram in Choutuppal mandal of Yadadri-Bhongiri district and in Bhogaram village of Keesara mandal of Medchal-Malkajgiri district following fruitful discussions with farmers of the two villages at grama sabhas. The HMDA has plans to augment its revenue by development of lands acquired from farmers in villages on the city outskirts. Following the success of such initiatives in many outskirts, the HMDA is keen to issue notification to acquire lands in the two villages. The HMDA officials said that the farmers of the two villages came forward to give up their lands. Currently, TSIC has set up an industrial park in Dandu Malkapuram.

## Ex-servicemen rally on Feb 1

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

An ex-servicemen rally will be organised on February 1 by Artillery Centre Hyderabad under the aegis of Dakshin Bharat Area and Telangana & Andhra Sub Area at Sri Rama Gardens Hall, Maruti Nagar, Nizamabad. The rally is aimed at reaching out to veterans and widows of Army, Navy, Air Force of Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Adilabad and Nirmal districts. Senior military and civil administration officials will interact with the participants and veer naris and differently-abled soldiers will be felicitated on the occasion.

## HYDERABAD BULLION RATES

<b>GOLD</b>	₹ 40,140 (10 gm)
	₹ 220 ↓
<b>SILVER</b>	₹ 46,100 (1kg)
	₹ 100 ↑

## CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹155
Without Skin	₹177
Broiler at Farm	₹107

## EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	370
VIJAYAWADA	420
VISAKHAPATNAM	420
<b>RETAIL PRICE</b>	<b>₹3.95</b>



Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy releasing TNGO agricultural market employees' central union's calendar on Thursday

## Avoid middlemen in marketyards: Niranjan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy on Thursday said farmers are central to state's development and the state progresses only if the farmer is happy. Speaking at a programme held at TNGO agricultural market employees' central union diary and calendar release function held here, he said the government succeeded in bringing crop production, marketing, processing and single window mechanism under one umbrella.

There were an estimated 60 lakh farmers in the state. Excellent results can be achieved by unifying the farmers and with the functioning of

the farmers' coordination committees with greater coordination, he said.

Prior to statehood movement, agricultural market yards wore deserted look, he said adding now farmers are seen selling their produce everywhere as paddy purchase centres have been set up in almost all villages. Integrated agricultural markets would be set up across the state in future on the lines of the ones at Gajwel and Siddipet increasing employment prospects for many.

He exhorted the marketing department employees to be not to be worried as the government would solve all of their problems. He asked the

government employees to eliminate the intervention of middlemen in the market yards.

The Centre would purchase only 30 per cent of the crop produced at the MSP while the government of Telangana would purchase the remainder of the crop at the MSP, he said. It would put an annual burden of Rs 1,000 crore per annum. There were instances of farmers of neighbouring states are selling their produce in the market yards in Telangana for want of the MSP for their produce in their states. He wanted the market yard employees to resist the practice and prevent drain of government funds.

## GREEN DRIVE



Rajya Sabha MP Joginapally Santosh Kumar congratulated the Indian Oil Corporation, which had come forward to plant saplings in Miyawaki method at Gachibowli in partnership with GHMC, as part of Corporate Social Responsibility. The MP, welcoming the initiative, asked other petroleum products marketers to get inspiration from Indian Oil Company, and urged them to join the bandwagon

## Warangal to have new fruit market soon

PNS ■ WARANGAL RURAL

A new fruit market with all modern facilities will come up soon on outskirts of the city. Parkal MLA Challa Dharma Reddy said that the State government had already sanctioned Rs 6.50 crore for setting up the market for the benefit of the traders as well as the consumers.

He added that they were scouting for the suitable land for the proposed market. As a part of it, MLA along with Geesugonda Tahsildar Kanakaiah and others has inspected the government land in the third division of the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (on the outskirts of Gorrekunta) on Thursday. He directed the revenue officials to survey the land and demarcate the boundaries. Official sources said that there is an extent of more than nine acres of the government land available. However, there are some legal disputes over the land. But the officials made it clear that they would sort out the legal issues and see that the land would be allocated for the fruit market.



Minister Sathyavathi Rathod at a review meeting with officials in Hyderabad on Thursday

## Officials told to make fool-proof arrangements for Medaram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Woman and Child Welfare Minister Sathyavathi Rathod has directed the officials concerned to ensure foolproof arrangements are made at the Medaram Jatara site, which is all set to commence from February 5.

Reviewing the arrangements for the event with officials here on Thursday at Damodaram Sanjivaiah Samkshema Bahvan, she asked the officials to make good use of Rs 75 crore, granted by Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao to make arrangements for the festival

and provide all amenities to the milling devotees. She inspected an invitation card designed for the event as if to brand the tribal festival and to invite the CM and other important leaders and tribal leaders. The invitation card was designed by the Tribal Welfare Department reflecting the tribal culture. She asked the officials to monitor the residue of works on a daily basis to ensure their completion on time and asked them to take all precautions to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the devotees visiting the festival. She asked the officials to appoint all those officials who were involved in the past in

the conduct of the festival on deputation basis. She wanted that a plastic free Medaram should be the objective of the officials. Coconuts should be sold in cloth bags in shops across the venue of the festival. She appealed to the devotees to not to use plastic.

She wanted the officials to give enough publicity to the event across the state, in Hyderabad and in undivided Warangal district. She also asked the officials to pay attention to the forthcoming SSC public exams so that the students of tribal welfare residential schools post good results compared to the last year.

## KTR gets rare honour...

Continued from Page 1

IGWEL is a gathering which brings world leaders onto a single platform and encourages them to talk more freely.

The organizers of the World Economic Forum invited world leaders, including the Prime Ministers of various countries and National Ministers from various states and provinces.

The list of Prime Ministers who attended the gathering includes Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of Serbia, Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland, and Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of Estonia.

A line of prominent National Ministers invited to the gathering include Carlos Alexandre Da Costa, Deputy Minister for Productivity,

Employment and Competitiveness, Brazil; Paulo Guedes, Minister of Economy, Brazil; S Iswaran, Minister for Communications and Information; Minister-in-Charge of Trade, Singapore (MCI); Park Young-sun, Minister of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Start-ups, Republic of Korea; Johnny Gerard Plate, Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Indonesia; Peggy Konkutwile, Serame Minister of Investment, Trade, and Industry, Botswana; Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning, Oman; Eyob Tekalign, Tolina State Minister of Finance, Ethiopia.

## 3 killed in road accident

PNS ■ JOGULAMBA GADWAL

Three persons died on the spot when the car they were travelling in, rammed a stationary tractor late on Wednesday night near Dayyala Vagu of Itikyala mandal. There were four persons in the car when the accident happened. The passengers of the car, all residents of Gadwal town, were heading towards Erravalli from Gadwal town at around 12.30 am on Thursday, when their car collided with a tractor carrying sugarcane, which was parked on the roadside. Three passengers travelling in the Swift car died on the spot. Driver was admitted to hospital with serious injuries.

## NIRDPR joins hands with UNICEF



NIRDPR Director General Dr WR Reddy and others at a programme in the city on Thursday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City-based National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) on Thursday said it has joined hands with UNICEF to establish a 'Communication Resource Unit' (CRU) to act as an institutional mechanism for providing strategic communication support to national flagship programmes.

It provides Social and Behavioural Change Communications (SBCC) to state governments as well as to central government schemes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan,

**NIRDPR UNICEF will establish a Communication Resource Unit to act as an institutional mechanism for providing strategic communication support to national flagship programmes**

National Health Mission and Swachh Bharath Mission among others, a release from NIRDPR said. It is currently operating in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka and has demonstrated management of strategic communications, the release said.

It aims to cater to strategic communication needs of different government department through consultations, technical support and, capacity building. CRU is equipped with a skilled team to support SBCC strategies development, rollout plans, capacity building and

developing IEC material, among others. According to the release, CRU has been recognised as unique model to operate out of NIRDPR and serve government departments with various communication needs. The unit is serving departments such as Women Development and Child Welfare, Health, Rural Development and Education through various SBCC strategies, IEC material, capacity building of line functionaries and also with translation and adaptation of National Material on POSHAN and Anaemia Mukth Bharath, it added.

## RTC special services net Rs 139.34 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TSRTC earned Rs 139.34 crore, as against Rs 121.30 crore earned last year during the corresponding period, by operating 5,052 special bus services for about 10 days during the Sankranti festival to various destinations in Telangana and Karnataka.

The daily income of the RTC was increased to Rs 12.66 crore as against the daily earning of Rs 11 crore. On Monday (Jan 20), the RTC earned the highest revenue of Rs 16.57 crore. Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar described the earnings as the highest in the history of TSRTC. He said that the earnings of the RTC are in tune with the management's predictions and exuded confidence that the transport undertaking will multiply its income by running special buses to Medaram tribal festival.

## SURVEY IN VILLAGES

## Training for panchayat officials soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Training programme for District-level Panchayat Officers will be conducted within a week as a precursor to conducting ease of living survey in villages to assess the standard of living of villagers. An officer of the Panchayat Raj Department, who wished to remain anonymous, said that the whole survey would be conducted with the help of a mobile application.

As part of the survey each and every household would be covered in villages and the

image of their habitats would be geo-tagged. Arrangements are being made to get access to the whole information online with just one click.

The authorities will find out whether the habitat is a tin-sheet roofed house, tiled house, are a two-storeyed structure and whether the house as power connection and road access. The officials verify whether the house has tap connection and individual sanitary toilet. The officials assess whether a habitat is a residential building or commercial building.

**hmda** HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
URBAN FORESTRY  
B-Block, HUDA Commercial Complex, Tarnaka, Hyderabad-500 007  
Hyderabad-500 007 Dt:22.01.2020

**Tender Notification (Re-call)**

It is to inform that the Urban Forestry wing of HMDA is inviting tenders for Construction of Gazebos in Kamadhanam, Singiripur, Srinagar, Kondamadugu, Jalalpur, Bininagar, Wadiyaram Cluster, Manoharabad, Panikibanda-I, Turkapally and Sangareddy Cluster (Bonthapally) (11) Urban Parks of HMDA from the registered contractors in any State or Central Government Departments/Organizations who have previous experience of executing similar nature of works on e-procurement platform. The last date for tender filing is 29th January 2020. For further details please visit HMDA official website [www.hmda.gov.in](http://www.hmda.gov.in) or <http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in>

Sd/-  
R.O. No: 325-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2019-20 Director, Urban Forestry HMDA

**CRIME CORNER**

**Rs 7 lakh netted from 70 fined for drunk driving**

**KHYDERABAD:** A local court at Nampally has imposed a fine of Rs 7 lakh to 70 people on Wednesday who were caught driving under the influence of alcohol. All the persons who were challenged were caught by police during drunken driving checks conducted last week. The Hyderabad Police have started conducting drunken-drive checks across the city. After hearing over the case, the court has imposed a fine of Rs 10,500 to 59 people and Rs 500 to six people, along with five days imprisonment, Rs 16,500 fine was imposed on four people and a person was asked to pay Rs 16,500 and one-day imprisonment.

**Man gets life term in prison for raping minor**

**KHYDERABAD:** A local court at Nampally that deals with POCOS cases has sentenced a man to rigorous life imprisonment on Wednesday for raping a 15-year-old girl. The accused has been identified as 23-year-old Mukesh Kumar Yadav, a painter by profession, he is a resident of Golnaka in Kacheguda and a native of Uttar Pradesh. He was arrested by the Kacheguda police for sexually assaulting a girl in 2011. According to the police, the victim on May 1, 2011 visited the place of the accused who was her neighbour. The two sisters of the girl were out playing at that time. While the victim was watching TV at his house, the accused forcibly raped her. When her mother, who is a contract labourer in RTC depot, returned home, the minor victim informed the same to her. On May 2, 2011 the victim's mother registered a case with Kachiguda police. A case was booked against Mukesh Kumar at the Kachiguda police station under Section 376(2)(f) of IPC. The court sentenced the man to rigorous imprisonment for life.

**Teacher booked for thrashing student**

**KHYDERABAD:** The LB Nagar Police booked a teacher at a private school for allegedly thrashing a Class IV student on Thursday. The police officials received a complaint from the boy's grandfather, who said that the 9-year-old boy had fainted due to a blow he had received on the head when the teacher beat him. The boy, a student of Pallavi Aware International School, at LB Nagar had reportedly torn a drawing paper. The drawing teacher was enraged at this and punched the boy on his head. The boy then fainted. The boy's grandfather then went to the school to ask about the issue. Based on the complaint, the LB Nagar Police registered a case and began an investigation into the incident.

**2 cricket betting bookies nabbed**

**KHYDERABAD:** Officials of the South Zone Task Force team apprehended two cricket betting bookies and seized Rs 55,000 cash and three cell phones at Shahinayat Gunj on Thursday. The accused identified as Shailender Agarwal, 34, is a resident of Sitaram Bagh, Malleshwaram and Sandeep Agarwal, 35, is a resident of Doodbowli.

**Office space consumption to surge residential realty**

**NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD**

While Hyderabad overtook Bengaluru office space absorption, this is likely to impetus residential realty. According to Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI), the increase in office space consumption to 12 million square feet will have a ballpark increase by 4 times on residential realty.

According to V Rajasekhara Reddy, General Secretary, CREDAI Hyderabad "Decentralisation of office space is happening in the city and price appreciation is much beyond anything. Lot of absorption of office space is in west. Office space consumption in Hyderabad is giving impetus to market which is focusing in better way. In long run, there will be small rental corrections. We need to address absorption for residential projects which is running in parallel. It is better to invest in space which minimises travel time. Gachibowli, Kokapet, Shamshabad additionally Patancheru, Kolluru, Miyapur and Chandanagar will witness



more new projects" However, realtors believe that there is huge scope for furthering office space consumption in the city. N Jaideep Reddy, vice president of CREDAI said, "Actually 12 million square feet office space consumption is very low for Hyderabad. The reason we are stuck at 12 million and not going to 15 million is because there no space available. Our infrastructure is good which is better than IT hub in Bengaluru. There are many chances to shift new projects to Hyderabad which are planned in Bengaluru." Jaideep Reddy added, "Moreover, the low rental rates will add to it. We are doing around Rs 55-Rs 65 in Raidurg area. The same place in Bengaluru is about Rs 100, we are about 30 per cent cheaper than Bengaluru. This is translating to 60 million square feet of residential realty." P Rama Krishna Rao, CREDAI President announced the 9th edition of Hyderabad Property Show from 31st January to 2nd February 2020 at Hitec, Madhapur. The show will display over 15,000 units from CREDAI Hyderabad member developers, different stakeholders from the financial and manufacturing sectors,

**According to CREDAI, the increase in office space consumption to 12 million square feet will have a ballpark increase by 4 times on residential realty**

displayed in 80 stalls. Speaking on the occasion, Rama Krishna Rao said, "The real estate sector in Hyderabad is on an upswing. This 9th edition of CREDAI Hyderabad Property Show is to help the buyers identify the best projects in the city under one roof and decide to make their 'investment' before the city witnesses a rapid price hike in the real estate." Meanwhile, CREDAI welcomed the TS-Bpass move and termed it as big administrative reform that is going to happen in Telangana.

**Hyderabad is a priority centre for YouTube: Susan tells KTR**

● KTR meets CEOs of YouTube, CocaCola at Davos

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Hyderabad is priority center for YouTube, declared the CEO of YouTube Susan Wojcicki during an interaction with Minister KT Rama Rao at Davos.

KTR had a brief conversation with CEO and was delighted to learn about the priorities of YouTube. He also met CocaCola CEO James Quincey and discussed their business growth plans and opportunities in Telangana. On day three, KTR promoted Telangana as an investment destination at WEF. He held series of discussions with Business leaders and political leaders.

KTR met the Minister of SMEs and Startups of Republic of Korea Park Young-Sun who emphasised the need for deregulation with respect to innovative enterprises. Saudi Communications Minister Abdullah Alswaha interacted with Minister KTR at a business gathering in Davos. Minister invited the Saudi Minister to visit Hyderabad to explore potential collaboration opportunities



IT Minister KT Rama Rao meets YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki at Davos

Chris Johnson, EVP & CEO Asia, Oceania, Nestle met KTR. Minister also held discussions with Deep Nishar, senior managing partner Soft Bank Investment Advisers and Amazon Web services VP, Global Public Policy Michael Punke. Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra also met Minister KTR at Davos. Hyderabad's robust life sciences and pharma ecosystem, emerging trends in Digital Drug discovery and use of AI, ML in the pharma industry, emerging trends in vaccine manufacturing were among a host of issues discussed in the meeting. KTR discussed possible collaboration with RICH and BioAsia with Camilla Sylvest, EVP, commercial strategy and corporate affairs Novo Nordisk - Danish multinational pharmaceutical company. David Loew, executive vice president and head of Sanofi Pasteur met Minister at the Telangana Pavilion in Davos.

**Satyavathi: Encourage girl child to pursue education**

● Minister releases poster for National Girl Child Day

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Minister for Women and Child Welfare Satyavathi Rathod on Thursday released the poster for the National Girl Child Day to be observed on Friday and called upon one and all to strive to protect the girl child. The poster was brought out by the Child Rights Protection Forum of the MV Foundation.

The KCR government gave priority to welfare of the women and to their protection and constituted SHE teams, brought out Kalyana Lakshmi scheme to wean girls away from child marriages. Implementing Arogya Lakshmi scheme to provide nutritious food to expectant mothers, the government gives Rs 12,000 to each pregnant woman since she was 24 weeks pregnant till her baby become



three-months-old for a period of six months at the rate of Rs 2,000 a month. Also, the government gives Rs 1,000 additionally to the mother if the new born was a female. She appealed to citizens to conduct themselves responsibly towards the girl child and stop practicing sex discrimination and encourage the girl child to pursue education. She wanted women to take active part in the Each One Teach One programme and eradicate illiteracy. MLCs Farooq Hussain, Child Rights' Protection Forum chairman Subash Chandra Bose, Dalit Bahujan Front leader T Sankar and others took part in the event.

**OU & UK researchers...**

Continued from Page 1

After the area was declared as a Conservation Reserve, almost 95% of disturbance to the bat has come under control. But more research needs to be done to know how far they go, where they go, what they eat so that they can be conserved in the right manner." The researcher added, "The Kolar leaf-nosed bat is unique because it has only one pair of leaflets as opposed to the other bats." The leaflets refer to the bat's nose-leaves, which they use while calling. Bat conservation has always taken a back-seat since the Wildlife Protection Act classifies bats as 'vermin' with the exception of two species. The Indo-UK team of biologists has brought forth a draft plan for a holistic study on the Kolar leaf-nosed bat. The UK team was led by Prof Gareth Jones, along with Dr Matt Zeale and Dr Lia Gilmour, while the Indian team included Dr Bhargavi Srinivasulu and others.

**COURTESY CALL**



Sarawathi Swamiji, Sarada Peetham, Visakhapatnam called on Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan at Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad on Thursday

**Massive fire breaks out in plastic, tyre godowns**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

A major fire broke out in two warehouses at Sai Baba Nagar in Mailardevpally on the city outskirts on Thursday morning. No casualties were reported as the warehouse was closed. The fire initially started in a tyre godown and soon spread to the nearby plastic godown. The flames from the two godowns formed a thick smoke which caused suffocation to the people residing in the area. Officials suspect a short circuit could have led to the fire. The tyre godown is owned by Syed Mosin, a resident of Danama Jopidi. He used the warehouse to dump old

unused tyres. The plastic warehouse belongs to Syed Amir, a resident of Kings colony. Police said that the godowns were set up without permission. Residents noticed fire and alerted the fire department and police officials. The warehouse was full of plastic scrap material, due to which thick smoke engulfed the surrounding areas, triggering panic among the residents. People staying in houses and huts near the warehouse were evacuated as a preventive measure. Due to the thick smoke and flames, more fire engines were called in. "Five fire engines took six hours to control the blaze," said Ravinder Naik, SI Mailardevpally Police.



**OU professor invited for leadership at Harvard**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Prof Jagadeeshwar Rao Veerani, EMRC, Osmania University, was invited for the leadership of 21st Century programme at the prestigious Harvard University, Boston, USA for two weeks from February 2, 2020. As many as ninety participants from different countries are going to participate in the programme. Leadership for the 21st Century pushes participants to reflect on deepest assumptions and most strongly held values and encourages to consider how values and beliefs may have limited in the past. The leadership for the 21st Century programme is intended for senior executives in government, corporate, NGOs and academicians who wish to better understand the personal and political aspects of leadership and improve their capabilities to lead.

**Officials told to make elaborate arrangements**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Minister for Education Sabita Indra Reddy on Thursday asked officials to conduct the Intermediate public exams in a fool proof manner taking into consideration the last year's experiences. The practical exams will be held from February 1 to 20 and the main exams from March 4 to 23. The Minister said that over 9,65,840 are appearing for the exam in 1,334 examination centers. Referring to private colleges harassing students by not giving the hall-tickets, the Minister said that the students can download the hall tickets from the relevant website. The Center for Good Governance has been appointed to extend technical support to the government in the conduct of exams, the Minister said asking the authorities to

**Voc Inter passouts can avail apprenticeship**

**KHYDERABAD:** Those completing vocational Intermediate courses in Telangana will now be able to avail apprenticeship from this academic year. The students from various trades will be engaged in different industries after passing their Intermediate examinations that will be held in April and May 2020. The apprentices will receive a stipend of Rs 7,000 per month. The Commissioner of Intermediate Education has begun approaching various business segments, urging them to provide apprenticeship to the vocational intermediates. The government will reimburse 25 per cent of the stipend to such units. The Department of Intermediate Education in collaboration with the Regional Directorate of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (RDSDE) held a workshop on Wednesday to raise awareness of 'apprenticeship' with managements of hospitals and nursing homes, at the Commissionerate of Intermediate Education, Nampally in Hyderabad. The director of RDSDE also requested the hospital managements to register themselves with the directorate to provide apprenticeship to the vocational students. He said that apprenticeship to students has been restored from the academic year 2020. Syed Omer Jaleel, the Commissioner of Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education, said that a database of passed students will be displayed on the board's website for the convenience of hospitals looking to take in apprentices. Nearly 10,000 female students training to become Multi-Purpose Health Workers and 9,000 male students of Medical Lab Technician can avail apprenticeship through Centralized Apprenticeship Selection Melas, said Jaleel.

constitute technical experts to monitor the activities of the CGG. Sabita Indra Reddy told the officials to arrange meetings of the High-Power Committee in districts to ensure smooth conduct of exams. The officials were also asked to set up a help desk in the office of the Board of Intermediate Education to answer queries of students. Board secretary Omar Jaleel, controller of exams Abdul Khaliq and others were also present.

**Narayana student secures 100 percentile in B Arch JEE MAIN**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Narayana Educational Institutions have once again dominated B Arch division of JEE Main results 2020 announced on Thursday evening by securing 100 percentile for their student Hardik Rajpal. Dr Sindhura Narayana, Managing Director and Sharan, director of Narayana Group informed media persons that Rajpal is one of the two students in the entire country to have secured 100 percentile in JEE Main (B.Arch.) results announced by NTA and he is also the lone student from both



Telugu states to achieve this distinction. Sindhura said that Narayana's unparalleled success rate is a result of the Group's well researched and definitive curriculum developed by experts, which gives strong emphasis on mastery of fundamentals and thorough conceptual understanding.

**Hyd US Consulate number 2 in issuance of H1B**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

US Consul General, Hyderabad Joel Reifman on Thursday said that US consulate in Hyderabad stands at second position in the world for the issuance of H1B visas. Commending erstwhile Andhra Pradesh government for facilitating setting up of the Consulate in Hyderabad, Joel said, "It stands in top ten in the world for issuance of student visas. We issued more than 2 million visas in 11 years. Our new consulate will have 54 visa windows and more capacity to expand that relationship." He added that Telugu is fastest growing language in US. He was speaking at HYSEA first ever business summit - BIZ



Summit 2020-Expanding Growth Horizons' at Avasa Hotels in Hyderabad. While stating that the best is yet to come, Joel said, "While we are very encouraged by India's reform in GST, bankruptcy and consultancy code,

**The summit focused on outstanding business leaders providing trade insights and effective strategies for expanding growth horizons**

that the trade is truly free and equitable". The business summit focused on outstanding business leaders providing trade insights and effective strategies for expanding growth horizons. He said, "For instance the United States has one of the lowest applied average tariff rate in the world at 3.4 per cent. India's applied average tariff rate is 13.4 per

cent. Almost one half of our tariff items imported into United States from India is duty free whereas less than 3 per cent of goods coming from United States into India qualify for duty free status. So we are looking to equalise that playing field for serving our nation for further growth." Murali Bollu, President, HYSEA said, "Our objective is to help IT companies in Hyderabad to grow by bringing in new business. This summit will benefit companies gain insight about the new technologies and geographies, changing client expectations, emerging new business models and knowledge about new models in marketing and sales domains."

**FSDR Bill will lead to privatisation of PSBs: Cong**  
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Treasurer Guduru Narayana Reddy has alleged that the BJP Government at the Centre was trying to give corporate sector a backdoor access to savings of small depositors by introducing Financial Sector Development and Regulation (FSDR) Bill. Narayana Reddy, in a statement on Thursday, alleged that the BJP Government was trying to privatise the Public Sector Banks through FSDR Bill so as to benefit a few corporates by granting them access to the hard earned money of common depositors.

Originally, the BJP Government had introduced Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017 which was later dropped due to a controversial 'bail-in' clause. However, now the same Bill is being introduced with some modifications which are more dangerous than the original FRDI Bill. He said the Bill provides for constitution of a new RC which will monitor the health of financial firms like banks, insurance companies, mutual funds, non-banking finance companies, etc. In case of failure of any of these firms, the RC will have the mandate to take measures to resolve the crisis without involving RBI and other financial regulatory authorities. Narayana Reddy said out that the FSDR would make the existence of RBI totally irrelevant in handling banking crisis.

**ALL SET FOR POLLING IN KARIMNAGAR TODAY**

PV KONDAL RAO ■ KARIMNAGAR

Elaborate arrangements have been made for conduct of Karimnagar Municipal Corporation polls scheduled to be held on Friday. Though the election for 120 municipalities and nine municipal corporations across the State was held on Wednesday, the polling of Karimnagar Corporation was postponed to January 24 following the court cases.

The Municipal Corporation has a total of 60 divisions, out of which, the ruling TRS candidates were elected unanimously from two divisions, while in the remaining 58 divisions, a total of 2,69,000 voters are likely to exercise their franchise to elect the urban local body representatives. A total of 369 candidates are in the fray in this election, and the administration has deployed over 2,000 poll personnel for conducting the elections.

A total of 2,000 polling staff including 20 each of route officers, nodal officers, sector officers, returning officers, assistant returning officers and polling officers, assistant polling officers, webcasting staff and others are engaged to conduct election. One each of PO and APO and three OPOs were allocated for every polling booth. 82 polling stations have been identified as hyper sensitive centers where in tight security arrangements are made by the police department. Besides recording the polling process in all centers,



Officials reviewing the arrangements at a polling booth in Karimnagar on Thursday

officials have decided to monitor election in 14 centers through web casting.

Police took up intense patrolling in the sensitive areas of the city. Meanwhile, the ruling TRS is taking the election prestigiously as it suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of the BJP and Bandi Sanjay at the Lok Sabha polls. This could be one of the prime reasons why the KMC was regarded the prestigious urban local body in the state.

Karimnagar city has got the distinction of sending about 10 Majlis Corporators to the urban local body and this time too, the Majlis is taking the election seriously and they are giving stiff competition to the prime contenders - TRS and BJP. Meanwhile, the Congress is in a most precarious condition and their leaders and cadre are placed in worst ever condition in this city.

**Repolling in 3 wards today**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The SEC issued notification for re-polling in ward number 41 of Mahabubnagar and Kamareddy and ward number 32 of Bodhan. In all the three wards, bogus votes were reportedly cast by Muslim community women who came in the last moment wearing burkha.

The SEC said: "Despite appeal to unveil burkha, they argued and refused to do so, stating that it is against their religious custom. Due to the number of voters in waiting in the line in the last minute, they were allowed to cast their vote merely based on the documents presented in support of their identifica-

tion. Subsequently when real voters presented themselves for voting, the polling officials have issued them tendered votes." Fresh poll will be conducted in polling booth 198 of ward 41 in Mahabubnagar on 24 January. On same day, polling will be conducted in polling station 101 in ward 41 of Kamareddy. Ink mark will be applied on middle finger of the voter's left hand. Meanwhile, the EC announced the schedule for election of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson of Municipal Council and Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Municipal corporations. The notice to convene special meeting will be given on 25 January.

**Police denying nod for our events, claims Laxman**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana BJP has lodged a complaint with the Hyderabad CP Anjani Kumar alleging that the police are not giving 'minimum respect' to the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy. They alleged that the police had denied permission to the programmes, in which Kishan Reddy was supposed to participate.



BJP State unit president K Laxman and others at the CP office in Hyderabad

BJP state president Dr K Laxman, in the complaint mentioned that the police are not giving permission to the programmes of BJP whereas the same police are giving permissions to the programmes of the AIMIM. Demanding the Police Commissioner not to give permission to the AIMIM proposed rally at Charminar on January 25, BJP alleged that the police are not reacting on the provocative speeches delivered by AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi.

**MIM is trying to create communal riots in the state in the name of rally against CAA. It is trying to spread its party across the state by provoking communal differences, said K Laxman**

may provoke communal differences across the state with the proposed rally at Charminar where Bhagalaxmi temple and several religious organizations were there.

MIM is trying to spread its party across the state by provoking communal differences, he said alleging that MIM leaders were hatching conspiracies to provoke communal violence like Bhainsa in Hyderabad city too. It was unfortunate that the TRS government is too extending its support to the MIM, he

lamented. He urged the City Police Commissioner not to give permission to the programmes, which will disturb communal harmony, by carrying national flags. MIM is trying to become strong under the guise of friendship with TRS, he alleged.

Laxman found fault with the police for giving permission to the protest programmes and rallies taken up by the MIM whereas the same police are not giving permission to the programmes taken up by the BJP.

**CHANGE OF TPCC CHIEF**

**Anxiety grips TS Congress leaders**

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has intensified the process to appoint new chief for the TPCC. Especially after the grand old party's disastrous performance in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the Congress party high command has reportedly decided to appoint a new chief for its Telangana unit.

Also, the leaders of the Telangana Congress were eagerly waiting for the change of the TPCC chief position.

According to sources, party senior leader V Hanumantha

Rao received a call from AICC Control Room to meet party high command in AICC War Room on January 27. The party senior leaders held a surprise meeting on the day of polling for municipal elections (Wednesday) and had written a letter to the party high command urging it to consider appointing a party loyalist for the post of TPCC chief.

The party high command is also changing the PCCs of the states one after the other across the nation. The high command had already appointed new PCC chief to Andhra Pradesh. According to sources, AICC is busy finalising the chief of Karnataka PCC. Besides, the AICC had already

**Following disastrous performance in the Assembly and LS polls, the party high command has reportedly decided to appoint a new chief for its Telangana unit**

removed the leaders from their PCC positions except its chief in Punjab. Sonia Gandhi is determined to appoint new chiefs to rejuvenate the party in the states.

In case of Telangana, present TPCC president Uttam himself already announced in Huzurnagar that he will step down after the municipal elec-

tions. One of the leaders on condition of anonymity questioned saying that how the municipal elections would decide the TPCC chief position. No leader roamed across the state to prove their skills in these elections influencing the voters, he said. The high command may think in all aspects and appoint a new PCC chief.

According to AICC leaders, the high command will give first priority to loyalty and second priority would be given to popularity of the leader and influence and last priority would be of leader's economical resources. One of the AICC secretaries from the state stated that the first one i.e. loyalty to the party is must besides the remaining qualities for the position.

**TRS MLA's son booked...**

Continued from Page 1

However, Goud has set up his shop in the same area and was selling similar products as the contract shop, causing trouble in their business. This led to an argument and escalated to an extent where Vishnuvardhan Reddy, along with other men, approached Goud and beat him up. They also assaulted his wife Shailaja at his home," said the police.

Based on a complaint, cases were booked against Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Malleth, Gandhi and Sreenu under Sections 447 (criminal trespass), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the IPC and investigation was launched.

**Minor girl gang-raped on city outskirts**

Continued from Page 1

The trio took the girl to an isolated place in the Patancheru Industrial Development Area (IDA) and raped her by taking turns. They then abandoned her at the spot and fled away. With the help of passers-by, the girl reached home and informed her parents.

"Area locals heard her scream and shout for help and came to her rescue. She told them about what happened and with their help, cops were called via dial 100. The police used the GPS location of the caller to reach the place and started investigation by taking a statement from the victim," said a local source.

Ravi, the owner of the house where her parents work, told media persons that she was in shock and not able to answer



**Cheating case...**

Continued from Page 1

Further, when Shahab asked for payment, Mujib's employee Sudesh Awakkal replied through an e-mail, informing them that Rs 10.6 lakh was transferred to his bank account. However, the payment did not reflect in their account, Shahab said.

"Later in November, they (referring to Azharuddin's personal assistant) sent me pictures of a cheque over WhatsApp informing that the cheque was dispatched. But we did not receive the cheque; he added.

As there was no response despite repeated requests, Shahab approached the City Chowk Police Station in Aurangabad and file a complaint. The Maharashtra police booked a case under charges of 420 (cheating), 406 (criminal breach of trust) against Azharuddin.

**MANUU students write to KCR against CAA, NRC**

Continued from Page 1

"CAA, NRC and NPR are against the Indian Constitution and a threat to the secular ethos of this country. Our country needs to register unemployed youth and uneducated children, not NRC and NPR," the letter said.

Pointing out that the state governments of Kerala and Punjab had passed resolutions in their respective Assemblies against CAA, the letter to KCR said, "We request you to please take a firm decision to stop CAA, NRC and NPR and defeat the

divisive agenda of the communal forces in the larger interests of the nation."

The students' union wrote letters to nine states headed by non-BJP Chief Ministers, requesting all of them to pass Assembly resolutions against CAA and NRC.

Although the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) had voted against CAA in Parliament, KCR has since maintained cryptic silence on the issue.

However, KCR's close aide and state Home Minister Mahmood Ali has said that NRC would not be implemented the state.

**AP Govt indicates it may abolish Upper House of Legislature**

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister was winding up an impromptu debate in the Assembly on what happened in the Council on Wednesday, where the Chairman exercised his "discretionary power" under Rule 154 and referred the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020 and the APCRDA (Repeal) Bill to a select committee for deeper examination.

With the principal opposition Telegu Desam Party members staying away from the Assembly proceedings, the rul-



ing YSR Congress MLAs came down heavily on Council Chairman M A Sharrif and Leader of the Opposition in the Council Yanamala Ramakrishnu over the manner in which the proceedings were conducted and the two

bills referred to a select committee, allegedly in transgression of rules.

"The Chairman's decision was against the rule book and the procedure he adopted was very unfortunate," the Chief Minister pointed out.

He maintained that the Council, as the House of Elders, was there "only to give suggestions" to the government.

"What will be the meaning of governance if the House of Elders does not allow good decisions to be taken in the interest of people and block enactment of laws?"

**Over Rs1,000 cr sweetened municipal elections!**

Continued from Page 1

In the municipalities there are about 40,36,346 voters and in corporations there are 13,13,909 voters; totaling 53 lakh voters in the state. Specifically 11,179 candidates in municipalities plus 1,747 candidates in corporations, irrespective of their political affiliations, went overboard to woo voters.

The candidates from major parties viz. TRS, Congress, BJP and MIM tried to woo voters with multiple forms of inducements. About 50 per cent of the candidates distributed cash to voters. Some more 'resourceful' candidates also distributed liquor, chicken and mutton. There were also those who distributed gifts like gold coins and utility and electronic items for use at home.



According to conservative estimates of observers, candidates from all political parties spent more than Rs.1,000 crore in cash for these municipal elections. The candidates reportedly offered amounts ranging from Rs.1,000 to Rs.3,000 to each voter. The voters had no qualms in accepting money from all and sundry.

Interestingly, some of the voters who had taken money from all candidates adopt their own method of justice. For example, if there were three

voters in a house and they had taken money from all political parties; one vote went to TRS, another to Congress and the remaining one to BJP. If there was a fourth person, his or her vote went to the party that had paid the biggest amount Bonus!

The president of one of the colonies in Boduppall municipality, who does not want to be named, shares: "I had advised residents to accept money from the candidates if offered. If you don't take money from one of the contestants, then he could have doubts on you. They will target you if unfortunately the same candidate loses the elections." Of course, the winners will enjoy once the results are out. "The losers will have to additionally bear the burden of 'unproductive' expenditure.

**AIMIM denied permission for...**

Continued from Page 1

AIMIM President and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi tweeted that the police rejected permission for the protest meeting and instead advised them to move it to nearby Khilwat Grounds.

He announced that the 'Mushaira' and protest meeting against CAA, NPR and NRC will now be held at Khilwat Grounds. The national flag would be hoisted at midnight to usher in the Republic Day.

BJP's Telangana unit chief K. Laxman had threatened that if AIMIM was permitted to hold the protest rally at Charminar, his party would hold a meeting at another place.

Laxman alleged that the police were denying permis-



Charminar. His party on Thursday stated that the programme will see participation by country's leading Urdu poets.

"There is a long-standing tradition in Hyderabad to use poetry and satire to challenge tyranny and oppression, this 'Festival of Democracy' is part of this tradition. The goal of the event is to not only celebrate the Republic of India and its Constitution, but to also emphasise on the dangers to it from CAA, NPR and NRC," the AIMIM said.

The event will see participation by well-known poets Rahat Indori, Sampat Saral and Lata Haya along with young voices such as Nabiya Khan, Aamir Aziz and Husain Haidry.

**'Development in UTs Centre's priority'**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy visited Ganderball town and Manigam Block of Ganderball District on first two days of his three-day tour to Jammu & Kashmir under the Central government's outreach programme. During his visit, he laid foundation stones for projects worth over Rs 50 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the Centre has development of the Union territory as top of its agenda. He stressed on the fact that this potential will now be unleashed with the right policy interventions and honest intentions. He unequivocally asserted that development of Jammu & Kashmir along with renewed growth



Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy distributing pension book to an elderly woman in Manigam Block of Ganderball District in J&K on Thursday

**As part of his 3-day tour to Kashmir, Kishan visited Ganderball district and interacted with different delegations**

ment. He discussed about several welfare schemes and several measures taken for development infrastructure and basic facilities for the Jawans.

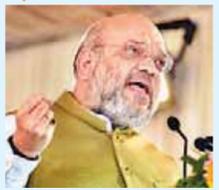
Kishan Reddy also distributed pension books to senior citizens ensuring monthly financial support of upto Rs 1,000/- per month. Interacting with people, he said ensuring inclusive social and financial development has been the

founding principal of the Central Government.

Interacting with the people at Manigam, Kishan Reddy highlighted the fact that the first step towards building a growth story for Kashmir has been removing all policy bottlenecks, address corruption. He said that it was unfortunate that many essential projects such as drinking water, power generation etc. had been languishing for years and some even for decades.

As part of his three-day tour to Kashmir, Kishan Reddy visited Ganderball district and interacted with different delegations, local people and official stakeholders. He also assessed the progress under several schemes of the Central government.

SHORT READS



Shah pays tributes, says Bal Thackeray never compromised

**NEW DELHI:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday paid homage to Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray on his birth anniversary and described him as a brilliant intellect of his time who never compromised with his ideals. The Shiv Sena in November broke its decades old alliance with the BJP and formed a government in Maharashtra with the support of the NCP and the Congress. "Remembering Balasaheb Thackeray Ji on his Jayanti. Balasaheb Ji was a brilliant intellect of his time, always mesmerised the masses with his oratory skills. He always stood firm and never compromised with his ideals. Balasaheb Ji's life and his values will continue to inspire us," Shah tweeted. Thackeray was born in 1926 in Pune and passed away in 2012 in Mumbai.

UGC warns varsities against awarding 'unspecified' degrees

**NEW DELHI:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) has warned universities and educational institutions against awarding "unspecified" degrees. "It has been observed that some universities and institutions are awarding unspecified degrees leading to litigations and different problems for the students conferred with such degrees. The universities should abide by the provisions of the UGC Act and award only those degrees which have been specified by the UGC," the commission said in a letter to vice chancellors of all universities. The UGC has asked universities to stick to the consolidated list provided by it for the approved nomenclature of degrees. "If a university wishes to award a degree other than the ones specified by the UGC, it shall approach the commission for its approval six months prior to starting the degree programme with full justification on the course to be started," the letter said.

Netaji opposed Hindu Mahasabha's divisive politics: Mamata

**DARJEELING (WB):** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Thursday that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose opposed the Hindu Mahasabha's "divisive politics" and fought for a secular and united India. Demanding that his birth anniversary be declared a national holiday, Banerjee said Bose through his struggle has sent the message of respecting all faiths and the best tribute to him would be to fight for a united India. "Netaji had opposed the Hindu Mahasabha's divisive politics. He had fought for a secular India. Now efforts are on to oust those who follow secularism," Banerjee said at an event here to celebrate Bose's birth anniversary. She also slammed the Centre for "not being serious" about unravelling the mystery shrouding Bose's disappearance. "They had only declassified a few files and not taken any step to find out what actually happened. It is a matter of shame that even after more than 70 years, we don't know what happened to him," Banerjee said.

# Pavan Varma free to leave JDU when he wants: Nitish

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday took umbrage at his senior party leader Pavan Varma for going public with reservations about the JD(U)'s support to Citizenship (Amendment) Act and tie-up with BJP for Delhi assembly polls, and made it clear that the "scholarly" diplomat-turned-politician was "free to go wherever he likes".



'WILL DECIDE NEXT COURSE OF ACTION DEPENDING ON NITISH KUMAR'S REPLY'

**New Delhi:** JD(U) general secretary Pavan Varma on Thursday said he will decide his next course of action depending on the reply from party president Nitish Kumar to his letter and asserted that he will continue to speak "what he believes is for the good of the country and the party". Varma's comments came after Kumar, who is the chief minister of Bihar, snubbed him saying he is free to go wherever he wants and slammed him for raising his concerns over the party's stand on a host of citizenship measures of the Modi government. "I have not received a reply. Depending on the reply or its absence I will decide on my course of action. I will continue to speak what I believe is right, what is for the good of the country and the party," the former Rajya Sabha member said. The former diplomat has drifted from the JD(U) over its support to CAA and NRC.

organized on the occasion of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary. "He (Varma) is a scholarly person for whom I have enormous, personal respect. But the types of state-

But if he had any reservations, he could have expressed the same in a party forum. And the reference to conversations made in private! Would I ever go public with what he has said to me in private

— NITISH KUMAR  
Bihar Chief Minister

ments he has been giving.. it has left me flabbergasted," he said. "There should be no confusion on the stand taken by the Janata Dal (United) on issues. Our stand is always very clear. "But if he had any reservations, he could have expressed the same in a party forum. And the reference to conversations made in private! Would I ever go public with what he has said to me in private", Kumar said with obvious displeasure. "Nonetheless, I have lots of respect for him. He can go wherever he likes", Kumar said with smile on his lips, concealing the bitterness caused by the recent development. This is the first time that Kumar has chosen to speak about voices of dissent emerging from his party in the wake of the JD(U)'s decision to support the CAB in Parliament.

# Rly commissions govt's first waste-to-energy plant

● To turn e waste, plastic into light diesel oil

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The East Coast Railway has commissioned the government's first waste-to-energy plant which will turn e waste and plastic into light diesel oil in 24 hours, officials said on Thursday.



The plant is the world's first patented heterogenous catalytic process which converts multiple feed stocks into hydrocarbon liquid fuels, gas, carbon and water

A patented technology called "Polycrack" will be used in this waste-to-energy plant, which is first of its kind in Indian Railways and only the fourth in India. "It is the world's first patented heterogenous catalytic process which converts multiple feed stocks into hydrocarbon liquid fuels, gas, carbon and water. Earlier, lots of non-ferrous scrap generated from the Carriage Repair Workshop had no efficient method of disposal. As a result, these elements were being disposed by landfills, which had environmentally hazardous impact," said East Coast Railway spokesperson JP Mishra. He said in this process, pre-segregation of waste is not required to reform the waste which can be directly fed into the machine to be converted into diesel. "It has high tolerance to moisture hence drying of waste is not required. Waste is processed and reformed with-

in 24 hours. It is an enclosed unit hence the working environment is dust free. Biological decomposition is not allowed as the waste is treated as it is received, the officer said. The foot print of the plant is small hence the area required for installing it is less when compared with conventional method of processing. All constituents are converted into valuable energy thereby making it zero discharge process," he explained. Gas generated in the process is re-used to provide energy to the system thereby making it self reliant of its energy requirement and also bring down the operating cost, the officer said. He also said that there is no atmospheric emission during the process unlike other conventional methods except for combustion gases which have pollutants less than prescribed norms the world over. The plant operates at around 450 degrees, making it a low temperature process when compared with other options.

# Dalit man set ablaze in MP dies, Cong, BJP engage in war of words

PNS ■ BHOPAL

A 24-year old Dalit man, who was set on fire in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar city last week, died at a hospital in New Delhi on Thursday morning, police said.



Dhanprasad Ahirwar, a resident of Motinagar area in Sagar, was set ablaze on January 14 by four of his neighbours who were forcing him to take back a police complaint that he filed after a dispute with them

The ruling Congress and the opposition BJP hit out at each other following the incident. While the BJP said police did not act upon the victim's complaints made before the incident because of the state government's "appeasement policy", the Congress accused the saffron party of trying to vitiate the atmosphere by speaking "lies". Dhanprasad Ahirwar, a resident of Motinagar area in Sagar, was set ablaze on January 14 by four of his neighbours who were forcing him to take back a police complaint that he filed after a dispute with them, police said. Ahirwar, who sustained around 70 per cent burns, was initially treated in Sagar and then shifted to a hospital in the state capital Bhopal. He was later taken in an air ambulance to a hospital in Delhi where he died on Thursday, police said.

All the accused, Chhuttu, Aju Pathan, Kallu and Irfan, have been arrested, Sagar's Superintendent of Police Amit Sanghi said. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath expressed grief over the death of Ahirwar and assured all assistance to his family. "Received the news of demise of Dhanprasad Ahirwar, a resident of Sagar, during treatment in Delhi. My condolences to the family... Inquiries have been issued for all possible help to the family," Nath tweeted. However, Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Gopal Bhargava accused the Sagar district administration of negligence and said Ahirwar could have been saved if police had acted "in time".

# Karnataka notifies anti-superstition law

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Over two years after it was passed by the Karnataka legislature, the B S Yediyurappa-led BJP government has finally notified the much-hyped anti-superstition law that aims to prevent and eradicate "inhuman evil practices".



Interestingly, the BJP, which was then in the opposition, had expressed strong reservations about the Bill, piloted by the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government and passed by the state Legislature on November 16, 2017

Interestingly, the BJP, which was then in the opposition, had expressed strong reservations about the bill, piloted by the Siddaramaiah led Congress government and passed by the state legislature in November 16 2017. The Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Act RPT Act, 2017, that intends to protect the common people against "evil" and "sinister" practices, shall come into force with effect from January 4 2020, the government notification issued earlier this month said. The Act seeks to combat and eradicate other such inhuman practices propagated and performed in the name of "black magic" by comment with the sinister motive of exploiting the common people, thereby destroying the social fabric in society. Further, it aims to bring social awakening and aware-

ness in the society and create healthy and safe social environment. Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Siddaramaiah congratulated BJP for enforcing the Act by rectifying its mistake of "condemning, hounding and maligning" his government when they tried to implement the Act with an intention to stop it. He also hoped that things which are beliefs now "don't turn into superstition under pressure." Considered similar to the one in Maharashtra, the Act has 'savings' and 'schedule' categories, which classify practices that could be tolerated and those that need to be controlled or prohibited. The notification said nothing in the act shall apply with respect to the forms of worship mentioned under the heading 'savings'. These include practices like 'pradakshina', yatras, 'parikramas' performed at religious places, among other normal practices. It also includes the advice with regard to 'Vastushastra', advice by 'jyotishya' and other astrologers. Practices included under the 'schedule' for prohibition are -- performing any inhuman, evil act and black magic in search of precious things, bounty and hidden treasures. Other practices listed under 16 points for prohibition are facilitating any person to roll over leaves of leftover food by other people in public or religious places or similar practices that violate human dignity; subjecting women to inhuman and humiliating practices like parading them naked in the name of worship or otherwise, such as "bethale seve". Also, forcing any person to carry out evil practices such as killing of an animal by biting its neck and coercing any person or persons to perform 'fire walk' at the time of 'jattras' (temple/village fest) and religious festivals have also been included, it added.

# Gun used to kill TN police officer recovered from drain

PNS ■ KOCHI

A gun allegedly used to kill a Tamil Nadu police officer early this month was recovered from a drainage near the KSRTC bus stand here by the 'Q' branch team probing the case, police said here on Thursday. The gun, reportedly made in Italy, was recovered in the presence of the arrested suspects — Abdul Shameem and Taufiq -- while they were brought here as part of gathering evidence in connection with the case, they said.

Police suspect that the gun allegedly used by the assailants was meant only for Army supply. Personnel of the Tamil Nadu 'Q' branch, which handles matters related to extremists and involving national security, had taken the duo into custody last week. Two unidentified men had shot Special Sub Inspector Wilson with a pistol and stabbed him when he was on duty at Kalyakavilai checkpoint in Kanyakumari on the border with Kerala around 9.30 PM on January 8.

# Hemant Soren to expand Jharkhand Cabinet today

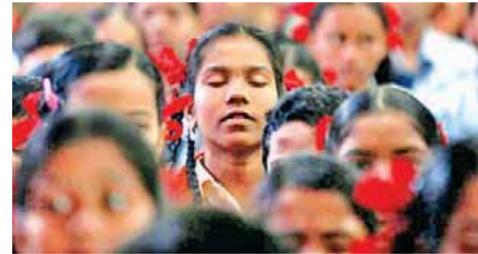
PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren will expand his four-member cabinet on Friday. Earlier on Thursday, Soren called on Governor Droupadi Murmu at the Raj Bhavan. "The cabinet will be expanded tomorrow at 1 pm at Birs Mandap in the Raj Bhavan," an official said. JMM general secretary Suprio Bhattacharya confirmed the cabinet expansion. As per the constitutional



provision, Jharkhand can have a maximum of 12 ministers,

including the chief minister. The previous Raghubar Das government had left one berth vacant throughout its term. Soren took oath as the 11th chief minister of Jharkhand on December 29 at the Morabadi ground with a galaxy of leaders, including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in attendance. Along with Soren, three ministers — two from the Congress and one from the RJD — also took oath that day.



# Reciting preamble every Saturday mandatory in MP government schools

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Students in government-run schools in Madhya Pradesh will have to compulsorily read out the Preamble to the Constitution during their assemblies on every Saturday starting this week, an official said on Thursday. Earlier this week, the Maharashtra government also made it compulsory for students in schools across the state to read out the Preamble to the Constitution during their morning assemblies everyday from January 26. A Public Relations Department official in Madhya Pradesh said, "Preamble to the Constitution will be recited by students in every government school every Saturday." The state School Education

Department on Wednesday issued an order to this effect, the official said, adding that it will be implemented immediately. "As per the order, students will recite the Preamble to the Constitution every Saturday under the guidance of the school headmaster or teacher after the prayers in primary and middle schools," the official said. "Similarly, students of high schools and higher secondary schools will recite the preamble under the guidance of the principal during the 'bal saba', which is held every Saturday," he said. The move to make students read out the Preamble comes at a time when large-scale protests are being held against the CAA and NRC.

# R-Day parade dress rehearsal leads to traffic snarls in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Thousands of commuters faced difficulties in reaching their destinations as several roads were closed in view of full dress rehearsal of the Republic Day parade, leading to traffic snarls in the Lutyens' Delhi on Thursday. There was heavy traffic congestion at Dhaula Kuan, Bhikaji Cama Place, ITO and Pragati Maidan. The rehearsal parade began at 9.50 am from Vijay Chowk and proceeded towards the Red Fort via Rajpath, C-Hexagon, Tilak Marg, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and Netaji Subhash Marg, according to the Delhi Police. Traffic on Rajpath - from



Vijay Chowk to India Gate - was restricted during the rehearsal on Thursday, the police said. Metro services were available for commuters but entry and exit gates at Udyog Bhawan and Central Secretariat stations were closed. No heavy transport vehicles were allowed to enter the national capital from borders from 10 pm on Wednesday till the rehearsal concluded in the afternoon on Thursday. They were allowed to ply between

In this year's parade, the Walled City of Jaipur and Gujarat's iconic stepwell in Patan, both UNESCO world heritage, and the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev will be thematically showcased in the tableaux.

ISBT Sarai Kale Khan and ISBT Kashmiri Gate on Ring Road from 7.30 am to 1.30 pm on Thursday. Traffic on Tilak Marg, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and Subhash Marg was restricted on both directions. For the Republic Day too, no traffic will be allowed on Rajpath from Vijay Chowk to India Gate from 6 pm on Saturday till the parade gets over on Sunday. No cross traffic on Rajpath from 11 pm on Saturday at Rafi Marg, Janpath, Man Singh Road till the parade gets over. C-Hexagon-India Gate will be closed for traffic from 2 am on Sunday till the parade cross-

es Tilak Marg, a traffic advisory said. From 5 am on Sunday, the traffic on Tilak Marg, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and Subhash Marg will not be allowed on both directions. Cross traffic will only be allowed depending upon the movement of the parade. Jammu & Kashmir will participate in the parade for the first time as a Union Territory. Out of the total 22 tableaux, 16 will be of various states and UTs and six of ministries, departments and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). They were unveiled at an event held at the Delhi Cantonment on Wednesday.

## A really bad year

India slips on the global democracy index from 2018 even as Thailand goes up. We are losing the war of perception



As the world's largest democracy, no matter how grudging an admission this might be by assessors of the Western world, we should at least be held up as tolerable and accommodative if not the best. So India dropping by 10 places to 51st on *The Economist's Democracy Index 2019*, is a cause for worry rather than an easy example of Western bias. Simply because the publication has earned global respect and acceptability as least biased and careful about facts. And as a member of the Fourth Estate, it fulfils its

responsibility of upholding what global regimes are flawed at, in political, economic and social liberalism. So it is considered credible enough. Also, it has never rated India so harshly or lowly ever since it began the index 12 years ago. So what is alarming? India's decline in its overall score from 7.23 in 2018 to 6.9 last year and its classification as a "flawed democracy," just two steps away from being called an authoritarian regime. Given our much-claimed vibrancy, we should have scored at least eight or thereabouts on all counts. The index termed the erosion of civil liberties as the primary cause of our democratic regression. Which means that even by the Modi regime's own standing since 2014, the last six months have severely damaged perception. Except for pluralism and electoral processes, where we scored 8.67, there has been a drastic slide in the perception of governance, political culture and civil liberties. In short, it is the functionality and leadership of the Government that has clearly been put under the scanner. Before we dismiss these observations as part of a worldwide conspiracy hatched by a minuscule group of "urban Naxals", "funded academics" or give in to the compulsive urge to generate counter-propaganda, we must stop to think that the idea of democracy suffering in India has never been a talking point. This is simply because it has always been seen as a descendant of its civilisational moorings, its liberal ethos and, therefore, incapable of forced human constructs of oppression and supremacy. This is the reason why the world supported the abrogation of Article 370 only because the Government argued it as an issue within our constitutional space and never thought that it would be followed by authoritarian clampdowns or adventurism. That acceptance was followed by a significant review of citizenship laws and a renewed impetus on re-establishing majoritarian Hindu pride through the Ram temple. Considering their upending tectonics and the monolithic aggression that went against our grain of consensus politics, dissent was but natural. But the Government, instead of sizing up its destructive potential and neutralising it through a process of dialogue, went about hammering it with mindless brutality. Contentious politics cannot be force-fed in a democracy and for a Government that rests on a valid people's verdict, undermining it would only backfire on its true intentions.

The countrywide internet shutdowns on dissenting voices and protests have given us the dubious distinction of authorising over 67 per cent of the world's internet shutdowns. Holding up the information highway has become the latest tool for authoritarian governments around the world to control the political narrative on their terms and carpet-bomb any opinion or emotion against it. We are guilty of it while claiming to be a democracy. The otherisation and ghettoisation of politics, perpetuated through citizenship laws and a census based on profiling, are clearly divisive in intent and end up playing a nation's people against each other. The crackdown on students and civil society protests have been the proverbial last straw. The restrictive and biased media has relegated itself to being the Government's official propagandist than a conscience-keeper. The discourse in the country has been polarised to such an extent that we fail to realise that every argument is justified on its axis and needs to be heard, judged and then decided on its merit or demerit. That is the democratic process, which is now being dumped as a liability than an asset. And if free speech is under threat, then obviously the estimation of India as a democracy will be called into question. Going by the study, almost one-half (48.4 per cent) of the world's population lives in a democracy of some sort although only 5.7 per cent reside in a "full democracy." As the world's largest democracy, imagine the diplomatic sweep India can harness for the future. Critics might draw some solace from the fact that the US had also been demoted from a "full democracy" to a "flawed democracy" in 2016. But then the number of "full democracies" increased to 22 in 2019, with Chile, France and Portugal joining the top-ranked countries. Even Thailand, for long considered running a faux model, had the biggest improvement in score. Should we still be defending ourselves?

## An astronaut's friend

ISRO is using a half-humanoid robot to smoothen out creases for Gaganyaan, our manned mission



So what if we have to wait awhile to send an Indian woman into space, we have a half-humanoid robot in the shape of one doing so. And she will test-pilot drills for our first manned mission as part of the Gaganyaan project. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be sending Vyommitra to mimic humanistic functions in the spacecraft, even converse with intended astronauts and respond to their queries. This preparatory drill is being done to ensure that Indian astronauts can complete their historic manoeuvre without a glitch. India though is not the first nation to send a robot into space to ensure safety of manned flights. NASA had sent Robonaut 2 to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2011 and Japan's Kirobo had landed there in 2014. Advanced versions are being developed to do a reconnaissance for human settlements. Post the failed lunar mission last year, ISRO seems to have learnt its lessons well and is proceeding with extreme caution with AI-aided dry runs.

While the nation would rather not talk about Chandrayaan 2 simply because its rover failed to land on the dark side of the moon, it has had its own success. Forget the lost rover, at the end of the day, it is indigenously developed and manufactured and is testimony to not only R&D and innovation but the ability of home-grown companies to expand capabilities. The Gaganyaan is a logical follow-through of this mission. India has already set a benchmark in PSLV and GSLV launches. It recently launched the high-power communication satellite GSAT-30. This is expected to provide improved coverage and will enable Indian broadcasters to air content in the Middle East, Australia and other parts of Asia, widening the arc of our soft diplomacy. The commercial satellite launch market is estimated to be \$30 billion by 2025 and ISRO is certain to be a top player in it. With Vyommitra, ISRO hopes to expand its ability to analyse data and ensure trajectory and payload optimisation for bigger missions. NASA is using AI for its next rover mission to Mars, too. But then a word of caution here. Robots aren't heroes. As much they promise a new era in space exploration, they must ascend the curve with utmost care.

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# Illogic and the showman

The US under the Trump administration typifies the reckless decision-making of military imperatives without prior experience, counsel or professional advice



BHOPINDER SINGH

Traditionally, the US administration has benefitted from the military experience that resides in the "White House." Prior to their political ascendancy, around 29 of the 45 US Presidents have held military experience. However, the incumbent President Donald Trump has been an exception. He has had a controversial past of medical deferment that purportedly kept him out of military enrollment during the Vietnam War. Post the World War II, in the midst of the cold war era, nine successive US Presidents were former combatants till the tenures of Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and now Trump. Even the US Congress and Senate have had a substantial presence of veterans (they represented more than half of Congress for much of the late 20th century), who have debated and drafted security policies in pursuance of national objectives.

Given that the post World War II period entailed bloody American military involvement in places like Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, Somalia and Afghanistan as well as other covert wars and operations, the reassuring presence and understanding of the accompanying security sensitivities added the necessary nuance, steel and perspective on governance. But the last 12 years have seen a gradual reduction in the representation of veterans (till very recently) in both Houses. Trump though has displayed himself with misplaced enthusiasm for military trappings, bravado and parades to posit his own surrogate muscularity in pursuit of politics.

Most of his interventions, allusions and invocation with military imperatives have been high on instinctive showmanship and theatrics but have been low on efficacy. He started his tenure by appointing the iconic Marine Corps General James Mattis as the Secretary of Defence. The latter was found to be too rational, grounded and a well-read professional for Trump's boorish and fickle preferences. The US President authorised the usage of the "mother of all bombs" (GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast, the most powerful non-nuclear explosive) in Afghanistan. Today, he is negotiating "peace talks" with the Taliban, which has already accounted for well over 2,000 US casualties. He got the US military to rashly rain 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles (each costing approximately a million and a half dollars) on a dilapidated airbase and then another hundred on an industrial site in Syria, among other military commitments. Today, most Syrian lands have been lost to his *bête noire*, Bashar al-Assad's Syrian Government.

Units of the US Special Forces, in conjunction with allies — Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — conducted operations along with supporting militias in the Yemen theatre. As a result, a ragtag Army of Iran-supported Houthi rebels have been cocking a snook at the much larger, affluent and better armed forces of the US and



its allies. While he did get to "take out" a past his prime Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and more recently the Iranian Commander of Quds Force, Major General Qassem Soleimani, the essential American foothold in the Middle East remains shaky and is desperately in need of a "pull-out" to limit further damage.

Taking militaristic decisions is inevitable for a superpower that is mired in protecting its hegemonic interests across the globe. However, recent decisions and the fate of the Trump-led US military's involvement across the globe warrant serious introspection. It's not that "team" Trump did not have competency but his impatience with reason and restraint has ensured that the likes of Mattis have left, got fired, joined his "echo chamber" or, as mentioned in the famously anonymous Op-ed in *The New York Times*, are part of the silent "resistance working within the Trump administration." The Op-ed, authored by a senior person in the Trump administration, evocatively noted his leadership style to be "impetuous, adversarial, petty and ineffective." Further, it went to express the conundrum of the hapless staff, who would "privately admit their daily disbelief at the commander-in-chief's comments and actions."

A thoroughbred professional, Mattis became a typical suf-

fer of Trump's foolhardiness when he refused to carry out killing orders of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, to make war plans to attack Iranian facilities and opposed the decision of the US' troop withdrawal from Syria. On Mattis' resignation, the former combatant was hailed as the "last adult" in the Trump administration. Questions now abound if Soleimani would have been "taken out" today if Mattis was still around.

The decision to up the ante with Iran did have the backing of some veterans like four-star general Jack Keane and former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency David Petraeus among others. But as Congressman Adam Smith said, "Trump has no idea what he's doing but isn't afraid to do it." This unheeding trait has led to multiple forms of military adventurism with little to show on the ground at a time when Trump is in the last leg of his first tenure.

The usual phenomenon of spectacular military actions, resulting in a bipartisan "rallying around the flag" and, thereby, bumping up the crucial presidential approval ratings, is an old hat (in all democracies). After the Gulf War, former US President George HW Bush's approval ratings went up from 58 per cent to 89 per cent. His son, George W Bush's invasion of Iraq got a similar spike from

58 per cent to 71 per cent. Barack Obama's elimination of Osama bin Laden took his ratings from 44 per cent to 51 per cent. But Trump's Soleimani action did not result in any noticeable jump. He continues to languish in the mid-40 approval percentages. Clearly, Trump has politically abused the "military card" too often and it no longer resonates. On the contrary, his embarrassing description of "beautiful weapons" in the serious business of deploying the "last resort" responsibly diminishes the statesmanship and restraint required of his position.

What deliberately polarising politicians like Trump also achieve is that they dangerously "divide" perceptions within the veteran community, which is usually bipartisan on security matters and goes by military "facts." This sort of brazen politics has alienated the likes of Trump's fellow Republican and former combatant Senator John McCain, whose professional integrity as a soldier was affronted by usurpers like him.

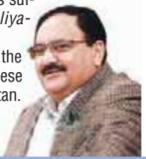
Matters of military need to be spared from political appropriations. Else, the required institutional ethos and perceptions are weakened. Following this, the overall national security preparedness, too, would stand diminished.

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

## SOUNDBITE

The Congress leadership is suffering from *manasik diwallyapan* (mental bankruptcy). Statements issued by it in the past months reflect that these are intended to help Pakistan.

BJP chief  
—JP Nadda



They (Government) are asking those who have been living here for four generations to prove that they are Indians. This is sad. I think everyone should speak up.

Actor  
—Nandita Das



When I was playing cricket, India was seven times our size but we regularly quashed them. In hockey and so many other games also. We were great.

Pakistan Prime Minister  
—Imran Khan



Netaji had opposed the Hindu Mahasabha's divisive politics. He had fought for a secular India. Now efforts are on to oust those who follow secularism.

West Bengal CM  
—Mamata Banerjee



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Change of guard

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "BJP's new chief" (January 21). With the advent of JP Nadda as the BJP president, the party may see a change from the diktat-style of the earlier dispensation to one of consultation, if not consensus.

Voices of the BJP cadre from the State as well as district levels may yet get a chance to be heard. And that should prove useful after a string of recent poll reverses, equally attributable to a failing economy, consolidation of the Opposition, protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and amorphous ideologies clouding local issues.

That said, the policy approach that ran the party till now is getting transplanted to Home Affairs in the national canvas. Federalism is losing currency and an unfamiliar brand of nationalism is being sought to be implemented. As unease of the States and the common man gets palpable by the day, the future does not augur well. Nadda will have an important role in deciding what the party must focus on next.

R Narayanan  
Navi Mumbai

### CAA: Flawed on several counts

Nobody expected the Supreme Court to stay the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). And it did not, on the presumption that the law passed by Parliament is constitutionally valid until it hears both the petitioners challenging its constitutionality and the Central Government — "presumption" being the operative word. Hence, there is no cause for the Government to celebrate prematurely. Before going ahead with the implementation of the CAA, the Government will do well to remember the apex court's observation that "nothing is irreversible." When the Sabarimala case was referred to a larger Constitution Bench, the original ruling, allowing entry of women of all ages into the temple, was held in abeyance or at least its implementation was not favoured by the BJP even in the absence of any stay on the ruling. Similarly, the Government can put on hold the implementation of the CAA till the top court's final ruling.

Home Minister Amit Shah has refused to make a gesture towards the opinion of the anti-CAA protesters



and ruled out a repeal of the law. Critics of CAA plead the case for the inclusion of Muslims as the seventh religious group to make the law "religion-neutral." Secular India cannot and should not discriminate between a Hindu from Pakistan, a Rohingya Muslim from Myanmar and a Sri Lanka refugee of any faith on granting citizenship.

G David Milton  
Maruthancode

### Silent killer

Sir — In a shocking tragedy, eight Indian tourists from Kerala, including four children, died this week due to a possible gas leak from a room heater at a resort in Daman in Makwanpur district of Nepal. They were part of a 17-member tourist group who had checked into Everest Panorama

resort at Daman, a popular tourist destination in Nepal.

According to the SP of District Police Office, Makwanpur, the tourists turned on the gas heater in the room and later suffocated due to some defect in the device, leading to carbon monoxide leak resulting in death.

The group — travelling to Pokhara from Kerala — were returning home. On the way,

they had stopped at Everest Panorama Resort in Daman. Gas heaters that are not installed correctly or have become faulty over time can cause a carbon monoxide leak. As carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas, it becomes difficult to detect it. To prevent such hazards, hotels should inspect and rectify such appliances regularly. The tourism Ministry in Nepal, too,

should have mechanisms to avoid such mishaps. Also, tourists staying in hotels in cold places should be aware of such silent dangers.

M Pradyu  
Kannur

### No, thank you

Sir — At a time when he is embroiled in impeachment proceedings, US President Donald Trump has once again expressed his desire to "help" India and Pakistan resolve their dispute. With elections round the corner, it is all but common for politicians to intensively work towards improving their image.

However, New Delhi must be complimented for beating off another unwanted diplomatic advance by making it clear that there is no scope for mediation by anybody. Now, the ruling Government must refrain from gaining unwanted attention on the Kashmir issue. It must strike a conversation with all stakeholders and leaders in the Valley.

Aditi  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

**FIRST COLUMN**

## Aim for green industrial growth

Centre, States must create a sustainable business environment and impactful economy while integrating with global benchmarks and practices



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The world is moving towards sustainable businesses to tackle the challenges of climate change, empowerment of communities, health, education and other social causes to ensure the survival of life on the planet. From Davos, where the world's most powerful people gather, to a humble policy document emerging from a bureaucrat's desk, the theme is sustainability. In the midst of the clamour for making the blue planet a safer, healthier zone, lies the underlining theme of slowing the world order and tightening cross-border flows of goods, services and people. India, with its goal of a \$5 trillion economy by 2024 in the middle of ominous forecasts of slow GDP growth, is facing a double challenge of sustainable growth vs a steroid shot of booster measures to put the economy on the fast track. While the full Union Budget 2020 will deliver parts of the promise and create hopes for more, the door is ajar for two important policies under consideration by the Government — the industrial policy and the e-commerce policy.

The proposed industrial policy (third after 1956 and 1991) ought to be a North Star for making India a global innovation, R&D and manufacturing hub, thereby achieving the \$5-10 trillion target in the next decade. However, it must be kept in mind by lawmakers that this policy is coming at a time when the world has shifted towards Industry 4.0 and the global economy determinants are increasingly sinking into computing prowess of latest chips and bots while facing tremendous ecological challenges. This policy has a stated objective to develop and sustain global competitiveness for India; increase technology depth of the industry; increase employment avenues; increase share in global merchandise exports and reduce the environmental footprint. The stated vision is a one trillion gross value addition in manufacturing by 2025, (even though with right policy measures this target can be moved up.) The Government at this stage is in focussed stakeholder consultations to devise the right strategy for pushing India up in the world economic order.

The key questions being asked under the stated targets are how to bring the cost of capital expenditure in large-scale manufacturing in value terms for land, electricity and money at par with the globe benchmarks? How to reduce regulations and promote ease of doing business? How to develop India as a research, design and innovation hub by removing hurdles which are fully-integrated with the new asks from a connected digital economy? How to promote skills and workforce education as well as upskilling of the existing workforce to be able to function in the new industrial arena? How to focus on quality checks, testing and standards practices while recognising that we need to align with global benchmarks? Also, how to increase India's global share in exports with a focus on our policy? Assist and put all industries on technology-aided platforms to enjoy the true benefits of a connected global economy? Achieve a stable, predictable, industry, consumer and economy-friendly policy framework to foster higher growth? Increase foreign direct investments? Promote sustainability as the core objective of all businesses in the country?

All these are commendable strategy directions which ask the right questions for an increasingly coagulating global order where technology innovations are diminishing physical barriers in fractions of seconds while protective Governments are putting iron fences around their economies and reducing global agreements to pieces of paper.

It is in this context that the new industrial policy seeks to achieve significance, as it comes at a time when every citizen is feeling the impact of the crumbling economy, job losses and more important, climate change. From extreme weather conditions being reported around the globe, to rising costs of providing basics to humans, not to forget, extinction of species, are a real danger today.

India needs to walk the tightrope of creating a sustainable business environment and impactful economy while getting more integrated with global benchmarks and practices. The new industrial policy needs a series of deliberations and clause by clause analysis of the vision, objectives before being drafted.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has formulated a working group to finalise the policy which includes a couple of key State Governments. Nobody can deny the role States are likely to play in shaping the next economic growth for India. State Governments in the past have organised successful roadshows or "invest inwards" summits, promising big ticket businesses free land, cheap electricity and fast Government clearances for new projects. However, now they need to align with the Central Government and put in their key demands, challenges and proposed solutions towards developing their States which are sustainable, long-term and more importantly can survive changing regimes. It is a long shot but in the spirit of federalism, States need to get their records straight on power subsidies, clamp down on existing businesses using local administration and similar regulatory challenges. The deliberations so far have been behind closed doors. For a global "outward"-looking industrial policy, there should be an open consultation process, especially at the State Government level.

(The writer is Country Manager, India, ITC Council)

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

I'M HERE TO TELL ALL OF YOU. MAMATA BANERJEE, RAHUL GANDHI, COME AND DEBATE CAA WITH ME. I HAD PILOTED THE BILL IN THE PARLIAMENT.

—UNION HOME MINISTER

AMIT SHAH



YOU SHOULD DEBATE WITH ME. WHY DEBATE WITH THEM? THE DEBATE SHOULD BE WITH A BEARDED MAN. I CAN DEBATE WITH BJP ON CAA, NPR AND NRC.

—AIMIM CHIEF

ASADUDDIN OWAIISI

# List of expectations

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman gears up to present the Union Budget on February 1, India Inc shares its hopes and concerns

## MSMEs need more incentives



RACHIT CHAWLA

At a time when the economy of India is experiencing a slowdown, the country is hoping for a balanced Union Budget by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1. The middle-class is anticipating relief in income tax and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are looking for incentives. It is also crucial for the FM to formulate policies which ascertain 6.5 per cent real GDP growth for the fiscal year 2020-21.

**Time to revamp MSMEs:** While the economy is still facing a liquidity issue and MSMEs are bearing the brunt of the deceleration, achieving 6.5 per cent growth is a challenge but not impossible. If the Government could save Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and MSMEs, the scenario would turn favourable within a few months. Recently, the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) requested the Government to change the definition of MSMEs in response to alterations in the economic environment of the country in the last couple of years. MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy and the country cannot compromise with their health. Hence, a changed definition will help the sector enhance its contribution to employment-generation, poverty-alleviation and resource improvisation. A large number of MSMEs are struggling with financial challenges and without subsidies their sustenance is difficult. It is shocking that out of the 6.33 crore MSMEs in the country, only 0.05 lakh are medium enterprises. They are usually deprived of the Public Procurement Policy which mandates 25 per cent procurement from the micro and small enterprises. They are also barred from availing delayed payment reliefs through facilitation councils.

**Need for sector-specific measures:** Besides considering the problems of MSMEs, Sitharaman must also address the issues of underperforming sectors such as real estate, energy and telecom. There is an urgent need to reinforce sectors which strengthen the infrastructure of the country but are reeling under the impact of the downturn. Last year, Sitharaman relieved large businesses by cutting corporate tax to 22 per cent, but businesses cannot flourish until MSMEs become secure and stable. The Government should also lower the tax burden on MSMEs by slashing the Goods and Services Tax in key sectors. The real estate sector, which is one of the growth propellers of the economy, has been struggling for almost a decade. To infuse life into this sector, the Government must consider its long-pending demands such as getting industry status, a single-window clearance mechanism, dropping the circle rate section from the Income Tax Act, elimination of taxes on vacant property, reduced land acquisition cost and tax rationalisation on Real Estate Investment Trusts.

Telecom, yet another crucial sector is hopeful that the Government will take measures to resolve the burgeoning debt issues in the Budget. Telecom companies are also demanding reduction in licence fee, Spectrum Usage Charges and relief in levies.

**No compromise with liquidity:** The next big challenge before Sitharaman is increasing liquidity in the market because it is directly proportional to the growth of MSMEs, especially start-ups. The IL&FS and DHFL fiascos had drastic repercussions on the financial markets, and one of the main reasons for the huge impact is the lack of availability of alternative options to bank funding. Now, Public Sector Banks have decided to cut their Marginal Cost of Funds-based Lending Rates (MCLR) which will be beneficial for the economy as it will improve liquidity in the market. Lower MCLR will mean that NBFCs can borrow from banks at lower rates and the NBFCs that operate in SME lending and housing will benefit the most. It will strengthen the capitalisation structures of HFCs and help revive the real estate sector. Also, to bring back positive sentiments in the market and to counter the decelerating growth, better liquidity is needed and a lower MCLR would help meet this to a great extent. Industry pundits believe that stability in the sector will be regained by the first quarter of 2020. They are optimistic about increased demand for credit because urbanisation is taking place at a fast pace. Plus, there is a thriving start-up culture in the country and retail and e-commerce sectors have high penetration even in semi-urban areas. The Government should also keep inflation under control and it must not go beyond six per cent for at least three quarters. If all these issues are addressed, making India a \$5 trillion economy will be a realistic goal.

(The writer is founder, CEO, of an investment management firm)

## Give IT sops to boost EV sales



PANKAJ MUNJAL

The Union Budget announced in 2019 was in many ways a landmark one for pushing e-mobility. Not only was the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on electric vehicles slashed to five per cent, the Budget also offered major incentives for buyers of electric vehicles (EVs) in the form of income tax rebates on loan. These measures were designed to push the sale of EVs, which have been on the top of the Government's priority list in recent years.

These incentives were additional to the major commitment announced under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) scheme to boost EV infrastructure. However, the sale of EVs remained lukewarm with an analysis suggesting that just 1,309 units of e-cars were sold between April and November 2019. With the economic slowdown and falling demand hitting the auto sector hard, the industry needs a slew of measures that will address concerns on both the demand and supply sides. With the Union Budget round the corner, there are hopes that the Finance Minister (FM) will announce measures to revive consumption, put more disposable income into the hands of the people as well as more sops for EVs. Importantly, the FM must give a policy push to e-bicycles which have the potential to be at the forefront of an e-mobility revolution.

**Revive demand:** In its annual review, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that the declining consumption and investment, accompanied by falling tax revenue have arrested India's GDP growth. The IMF also called for "urgent" policy actions to reverse this slowdown. Falling demand has been at the centre of the current slowdown and the country needs measures that can put more incomes into the hands of people and revive consumption. Cutting income tax rates and readjusting income tax slabs might be a tough call at a time when the Government's revenues are shrinking but it might also be the bitter pill the economy needs. An income tax exemption on income up to ₹5 lakh can positively impact salaried taxpayers and boost consumption. It can also spur buying among people who have deferred automobile purchases in view of the deceleration. However, just monetary measures will not be sufficient. The economy also needs a major fiscal policy push to increase employment and income. The Government must announce broad measures to infuse expenditure in strategic sectors like manufacturing and infrastructure and create income-generating avenues in the rural economy. This also includes revisions in GST slabs to create a low tax economy.

**Institute a supportive scrapping policy:** Earlier this year, the FM announced a scrap page policy aimed at shunting out old vehicles and increasing production. The policy is aimed at serving the twin objectives of reducing emissions and boosting consumer demand. The Government must ensure a quick rollout of the scrap page policy to encourage the replacement of older vehicles and must also lay down positive incentives for customers to push the disposal of older vehicles. The incentives may include exemption on road taxes for consumers and low interest loan schemes for purchase of new commercial vehicles. According to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the commercial vehicle industry suffered a decline of 22 per cent in sales between April and November 2019. We hope a supportive scrapping policy can help revive some of this lost demand.

**Extend FAME II benefits to E-bicycles:** E-bicycles have recently been categorised under EVs to get tax benefits. However, they do not get the benefits designated under the FAME-II scheme. We hope the Government recognises the need to promote e-bicycles as much as the need to promote e-cars. While e-cars address the concern of pollution, they do not solve the problem of traffic congestion. E-bicycles are both eco-friendly, space-friendly and also offer a viable solution to the anxiety that comes with lack of charging infrastructure as they can be easily pedalled back in case of battery loss.

**Policy measures to reduce viability gap of EVs:** More measures might be needed to reduce the viability gap of EVs. The Government must support the sector in different ways to make EVs more affordable and viable. These measures can include exemption on road tax, lower power tariffs for charging EVs, exemption of parking fees for EV users and exemption of permit costs among other measures.

(The writer is Chairman and MD of a leading motor company)

## Formulate retail policy soon



RAVINDER SINGH

India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and the drivers of this growth can be credited to the burgeoning millennial population, growing middle-income households and an increasing representation of women in the workforce. All these factors contribute to economic growth by boosting retail consumption, thereby providing a highly positive outlook for businesses in the country. Meanwhile, as far as the market potential is concerned, the retail industry provides a robust platform for multiple stakeholders, including the consumers, distributors, manufacturers and additional sectors like transportation, logistics and so on. In fact, according to the Retailers Association of India (RAI), around 43 million people in the country are employed in the retail sector and the industries that support those businesses. In fact, the sector is generating employment at a fast pace, taking the second position after agriculture in terms of creating direct as well as indirect employment opportunities.

Despite the retail industry's positive contribution towards the country's economy, 2019 witnessed many players struggling to sustain the growth chart. Even though they are expecting growth to rebound in 2020, it will all depend on factors like the recovery in the manufacturing and other sectors, availability of finances in the hands of consumers to make easy retail consumption decisions and of course, the forthcoming Union Budget 2020 that will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1. This will be her second Union Budget and the retailers have many expectations from the Modi Government in its second term.

**Accelerating the process of national retail policy:** It is a harsh reality that India to date has been unable to develop a robust manufacturing sector despite two decades of economic and trade liberalisation. Structural issues like scarcity of resources in the form of raw materials and trained labour force, lack of capital and credit facilities and inadequate infrastructure are causing major hindrances in the operations of small retail traders. This is also affecting the export-competitiveness of a large number of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). So, in this year's Union Budget, these players want the Government to speed up the formulation and implementation of the National Retail Policy, as this would provide a significant boost to the development of 65 million small traders in the country's retail sector and expedite/promote the ease of doing business in the country.

**Promotion of digital and modern retail:** The Indian retail industry is currently dominated by e-commerce and it is expected to grow to \$200 billion by 2026 driven by rising smartphone penetration, the launch of 4G networks and increasing disposable incomes. That said, the competition is only increasing day by day. Bearing in mind the new-age consumers' speedy adoption of technology, offline retail players must also modify their strategies to keep their brands relevant, the brand experience even and their products and services accessible across multiple channels. They are expecting the Government to modernise its retail by upgrading the use of Point of Sale Machines that would help retailers to access the customers' information and efficiently manage their inventory, thereby improving their revenue-generation and profitability.

**Boosting the consumption story:** Due to the deceleration in the economy, retailers both small and premium ones, are bearing the brunt of a consumer class that has become careful in its purchasing decisions. This slowdown in consumption has dampened the demand in the retail segment. Retail players are hoping that the Union Budget will be pro-consumption and will come out with a slew of measures that will make small-ticket credit and additional cash accessible in the hands of the middle class. This will positively impact the retail industry by increasing demand and also provide a much-needed boost to the economy.

**GST on clothes:** Clothes are subject to five per cent GST if the taxable value of the goods is less than ₹1,000 per piece, whereas, the sale value of clothing that exceeds ₹1,000 is subject to 12 per cent GST. Retailers expect the Budget to focus on increasing the threshold for the five per cent slab to ₹2,000 from the ₹1,000 that is levied at present to give a fillip to the sector.

(The writer is Founding Director of a chain of value retail stores)

# Derivatives are a double-edged sword

Used both for hedging and speculation, the derivatives markets worldwide have grown to a humongous level, reaching about \$1.2 quadrillion. However, their use has also brought giant corporations to their knees, hence investors must exercise caution



HIMA BINDU KOTA

derivatives. Since they are a double-edged sword, one has to be extra cautious while using them.

What are derivatives anyway? These are instruments that derive their value from any underlying asset, which could be either a stock or a commodity.

Any investor or corporation can put money in any one of the popular derivatives for hedging or speculative purposes. Corporations use them for hedging if they want to reduce an existing risk or protect themselves from any volatility in the price of an underlying asset by taking an offsetting position, whereas speculation is trying to make profit due to any price changes.

Several analysts believe that the Indian stock markets are set to rise further in 2020 and may end higher by at least 13 per cent. It is being predicted that Nifty might end above the 13,000 mark. Similarly, the expectation for the BSE Sensex is that it will go above the 46,000 level. So, if we consider a bullish market for this year, what are the derivative strategies that

an investor can use in this type of market where the prices of underlying assets are set to rise? Although the general belief is that stock markets will be bullish, there will certainly be variations as is natural.

In case the markets are extremely bullish, investors should go ahead with a long-call strategy. This is one of the simplest approaches and can be used by beginners in the derivatives market. There is only one transaction involved, i.e., buying call options. It helps investors use the power of leverage and make potentially unlimited profits and at the same time cap their losses. In the worst case scenario, when the markets do not behave as anticipated, loss is limited to the price of buying the call options.

A reverse call ratio spread is also an extremely bullish strategy where an investor can sell an option at a lower price, usually in-the-money or at-the-money and buy more options at the higher strike price, which is out-of-the-money, of the same underlying asset. So if an investor sells one

option and buys two options with a higher strike price, a reverse call option strategy is created.

When the market outlook is moderately bullish and the investor is expecting some upward movement in the underlying asset, a long-call ladder strategy could be initiated. This strategy has the potential of earning from time decay if it expires in the range of the strike price. This strategy is created by buying one in-the-money call, selling one at-the-money call and selling one out-of-the-money call of the same underlying asset with the same expiry. Experiments can also be made with different strike prices.

Another income-generating strategy that can be initiated in a moderately bullish market is a covered call option which can be created by using a stock and an option. This strategy is created by purchasing a stock and simultaneously selling a call option, which is out-of-the-money, usually on the higher side.

When the markets are becoming more neutral, buying a long-call

would not be the best strategy to use. In a moderately bullish market, investors could take a short put option strategy, wherein they go short on a put position, i.e., they are obliged to buy the underlying asset in future at a predetermined price if the buyer wishes to exercise his option. This strategy will be helpful for investors if the price of the underlying asset increases moderately or even remains at the same level. In a flat market, this strategy will be beneficial as it gives investors a chance to earn some upfront money in the form of premium which can be adjusted against some margins.

Another strategy for a more neutral or flat market with a bullish view is bull put spread option, which involves two put options, both short and long. It is created by one short put with a higher strike price and one long put with a lower strike price. But here the expiration date remains the same. This strategy has a higher potential of being profitable as it is beneficial in situations when the prices are steady or are rising.

In case an investor has suffered any losses due to price fall, a stock repair strategy is there and can help the investor recover their losses even if the prices of the underlying asset show slight improvement. This strategy is created by buying one at-the-money call and at the same time selling two out-of-the-money call, of the same underlying asset with the same expiration. The trick here, though, is that the strike price of the sale should be very close to the buying price. As one can see, there are different derivative strategies for different market outlooks. However, taking a bet with derivatives can be very dangerous as by paying a small premium, investors can end up initiating very large transactions and if the markets do not move the way the investors anticipated, the losses can be huge. These transactions should only be undertaken by an expert with knowledge about stock markets and in particular, derivatives.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)



FOREIGN EYE



WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

The world turned a blind eye to Saudi Arabia's behaviour because it suited it. Now the costs are clearer as an investigation found billionaire Jeff Bezos had his mobile phone hacked after receiving a WhatsApp message apparently sent from the account of the Saudi crown prince. A year after journalist Khashoggi's death, many of those who had pulled out of the 2018 investment summit were present. Yet many of them are doubtless in urgent talks with their digital security consultants.

(The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



**Canara Bank's net profit rises 3.8 pc to Rs 330 cr in Q3**

**MUMBAI:** State-owned Canara Bank on Thursday reported a 3.8 per cent rise in its net profit to Rs 329.62 crore in the third quarter of the current financial year, mainly due to a decline in proportion of bad loans. The bank's profit was Rs 317.52 crore during the December 2018 quarter. Its total income stood at Rs 14,001.63 crore during the quarter ended December 2019, up from Rs 13,513.35 crore in the year-ago period. Canara Bank said in a stock exchange filing. The net non-performing assets (NPAs) as a percentage of total assets stood at 5.05 per cent, down from 6.37 per cent a year ago. Similarly, the percentage of gross NPAs also narrowed to 8.36 per cent from 10.25 per cent. In absolute terms, the net NPAs stood at Rs 21,337.74 crore, down from 26,591.07 crore.



**Power ministry appoints Ashish as govt nominee**

**NEW DELHI:** State-owned power giant NTPC on Thursday said the power ministry has appointed Ashish Upadhyaya as a government nominee director on its board. The ministry has appointed Upadhyaya, additional secretary and financial advisor in the ministry, as a government nominee director on the board of NTPC till the date of superannuation or till further orders, whichever is earlier, according to a BSE filing. Upadhyaya joined as a part-time official director on the board of NTPC on Wednesday. He is a 1989-batch IAS officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre. Upadhyaya has been working as additional secretary and financial advisor in the power ministry since November 14, 2019.



**OBC Q3 profit jumps 39.11 pc to Rs 201.66 cr**

**MUMBAI:** State-owned Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) on Thursday reported a 39.11 per cent jump in net profit at Rs 201.66 crore for the quarter ended December 2019, mainly due to reduction in bad loans. The bank, which is going to be merged with another state-run lender Punjab National Bank, had reported a profit of Rs 144.96 crore in October-December quarter a year ago. The bank's total income during December quarter stood at Rs 5,642.61 crore as compared with Rs 5,127.98 crore a year ago, it said in a regulatory filing. Income from interest stood at Rs 4,659.93 crore as against Rs 4,561.12 crore during October-December quarter of previous fiscal.

**DB Corp posts 7.9 pc rise in Q3 profit at Rs 81.63 cr**

**NEW DELHI:** Media house DB Corp on Thursday reported 7.9 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 81.63 crore in the third quarter ended December 2019. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 75.63 crore in the same quarter a year ago, DB Corp said in a regulatory filing. Revenue from operations during the quarter under consideration stood at Rs 598.75 crore as against Rs 659.7 crore in the same quarter previous fiscal, it added. The company said its board of directors at its meeting held on Thursday declared second interim dividend of Rs 3.5 per equity share of face value Rs 10 each.

**Sebi bars Equicom Financial, directors from providing investment advisory**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has barred Equicom Financial Research and its two directors from acting as an investment advisors for luring innocent investors by making assured profit commitment and presenting misleading information to clients.

Besides, they have been barred from capital markets, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in an order.

After receiving several investors' complaints, Sebi conducted an examination in relation to the affairs of Equicom.

This is registered as an Investment Adviser (IA) with effect from April 25, 2014 and, Amit Kukda and Akhilesh Raghuvanshi are the two directors of Equicom through whom the company functions.

The probe found that Equicom was involved in luring the innocent investors by making assured profit commitments; extracted more and more money from the clients by offering more and more services; presented misleading information to clients to influence their decision to invest, took advance payments for services and made false commitment of profits to their client for extracting more payments from the clients among others.

"The adoption of such practices are nothing but contrivance/device/deceit for manipulatively forcing the clients to deal with the IA. Thus, Equicom has prima facie violated ...the PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) Regulations," the regulator said in an order passed on Tuesday.

Besides, Sebi noted that Equicom has failed to abide by the code of conduct while carrying out its activities as an investment adviser and therefore violated Investment Advisers Regulations.



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The regulator said Kukda and Raghuvanshi being the directors of Equicom are prima facie responsible for the violations committed by the company.

Consequently, Sebi has directed Equicom and its two directors to "cease and desist" from acting as an investment advisor including the activity of acting and representing through any media (physical or digital) as an investment advisor, directly or indirectly until further orders.

In addition, they have asked "not to access the securities market and buy, sell or otherwise deal in securities in any manner whatsoever, directly or indirectly, until further orders". Further, they have been restrained from diverting any funds raised from investors.

**Indian economy poised to take off, says Goyal**

PNS ■ DAVOS

Asserting that the Indian economy is well-poised to take off, Union minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said there is a lot of enthusiasm for making investments in the country.

Speaking at a session at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual summit here, the Commerce and Industry Minister also said the government will hold discussions with Britain and European Union on free trade agreements.

Britain is set to leave the European Union by end of January. "... things have once again started showing an uptrend... economy is well poised to take off from here," Goyal said.

According to him, the enthusiasm to make investments in India is infectious.

At least four or five companies have said that more than 50 per cent of their total workforce would operate out of India in the coming years.



Piyush Goyal

**According to him, the enthusiasm to make investments in India is infectious**

Some of them are big names, he noted.

On RCEP, Goyal said it was an "unbalanced trade agreement, which was really not fulfilling the guiding principles on which RCEP started about eight years ago, therefore India chose not to participate in it".

**'If I were not a Minister today, I would be bidding'**

PNS ■ DAVOS

As the government works on divesting debt-laden Air India, Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said if he was not a minister, he would be bidding for the airline.

Air India has been in the red for long and the government is now in the process of finalising the contours for its disinvestment.

Responding to a query about proposed divestment of Air India, BPCIL and other companies, Goyal said in the first term, the government had inherited an economy which was in pretty terrible shape.

Steps were taken to put the economy back in shape and if the government had looked at



divesting these jewels, it would not have got a great value.

He was talking at a session on 'Strategic Outlook: India' at the WEF 2020 here.

"If I weren't a minister today, I would be bidding for Air India. It has some of the best bilaterals the world over... a well managed and efficient Air India with lot more good aircraft put in using these bilaterals is nothing short of a gold mine to my mind," Goyal said.

Bilaterals refers to an agreement between two countries that allows each other's airlines to operate services with a specific number of seats.

Goyal holds the portfolios of Railways as well as Commerce and Industry.

"India today is a land where you have equal opportunity, you can work with integrity..." the minister said, adding that he thinks a good job has been done in cleaning up the banks and strengthening them.

**Sensex rises 271 pts on value buying**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmark Sensex rose by 271 points on Thursday on the back of gains in index heavyweights Infosys, L&T, ICICI Bank and SBI, despite massive a selloff in global equities.

After gyrating over 300 points in a volatile session, the 30-share BSE index settled 271.02 points, or 0.66 per cent, higher at 41,386.40. It hit an intra-day high of 41,413.96 and a low of 41,098.91.

Likewise, the broader NSE Nifty closed 73.45 points, or 0.61 per cent, down at 12,180.35.

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising by 2.98 per cent, after the company reported a 15 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit at Rs 2,560.32 crore for quarter to December 2019.

Other gainers included M&M, SBI, Titan, Infosys, Bharti Airtel and Ultratech Cement.



Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid, TCS, Bajaj Auto, Reliance Industries and Maruti ended in the red.

According to experts, despite carnage in other Asian equities amid fears of contagion after a deadly new virus emerged from China, stock-specific action kept domestic benchmarks buoyed.

Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul declined up to 2.75 per cent. European markets were also trading on a negative note in their early sessions.

Brent crude oil futures fell 1.22 per cent to USD 62.44 per barrel.

**HCL, Citi chiefs join US-IBC board**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

HCL CEO C Vijayakumar and Citi India CEO Ashu Khullar have joined the Global Board of Directors of US-India Business Council, the top advocacy group said on Thursday.

Other high-powered additions to the board include Procter & Gamble President, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa Magesvaran Suranjan; TransUnion President for International David Neenan; and Bharat Forge Deputy MD Amit Kalyani.

**GE T&D India bags Rs 173-cr order from JKPDD**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

GE T&D India Ltd on Thursday said it has bagged a Rs 173-crore order from Jammu & Kashmir Power Development Department (JKPDD).

GE T&D India Ltd was awarded a supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) and advanced distribution management solution (ADMS) project by JKPDD for the distribution operations in Jammu and Srinagar, according to a statement by the company.

The order worth about Rs 173 crore, won through a competitive bidding process, includes a five-year maintenance services contract and the



supply and integration of a host of solutions in the overall distribution network in the two cities, said the statement.

Pitambar Shivnani, chief executive officer of GE T&D India Ltd, said, "The commitment towards the implementation of this technology is a major step towards realising the vision of 24x7 power supply to all consumers in the

**The technology solution being executed for this project is used mainly for 24x7 power supply, reduction of power losses and real-time data monitoring and control of distribution network from a centralised place**

cities of Jammu and Srinagar." The technology solution being executed for this project is used mainly for 24x7 power supply, reduction of power losses and real-time data monitoring and control of distribution network from a centralised place.

This will determine the setting up of reliable and "no manual touch" systems for system control or data collection and adoption of information technology in energy accounting.

The SCADA technology reduces aggregate technical and commercial losses and enables real-time monitoring and control of the electric distribution network, handling of loads during load shedding and restoration and plugging of pilferage points.

**DLF to invest Rs 5,000 cr in new project**

PNS ■ CHENNAI

India's largest realty firm DLF on Thursday announced an investment of Rs 5,000 crore to develop large commercial project here as part of its strategy to expand portfolio of rent yielding properties.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Thiru Edappadi Palaniswami laid the foundation stone of 'DLF Downtown' at Taramani in Chennai.

The 27 acre project will be developed by DLF's joint venture firm with GIC named DLF Cyber City Developers Ltd



(DCCDL). The total commercial area, largely office spaces to be constructed under the new project, is 6.8 million sq ft

**The project, to be completed in the next 5-6 years, would help additional 70,000 direct and 6,000 ancillary employment opportunities once operational.**

in various phases. "Tamil Nadu has always been a destination of choice for corporates and MNCs due to its talent pool and favourable business environment. We are investing Rs 5,000 crore in phases for developing our fourth project DLF Downtown, Taramani in Chennai," DLF

CEO Mohit Gujral said. DLF would commence construction of 2.5 million sq ft area in the first phase. The project, to be completed in the next 5-6 years, would help additional 70,000 direct and 6,000 ancillary employment opportunities once operational.



**French firm ENGIE inks pact with EIYP**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

French energy utility firm ENGIE has announced a strategic partnership with Edelweiss Infrastructure Yield Plus (EIYP) for solar assets in India in order to pare debt of around EUR 400 million (around Rs 3,159 crore).

"In line with both ENGIE's and EIYP's strategies, ENGIE has agreed to sell (once the transaction has closed in accordance with its terms) a 74 per cent stake in 12 solar assets aggregating 813 MWp of operating capacity collectively to EIYP and Sekura Energy, a portfolio company of EIYP," the utility firm said in a statement.

EIYP is an infrastructure focused fund managed by Edelweiss Alternative Asset Advisors and part of diversified Indian financial services conglomerate Edelweiss Group.

According to statement, the completion of this transaction (subject to the usual conditions associated with this type of operation) is expected to occur during the first half of 2020 and will allow ENGIE to reduce its net debt by more than EUR 400 million.

**Power Min seeks Brazilian investment in energy sector**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power Minister R K Singh on Thursday urged Brazilian investors to invest in the Indian energy sector, saying it is the fastest growing energy market and its consumption will treble in coming days.

Singh also assured investors that India will provide stable policy and regulatory regime to facilitate them.

"Meeting our aspirations require us to go on higher energy consumption pedestal... with our low base (per capita) energy consumption, our energy consumption is going to double or treble in short while.

"We want more and more companies to come here and invest here. We can promise of stable policy regime. We can promise a regulatory regime which is fair and decides and



totally at arms length from the government. All of you are welcome to invest here," Singh said while addressing a seminar -- India-Brazil Opportunities in Energy and Mining -- here.

As far as energy is concerned, no other country will grow as fast as India, the minister added.

**India has set a target of adding 175 GW of renewable power in the energy mix by 2022. It has already added 86 GW. Besides, around 36 GW is under installation and about 35 GW is under bidding stage**

huge expansion and entry of new players. "You will see many large distribution companies emerging in India," he noted.

India has set a target of adding 175 GW of renewable power in the energy mix by 2022. It has already added 86 GW. Besides, around 36 GW is under installation and about 35 GW is under bidding stage.

The minister exuded confidence that India will have around 50 per cent renewables in its energy mix by 2030.

India has established power generation capacity of about 360 GW, which is expected to be trebled by 2030.

Singh also drew attention toward India's efforts for shifting to electricity based mobility and cooking which would also push power demand up.

He also said India's hydro power companies will be bidding for projects in Brazil whenever auction would be announced.

"We have huge companies in energy sector. We have com-

## Making a way through EMERGENCIES

Karimnagar-based Vishwaja Reddy built disposable sanitary pad vending machines to make sure that no girl or woman would have to worry about not having a pad when needed, finds V SATEESH REDDY



Vishwaja Reddy, a student of the University of Hyderabad studying MBA, says, "In the midst of my external lab examination, while I was studying engineering, I got my periods. I couldn't go out and bring a pad. I somehow managed to get one with help from my junior. Then it struck me that something must be done so that pads can be made available during emergencies like these."

"During research on this topic, I came to know about sanitary napkin vending machines and incinerators. Being a mechanical engineer it was easy for me to understand how the machine works. The prototype I made was with cardboard and also tied up with a fabric company to procure the pad material," she adds.

This led Vishwaja Reddy to the creation of sanitary pad vending and disposable machine.

When asked about how the machine works, Vishwaja

shares, "The manual sanitary napkin vending machine gives out pads in exchange for coins. All one needs to do is drop a Rs 5 coin and pull the lever to get the pad. We upgraded it to an automatic metal machine that runs on power. Recently, we have modified the machine to scan an RFI code, similar to the ones used at Metro stations. The code can be incorporated into ID cards of students and employees so it can be easily scanned."

About incinerators, she adds, "A safer, quicker and hygienic method for disposal of napkins is the incinerator. The used pads are burned at

a relatively low temperature so as to have the least amount of emissions. There is an external thermal protection that automatically cuts power when required. An incinerator can burn up to 200 pads a day depending on its capacity. Burning 10 pads produces only one tablespoon of ash."

She said that these machines are very useful to every girl who is menstruating and can easily obtain a pad and it is not just for girls but also for women/sweepers (men) who clean washrooms.

She says, "Generally, every female face such crises but they don't know what to do

and sometimes even if they have any plan they may not come forward to discuss it with anyone. If you face problems express it out loud. Even if you may not get a solution right away, you may find a way to get out of it eventually."

Vishwaja was awarded the Intinta Innovation award 2019 by the IT department of Telangana. IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao also lauded her for her efforts.

Vishwaja says that they had installed the machines in 23 schools and colleges in Hyderabad and are planning to set up the same in rural areas of Telangana.

"It took a year for me to make the machine. Each machine costs Rs 10,000 to Rs 18,000. Being a student, I had to collect the funds by going from school to college to convince them to buy the sanitary pad vending machine. That is how I managed to make these machines," shares Vishwaja.

On a concluding note, she says, "We are working on to get a patent for the machine. We want to make more and distribute them throughout the state so that no girl or woman would have to face the worry of not having a pad when needed."



Generally, every female face these problems but they don't know what to do and sometimes even if they have any plan they may not come forward to discuss it. If you face problems, express it. Even if you may not get a solution, you may find a way to get out of it

VISHWAJA REDDY, INNOVATOR

## Animal Planet comes to city zoo

Why do dogs wag their tails? How do cats always land on their feet? What makes some people magnets for mosquitoes? Do elephants really never forget? How do electric eels not electrocute themselves? Why don't penguins' feet freeze on ice? Animals are extraordinary, and they do seemingly impossible things that leave humans in absolute awe. Children especially are full of curiosity and want to know more about the wild animals not found in urban areas.

These questions and other mysteries will be explored as the channel Animal Planet presents the natural world up close, with rare footage of animals captured in new and surprising ways with a special preview of *How do Animals Do That* as a part of special

tie-up with Nehru Zoological Park Biological Park. As a part of the tie-up, Animal Planet will screen hugely popular series *How Do Animals Do That* in the auditorium of Hyderabad Zoo starting January 23, 2020.

The entry to the theatre will be free. The zoo will host

show according to visitor's interest. The tie-up with Hyderabad Zoo is in line with Animal Planet's mission to keep the childhood joy and wonder of animals alive by bringing people up close in every way, said, Megha Tata, Managing Director, South Asia, Discovery.

"We are delighted to part-

ner Animal Planet in this novel initiative. I am confident that children will enjoy and learn a lot from this entertaining series. We will continue in our endeavor to offer world class content to discerning visitors to our zoo," said N. Kshitija, I.F.S Curator Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad.



## Chance for influencers, Instagrammers to shine



Content creators and influencers in the Telugu states now have an opportunity to showcase their talent. Instagram launched the 'Born on Instagram' programme in Hyderabad, to discover, showcase and grow the most creative content creators in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The programme aims to give creators the knowledge to best leverage Instagram and hone their storytelling capabilities.

The programme will have the creators participate in a series of 15 events, including one in Hyderabad, and subsequently provide a bouquet of benefits over the rest of the year including one-on-one partner management, sessions on best practices of the platform, video storytelling techniques, mentorship by celebrated creators, create-

together opportunities and other useful resources.

"Born on Instagram" is a programme that recognises the creativity in content that we're witnessing all across India — in big and small cities. Hyderabad is a great example because it represents the myriad passions that are pursued on our platform — food, fashion and technology. While we build on our strength of visual storytelling and launch innovative features for enhancing safe self-expression, programmes like these will help us in further identifying and mentoring the next big digital content creators of India," said Manish Chopra, Head of Partnerships, Facebook India.

A highlight of the event was Mahathalli aka Jahnvi Dasetty, a popular creator with 648k followers, who shared her insights on leveraging the platform. She said, "I love entertaining con-

tent and that's the genre I focus on. While I play different characters in different sketch videos I make, Instagram allows me to show my real and authentic self. It's a place where you see all my passions, which include fashion, travel and entertainment. I'm hoping this new programme discovers and develops more talented Instagrammers from Hyderabad, and I'm happy to play a part in it."

— PNS

A HIGHLIGHT OF THE EVENT WAS MAHATHALLI AKA JAHNAVI DASETTY, A POPULAR CREATOR WITH 648K FOLLOWERS, WHO SHARED HER INSIGHTS ON LEVERAGING THE PLATFORM.

## PARTY

### EXOTIC DISPLAY

**G**aja, an exhibition curated by Bolgum Nagesh Goud, was held at Bangur House, Jubilee Hills recently. The exhibition had put up beautifully painted fibreglass elephant sculptures, the work of 25 renowned artists, on display. Several prominent personalities including actress Lakshmi Manchu graced the event.



● Manisha



● Sweta



● Manchu Lakshmi



● Amal Preeti



● Renu Desai

## CITY GUIDE

### COMEDY



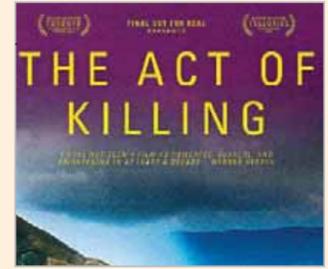
**OH HELLO!**  
● Crowd favourite Rahul Dua starts his country tour again, this time travelling solo with his brand new stand up special 'Oh Hello!' He will be touring multiple venues in the city till tomorrow.



**DRAUPADI - A DANCE DRAMA**  
● Draupadi is a dance drama in Kuchipudi format, with Sravya Manasa playing the lead role as Draupadi. It deals with the less familiar phases of Draupadi's life along with her inclination towards Karna. The play shall be held at Phoenix Arena on February 1 at 7 pm.

### THE ACT OF KILLING

● Cinephiles Film Club is screening a film The Act of Killing on January 29 at Lamakaan from 7.30 pm. Filmmakers expose horrifying mass executions of accused communists in Indonesia and those who are celebrated in their country for perpetrating the crime.



**SPLENDOR OF MASTERS**  
● 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 Vedika tomorrow at 6 pm.

### PALM LEAF CRAFT

● For all craft lovers Lamakaan Cultural space brings you Palm Leaf Craft, which is the third in a series of workshops named Leela Ten Months, Ten Crafts. This is an initiative to sustain traditional crafts that are on the verge of extinction. The workshop will be held at January 26 at 11 am.



**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 programme 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 tomorrow from 11 am to 5 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](mailto:pioneer.features@gmail.com)



● Priyanka



● Nagesh Goud and Sheetal



● Annapurna



● Swapna

Photos by SV Chary

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



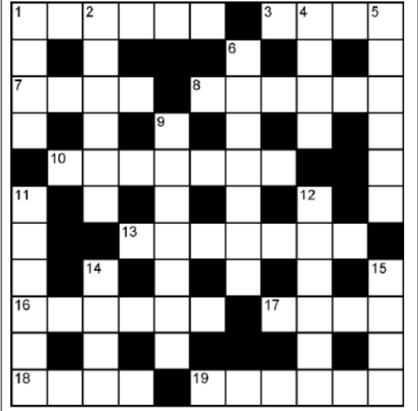
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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

**Yesterday's solution**

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

**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**

- One of the continents
- You need this to be allowed to drive a car
- Opposite of false
- A short letter
- Repairing
- Went red in the face
- A game with bat and ball
- A king's son
- Come to an halt
- Sprinkle this on food
- A bird that can be trained to race
- Four times twenty
- Wine is made from these
- Middle
- Young woman
- Twirl

**DOWN**

- A female relation
- A baby's toy
- Water from the sky

**SOLUTION**

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

### GINGER MEGGS



# SAI TEJ boards SANKRITYAN'S time-travel adventure

Sci-fi bug is catching on. Now director Rahul Sankrityan has lined up a time travel movie for Sai Tej who is riding a high after the success of *Pandaga Chesko*, writes NAGARAJ GOUD

**E**ven before he takes his third film with Nani to sets, director Rahul Sankrityan has lined up another project. *The Pioneer* has exclusively learnt that he got an in-principle nod from Sai Tej for a time-travel adventure drama. The actor is riding a high, post the success of *Pandaga Chesko*. The project will be a joint production venture between GA2 Pictures and UV Creations, which produced Rahul's second film *Taxiwaala*, and will roll after he wraps up Nani's film.

A highly-placed source close to the development tells us, "Geetha Arts got a wind of Rahul's time-travel story last year and immediately asked him to narrate it to Bunny Vas, chief of GA2 Pictures. He endorsed it and later asked Rahul to narrate it to Sai Tej. The actor liked it straightaway. He was bowled over by the content and style especially. Vas was instrumental in making Vamsi of UV Creations listen to the story, and got his nod too. Vamsi too felt that the whacky nature of the content will be a refreshing change

for audience from regular commercial cinema. Business-wise as well the film will be a hot commodity in the market as it marks the combination of Sai Tej teaming up with GA2 Pictures and UV Creations after the box-office smash *Pandaga Chesko*. Time-travel concept aside, the film's story is layered which will be its definitive style."

The source adds that the film will be a mounted on a

budget of Rs 20 crore to Rs 25 crore and will boast of a good number of computer graphics shots.

Right now, Rahul is busy polishing the script of his next with Nani, while Sai Tej is shooting for *Solo Brathuke So Better* in Visakhapatnam. In all likelihood, the duo's coming together will transpire next year.

**EVEN BUSINESS-WISE THE FILM WILL BE A HOT COMMODITY IN THE MARKET AS IT MARKS SAI TEJ TEAMING UP WITH GA2 PICTURES AND UV CREATIONS AFTER THE BOX-OFFICE SMASH PANDAGA CHESKO. THE FILM'S STORY IS LAYERED WHICH WILL BE ITS DEFINITIVE STYLE**



## SREE VISHNU, SUDHEER support Savaari

**T**he trailer of *Savaari*, featuring Nandu and newbie Priyanka in the lead, was launched in Hyderabad on Wednesday evening. Carrying a good deal of buzz around it, the film marks the directorial debut of Saahith Mothkuri whose 2017 short film *Bandham Regad* received widespread critical acclaim. Actors Sudheer Babu and Sree Vishnu graced the trailer launch as guests and were thoroughly impressed by the trailer.

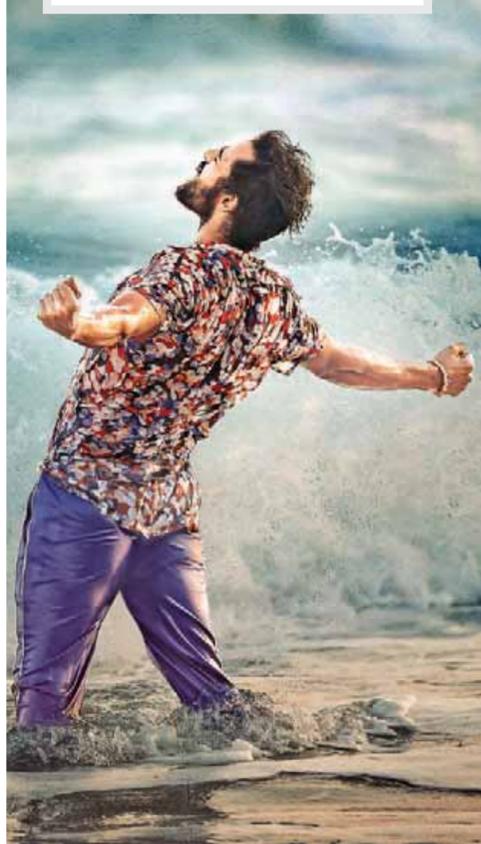
Vishnu said he came to the event uninvited after falling in love with the film's song *Nee Kannulu Naa Dillulo*. "I've heard the song on a loop for 10 to 15 days continuously. The other songs are equally good and they will help generate buzz around the film. The trailer is different and the film's team looks gen-

uine. I hope from here on Nandu will not associate with films for money and attempts to create a different path of cinema. I will be watching *Savaari* on its first day (February 7)," he said.

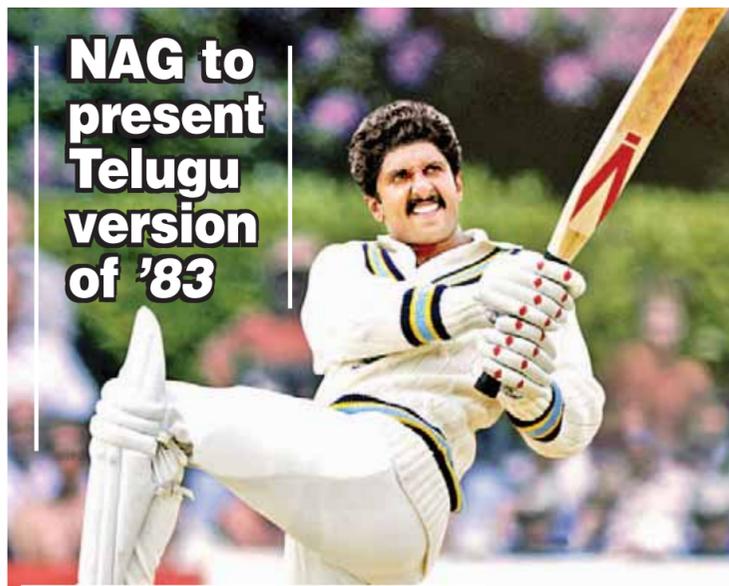
Sudheer said he understood Nandu's range as an actor after working with him in *Sammohanam*. "The great quality about him is that he never relents. His passion for cinema hasn't diminished a bit from the day he started his career. He deserves stardom and a good fan base," Sudheer said. On Saahith he said, "I was impressed with his *Bandham Regad* and later I've heard this story from him. I liked it but I was looking at some other genre at that time. For someone who listens to a story a day, I am still able to recall Saahith's story with clarity and that tells how much of an impact it had on me. And now after watching *Savaari*'s promotional material, I can say that he will be one of the big directors in the future."

## FIRST LOOK

**R**evealing a new still, the makers of *Uppena*, which marks the acting debut of Megastar Chiranjeevi's nephew Vaishnav Tej, on Thursday announced that the film, a rustic love story, will be opening in cinemas on April 2. Directed by debutant Buchi Babu Sana, the film, a Devi Sri Prasad musical, is a joint production venture between Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings. Vijay Sethupathi, Krithi Shetty, Sai Chand and Brahmaji will be seen in pivotal roles.



## NAG to present Telugu version of '83

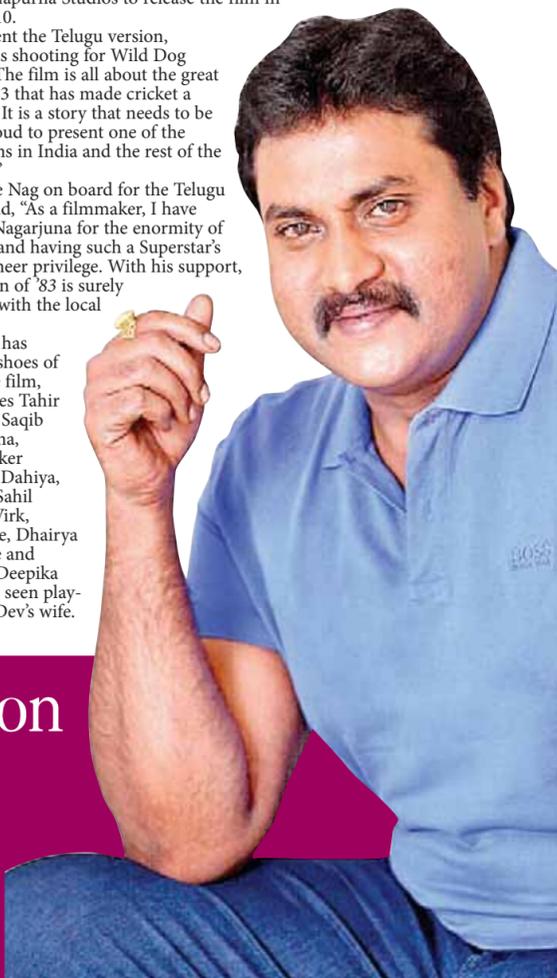


**S**uperstar Akkineni Nagarjuna will be releasing the Telugu dubbed version of the much-anticipated Hindi film, '83, directed by Kabir Khan, under his Annapurna Studios banner. Touted as the biggest sports film of the country, the film chronicles Indian cricket team's historic 1983 World Cup triumph against the West Indies. Reliance Entertainment and Global Cinemas will partner with Annapurna Studios to release the film in Telugu on April 10.

Happy to present the Telugu version, Nagarjuna, who is shooting for *Wild Dog* presently, said, "The film is all about the great iconic win in 1983 that has made cricket a religion in India. It is a story that needs to be told and I am proud to present one of the most awaited films in India and the rest of the cricketing world."

Excited to have Nag on board for the Telugu version, Kabir said, "As a filmmaker, I have always admired Nagarjuna for the enormity of greatness he has and having such a Superstar's association is a sheer privilege. With his support, the Telugu version of '83 is surely going to be a hit with the local audience."

Ranveer Singh has stepped into the shoes of Kapil Dev for the film, which also features Tahir Raj Bhasin, Jiiva, Saqib Saleem, Jatin Sarna, Chirag Patil, Dinker Sharma, Nishant Dahiya, Harry Sandhu, Sahil Khattar, Ammy Virk, Addinath Kothare, Dhairya Karwa, R. Badree and Pankaj Tripathi. Deepika Padukone will be seen playing Romi, Kapil Dev's wife.



## Saiee Manjrekar, Niddhi Agerwal in casting race

**M**ore than three months after its launch, Varun Tej's as-yet-untitled boxing drama with debutant director Kiran Korrapati will finally go in front of the cameras from February 15 in Visakhapatnam. A little birdie tells us that Varun is in the process of creating a certain look for the film. "He is preparing for his part in Mumbai. The makers have hired the services of national-level boxer Neeraj Goyat, who is the first Indian boxer to have made it to WBC world rankings (ranked 20), to train him in boxing as well as in attaining the boxer's look," informs the source.

The source further exclusively confirms that except for the lead actress casting, other cast members are in place. The makers have approached Saiee Manjrekar, daughter of film-maker-actor

Mahesh Manjrekar, to be the lead heroine. She has made her Bollywood debut alongside Salman Khan in *Dabangg 3* last year. "Niddhi Agerwal is also on the director's wish list. In another two to

three days, clarity to this end will emerge," stated the source. The first schedule in Visakhapatnam will be followed by outings in Hyderabad and in surrounding areas of New Delhi, calling it a wrap. On the supporting front, the source informed that Nadiya and Jagapathi Babu will be seen in pivotal roles, while the likes of Vennela Kishore and Satya will take care of comedy. A joint production venture between Sidhu Mudda and Allu Venkatesh, the film will be shot by cinematographer George C. Williams, while S.S. Thaman is the tune-smith.

— NG



## Sunil down with infection

**A**ctor Sunil, who was recently seen in a comedy role in Trivikram's *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo*, has been admitted to a private hospital in Hyderabad, after he complained of uneasiness on Wednesday evening. According to reports, the actor has been on antibiotics for the past week. The side effects from the antibiotics took a toll on him leading to throat infection and

sinus. He was not in a position to speak properly till Thursday noon and his situation improved as the day progressed. Doctors treating him told his family that there's nothing to worry about.

The sudden hospitalisation means that Sunil won't be able to promote his Friday release, *Disco Raja*.

He has projects like *Colour Photo* and Anand Deverakonda's next with Damodar Attada in his kitty.

# Black & Blue

Upbeat India take on injury-struck Kiwis as build-up to T20 World Cup continues

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Preparations for the World Cup on top of their agenda, India will take on an injury-hit New Zealand in a rare five-match T20 International series starting today during which seam-friendly wickets would be a major challenge for the visitors.

Unlike most overseas tours, this will be a quick start for the Indian team. The team arrived in Auckland on Tuesday and Thursday was when they hit the nets ahead of the tour-opening game.

On the plus side, this hectic schedule helps the team management maintain consistency in team selection as they continue experimenting across the available squad in a World Cup year.

Despite injury issues to key white-ball personnel like Shikhar Dhawan, Hardik Pandya, Deepak Chahar and Bhuvneshwar Kumar this past home season, the bench strength has come across adequate and raring to go for challenges ahead.

It begins at the top where KL Rahul has stepped up as a key part of India's white-ball plans.

Skipper Virat Kohli dropped hints that Rahul's newfound confidence in his dual role as batsman-keeper has given vital options to the team.

According to Kohli, Rahul will continue to keep wickets in both ODIs and T20Is, but will open in the shortest format while returning to the middle-order in the 50-over format.

It could mean that Prithvi Shaw is being primed for an ODI debut and a potential pairing with Rohit when the three-match series begins on February 5.

The skipper also indicated a change in middle order plans. With Rahul keep-



Indian captain Virat Kohli and New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson pose with the T20 trophy on the eve of 1st game at Eden Park in Auckland. Black Caps/Twitter

ing wickets, the fit-again Rishabh Pant could lose his spot in the playing eleven.

Manish Pandey is expected to play as the fifth specialist batsman and Shreyas Iyer will regain his spot at number four.

Pandey, Iyer and Pant batted together in the nets on Thursday, while Sanju Samson hung around, only to pad up later on. The Kerala batsman didn't seem to be in contention for the first T20I.

Pant and Pandey could both fit into the playing eleven should India opt for five bowlers and leave out the sixth option in Shivam Dube. Washington Sundar and Ravindra Jadeja are the other two all-round options.

The Yuzvendra Chahal-Kuldeep Yadav combination is yet to play a game together since the 2019 ODI World Cup, and it remains to be seen if things will change in this aspect.

In the pace department, Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah are assured

starters, while the toss-up will be between Shardul Thakur and Navdeep Saini.

New Zealand had beaten India 2-1 in the T20I series last year. The Black Caps also won 2-1 in the T20I series during their Sri Lanka tour, and then drew 2-2 at home against England in a five-match series.

Despite the recent good record in the shortest format, there is a downbeat mood in the hosts' dressing room thanks to the 3-0 shellacking received in Australia over the past month.

It hasn't helped matters that the disappointing loss to their trans-Tasman rivals has raised questions about Kane Williamson's future as captain.

For the moment, New Zealand's leading batsman is happy to lead the side across all formats, but his position is up for review after the shattering defeat to Australia.

As always, they have a dearth of all-rounders to choose from but need to balance with pickings in the pace department,

which is missing the services of Trent Boult, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson owing to injuries.

It remains to be seen if the Black Caps opt for two spinners in Ish Sodhi and Mitchell Santner given the really short boundaries at Eden Park, venue for the two T20Is.

## TEAMS

**India:** Virat Kohli (capt), Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul (wk), Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur, Navdeep Saini, Washington Sundar.

**New Zealand:** Kane Williamson (capt), Martin Guptill, Ross Taylor, Scott Kuggeleijn, Colin Munro, Colin de Grandhomme, Tom Bruce, Daryl Mitchell, Mitchell Santner, Tim Seifert (wk), Hamish Bennett, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee, Blair Tuckner.

## No revenge in mind against 'nice guys'



Virat Kohli during India's nets session. PTI

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

The loss still rankles him but Virat Kohli on Thursday said he can't really bring himself to think of revenge when India take on New Zealand for the first time after the Kiwis sent his side packing from the ODI World Cup last year.

The Black Caps defeated pre-tournament favourites India by 18 runs in the semifinals of the showpiece in England and today's tour-opening T20I is the first clash between the two sides since then. Kohli has spoken repeatedly about how devastating the loss was for him personally.

"Even if you want to think of revenge, these guys are so nice you cannot get into that zone," said Kohli at the pre-match press conference.

"We get along really well with these guys and it's all about being competitive on the field. As I said in England, they are probably one side that has set the example for teams to play international cricket," he reasoned.

Williamson and his men had drawn effusive praise for their grace in the aftermath of a heartbreaking World Cup final loss to England, a game that was decided on boundary count after scores were tied.

"It is not about any kind of revenge — it is two quality sides playing good cricket. It is a challenge to beat New Zealand here and we are totally up for it," Kohli said.



Indian U-19 players celebrate after win. CWC/Twitter

## India U-19 side look for hat-trick

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

India vs NZ (U-19 WC)  
Live from 1:15pm IST  
STAR SPORTS 2 NETWORK

Already through to the quarterfinals after two resounding wins on the trot, defending champions India will be keen to maintain their unbeaten run when they face New Zealand in the final Group A tie of the ICC U-19 World Cup here today.

India, who are atop their group with four points, had cruised to a 90-run victory over Sri Lanka in their opening encounter before outclassing debutants Japan by 10 wickets with the disciplined bowling effort. The Priyam Garg-led side will start as favourites against New Zealand.

New Zealand, on the other hand, were unlucky to share a point with Japan after their match was washed out in Potchefstroom last week. However, they managed to clinch a late winner against Sri Lanka and book a place in the last eight.

New Zealand, who had finished eighth on home soil in 2018, will be looking to follow a similar trajectory as their senior counterparts, who reached the finals of the men's World Cup last year, in this edition of the U-19 showpiece.

Having won the warm up matches against Zimbabwe and Afghanistan and the quadrangular series, the Indian team would not want to lose the rhythm at any cost.

In their previous outing, India leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi (4/5) took four wickets while pacers Kartik Tyagi (3/10) and Akash Singh (2/11) shared five scalps among themselves to help the four-time champions bundle out Japan for 41.

Also on the batting front, Jaiswal (59), Garg (56) and wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel (52 not out) impressed with half centuries against Sri Lanka while Tilak Varma (46) and Siddhesh Veer (44 not out) also provided useful contributions.

However, the Indian team is yet to be tested against a strong opposition.

## SINGLES

### BFI OFFERED TO HOST OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS

**NEW DELHI:** The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has offered to host next month's Olympic Qualifying Tournament, which has been cancelled in the Chinese city of Wuhan following the outbreak of coronavirus. The qualifiers are scheduled from February 3 to 15 but the schedule has now become uncertain following the health crisis in Wuhan, which has so far claimed 17 lives and infected over 550 people. "...Due to any reason, if the event is to be shifted to a different country, BFI would be willing to host this Asian and Oceania Qualification Event 2020," BFI President stated in a letter to the Chairman of the IOC's Task Force (Boxing).

### SHIVA, SONIA LATHER ENTER STRANDJA S/F

**NEW DELHI:** Former world medallists Shiva Thapa (63kg) and Sonia Lather (57kg) assured themselves of medals at the 71st Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament by advancing to the semifinals. Joining them was Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg). He outpunched Ireland's Kurt Walker 5-0 to make the medal rounds. Former world Silver-winner Lather (57kg) clinched a 3-2 triumph over Michaela Walsh in a hard-fought contest to enter the last-four stage. Thapa got the better of George Bates in his quarterfinal clash.

### WORLD ARCHERY LIFTS SUSPENSION ON INDIA

**KOLKATA:** In a big boost to Indian archers' preparations for the Tokyo Olympics, the world body on Thursday conditionally lifted the suspension on India, less than a week after the embattled national federation held its elections. While lifting the ban, World Archery instructed AAI to make changes in its constitution regarding athlete membership, resolve governance issues and develop a strategic plan. It also asked AAI to furnish a quarterly progress report on these issues. After lifting of the ban, the Indian archers are now free to compete under the Indian flag. India currently has three men's and one women's quota place at 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

### RFI LIFTS BHOKANAL'S BAN

**NEW DELHI:** Rower Dattu Bhokanal's two-year suspension on charges of tanking a race during the 2018 Asian Games was lifted by the national federation (RFI) after the intervention of the IOA Narinder Batra. Bhokanal was a member of the Indian quartet that won a Gold in the men's quadruple sculls event in the Asian Games but later left the single sculls race midway. He was banned by the RFI in March last year. In his explanation, Bhokanal had said that he fell off the boat as it overturned and he was also not well on that day. But after Batra asked the RFI to review its decision, they informed Bhokanal's suspension has been lifted.

### CASSELL JOINS RR AS FAST BOWLING COACH

**MUMBAI:** Rajasthan Royals on Thursday appointed former Australian first class cricketer Rob Cassell as their new fast bowling coach for the upcoming Indian Premier League. Cassell has had success of working with, and developing fast bowlers during his previous coaching and development roles at South Australia and Ireland men's cricket team. The Australian represented his country at the 2002 U-19 World Cup in New Zealand but never played for the senior team.

### STAFANIE TAYLOR TO LEAD WEST INDIES WOMEN

**BARBADOS:** Stafanie Taylor will lead West Indies women in the upcoming T20 World Cup slated to be played in Australia from February 21- March 8. The team, led by Taylor, sees the return of Deandra Dottin to international cricket after eight months out of the squad following corrective surgery and rehabilitation. "The World Cup squad continues to show a blend of experience and young emerging players. It is boosted by the return of captain Stafanie Taylor, who was out of the T20 series against India through injury," chief selector Ann Browne-John said.



India ODI skipper Mithali Raj along side NZ players. ICC

## Christchurch will host 2021 WWC final

**AUCKLAND:** Christchurch's Hagley Oval will host the summit clash of next year's Women's Cricket ODI World Cup, it was announced on Thursday.

The 50-over tournament which will run from February 6 to March 7 will be played across six cities.

Auckland will host a bumper opening weekend at Eden Park, before the focus shifts to matches in Wellington, Hamilton, Tauranga, Dunedin and Christchurch.

The tournament, featuring 31 matches between February 6 and March 7, will be capped by a final in Christchurch under lights at the Hagley Oval, one of New Zealand's main Test venues.

# Handling pressure will be key in T20 WC: Harmanpreet

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian women's cricket captain Harmanpreet Kaur in her pre-departure press conference for T20 World Cup on Thursday said handling pressure would be crucial in the upcoming ICC Women's tournament in Australia, something that her side couldn't do in the last two global showpieces.

India made a semi-final exit from the last T20 World Cup and in the previous ODI World Cup, they had finished as runners-up.

"We were quite close in the last two World Cups, the only thing is we have to keep in mind how to handle pressure in the tournaments, last two World Cups we lacked in handling pressure," Harmanpreet said.

"This time we want to enjoy rather than taking more pressure on ourselves, thinking that it is a big tournament. We have to avoid thinking like that and focus on giving our best," she added.



Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and coach WV Raman answer to media queries. PTI

The 30-year-old batswoman, who has played 104 T20s, said the team needs focus on enhancing skills instead of thinking about the pressure of being at a big stage.

"Last few World Cups, we put ourselves under too much pressure of playing in a big tournament. This time

rather thinking that we are going for a big tournament, we just want to focus on our skills, how we should play and how to make the team win," she said.

"That will be very important for us and when we focus on these things, we (will) produce better results," she added. She counted spin bowling as one of

the strengths of her team.

"...They always give us breakthroughs. So I am looking forward to how our spinners perform there (in Australia) and see what they do for the team," said the skipper.

India will, in all likelihood, open with the experienced Smriti Mandhana and young Shafali Verma and according to Harmanpreet, the duo will have a crucial role to play.

"They both (Smriti and Shafali) are very important for the team and they always give their best...The first six overs are going to be important for us.

"Good start is important for the team and whenever they get a good start, we never look back. They both have very big role to play," she said.

Asked what will be her message for new players like Shafali and the 16-year-old Richa Ghosh, Harmanpreet said they would be encouraged to play their natural game.

"...Don't take any pressure because if we play freely without any pressure you will give your 100 per cent," she said.

# Root facing 'good selection headache'



Joe Root in action during third Test. AP

selection headache."

Mark Wood startled several of the South African batsmen in the third Test in Port Elizabeth, bowling bouncers at around 150kmh.

Archer is also among the world's small club of 150kmh bowlers.

"It would be nice to see how they go together," said Root. "I think they would be a relentless barrage of pace which is exciting, especially on a surface such as you typically get here at the Wanderers."

He also said that it would be "a very big achievement" if England could complete a series win.

Meanwhile, South African skipper Faf du Plessis said his side needed to dig deep to salvage a series draw.

"How strong are we mentally in this last hurdle? We know where we have been a little bit poor in our game plans," he said.

Du Plessis said Temba Bavuma would replace Zubayr Hamza in the XI, but there would also be a change in the batting order, with Rassie van der Dussen moving up to number three, the position filled by Hamza in the first three Tests.

He is also hoping that Vernon Philander, who will retire from international cricket after the match, would finish his Test career "with the storybook ending he deserves" on a pitch where he has done well in the past.

# Pak need Malik & Hafeez's experience

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's T20 skipper Babar Azam has defended the decision to recall veterans Shoaib Malik and Mohammad Hafeez, saying the experienced duo's presence will help the team in its pursuit of retaining the number one spot in the shortest format.

Desperate to hold on to its numero uno status in T20 rankings, Pakistan has recalled Malik and Hafeez in the team for the three-match series against Bangladesh.

"I felt that we needed these two (Malik, Hafeez) seniors. They were part of the number one team last year," he said.



Shoaib Malik in practice session. AP

man also said Pakistan is under no pressure in the series against Bangladesh, especially after the thrashing in last T20 series against Sri Lanka at home.

"No there is no pressure for us because what is done is done but we will not try to repeat the same mistakes we did against the Lankans," Babar said.

He made it clear that they were not taking Bangladesh lightly.

"Bangladesh have a good combination of youngsters and seniors and it will be a good competitive series. Their players have the advantage of having come here fresh out of the BPL (Bangladesh Premier League)," he said.

# Lakmal sets up Sri Lanka win

**HARARE:** Suranga Lakmal took four for 27 to set up Sri Lanka for a 10-wicket win over Zimbabwe in the first Test on Thursday.

Resuming on 30 without loss and needing 157 to make Sri Lanka bat again, Zimbabwe recovered from the loss of three early wickets to Lakmal to reach lunch at 120 for three.

The tall pace bowler struck again immediately after, removing Brendan Taylor for 38, and Zimbabwe slumped to 170 all out, losing their last seven wickets for 50.

Sri Lanka needed just 14 to win and the openers Oshada Fernando and Dimuth



Karunaratne knocked off the runs in three overs. Angelo Mathews was named man of the match for his 200 not out in Sri Lanka's first innings of 515 for nine declared. AFP