

OPINION 6

NEED TO OBJECTIFY HISTORY

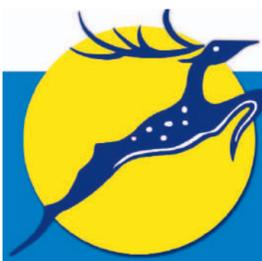
MONEY 8

IRDAI CHIEF CAUTIONS INSURERS AGAINST PREDATORY PRICING

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INDIA LAUNCH OLYMPIC BID WITH PRO OPENER

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the pioneer



PRABHAS' PICTURE SENDS FANS INTO FRENZY
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VIJAY MALLYA ALLOWED 17-BEDROOM FRENCH MANSION TO ROT, SAYS BANK

Indian tycoon Vijay Mallya's palatial island home boasts 17 bedrooms, a cinema, private helipad and even its own nightclub. But one of the banks suing him for unpaid debts allege the former billionaire let it fall into disrepair. Mallya bought 'Le Grand Jardin' through his company Gizmo Invest SA in 2008 using a 27-million euro (\$30 million) loan facility from Ansbacher & Co., a unit of Qatar National Bank SAQ. Gizmo has since defaulted on the loan, the bank told a London high court Wednesday.



US NURSE POISONS HUSBY USING EYE DROPS, GETS 25-YEAR JAIL

A South Carolina woman was Thursday sentenced to 25 years in jail after she admitted poisoning her husband by putting eye drops in his drinking water. In a plea deal, Lana Sue Clayton, 53, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter in the death of Steven Clayton, 64, at their home in Clover, near Charlotte, CBS-affiliate WBTV reported. She was accused of poisoning her husband by lacing his drinking water with eye drops between July 19 and 21, 2018. Her husband was initially thought to have died of natural causes but an autopsy toxicology report showed poisonous levels of tetrahydrozoline, which is found in eye drops.



SAI GETS FOUR WEEKS TO DISPOSE SEXUAL HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS

Sports Minister Kiren Rijju on Friday said all pending complaints of sexual harassment at SAI institutes will be disposed off in the next four weeks to ensure a zero tolerance approach towards the menace. Reacting to a report which claimed that 45 cases of sexual harassment were reported from 24 Sports Authority of India (SAI) institutes over the last 10 years in which little or no action was taken, the minister asserted that the body's institutes are, in general, safe spaces. "There is zero tolerance for sexual harassment on SAI campuses. The inquiries that are underway will be speeded up," he said.



40 JAWANS HOSPITALISED IN JHARKHAND WITH FOOD POISONING

More than 40 jawans have been hospitalised due to food poisoning in the Jharkhand Armed Police Training Centre in Padma, Hazaribagh. According to police, jawans posted in the training centre fell ill after taking dinner on Thursday night. The jawans were then rushed to the Hazariagh Medical College. Around 1,130 constables are taking training at the Padma training centre. After training the jawans will be promoted to the rank of Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI).



President junks plea to disqualify AAP MLA for being member of NDMC

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State Cabinet meet advanced to upset plans of protesters

Cabinet to meet at 3 pm today; ministers endorse reports on capital

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
In a strategic move, the State government has decided to hold the Cabinet meeting at 3 pm on Saturday instead of January 20, the day on which the Opposition parties and Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti are planning to organise massive protests.



“The Chief Minister told us all steps will be taken for the benefit of the farmers who gave up their lands for the capital. He suggested that a better package be given to the farmers”
—BOTSA SATYANARAYANA
Municipal Administration Minister

Chief Secretary Neelam Sawhney on Friday evening issued orders advancing the date of the Cabinet meeting. Earlier in the day, members of High Power Committee, who had their fourth meeting, met Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at his camp house in Tadepalli. They made separate PowerPoint presentations to the CM on various proposals mentioned in the GN Rao Committee and BCG

reports. They also made recommendations to the CM in support of decentralisation of development and governance, thus favouring the three-Capital concept mooted by the government. The committee will hold another meeting on Saturday. "We will go ahead with our plan in tune with the people's aspirations. The Chief Minister told us all steps will be taken for

the benefit of the farmers who gave up their lands for the capital. He suggested that a better package be given to the farmers," Municipal Minister Botsa Satyanarayana told reporters after the meeting. The Minister feigned ignorance when asked about the move to scrap the AP Capital Region Development Authority Act, in the wake of the plan to shift the capital from Amaravati

to Visakhapatnam. The HPC is expected to submit its report in a couple of days before the Cabinet meets on January 20 to approve it. The HPC report will then be placed in the Legislature during the extended winter session beginning on January 20 for discussion upon which the government is expected to come out with its final decision on the state capital issue. Meanwhile, the AP High Court admitting a PIL on submission of suggestions and raising objections and extended the last date up to 2.30 pm on Monday (January 20). The PIL also sought the HC to restrain the High Power Committee from submitting its final report to the government until then.

Continued on Page 3

BJP gains from alliance with JSP, but what about Pawan?

During the 2019 Assembly elections, BJP could get only 1 per cent of the vote in AP whereas about 7.5 per cent of the voters backed the Jana Sena. However, the percentage of the votes was unnoticed due to Pawan Kalyan himself losing in both the seats he contested from

The political scene in Andhra Pradesh has received a sudden spike with the 'joint agitation' announcement by Jana Sena and BJP. As there are no elections on the horizon, except for local bodies, the decision to work together by two parties has surprised political circles. But the inside story is that there has been consistent effort by top brass of two parties to have some sort of alliance, though the BJP leadership was reluctant due to the many objections from Pawan Kalyan and his team that had earlier sailed with Communist parties. Pawan's inconsistency vis-à-vis his political ideology was also a stumbling block to clinching an alliance. However, Pawan rushed to New Delhi and clinched a deal, signaling a change of stance. Now, everyone is trying to figure out who stands to benefit from the deal.

the 2024 elections. If everything goes as predicted, the present move would be certainly a pragmatic one. But then there is an ideological hurdle for Pawan and his team as BJP is hell bent upon getting support for the Citizens Amendment Act (CAA), NPR and NRC. While pursuing its agenda in AP, BJP might hurt the vote bank of Pawan which consists mostly of youth.

image among youth. BJP as of now has no popular face to woo to voters of AP and with about 7.5 per cent vote bank and strong hold over a numerically well-distributed community, Pawan certainly fits the bill. The future of the Jana Sena depends on whether Pawan will use the time till 2024 to build his party organization or simply hang around the BJP and generally be relevant. Whereas, BJP will certainly use its association with the Jana Sena to attract more Kapu leaders into the party fold and send a signal to people of AP that it is a strong contender in the coming days. This will automatically improve its fortunes in another important southern state that shares border with Karnataka where it is in power. Religious differences of political leaders had never played a role in Andhra politics but it appears now that the BJP, armed with Jana Sena, will not leave the opportunity to raise their voice against YSRCP leadership whenever there is a chance. At the time of rivals coming to form a labyrinth, the ruling YSRCP party needs to be more careful as the local media is also not in favour of YSRCP government for their own reasons.

— Krishna Prasad

CONTEXT

The youth across the country are fighting against NRC and divisive politics. In his hurry to please the 'big brother', Pawan will have to sacrifice his fans who are Left-oriented and from the minorities. This may also erode Pawan's ideological base which often compares him with Che Guevara, the Argentine Marxist revolutionary. For Pawan Kalyan, the BJP is strong at the Centre and this may help him build his party from the grassroots. It is already rumoured that he will be offered Rajya Sabha membership and will be accommodated in the Union Cabinet to get maximum mileage from his strong

'Nirbhaya's mother 'misguided', Delhi govt had no role'

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JAC leaders meet Governor, explain situation in Amaravati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti JAC leaders on Friday met Governor Viswa Bhusan Harichandan and apprised him of the situation in the Capital.



Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti JAC leaders submit a memorandum to Governor Viswa Bhusan Harichandan at the Raj Bhavan in Vijayawada on Friday.

They alleged that the police was being highhanded against peaceful protesters. They also submitted a memorandum to the Governor demanding that the Capital be retained at Amaravati. Later, the JAC leaders told reporters that they had brought to the notice of the Governor the police excesses in the Capital region. JAC convener A Siva Reddy said 20 associations had come together on one platform with 'One State-One Capital' being their objective. There was a lot of uncertainty in the Capital region over the last one month following the government's three-Capital proposal. Siva Reddy said the JAC had urged the Governor to ensure that the State government gives

clarity on the Capital issue. He said that the Governor promised them that the issue would be brought to the notice of President Ram Nath Kovind.

Continued on Page 3

NIRBHAYA CASE Delhi court issues fresh death warrant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
A Delhi court Friday issued fresh death warrants for February 1, 6 am against the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case. Additional Sessions Judge Satish Kumar Arora was hearing a plea by one of the four death row convicts in the case, Mukesh Kumar Singh, seeking postponement of the date of his execution scheduled for January 22.

'Amazon to create one million jobs in India by 2025'

8

Two minor boys 'rape' 4-year-old girl

PNS ■ KAKINADA
Offering her a kite during the Sankranti celebrations, two minor boys (aged 14 and 8 years) allegedly raped a 4-year-old girl under Two-Town police station limits in Kakinada of East Godavari district.

HC takes serious view of police excesses

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday took a serious view of police excesses in Amaravati during the ongoing agitation by farmers and women. The court asked the Advocate General as to what had led the male police officials to kick women protesters.



Continued on Page 3

CBI court refuses relief for Jagan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
In a major setback to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, a CBI special court here on Friday dismissed his petitions seeking all the discharge petitions to be heard at one stretch. After a lengthy argument, the court decided to hear all the petitions separately. Jaganmohan Reddy also filed a petition requesting the CBI court to hear the ED case after completion of the CBI case. However, the court dismissed this petition too. The court posted the case to January 24.

In his second petition, Jagan appealed to the court to allow his co-accused to appear before it in his absence in the charge sheets filed by the ED



Gujarat IPS to be new JD of CBI

Manoj Shashidhar, a Gujarat-based IPS officer has been appointed the new Joint Director of CBI in a sudden development by the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre on Friday. The move assumes significance in the backdrop of CBI adopting a tough stand against AP CM YS Jaganmohan in disproportionate and quid pro quo cases booked by the CBI and ED.

this week. The hearing on Jagan's disproportionate assets cases will continue next Friday on January 24.

Continued on Page 3

TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Paush & Shukla Paksha Panchangam
Tithi : Trayodashi: 03:43 am (Next Day)
Nakshatram: Rohini: 03:51 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 12:22 pm - 01:45 pm
Yamagandam: 08:14 am - 09:37 am
Varjyam: 07:42 am - 09:19 am, 09:24 pm - 10:59 pm
Gulika: 10:59 am - 12:22 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 12:35 pm - 02:13 pm
Abhijit Muhurtam: NIL

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 31/19
Humidity: 71 %
Sunrise: 06:48
Sunset: 05:57
Current Weather Conditions Updated January 07, 2019 5:00 PM

Relocation again irks Secretariat staff

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
Three years after they shifted from Hyderabad to Amaravati, employees of the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat may soon be packing their bags for Visakhapatnam as the Jaganmohan Reddy-led government appears to be going ahead with its proposal to shift the administrative capital to the port city. Nearly 4,000 employees, working from the temporary Secretariat in Amaravati since October 2016 are resisting the move to shift the capital even before they could settle down here after they were forced to relocate following the bifurca-



tion of undivided Andhra Pradesh. However, unlike the farmers who are on the streets for a month protesting against the three capitals proposal, the

employees are not voicing their dissent publicly. They may come out in the open if the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government takes a decision to move the seat of governance to

Unlike the farmers of Amaravati who are on the streets for a month, the employees are not voicing their dissent publicly

Visakhapatnam. To prevent any such resistance from the employees and to persuade them to relocate to Visakhapatnam, the government is said to be working on a series of sops for them. The government proposes to shift the Secretariat and the Chief Minister's Office to Visakhapatnam, making it the

state capital for all practical purposes. Under the proposal, the High Court will be shifted to Kurnool while Amaravati will house only the Raj Bhavan, the official residence of the Governor and the State Assembly and that too only for the winter session. The government's proposal is based on the premise of decentralisation of development. This idea was endorsed by an experts' panel and the Boston Consultancy Group (BCG). A high-powered committee comprising of ministers and senior officials is currently studying both the reports to arrive at a conclusion.

Continued on Page 3

CAT sets aside appointment of Punjab DGP

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH
In a big blow to Punjab government, the Central Administrative Tribunal on Friday set aside the appointment of Dinkar Gupta as the state police chief. A two-member bench pronounced the order on an appeal by Mohammad Mustafa and Siddharth Chattopadhyaya, who had challenged Gupta's appointment on the ground that they were 'ignored' despite being senior to Gupta.

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CAPSULE



JEO releases posters

VIJAYAWADA: Joint Executive Officer (JEO) of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) P Basanth Kumar released the posters of the annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Prasanna Venkataramana Swamy of Kosuvaripalle on Friday. Deputy executive officer Elleppa and others were also present on the occasion at the chambers of JEO in TTD administration building in Tirupati.

One person dies as car hits bike

VIJAYAWADA: One person died when a speeding car hit a bike on the national highway near NTR Nagar in Nellore district on Friday. According to police, Janardhan (65), a resident of BV Nagar in Nellore, and his relative Nagaraju, went to NTR Nagar on some work on their bike and were returning when the speeding car, which was coming from Kavali on the national highway, hit their bike. With the impact of the collision, Janardhan fell on the road and his legs came under the wheels of the vehicle, while the car crashed into the nearby farmlands. In the accident, Janardhan died on the spot due to severe injuries, while Nagaraju also suffered serious injuries. Locals, who witnessed the accident, rushed him to a hospital for treatment. On receiving information, police reached the spot and shifted the body to the government hospital for post-mortem. Police seized the car and registered a case.

Barricades confuse motorists, add to NH chaos

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Police impose curbs to regulate traffic and at the same time put barricades to provide safety to motorists, four wheeler and heavy vehicle drivers. But some time, barricades may become hurdles for motorists as bike riders in the city are complaining that the barricades kept at many points along the National Highway passing through the city are confusing them and sometimes resulting in minor mishaps.

Also, some mischievous persons are often seen displacing the barricades bringing them exactly at the middle of the road. This not only cause create traffic congestion but also motorists trying to overtake



These barricades are placed in zig-zag pattern at all busy roads, including highways, flyovers, narrow roads and even

Some mischievous persons are often seen displacing the barricades bringing them exactly at the middle of the road. This not only cause create traffic congestion but also motorists trying to overtake vehicle could end up hitting the barricades

These barricades are placed in zig-zag pattern at all busy roads, including highways, flyovers, narrow roads and even at places where ground digging work is underway. Freak accidents were most common in such places as the motorists were habituated to ride fast and overtake other vehicles

in his last visit to the city, Director General of Police D Gautam Sawang said, "At present, erecting barricades is the only solution to slow the speed of vehicles. Keeping them has brought down accident cases significantly across the State. When we come up with a new way out, we will definitely remove them. Till then, public must support us."

New Accident Analysis System to curb fatal road mishaps
An accident analysis system will be set up in Vizag region to curb the fatal road accidents. The Police and Road Transport Authority (RTA) will share their resources and information. If the casualties in a mishap were three or more,

then the enforcement departments used to analyse the fatal accidents.

District administration, in the recent road safety review meeting, had asked police and RTA to form special teams to scientifically investigate all the fatal road accidents by visiting the accident scene to ascertain the exact reasons for fatal accidents.

"In some cases, police mention several reasons in the FIR to conclude the case but it may not be accurate. A detailed study of the fatal accidents such as crash causation, injuries, vehicles involved in the crash would follow, based on which the authorities would take decisions," said Member of Road Safety Committee, Vizag, AH Khan.

544 private buses seized

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The State government has been successful in taking steps to see that the people, who travel to their native places for Sankranti, are not charged heavily by the private bus operators by operating special APSRTC bus services, said Minister for Transport and Information and Public Relations Perni Venkataramaiah.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, the minister said that 3,132 cases were booked between January 2 and 16 against private bus operators for over-charging and 544 buses were seized for violations, topping the list with 202 buses in Krishna district followed by 198 buses in Visakhapatnam district.

Moreover, the APSRTC had announced 4,900 special bus services in addition to the exist-



ing ones as per the demand during the festival time to check the exploitation by the private bus operators. A provision was made to ferry 1,03,500 people to their native places during the festival. The number of people, who used the RTC services during January 2020 has increased from the number of people, who used the services during January 2019. Similarly, over 2,000 special

buses would be plied by the RTC to take the people to their destination after the end of the festival from Friday onwards, the minister said and added that the government had increased the number of buses for the convenience of travellers during the festival time and that they can call 8309887955 on WhatsApp if they find that the private bus operators are fleecing them.

13TH WELD INDIA EXPO FROM FEB 6 TO 9 IN MUMBAI

'Bridge skill and technology gap'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Institute of Welding (IIW-INDIA) under the guidance of Union Ministry of Skill Development (GOI), along with the support of National Skill Development Corporation and private industries, is working on closing the swelling gap of the skilled persons needed in the country to meet the national objective of making India a 5 trillion economy.

Addressing the media here on Friday, R Srinivasan, Past-President of IIW and Co-Chairman of the National Organising Committee, said "The skill level and the technological gap that exist today in the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector of the manufacturing units are glaring. IIW India - a Premier Welding Institute of the country in its mission to develop the upgradation of the welding science and technology in metal joining technique has taken up a structured way of welding training and certifications methods".

This will be showcased in the 13th Weld India Exhibition in association with the International Institute of Welding from February 6 to 9 in Mumbai on the Theme of 'Advanced Welding Technology and Quality Systems for Developing Economies'. With strong base of over 5,000 welding profes-



sionals and 300 industries (private and public sector) as the members IIW India will also host concurrently 5th International Welding congress to answer the needs of industries.

Participants from over 22 countries will present exclusive skill development techniques for the Indian industries. The experiences of various successful welding models around the globe, especially under water and space welding will be shared by expert team from India, Canada, China, Australia and government officials.

A National Welding Capability workshop is being organised to identify and prepare the roadmap to close the technological gaps that exists today, which is being seen as a big hurdle to meet the global challenges that face the Indian

market. The Weld India exhibition, which showcases the latest technologies that has developed globally to meet the challenges and the participation of various industries and the training institute will give an opportunity to over 4,000 industrial visitors and the delegates to understand the new techniques that can be used to reduce the gap in the needs of the skill development.

R Srinivasan added "Industries will be benefitted largely by associating with this event, as over 150 technical papers are likely to be presented and an opportunity is created by The IIW India to the Indian industries by bringing over 250 highly experienced persons from across the world to interact with the Indian industries so that Central gov-

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ernment Mission of 'Make In India' is achieved at all levels."

Kadiyam declared as energy-neutral railway station

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Gajanan Mallya, General Manager, South Central Railway, declared the Kadiyam Railway Station in Vijayawada Division as energy-neutral station recently.

Kadiyam Railway Station in Rajahmundry section has earned the rare distinction of being the first energy-neutral station in the entire South Central Railway zone by meeting all its electrical demands through solar energy. This rare feat is accomplished by installation of 10KWp on-grid solar power plant on roof top of the building with bi-directional net-metering.

The entire electrical load of the station works on 10KWp solar power plant during the day and excess units generated from the plant are fed to DISCOM (Distribution Companies) through net-metering. Similarly, during the night, the power requirement for the building is taken from DISCOM, which will be deducted from energy supplied to DISCOM during the day, hence, the energy consumption charges paid to DISCOM is zero from railways.

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procured at a cost of Rs 6.5 lakh, this solar plant is also resulting in reduction of 14.7 tonnes of carbon footprints per annum. The station is already equipped with all energy efficient electrical equipment like LED lights, BLDC (Brushless DC electric motor) fans and star rated pumps to minimise the electrical consumption.

P Srinivas, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada, complimented V Venkata Ramana, Sr DEE/M, and the team for their dedicated work and achieving this rare feat. The DRM also said that such cost efficient initiatives not only bring down the maintenance cost but also contributes to clean and green environment.

Drive to create awareness on energy saving tips launched

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) 'publicity van' was flagged-off here on Friday to create awareness among people in rural areas on fuel and energy saving tips here on Friday. The van will travel 1,800 km across the State for 45 Days covering 40 km per day.

State Level Coordinator for Oil Industry (AP) Umashankar welcomed the gathering and said that various activities aiming at different segments of users would be carried out during the month-long programme for creating awareness on conservation of fuels.

In order to spread the message, students are chosen as ambassadors and various competitions, which were held across the State in educational institutions. He complimented and thanked the education department and schools for encouraging children to participate in competitions held from July to October 2019 in which the State has recorded a participation of 7.5 lakh students.

AEO inspects site for RTC depot

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Additional executive officer of TTD AV Dharma Reddy on Friday inspected different sites suitable to be allotted to set up the APSRTC bus depot cum garage in Tirumala. He, along with estate officer of Tirumala Vijayaradhhi, DFO Phanikumar Naidu, visited Purohita Sangham, Bata Gangamma and Waste Management areas to study the feasibility of providing the land to the APSRTC. EE Chandrasekar, Tirumala Depot Manager Giridhar Reddy and others accompanied the additional executive officer during the site inspection.

Pawan, a rank opportunist: Perni Nani

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Coming down heavily on Jana Sena president Pawan Kalyan, Minister for Information and Public Relations Perni Nani has said that the former is a rank opportunist. Addressing a press conference at Tadepalli on Friday, he said Pawan Kalyan had inherited the opportunism of TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu. He observed that Naidu had no confidence in his son Lokesh, so he was moved closer to Pawan Kalyan.

Stating that Jana Sena had no ideology, he said it was having alliance with its critics. Pawan Kalyan had proved that



even a political party could be put up for sale in OIX.

Pawan Kalyan had gone on record saying that he hated Chief Minister Jagannathan Reddy. "Then, why is he taking Jagannathan Reddy's name time and again?" he said. Perni Nani wondered why

Pawan Kalyan had entered into a tie up with BJP unconditionally. He could have fought for the Special Category Status (SCS) to the State, he added.

He said Pawan Kalyan helped Chandrababu Naidu and Narendra Modi win the elections in 2014. In 2019, he helped Jagannathan Reddy win the elections and he would repeat it in 2024.

Stating that Naidu has political and financial interests, he said he would use others to achieve what he could through his son Nara Lokesh. But, Pawan Kalyan had put even Naidu to shame in this game. He had become a 'care of' address for opportunism, he added.

Data from Fitbit smartwatches helped predict flu in real time

IANS ■ NEW YORK

In a first-ever study on wearable devices to improve surveillance of infectious disease, researchers in the US have achieved real-time flu prediction in five States, using resting heart rate and sleep tracking data from Fitbit users.

Resting heart rate tends to spike during infectious episodes and this is captured by wearable devices such as smartwatches and fitness trackers that track heart rate.

Influenza results in 650,000 deaths worldwide annually. And approximately seven per cent of working adults and 20 per cent of children aged under five years get flu each year.

"Responding more quickly to influenza outbreaks can prevent further spread and infec-



tion, and we were curious to see if sensor data could improve real-time surveillance at the state level," said study author Dr Jennifer Radin from Scripps

Research Translational Institute.

Researchers reviewed de-identified data from 200,000 users, who wore a Fitbit wear-

able device that tracks users' activity, heart rate and sleep for at least 60 days during the study time.

From the 200,000, 47,248

"Responding more quickly to influenza outbreaks can prevent further spread and infection, and we were curious to see if sensor data could improve real-time surveillance at the state level," said study author Dr Jennifer Radin from Scripps Research Translational Institute

of 13,342,651 daily measurements evaluated. The average user was 43 year olds and 60 per cent were female.

De-identified data from the users retrospectively identified weeks with elevated resting heart rate and changes to routine sleep, said the research published in The Lancet Digital Health journal. "In the future as these devices improve, and with access to 24/7 real-time data, it may be possible to identify rates of influenza daily instead of weekly basis," said Radin.

This data was compared to weekly estimates for influenza-like illness rates reported by the US Centres for Disease Control (CDC). This is the first time heart rate trackers and sleep data have been used to predict flu, or any infectious disease, in

real-time.

With greater volumes of data it may be possible to apply the method to more geographically refined areas, such as county or city-level. The authors identify several limitations in their study.

Weekly resting heart rate averages may include days when an individual is both sick and not sick, and this may result in underestimation of illness by lowering the weekly averages.

Other factors may also increase resting heart rate, including stress or other infections. Lastly, the authors noted that previous studies of sleep measuring devices have been found to have low accuracy, though they said that accuracy will continue to improve as technology evolves.

CAPSULE



Moolasthanam Ellamma gets sare from Srivaru

VIJAYAWADA: In a traditional practice, the precious gift in the form of 'Sare' was sent to the famous folk goddess located at Chandragiri, Moolasthanam Ellamma, from Her beloved brother Sri Venkateswara Swamy on Friday. In connection with the Sankranti Utsavalu Kondachuttu festival, the ex-officio member of TTD Trust Board and TUDA Chairman and local legislator Dr C Bhaskar Reddy has presented the 'Sare' on behalf of TTD. Earlier, 'Sare' was brought from Tirumala to Chandragiri Sri Kodandaramalayam temple by temple Peishkar Lokanatham. From there, 'Sare' reached Moolasthanam Ellamma temple in a grand religious procession. The EO of the folk Goddess temple Sri Ramakrishna Reddy and Chairman Sri Sivashankar Reddy received Sri C Bhaskar Reddy and arranged darshan.

Paruveta Utsavam held at Renigunta

VIJAYAWADA: The Paruveta Utsavam of Sri Govinda Raja Swamy was held at Renigunta on Friday with religious pomp and gaiety. Utsava deities of Sri Govindaraja Swamy flanked by Sridevi, Bhudevi and Andal Ammavaru were brought to the Paruveta Mandapam located at Renigunta in the evening and 'Asthnam' was performed by the priests as per Agamas. Later in the evening, deities returned to the temple.

Central jails in State overcrowded

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The latest report of National Crime Records Bureau also throws light on how the prisons in Andhra Pradesh are overcrowded by 10 per cent and also understaffed by at least 24 per cent. The problem of overcrowding in Central Prisons in the State continues to persist.

Andhra Pradesh has four Central Prisons located in Vizag, Rajahmundry, Nellore and Kadapa and which can accommodate 3,814 prisoners. However, in 2018, 4,212 prisoners, including 4,049 male and 163 female prisoners (both convicts and under-trials), were accommodated with an occupancy rate of 110.44 per cent. In 2017, the four Central Jails in the State had 4,690 prisoners, while the number of prisoners in the four jails was 4,126 in 2016.

The overall occupancy rate in all the jails (Central Jails, Sub-Jails, District Jails, Women Jail, Open Jails, altogether 105 jails) in Andhra Pradesh is 79.5 per cent in 2018. A total of 6,988 prisoners, including 414



female inmates, were in various prisons in the State against its capacity of 8,786.

Superintendent of Vizag Central Prison S Rahul said that convicts in the Central Jails account for around 40 per cent, while the under-trial or remand prisoners' share was around 60 per cent, he added.

A total of 2,373 convicts prisoners were in the Central Jails and a few other jails in the State.

The majority of the convict prisoners (1,574) were involved in murder cases, while 163 convicts involved in rape cases.

Senior advocate K Muralidhar said that some under-trial prisoners, who were involved in ganja transportation and a few other cases, are struggling to get bails due to various reasons. As the more youngsters are involving in crimes such as cybercrimes,

ganja trade and a few others for easy money, there is a need to increase the capacity of the central jails in the state, he added.

Members of the Visakhapatnam Bar Association said that overcrowding in the jails is also one of the violations of Human Rights, as it is the responsibility of the government to provide reasonable space in the prisons.

■ Andhra Pradesh has four Central Prisons located in Vizag, Rajahmundry, Nellore and Kadapa and which can accommodate 3,814 prisoners. However, in 2018, 4,212 prisoners, including 4,049 male and 163 female prisoners (both convicts and under-trials), were accommodated with an occupancy rate of 110.44 per cent

■ In 2017, the four Central Jails in AP had 4,690 prisoners, while the number of prisoners was 4,126 in 2016.

■ The overall occupancy rate in all the jails (Central Jails, Sub-Jails, District Jails, Women Jail, Open Jails, altogether 105 jails) in AP is 79.5 per cent in 2018. A total of 6,988 prisoners, including 414 females were in various prisons against its capacity of 8,786.



TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh greeting people during a motorcycle rally in Mangalagiri on Friday. CPI leader Narayana is also seen

Lokesh leads bike rally in Mangalagiri

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh and CPI national secretary Narayana led a massive motorcycle rally in Mangalagiri on Friday in support of the Political JAC members and farmers agitating against the three-Capital concept in the State. Narayana rode pillion on Lokesh's motorcycle.

Leaders and activists of Opposition parties, including the TDP, Jana Sena and Left parties, took part in the bike rally.

Amaravati continued to be tense on the 31st day of the agitation with farmers, their families and sympathisers taking to streets and organising various forms of protest. The rally, which began at Sitarama junction, culminated at Ambedkar statue in Mangalagiri town. People belonging to different villages around Mangalagiri took part in the rally.

CPI State secretary Ramakrishna warned Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy against shifting the Capital from Amaravati. He said if the Chief Minister went ahead with his decision, his political fall would start from there.

Ramakrishna alleged that the CM did not talk to the deputy chief ministers and the ministers about the Capital shifting. He expressed solidarity with Deekshas started by

■ Leaders and activists of Opposition parties, including the TDP, Jana Sena and Left parties, took part in the bike rally

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■ Amaravati continued to be tense on the 31st day of the agitation with farmers, their families and sympathisers taking to streets and organising various forms of protest

farmers in various villages. He said Jaganmohan Reddy and Vijayasai Reddy were deciding the fate of five crore people.

The CPI leader appealed to people to take part in the 'Chalo Assembly' agitation on January 20.

Alleging that police were causing inconvenience to peaceful protesters in the Capital Region and he demanded that the DGP act in a responsible manner.

Meanwhile, police are gearing up to foil the Opposition attempt to lay siege to the Assembly and is deploying a large number of police personnel to tackle the situation.

Man rapes his minor daughter repeatedly

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In another shocking incident, a man raped his 11-year-old daughter under influence of alcohol on Thursday in a village under Vedurukuppam mandal of Chittoor district. The 40-year-old accused is a daily wage labourer and has two wives. The girl is his daughter from his second wife. She is a Class-VI student and stays in a hostel.

According to police, the survivor returned home for Sankranti festival and her father raped her while she was busy with household chores on Thursday.

The police registered a case against the accused under Section 376 of IPC and relevant Sections of the POSCO Act. The police nabbed the accused and sent the girl for medical examination. Preliminary investigations revealed that the accused had raped his daughter repeatedly over the past few months.

Admin gears up for smooth conduct of R-Day

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Collector V Vinay Chand directed officials of departments concerned to ensure proper coordination with each other and discharge their duties for smooth conduct of the Republic Day.

As the State-level celebrations of 71st Republic Day will be conducted at the RK Beach in Visakhapatnam, the district administration is making necessary arrangements.

He informed that joint collectors will look after the arrangements related to VVIP guests near the main stage. Already, committees were formed with higher officials as presidents and district officials as members.



These committees will ensure organising the event on a high-scale. Each committee will take care of arrangements such as main stage, welcome of guests, accommodation, transport, parking, protocol, seating, sanitation, preparation of tableaux and their management.

Along with Governor



Biswa Bushan Harichandan and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, several dignitaries from the Central and State governments will arrive in the city on January 25 to take part in the flag hoisting event here on January 26.

Rehearsals and other arrangements for the annual parade will start in the city from Saturday. The Collector

asked officials to complete the arrangements on a war-footing. He directed beautification of the RK Beach to create a festive atmosphere in the city. Police Commissioner RK Meena informed that they tightened security measures to prevent any untoward incident in the event. Traffic restrictions were imposed in the city as per the schedule. The VIP convoy routes were also being prepared, he said.

The police imposed traffic restrictions on the Beach Road from Friday. The traffic police blocked the road from 5.30 am to 11.30 am in the morning and from 3 pm to 5.30 pm. City buses 28K, 28Z/H, 10K and 66K will ply on diverted routes.

State Cabinet meet advanced to upset plans of protesters

Continued from Page 1

The next hearing in the case will be held on January 20. Incidentally, a large number of farmers gathered at the grievance cell of CRDA office and submitted their suggestions and objections on the government's decision over decentralisation. They demanded that the GN Rao Committee and BCG reports be made available in Telugu.

CRDA officials said the farmers had submitted several suggestions and objections to them.

The farmers have prepared an action plan to submit their grievances. They have prepared letters giving their detailed opinion. The Amaravati Praisshana Samiti



too has been issuing letters to various categories of landowners to be handed over to the government.

Meanwhile, the farmers had faced inconvenience in uploading their grievances online due to failure of the server.

However, the government took steps to rectify the problem.

Minister Botsa Satyanarayana later confirmed that the technical problems was fixed and appealed to the farmers to upload their grievances and suggestions.

Devuni Kadapa Brahmotsavams posters released

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The annual Brahmotsavams at Sri Prasanna Venkataramana temple in Devunikadapa of YSR district will be conducted from January 26 to February 4 with Ankurpanam on January 25, said JEO P Basanth Kumar. The JEO, who released the posters related to this annual event at his chambers in Tirupati on Friday, said Brahmotsavams will be organised by the TTD for nine days with Dhvajarohanam on January 26, Garuda Seva on January 30, Kalyanotsavam on February 1 and Chakrasnanam on February 3. He said the annual Pushpayagam will be conducted on February 4 in the evening between 6 pm and 9 pm.

High Court takes serious view of police excesses

Continued from Page 1

The High Court concluded its hearing in the petition against police highhandedness on the farmers agitating against the proposal to shift the Capital from Amaravati.

In all, seven petitions were filed against prohibitory orders in Vijayawada and Amaravati region by farmers, women and lawyers. Besides, Chief Justice GK Maheswari had taken a suo motu cognizance of the situation.

The farmers contended in court that the police behaviour towards them, especially towards women farmers, was objectionable right from the first day of the agitation. The police were carrying out attacks on them though they

were staging protests peacefully, they said.

They contended that there was no way they could register their protests due to Section 144 and Section 30 being in force in the region. They prayed for lifting of ban orders in the region.

When the court asked Advocate General why Section 144 was imposed, the latter replied that it was already in force since 2014. The present government had only extended their period, he added. Asked to explain why 619 cases were registered against the protesters, the AG said that they were taken into custody as they were going to participate in a rally at Benz Circle in Vijayawada.

The High Court pulled up the police officials for getting the women arrested by male officials.

The High court took serious objection to Tulluru DSP's comments on imposition of Section 144. The DSP's comments on Supreme Court's judgment that the citizens should not be denied their constitutionally-guaranteed rights in the name of Section 144 turned controversial.

He had told mediapersons that the apex court order was delivered keeping the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The High Court found fault with the DSP's comments on the apex court's order. The next hearing was adjourned to January 20.

JAC leaders meet Governor explain situation in Amaravati

Continued from Page 1

The problems being faced by the farmers, general public and women on account of heightened security in the Amaravati Capital region and the imposition of Section 144 and Section 30 in the region were explained to the Governor, the JAC leader said. Woman leader Yalmanchali Anjali said the common people had lost the right to speak in the State.

Co-convenor of State JAC Gadde Tirupati Rao, JAC Krishna district convenor RV Swamy, Y Ramana Rao, Gadde Rajaling, Venkateswara Rao and others were present.

CBI court refuses relief for Jagan

Continued from Page 1

The ED cases hearings will begin on January 24 itself.

Jagan was not been given exemption from personal appearance before the court in ED cases also. The 11 CBI cases will be taken up for hearings separately.

The CBI has filed 11

charge sheets, besides supplementary charge sheet against Jagan in alleged cases of disproportionate assets and quid pro quo investments into his firms.

The court heard two petitions filed by Jaganmohan Reddy. One is for clubbing of all the 11 charge sheets filed by the CBI.

Gujarat IPS to be new JD of CBI

Continued from Page 1

The Union Home Ministry issued orders confirming the appointment of Shashidhar, a 1994-batch IPS officer of Gujarat cadre.

The news came after YSRC MP Vijaya Sai Reddy last week wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah to appoint someone from a non-Telugu State as the CBI JD. He said that earlier, VV Laxminarayana and other JDs had 'secret friendship' with TDP and they tried to fix Jagan in CBI cases on

'political grounds'. Amit Shah, responding positively to Vijaya Sai's request, directed officials to identify a new JD from non-Telugu states cadre.

At a time when the CBI is seen to have adopted a tough stance against Jagan, the appointment of Shashidhar has raised eyebrows. Shashidhar is said to have close links with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah and has also worked under them when they were ruling Gujarat.

CAT sets aside appointment of Punjab DGP

Continued from Page 1

The CAT bench, in its 54-page order, directed the Union Public Service Commission and the empanelment committee to form a new panel of three senior-most officers for appointment to the post of DGP and complete the exercise within four weeks.

In the plea filed last year, the two police officers said they were senior to Gupta and had outstanding service records. "The empanelment was done by a committee headed by then DGP Suresh Arora who was biased against Chattopadhyaya," their counsel Atma Ram said in the plea.

The police officers also opposed the contention of the empanelment committee, which sent a report to the UPSC saying the officers lacked experience in core policing areas, Ram said.

While Mustafa is a 1985-batch officer and Chattopadhyaya a 1986-batch officer, Gupta is a 1987-batch officer.

The counsel said his clients were ignored by UPSC for appointment as the state's DGP.

Relocation again upset Secretariat staff

Continued from Page 1

Jaganmohan Reddy is under attack from the entire opposition over the proposal as they believe he is dumping Amaravati just because it is the brainchild of his predecessor Chandrababu Naidu.

The ministers and ruling party leaders are also defending the proposal on the ground that the previous Naidu government was involved in insider trading, a term being used to refer to the allegations that the leaders of the then ruling TDP purchased land in and around Amaravati at throw-away prices before announcing the state capital.

Another argument is that the government has no financial resources to build a Greenfield capital city, which requires more than Rs 1 lakh crore.

When the AP capital moved to Amaravati in 2016, the government employees including IAS and IPS officials were in a dilemma about moving their families from Hyderabad as Amaravati and even nearby Vijayawada had no infrastructure including schools for

their children. Some of them, who could not afford to maintain a house in Hyderabad, relocated to Vijayawada with their families, but many families are still in Hyderabad while they continue to shuffle between the two cities.

They usually visit their children in Hyderabad on weekends as the distance between Hyderabad and Vijayawada (where the employees currently live) is about 300 km and the two cities are well-connected by road, rail and air.

If the Secretariat is shifted to Visakhapatnam, the employees will not be able to visit their families on weekends as the distance and travel time will be more than doubled.

The employees feel that the latest proposal came as a bolt from the blue even before they could overcome the shock of shifting from Hyderabad and settle down in Amaravati-Vijayawada.

Collectors' detention powers extended

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The State government has extended the period for empowering Collectors and Commissioners of Police to exercise powers of detention for three more months from January 16 to April 15. According to an order issued by Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney on Friday, the government had delegated the powers to all Collectors and Commissioners of Police, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, to exercise the powers with a view to preventing anyone from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community.

KTR: We split dists without any protests

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao responding to the decentralisation of Capitals in Andhra Pradesh said that Telangana under the aegis of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao could create 33 districts from 10 without any protests. In a chat with the media, he said that there is a need to think about why there are protests and agitation in Andhra Pradesh when it comes to Capital.

KTR took a dig about Jana Sena's alliance with BJP. Responding to a question on Jana Sena expanding to other locations, he said, "International level also he can align with BJP at international level. Pawan kalyan can expand presence anywhere and we are not concerned about it".

Furious over the chargesheet released by BJP, KTR said, "Congress and BJP have been in power for decades but could not be developed any of the cities, so People would file chargesheet



against them. Chargesheet should be filed against BJP, which done nothing for the state since 2014". He took a dig at BJP's Smart cities and Amrut programs. He asked BJP President Laxman to show in which Amrut town is 'Amrutham' (elixir) is flowing. He said that BJP is spreading lies about releasing fund to cities. He said that the details of the special funds brought from the Center to the towns of Telangana during the last five and a half years are to be put before the public. He challenged Union Minister Kishan Reddy to show 2BHK houses built anywhere in any BJP-ruled state, similar to double bedroom houses built in Telangana state.

Trade unions oppose Modi's move to rename Kolkata port

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Trade unions at Kolkata Port Trust (KoPT) have started protesting against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to change the name of the port after Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, saying the move will hurt the history of the organisation. A mass signature campaign from the employees of the riverine port against the Centre's decision has been launched by the National Union of Waterfront Workmen (N), backed by the West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress. Modi, while speaking at the 150th anniversary programme of KoPT on January 12, had announced that it will be renamed after the Bharatiya Jan Sangh founder.

"It is not acceptable. We commenced our protests and have been holding meetings and rallies in offices and docks.



We plan to continue such programmes at every corner of the port area mobilising support from employees, until the decision is revoked," National Union of Waterfront Workmen (N) general secretary Asim Sutradhar told PTI.

He said the union has collected 1,000 signatures and hopes to garner 1,500 more in few days, following which a memorandum will be sent to

the shipping ministry to reconsider the name-change decision.

CITU-backed Calcutta Port and Shore Mazdoor Union general secretary Prabir Sarkar said they are supporting the campaign as they oppose the Modi's announcement. The name-change will hurt "the history of the organisation", he said.

"In Kolkata, we have Netaji

"In Kolkata, we have Netaji Subhas Dock and Satish Samanta berth at Haldia, both named after freedom fighters. We had also sent a letter to the port chairman, urging him to celebrate Netaji's birthday on January 23," Sarkar said

Subhas Dock and Satish Samanta berth at Haldia, both named after freedom fighters. We had also sent a letter to the port chairman, urging him to celebrate Netaji's birthday on January 23," Sarkar said.

Hind Mazdoor Sangh-backed trade union leader Chinmoy Roy said the Centre's announcement was "unexpected" as there was no demand for it.

Govt set to issue EoI, share purchase agreement for AI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is likely to issue the expression of interest (EoI) and the share purchase agreement (SPA) for debt-ridden Air India's privatisation within the next three to four days, a senior government official said on Friday.

The official said that "a group of ministers (GoM), headed by Union home minister (Amit Shah), had on January 7 approved the EoI and the SPA for the airline."

"We will issue these within three to four days," the government official said.

While Air India's net loss in 2018-19 was around Rs 8,556 crore, its current total debt is around Rs 80,000 crore.

Dismissing rumours that the national carrier will shut down operations, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said on December 31 that the national carrier, which is incurring a loss of Rs 20 crore to Rs 26 crore daily, will keep on operating till it is privatised.



Air India chief Ashwani Lohani on January 4 had said that "rumours" of the disinvestment-bound airline's shut-down are "all baseless", weeks after he told the civil aviation ministry that the carrier's financial situation was "grossly untenable" for sustaining operations.

In 2018, the government had proposed to offload 76 per cent equity share capital of the

national carrier as well as transfer the management control to private players.

However, the offer failed to attract any bidder when the deadline for initial bids closed on May 31, 2018. Therefore, the Centre re-started the disinvestment process in 2019.

The Centre plans to divest its entire stake in Air India this time so as to make it attractive for private entities.

SHORT READS



Illegal 4-storey building reduced to rubble in few seconds

INDORE: Under its ongoing drive against illegal structures, the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) on Friday razed a four-storey building through controlled implosion method, turning it into rubble in less than 60 seconds. An IMC official said the owner of the building, located in Nyaya Nagar Extension, was issued a notice on January 15, asking him to demolish the illegal structure, built on government land, within two days. After the deadline ended without demolition of the building, civic officials used explosives to bring it down through controlled implosion method, he said. The explosives were so powerful that the four-storey building turned into a pile of rubble in less than a minute, the official said. Building implosion method involves strategic placing of explosive material and timing of its detonation so that a structure collapses on itself in a matter of seconds.



3-man panel to probe locking up of MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Visva Bharati University on Friday set up a three-member committee to look into the incident of BJP MP Swapna Dasgupta confined in a room for several hours when he visited the campus on January 8 to deliver a lecture on the new citizenship law.

Dasgupta, Vice Chancellor Bidyut Chakraborty and others were confined for six hours in a university building as hundreds of Left-leaning students staged a sit-in outside accusing the politician of promoting hatred among communities.

"We have formed a three-member committee to look into the matter where BJP

leader Swapna Dasgupta had said that he was locked in a room with a mob outside, at the university, where he was addressing a meeting on Citizenship Amendment Act on January 8," a senior official said. Dasgupta had taken to Twitter to inform about the incident.

"How does it feel to have a mob attack a peaceful meeting on CAA and intimidation students? This is what is happening to a meeting I am addressing at Vishwa Bharati now. Locked into the room now with mob outside," he had tweeted. The panel will also look into alleged clash between two groups of students of the university on January 15.

India top-most country for presence of social entrepreneurs, says Schwab

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/GENEVA

Social entrepreneurs working with the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship have distributed USD 6.7 billion in loans or value of products and services, improving lives of more than 62 million people in 190 countries, and India is the top-most country in terms of their presence, a new study showed on Friday.

These social entrepreneurs have also helped mitigate more than 192 million tonnes of CO2 and improve education for more than 226 million children and youth.

Besides, they have helped provide energy access for more than 100 million people, and have driven social inclusion for over 25 million people.

The report, titled Two Decades of Impact: Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, has been released ahead of the 50th World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos and focusses on how social entrepreneurs can achieve impact at scale, change the systems in which they operate and contribute to the



These social entrepreneurs have also helped mitigate more than 192 million tonnes of CO2 and improve education for more than 226 million children and youth

Sustainable Development Goals.

"The community has distributed more than USD 6.7 billion to projects and products that have enhanced livelihoods, including increasing healthcare access, providing clean energy solutions, and improving education outcomes," the report said.

"This report challenges the notion that models of social innovation can be dismissed as small, isolated islands of success amidst our overwhelming global challenges," said Hilde Schwab, Co-founder and Chairperson of the Foundation. "Consider the combined capability of all social innovators in the world, those recognised in networks

like the Schwab Foundation, and the hundreds of thousands that exist in local communities around the world," she said.

This community of social enterprises operate in more than 190 countries, with 25 per cent of them reaching at least 90 countries each.

All 10 countries in which social entrepreneurs are most active are low to middle income markets (with the exception of the US), and six of those are in Africa. They include Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and the US.

President junks plea to disqualify AAP MLA for being member of NDMC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind has rejected a plea seeking disqualification of Aam Aadmi Party MLA Suresh Singh for allegedly holding an office of profit by being a member of the New Delhi Municipal Council.

The President signed the order rejecting the petition on December 31, 2019 based on an opinion given by the Election Commission on September 16 last year. The February 8 polls to the Delhi assembly were announced on January 6. Singh, MLA from Cantonment in the outgoing assembly, was denied a ticket by the AAP. One Sanjeev

Kumar Rajput had moved a petition in August last year seeking disqualification of Singh as MLA, alleging that by being a member of the NDMC he was holding an office of profit.

The EC opined that "as per Section 4 of the NDMC Act, 1994, there is a statutory mandate to appoint two such MLAs to NDMC who have been elected to the Delhi Legislative Assembly from an assembly constituency which falls wholly or partly in the NDMC area. Hence, Suresh Singh, MLA did not incur disqualification." Based on the Commission's opinion, the President rejected the petition.

MP: 7 land owners in Panna fined Rs 27 cr for 'illegal mining'

PANNA (MP): The district administration of Panna in Madhya Pradesh has imposed a fine of total Rs 27 crore on seven private land owners for allegedly indulging in illegal mining, an official said on Friday. These illegal mining cases came to light recently during the district administration's drive, the official said. Ajaygarh's sub divisional magistrate (SDM) S K Gupta said that during the drive, cases were registered against the seven persons for illegally carrying out mining activities on their private lands. "On the basis of reports and estimation submitted by the mining inspector, notices were served to these land owners," Gupta said. As they failed to submit any proof to support their case, a fine of around Rs 27 crore was imposed on them, he added.

Man strangles wife, three daughters and mother in Bihar town

MUNGER (BIHAR): A middle-aged man, said to be suffering from acute depression, allegedly throttled to death his mother, wife and three daughters, before making a failed suicide bid here on Friday, police said. Fifty-year-old Bharat Kesri - a watchmaker by profession - strangled his 80-year-old mother, wife Asha Devi (45) and daughters Shivani Kumari (16), Simran Kumari (14) and Sonam Kumari (10), in a fit of temper early in the morning in Kharagpur police station area of the district. Kesri thereafter climbed atop the roof of his house and jumped off the building but fell on a neighbour who was passing by, Kharagpur SHO Mintu Babu said. The neighbour has been admitted to a hospital with injuries, while Kesri, who was unscathed, has been arrested. Preliminary investigations have revealed that he had been suffering from depression for some time, the SHO said. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post mortem, he added.

Enough proof to show Pathri is Saibaba birthplace: NCP leader

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

NCP legislator Durrani Abdullah Khan has said there is enough evidence to prove that Saibaba was born at Pathri and there is a fear if the town in Parbhani district of Maharashtra is developed, the importance of Shirdi, which has a grand temple of the saint, will fade.

Devotees in large numbers through the Shri Sai Janmasthan Temple at Pathri and during a recent visit there, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had announced a grant of Rs 100 crore for development of the town.

People of Shirdi, in Ahmednagar district, are afraid that if Pathri is devel-



oped, the importance of Shirdi will decline, Khan said.

There is enough evidence to prove that Pathri is the birthplace of Saibaba and President Ramnath Kovind has also endorsed the fact earlier, the NCP leader added.

"While Shirdi is Saibaba's 'karmabhoomi' (work place) and Pathri is 'janmabhoomi'

(birthplace) and both these places have their own importance," he said. Tourists from across the country and world visit Pathri in large numbers, he said, adding that the town lacks good infrastructure.

"The Chief Minister has agreed to grant Rs 100 crore to Pathri. People of Shirdi don't have an issue with the funds, they just don't want Pathri to be called Saibaba's birthplace," he said.

Shirdi residents fear that if Pathri comes under the lime-light, the flow of devotees to their town will come down, he said. The Saibaba Temple at Shirdi draws lakhs of devotees and is one of the most popular pilgrim destinations in the country.

KALBURGI MURDER CASE

Prime accused have fled, untraceable: SIT

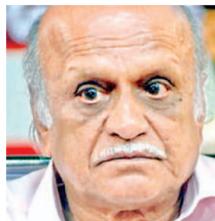
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two of the main accused in the murder of rationalist M M Kalburgi have absconded and cannot be traced, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has told the Supreme Court on Friday in its status report.

Kalburgi, a former vice-chancellor of Hampi University and well-known epigraphist, was shot dead at his residence in Kalyan Nagar in Dharwad, Karnataka, on August 30, 2015.

Born in 1938, he was a Sahitya Akademi award-winning writer of old Kannada literature.

The SIT, in its status report filed before a bench of Justices R F Nariman and S Ravindra Bhat, said that investigation has been completed and charge



sheet filed in the murder case.

"We have gone through the status report filed by the SIT. It says that two of the main accused have been absconding and cannot be traced. They also said that a charge sheet has been filed in the case and matter has been remitted to a Sessions Court for trial," the bench said.

As the Karnataka High Court is monitoring the case, nothing survives in the petition filed by Kalburgi's wife Umadevi and disposed of her plea, it said.

Umadevi moved the apex court in 2017 for a probe by a National Investigation Agency (NIA) or Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) claiming that no substantial probe has been carried out so far in the murder case by the state police.

She alleged that there was a common link between the murder of her husband and that of rationalist Narendra Dabholkar and social activist Govind Pansare, and hence the probe should be done by a Central agency.

On February 26 last year, the top court had transferred the

probe into the killing of Kalburgi to the SIT, already investigating the murder case of journalist-activist Gauri Lankesh after Karnataka government said there were common links in the two cases.

The state's Crime Investigation Department was earlier probing Kalburgi's killing and a SIT was investigating the murder of Lankesh in September 2017, in Bengaluru.

The apex court had asked the Dharwad bench of the Karnataka High Court to monitor the SIT investigation into Kalburgi's killing. It had said that if killings of Kalburgi, Lankesh, Pansare and rationalist Dabholkar are linked, it should be probed by one agency and monitored by one high court.

150 girls to perform Garba at R-Day fete

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A group of 150 girls from different schools of Gujarat are set to delight the crowd with a colourful 'Garba' performance at the Republic Day parade here on Rajpath, an achievement that has left the students ecstatic.

Besides, students from three different schools in Delhi, which have been selected for the first time to take part in the ceremonial parade, would also regale the crowd with Rajasthani folk dance, Bengali Baul-themed rendition and Yoga routines, officials said on Friday.

The students who will perform 'Garba' have been drawn from two schools in Gandhinagar — J M Chaudhari Sarvajanic Kanya Vidyalaya and



Sarkari Prathamik Shala, and another from Gondal in Rajkot district -- Kantaben Babubhai Bera Kanya Vidyalaya.

"For the 71st Republic Day, the Directorate of Education and Ministry of Defence have selected three Delhi schools and the West Zone Cultural Centre of Udaipur wherein a total of 474 girls and 162 boys will present colourful cultural programmes," a senior official said.

ANTI-CAA PROTESTS

Delhi court grants bail to accused in Seemapuri violence case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A court Friday granted bail to one of the accused arrested in connection with the violence in Seemapuri area in northeast Delhi during anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests.

Additional Sessions Judge Sanjeev Kumar Malhotra granted relief to Rais Ahmed on a personal bond of Rs 20,000 and one surety of like amount.

The police had earlier told the court that Ahmed had allegedly hurled petrol bombs at them and he himself had received a blast injury.

Ahmed's counsel advocate



Zakir Raza had said that he was falsely implicated.

The court earlier granted bail to 13 persons and direct-

ed them to get their doubts regarding the amended law cleared by the police.

On December 20, stone-

pelting and incidents of violence were reported from Daryaganj in Old Delhi and Seemapuri during protests against the CAA. Fourteen people were arrested in connection with the case.

Claiming that some of their personnel were seriously injured in the Seemapuri protest, the police had slapped section 307 (attempt to murder) of the IPC against all the accused.

The advocates, however, said told the court that section 307 was wrongly invoked since "admittedly the nature of injuries sustained by police officials is simple in nature".

Punjab Assembly passes resolution against CAA by voice vote

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Assembly on Friday passed a resolution by voice vote against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, the second state in the country to do so.

The resolution moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Brahm Mohindra was passed after over three hours of discussion. While the ruling Congress and main opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supported the resolution, the BJP opposed it. The SAD sought inclusion of Muslims in the list of communities that could be granted citizenship under the amended



law. CAA provides for granting citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, who had migrated to India before December 31, 2014 but not to members of the Muslim community. The Kerala Assembly was the first to pass the resolution against the amended Citizenship Act.

SHORT READS



Dravidian outfit accuses Rajinikanth of lying on Periyar

CHENNAI: Dravidar Viduthala Kazhagam on Friday accused superstar Rajinikanth of "uttering a blatant lie" in connection with a 1971 rally held by social reformer Periyar, demanded his apology and also filed a police complaint, seeking action against him. DVK president Kolathur Mani, in a statement, alleged that the actor uttered a "blatant lie that the images of Lord Ram and Sita were taken nude in a rally, held as part of superstition eradication conference held in 1971 at Salem." The actor made the remarks at an event held by a magazine on January 14, the outfit said.

Junior engineer shot dead by unidentified assailants in Mathura

MATHURA (UP): A 35-year-old junior engineer of state power department was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura district, an official said on Friday. Pradeep Kumar was shot at in the stomach around 9.30 pm on Thursday in Jamuna Paar area when he was returning from Panigaon power sub station, said Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar Meena. He said it is unlikely to be a case of loot as Pradeep's belongings, including his motorcycle, laptop and purse, were found at the crime scene. The junior engineer was transferred from his home town Agra to Mathura around five months ago, a power department official said. Pradeep is survived by his wife and two children.

ED files charge sheet before Delhi court against ex BPSL CMD

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate on Friday filed a charge sheet against former Bhusan Power and Steel Ltd CMD Sanjay Singal and others in a multi-crore money laundering case linked to an alleged bank loan fraud. The charge sheet was filed before Special Judge Arun Bhargava. Singal was placed under arrest on November 22 last year under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after he was questioned in connection with the case.

Rahul has no knowledge about amended citizenship

NEW DELHI: BJP working president J P Nadda on Friday took a dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying he has no knowledge and understanding of the amended Citizenship Act and dared him to speak 10 sentences on the law. Accusing Gandhi of misleading the country, Nadda said at an event here that the amended law is for minorities who faced religious persecution in neighbouring countries for years and had taken shelter in India. He said that those opposing the amended citizenship law were essentially "weakening" the country.

CORONAVIRUS SPREAD IN CHINA

India issues travel advisory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has issued a travel advisory asking citizens to follow certain precautionary measures while visiting China in the wake of the outbreak of an infection there because of a new strain of virus which is causing respiratory problems.

The advisory issued by the Union health ministry stated that even though the mode of transmission of the novel coronavirus is unclear as of now, those visiting China are advised to avoid travel to farms, live animal markets or where animals are slaughtered, and refrain consuming "raw or undercooked meat".

It suggested avoiding close contact with people who are unwell or showing symptoms of illness, such as cough, runny nose among others. The travellers are advised to wear a mask if they have symptoms of respiratory problem.

The advisory asks travellers to China to follow some "public health measures at all times" like observing good personal hygiene, practice frequent



hand-washing with soap and follow etiquettes like covering mouth when coughing or sneezing. It also stated that as on January 11, as many as 41 confirmed cases of infection with the novel coronavirus have been reported so far, of which one person has died.

"Only travel-related cases have been reported (one each) in Thailand and Japan. The clinical signs and symptoms are mainly fever with a few patients having difficulty in breathing. The mode of transmission

is unclear as of now. However, so far there is little evidence of significant human-to-human transmission. Although as per the World Health Organisation's risk assessment, the risk for global spread has been stated as low," the advisory read.

All travellers to China, in particular to Wuhan city, have been advised to monitor their health closely.

"If you feel sick on flight, while travelling back to India: Inform the airlines crew about illness, seek mask from the air-

It also stated that as on January 11, as many as 41 confirmed cases of infection with the novel coronavirus have been reported so far, of which one person has died

lines crew, avoid close contact with family members or fellow travellers and follow the directions of airline crew while disembarking," the advisory read.

It asked travellers who feel sick on flight or at the time of disembarkation to report to airport health authorities or immigration and follow the directions of the airport health officer.

"If you feel sick with in a span of one month after return from China: Report the illness to the nearest health facility and also inform the treating doctor regarding your travel history," the advisory states.

Chennithala justifies approaching Governor against ward recast

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala on Friday justified his party's decision to approach Governor Arif Mohammed Khan against the Left government's ordinance on the civic body ward-reorganisation. The ward-reorganisation, envisaged through the ordinance, was solely to protect the "political interest" of the Marxist party, he told reporters here.

"We had approached the Governor against the ordinance as he has to give his assent. The LDF government's inefficiency and lapses had made complex, matters related to the ward-reorganisation and voters' list of Local self-governments in the state," Chennithala said.

Asked about the Governor's criticism against the LDF government for not informing him in advance about moving the Supreme Court against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the senior



Ramesh Chennithala

Arif Mohammed Khan

The LDF government's inefficiency and lapses had made complex, matters related to the ward-reorganisation and voters' list of Local self-governments in the state," Chennithala said

Congress leader said he does not know the legal procedures in this regard.

"The Constitution demands that state governments consult the Governor on certain subjects...while it is not mandatory in the case of some other matters. Here, I had suggested that the government move the apex court against the CAA. They have the right for the

same. But I do not know if the Governor has to be consulted before moving the court. It is up to the government to examine it," he said. Chennithala also said it was not appropriate for the Governor to hold press meets. The Congress had always expressed its sharp criticism and opposition against the stand taken by Khan on CAA, he added.

HC sets aside ex-Delhi law minister's election

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Friday set aside the election of former law minister Jitender Singh Tomar for giving false declaration regarding his educational qualification in his nomination papers for the 2015 Assembly polls. The court passed the order on a plea by a BJP leader seeking to set aside Tomar's election. "The petition is allowed," Justice Rajeev Sahai Endlaw said. It is pertinent to mention that Tomar is also contesting the upcoming Delhi Assembly election and is likely to file his nomination from Tri Nagar constituency on Saturday. Tomar had contested on an Aam Aadmi Party ticket. BJP leader Nand Kishore Garg had alleged in his plea that Tomar's election had been "materially affected by deliberate concealment, misrepresentation, wrong declaration and wilful suppression of the educational qualification in the affidavit filed along with the nomination form".

DELAY IN HANGING CONVICTS

'Nirbhaya's mother 'misguided', Delhi govt had no role'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Denying the Delhi government's role in delaying the hanging of the Nirbhaya case convicts, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the victim's mother is being "misguided" and accused BJP leader Prakash Javadekar of politicising the matter.

Kejriwal, who is the AAP's national convener, told reporters that whatever responsibilities the Delhi government had, it had finished them within a few hours.

"We sent the mercy petition within hours, so the Delhi government has no role in delaying the hanging of the convicts," he said.

On Javadekar's allegations that the Delhi government is delaying the convicts' hanging,



Arvind Kejriwal

Kejriwal said the BJP leader is doing politics over the matter and this is not good.

Union minister Javadekar had also said that all the four convicts would have been hanged by now, had the AAP government acted quickly and served notices to them immediately after the Supreme Court rejected their appeal against death sentence in 2017.

Reacting to reports that

"We sent the mercy petition within hours, so the Delhi government has no role in delaying the hanging of the convicts," he said.

Nirbhaya's mother said those people who held protests on streets in 2012, today they are only playing with her daughter's death for political gains, Kejriwal said she is being 'misguided'.

"Why would our government try to delay, we want them hanged at the earliest. I think she is being misguided. The Delhi government barely has any role in the whole process," he said.



Russian army delegation visits key military sites

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An army delegation from Russia visited the key military logistics' installations and the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra as it wrapped up its two-day tour to the Uttar Pradesh city on Friday. The five-member delegation, led by Major General Andrei Kozlov, Chief of the

Directorate of the Military Railway Service of the Eastern Military District, visited the Army Base Workshop and the Central Ordnance Depot in Agra, an official release issued here said.

The delegation was briefed about the modernised logistics installation, which provides important electrical and technical equipment to the Indian Army, it said.

The visit of the Russian delegation to various Indian Army logistics establishment further strengthens the cooperation and military ties between the two nations, the release said. India and Russia have a history of strong strategic, military, economic and diplomatic relations, which has witnessed further growth and development in the recent times, it said.

NIRBHAYA CASE

Tihar jail seeks from court fresh death warrants against 4 convicts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tihar jail authorities Friday sought from a Delhi court issuance of fresh death warrants against the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case.

Additional Sessions Judge Satish Kumar Arora directed the jail authorities to inform the court by 4:30 pm on whether Mukesh, one of the four convicts, has been informed that his mercy petition was dismissed by the President.

Public Prosecutor Irfan Ahmed told the court that Mukesh's mercy plea was

rejected by President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday.

The court was hearing a plea by one of the four death row convicts in the case, Mukesh Kumar Singh, seeking postponement of the date of his execution on January 22.

The 23-year-old paramedic student, referred to as Nirbhaya, was gang raped and brutally assaulted on the intervening night of December 16-17, 2012 inside a moving bus in south Delhi by six persons before being thrown out on the road.

She died on December 29, 2012 at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

WATER CRISIS

Punjab CM convenes all-party meet

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has convened an all-party meeting on January 23 to evolve a comprehensive strategy to tackle the critical water situation in the state.

Intervening in a discussion on 'The Punjab Water Resources (Management and Regulation) Bill 2020', introduced by his government, Singh said invitations for the meeting have already been sent out.

All matters related to water issues, including the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) issue, poor quality of ground water and pollution caused by industrial and domestic waste, would be discussed during the meeting in a

Both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) supported the Bill while expressing concern over scarce water resources and depleting ground water table in the state

bid to evolve consensus and chalk out a detailed strategy to address these problems.

The Bill introduced by Irrigation Minister Sukhbinder Singh Sarkaria was later passed



Amarinder Singh

by the House unanimously, paving the way for creation of Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority to manage critical water resources in the state.

Both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) supported the

Bill while expressing concern over scarce water resources and depleting ground water table in the state.

In response to issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition Harpal Singh Cheema, the chief minister flayed the Opposition for criticising his government on the issue, while themselves failing to help tackle the problem.

Pointing out that he and his colleagues have already given up power subsidy for tubewells, Singh challenged Opposition leaders to show if any of them had headed to his appeal and done the same.

The appeal, he said, was aimed at ensuring judicious use of groundwater and inculcating the habit of water saving.

J-K LG reviews Jammu lake project to expedite works

PNS ■ JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu reviewed the progress of a number of projects in the winter capital of the Union territory on Friday and said the administration will expedite the works.

He visited the market place and tourism reception centre to assess the facilities there. During a visit to the Tawi river bank the L-G was briefed by Ajeet Sahu, the principal secretary of the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, about the progress of its beautification project and the Jammu lake project.

During his visits, Murmu was accompanied by top divisional-level officials and heads of departments. Asserting that the adminis-



tration was trying to expedite the projects, the L-G said, "We don't know what had happened in the past, but we will carry it from here and see to it that these are completed."

In June last year, the Jammu and Kashmir government had cancelled GR Infra Projects Limited's contract for developing the artificial Tawi lake.

The administration is set to release fresh tenders to resume work.

A revised detailed project report was framed, according to which Rs 51.57 crore shall be required to complete the project and Rs 4.97 crore to undo the damage caused due to floods till date, officials said.

Aadhaar required to get benefits under scheme for civilian victims of terror, communal violence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aadhaar will be required for getting benefits under a central government scheme for providing financial assistance to family members of victims of violence perpetrated by terrorists or naxals, and communal riots.

In a notification, the Union Home Ministry said an eligible beneficiary desirous of receiving the benefit under the 'Central Scheme for Assistance to Civilian Victims/Family of Victims of Terrorist/Communal/LWE Violence and Cross Border Firing and Mine/IED Blasts on Indian Territory' is required to furnish proof of possession of Aadhaar number or undergo Aadhaar authentication.

Any eligible beneficiary desirous of receiving benefit under the scheme, who does



not possess the Aadhaar number or, has not yet enrolled for Aadhaar, shall have to apply for Aadhaar enrolment.

The home ministry said the notification comes into effect in all states and union territories except Assam and Meghalaya, where Aadhaar has not covered all residents.

"The assistance is given by the state governments and the home ministry reimburses the state governments when it gets their demand. The annual budget for the scheme is broadly in the range of Rs 6 to 7 crore," a senior home ministry official said.

ministry through the implementing agency is required to offer Aadhaar enrolment facilities for the eligible beneficiary, who is not yet enrolled for Aadhaar and in case there is no Aadhaar enrolment centre located in the respective Block or Taluka or Tehsil.

Till the time Aadhaar is assigned to the beneficiary, benefit under the scheme shall be given to such beneficiary subject to the production of the Aadhaar enrolment identification slip if he or she has

enrolled and any one of the following: bank or post office passbook with photo; or voter identification card; or PAN card; or ration card; or passport; or kisan photo passbook; or driving licence or certificate of identity having photo of such person issued by a gazetted officer or a tahsildar on an official letter head; or Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme Job Card; or any other document as specified by the ministry.

Talks with Pakistan?

While UNSC backs India on Kashmir and insists on it being discussed bilaterally, our SCO invite is a smart move



Pakistan may have nudged its all-weather friend China into raising the Kashmir dispute at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) yet again — perhaps going by Western concerns about the continued lockdowns in the erstwhile State that is now a Union Territory — but failed with a big thud. This is the second time that such an attempt, either in the nature of informal consultations or closed door meetings of the Council's permanent members, has been thwarted convincingly. The message is quite clear. The remaining Big Four

(US, Russia, France, UK) are still committed to their position that Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan to be settled within the paradigm of dialogue set by existing agreements among the neighbours. It also means that the UK and the US, while responding to criticism on shutdown in the Valley, have delinked it from the larger Kashmir question and would much rather address it one-to-one. At the same time, certain facts cannot be ignored like China being allowed to raise the issue despite no significant change in collective viewpoints. Or that Pakistan's lobbying is high-pitch, with its Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi believed to be in New York while China moved the motion. He even met the UN Secretary-General. Clearly, given the emphasis on bilaterals, at some point both India and Pakistan have to sit across the table and look to engage with each other. Perhaps, India's invitation to Pakistan for a meeting of the regional alliance called Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an opportunity to thaw relations and set up some sort of interaction on the sidelines. Besides, China is scheduled to take over the rotational presidency at UNSC in March and without some movement from India, it will have no point to neutralise Pakistan with, much as it would want to keep its working relationship with India going. Besides, it has to show something for giving assent to the declaration of Jaish chief Masood Azhar as a UN-designated global terrorist. China and Pakistan back each other up on the world stage, representing each other in official groups of nations where the other is not present. For instance, Pakistan stands up for China in the Non-Aligned Movement and in return, it gets China's veto power in the UNSC.

India's bigger challenge though is to manage the SCO, where both China and Pakistan are key members, for its strategic imperatives. Already, we have made noises about jointly strengthening the fight against terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and organised crime to corner Pakistan as a sponsor of terror. India has to also walk cautiously on economic cooperation with members and ensure that China does not surreptitiously ensure its overlordship as the latter has proposed a free trade area for all. Most members are yet to feel comfortable on multi-lateral trade and cooperation. Besides, all other SCO members have embraced the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which India is opposing. In fact, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan formed the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which has signed a non-preferential trade and economic cooperation agreement with China. For all of India's efforts to highlight its connectivity corridors, like the Chabahar port and India-Myanmar-Thailand highway, Pakistan will always counter their significance with that of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Negotiating terrain with both Pakistan and China, India must find its feet in the SCO if it wants to strengthen its footprint in Central Asia, a diplomatic initiative that the Modi Government is keen on. India's other counter-balancing act is between Russia and China, both of whom have come closer but are wary of eating into each other's sphere of influence. India can be the counterweight and use that status to extract its gains. Besides, India needs to work on its economic heft vis-a-vis the SCO majors. Our trade with Russia stands at about a little over \$10 billion and is projected to be \$30 billion by 2025. In contrast, China's trade with Russia has already crossed \$100 billion. A similar lopsided volume prevails with Central Asian republics. The lack of connectivity has stifled energy cooperation between the hydrocarbon-rich region and India. We cannot miss the bus as the SCO accounts for 20 per cent of the world's GDP and can guarantee its relevance in the region. But can its bilateral differences with Pakistan and China mean SCO members could set up their own mini-groupings of mutual benefit and derail its very purpose? That's for India to understand and move adroitly.

Bezos' bumper trip

From getting a Gandhi quote wrong to drawing the ire of the BJP, the Amazon CEO's latest trip didn't go that well



In terms of disastrous visits to India, Amazon's Chief Executive Jeffery Bezos's latest trip wasn't quite up there. No, it will take a lot more to top the stupendous failure of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's visit a few years ago. Despite misquoting Gandhi. Yet, Bezos' rap on the knuckles delivered by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, where he straight up accused Amazon of funding its losses in India with its latest investment, was harsh. Even though Goyal was forced to backtrack and claimed that his quote was taken "out of context," it was strange that a Minister, who speaks decent English, is taken out of context time and again. But the message was clear: Bezos' ownership of *The Washington Post* and articles published by it against Prime Minister Narendra Modi counted against him. Also the fact that the BJP still draws huge support from the trading community, which has deeply been affected by the advent of online retailing, has meant that Bezos has had a problematic visit to the country this time. He has even eschewed both the Government and media interactions. Indeed, Bezos' most high-profile interactions were in Mumbai where he celebrated the success of Amazon's video streaming service *Amazon Prime* with Bollywood's elite and the honchos of several Indian conglomerates.

While Goyal was surprised by the way some reacted to his comments, they did have an element of truth. Although reactions were delivered with the grace of a dancer wearing work boots and quickly retracted, there was no hiding from the fact that the Government wanted Bezos to know it is not very happy with Amazon and his ownership of *The Washington Post*. While Bezos is unlikely to interfere in the editorial process of his newspaper, it is also clear that he needs India as a market. Most American internet giants are locked out of China and India is the "it" market. This is the case not just for Amazon but also Google, Facebook and Uber. And as India becomes more aware of this, it will flex its muscles economically. Recent actions against Malaysia are a case in point and a decision is also likely to be taken against Turkey for its support to Pakistan-sponsored separatists. It is unlikely that India will act against Amazon in the immediate future but the firm does need to answer some questions as to how it is abusing (or not) its market position. The BJP, too, should understand that it cannot control the narrative in the foreign media. It needs to have better spokespersons who can defend the Government's position or change perceptions.

Need to objectify history

As India charts its course through the 21st century, the liberation we all need is not from the glories of the past but from its burdens — communal, economic and psychological



AVIK CHANDA

Why, when the nation should be focussing all its resources on remedying its economic slowdown in a fascinating but disruptive world driven by automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI), should we continue to be obsessed with the past? Well, because history is no longer the sole purview for reclusive academics tucked away amid lengths of dust-laden bookshelves. It's being revisited and morphed, banded about by politicians and re-branded in the media everyday. It's used as a veritable psychological battleground and there's a war, for our allegiance. It's a campaign characterised by selective erasure, of highlighting specific events, the systematic reduction of historical figures to mere unidimensional labels and retro-fitting them into contemporary political positions.

Take the case of Dara Shukoh, the would-be emperor of Hindustan, haloed in his timeless promise of ideal kingship. The traditional tack of pitting him against his nemesis, Aurangzeb, has imploded in recent times. So much so that even the debate of "good Muslim versus bad Muslim, good Mughal versus bad Mughal" has faded away. Dara Shukoh, rescued from centuries of indifference, has re-emerged in his new avatar as "the emblem of Indianness", confident and consummate. Dara the eternal victim is a notion of the past and we can all pretend that his belligerent brother never existed. Ample reasons are being furnished for this new, posthumous *khatab*. The Mughal prince was a deeply syncretic thinker, accomplished scholar, poet and a theologian of unusual merit; a calligraphist and connoisseur of the fine arts as well as a dutiful son and warm-hearted family man.

The first stumbling block comes in the nature of an anachronistic fallacy: The idea of retrospectively imposing the concept of "Indianness" — and by corollary, nationhood and nation-state and more specifically, the personification thereof in the form of a deified "Bharat Mata" — onto the Mughal empire of the 17th century. The fact is that in our land, the consciousness of nationhood has evolved as the end-result of a much later historical process: The idealistic, patriotic reaction to the brutal British colonial experience and rather more tenuous associations with 19th century European history such as the Germanic *Freiheitkampf* (freedom struggle) during the Napoleonic regime. This is brought out very clearly in Sugata Bose's book, *The Nation as Mother and Other Visions of Nationhood*.

There is, however, another challenge. The cherry-picking of only the syncretic attributes of Dara completely leaves out other aspects of his personality. He was habitually cold and arrogant towards the mass of courtiers and commanders, who he felt, were intellectually inferior to him. He was highly superstitious by nature, easily swayed by mystery, magic and all manner of self-styled god-men, a conspicuously uninspiring military

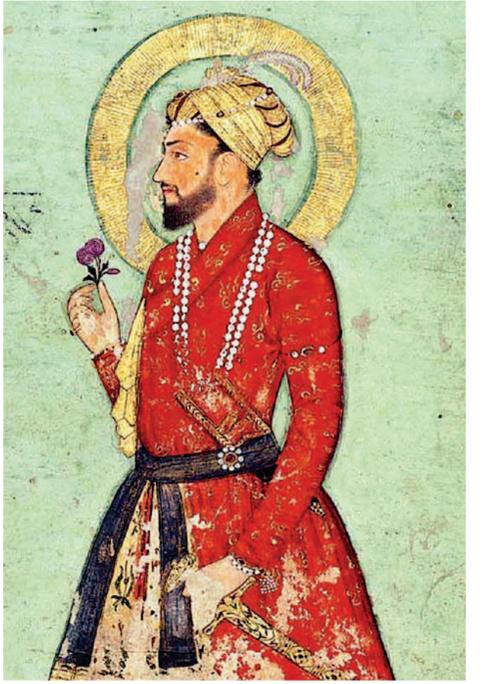


commander and an alarmingly poor judge of human character. One can well wonder whether, even assuming he had managed to ascend the throne, his eclectic nature but indifference towards administrative and military matters would have enabled him to hold the empire together. In the years between 1654 and September 1657, when Shah Jahan fell grievously ill — the War of Succession broke out soon thereafter — Dara was the *de facto* ruler of the empire. This period was characterised by moves to thwart campaigns of territorial expansion in the Deccan and Kashmir, coupled with a reclusive temperament and highly creative outpouring of a philosophical nature. In terms of court politics, Dara displayed a steady, cold hostility towards the senior imperial advisors and commanders and his mutually acrimonious exchanges with the seasoned *wazir*, Saadullah Khan, almost mirrors the rivalry between the crown prince Salim (later, the emperor Jahangir) and Abul Fazl. But the moot question is: Would the current unidimensional narrative about Dara have even brought up these other facets of his personality and objectively looked at the man in the context of his times? Separated from Dara Shukoh by almost two-and-a-half centuries but basking in this same Lazarus light is Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Stymied

through the prime of his life by the draconian prisons of the British Raj and then after Independence, even posthumously, by a succession of Congress-led Governments, only in recent years has his release from oblivion taken place. The image of the controversial political leader has been resurrected by the present administration to larger-than-life proportions and with it, his ethos of Hindutva.

This very term has come to denote a number of aspects in our common perception, the re-establishment of rituals and religious practices (including the cult of cow worship) in the heart of societal life, the retention — and at times, deepening — of the fault-lines of caste and a steadfast advocacy of vegetarianism, among other things. Consequently, the image of Savarkar looms before us as an austere, conservative traditionalist, steeped in the rituals of his faith, a sort of archetypal Hindu counterpoint to the ulama. And politically, a Hindu Jinnah.

But is that who he was, in reality? A recent biography, sourcing the treatises, letters and speeches of this polemic leader in the original Marathi, reveals a very different picture. Savarkar's conception of Hindutva, the book informs us, was essentially political, a move to galvanise the eternally splintered Hindu communities into a homogenous whole — and not an ultra-religious manifesto. In Savarkar's credo, the key to achieving this was the uniting and unionising of the Hindu polity, across caste lines. Far from being a traditionalist, this high-caste Chitpavan Brahmin established a Patit Pavan temple open to all castes, organised inter-caste dinners and marriages and did not personally care for rituals, including that of cow worship. In this more objective narrative, Savarkar emerges not as a fanatic but an astute rationalist, who rejected the Gandhian project, and wholeheartedly espoused industrialisation as the vehicle of progress in the future.



A significant aspect of Savarkar's life, unravelled in the biography, further belies the unidimensional label adduced to him. In *The Indian War of Independence*, his first major literary work that catapulted him to fame — and in the eyes of the colonial rulers, notoriety — he presented his narrative as a unified uprising against the British oppressors, stemming from a strong sense of nationhood. Savarkar's position in this book is unambiguously secular — Hindu satraps and commanders had rallied in union against the British under the flag of the Muslim Mughal titular monarch, Bahadur Shah Zafar. There's no hint of any deep-seated hatred of the Muslims, which henceforth became the quintessential trait associated with him. In fact, it was

only later, triggered by particular experiences and tribulations during his long incarceration in the Cellular Jail of the Andamans, that Savarkar developed his animosity towards the Muslims.

We're now faced with a lingering, larger question, which is central to this whole issue. Is there still a purpose to all this indulging in history in today's world? The Churchillian, though unoriginal, viewpoint purported to answer this question: "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." But such aphorisms have long since dissolved into clichés.

Contemporary thinkers such as Yuval Noah Harari are not only more ambitious, they're also more persistent when demanding our participation: "Though historians occasionally try their hand at prophecy (without notable success), the study of history aims above all to make us aware of possibilities we don't normally consider. Historians study the past not in order to avoid repeating it — or perpetuate it — but in order to be liberated from it."

As India charts its course through the 21st century, the liberation we all need is not from the glories of the past but from its burdens — communal, economic and psychological.

(The writer is a columnist, business advisor and entrepreneur. He is the author of *Dara Shukoh: The Man Who Would Be King*)

SOUNDBITE

The Congress is opposing the CAA. I dare Rahul Gandhi to speak 10 sentences on the law. He should tell us in two sentences what is his problem with the CAA.



BJP working president —JP Nadha

I was very naughty in class but I was a teacher's pet. When the teacher was out, I was making dirty jokes and I was grabbing boys and kissing them. I was terrible!



Actor —Kalki Koechlin

Our Government wants peace in the neighbourhood. But we are not prepared to pay any price, certainly not without resolving the Kashmir dispute in a just manner.



Pakistan's Foreign Minister —Shah M Qureshi

I want to inform the CDS, if you want to deradicalise, then you first read the Juvenile Act. IPC is not applicable to children. What de-radicalisation are you talking about?



AIMIM chief —Asaduddin Owaisi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Act responsibly

Sir — It is disappointing that educated politicians speak irresponsibly. Congress leader Shashi Tharoor criticised Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by comparing him to a "eunuch." Leaders must inspire the masses, otherwise their words can adversely impact the mindset of their supporters.

Ravi
Via email

Experiment first

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "SC to the rescue" (January 16). There have been several controversies about the educational qualifications of some of our Ministers. A complete mismatch between the claims made by them and their marks in their certificates has been found. How then do they expect the citizens to have all necessary documents? If there is merit in the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), it must be explained. Before it is applied throughout the country, our leaders must first pass the CAA test. Even then questions will

Government must rise above politics

Union Minister Piyush Goyal seems to have jumped the gun by saying that Amazon is not doing a favour to the country by investing \$1 billion and that this was probably on account of a need to fund losses. To recall, Amazon had promised to create more than 25,000 jobs on a new campus in Long Island City, New York, in return for nearly \$3 billion in Government incentives. It was a cocky and raw business approach in a nation that is a votary of pure capitalism. Yet, it failed in this venture mostly due to the growing influence of the progressive Left in New York.

In its current home in Seattle, Amazon is being criticised for impacting house prices and growing inequality that has damaged the city. Now, the Minister in our own Right of the Central Government has chosen to cast a barb on its predatory pricing policies. This might well be due to the party's concerns on saving its trader vote bank. But the remarks, though credible, could as well have come from a party func-



tionary than a Cabinet Minister. That, too, one who holds a crucial portfolio as that of Commerce and Trade. As is its wont, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is known to put its concerns over elections ahead of those that actually should. The state of the economy and growing unemployment should worry it more.

R Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

Space dreams

Sir — The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) must be complimented for successfully launching the GSAT-30 into the orbit. After last year's setback, where the Chandrayaan-2 mission failed to touch down on the lunar surface, this is its first launch this year. GSAT-30 is

aimed at eliminating the technical bottlenecks not only for the country's communication system but also of a large number of Asian countries. Given that ISRO has helped India earn several firsts through its space missions in the recent past, hopefully, it will continue pushing the boundaries of Indian space science.

Yugal Kishore Sharma
Faridabad

Healthy lifestyle

Sir — Kudos to the Ministry of AYUSH for coming out with an excellent initiative to make people at work de-stress and refresh themselves through Y-BREAK or Yoga break — a five-minute exercise designed to make professionals at workplaces get some physical activity. It will help keep the mind tension-free and also enhance lifestyle apart from increasing productivity. This project may soon become a part of the schedule at all Government institutions and corporate bodies. Around 15 institutions, including corporate houses like Tata Chemicals, Axis Bank and Ernst & Young Global Consulting Services, have volunteered to join the project.

Booklets and videos on how to practise yoga will be given to the staff at the work places. Besides, the Ministry would also provide all possible help and support to see that this programme is inculcated among all.

M Pradyu
Kannur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Tectonic shift in US' attitude

The US no longer views West Asia as critical to its economic well-being as it did in the past, when it depended on the oil from that region



DEEPAK SINHA

Karl Marx once wrote, "History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce." But often times events tend to combine both the tragic and the farcical in equal measure, just as we are seeing them play out between the Iranians and the Americans. US President Donald Trump's recent actions remind one of the Hollywood blockbuster, *Gunfight at the OK Corral*, except for the minor aberration that West Asia is no Wild West and Trump is certainly no Marshal Wyatt Earp.

Whatever reasons he may put forward for his actions, the targeted execution of a serving Iranian General and war hero, Qasem Soleimani, while on an official visit to Iraq raises serious questions of sovereignty, morality, ethical conduct and can never be justified in any civilized society. It was, in fact, a blatant act of aggression in clear violation of international law and a war crime, made even more heinous because neither America nor Iran is at war with each other. It shows up the true face of America for what it is and has been these past decades, a global bully.

More importantly, the rationale and timing of the attack raise grave suspicions as to Trump's motives. The late General Soleimani was by no means a tactical commander and his neutralisation would hardly stop operations in progress, in this case the launch of "imminent attacks" on American embassies, as has been alleged by the President. What is more likely is that Trump ordered this rash and utterly immoral attack in the vain hope that it would divert attention from his forthcoming impeachment trial, while at the same time make him appear to be a strong and decisive leader. However, make no mistake General Soleimani's killing was a grievous loss to the Iranian establishment, especially to its "Irregular Warfare" capabilities, something that will take time to rebuild.

While Trump's action was totally transactional and short-term in nature, it coincided with the American deep state's far more long-term strategy there, the necessity to squeeze China. Over the past two decades there has been a tectonic shift in the manner the United States (US) views West Asia, ever since it became one of the world's leading oil producers, exporting more oil than Saudi Arabia. In March last year, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported that the US exported more crude and petroleum products than it imported. As senior partner Per Magnus Nysveen of Rystad Energy, a global oil consulting and analysis firm, put it, "The oil market is overly preoccupied with short-term US crude stocks but the big picture tells a new story. Increasingly profitable shale production and a robust global appetite for light oil and gasoline is poised to bring the US to a position of oil dominance in the next few years."

This fact obviously suggests that the US no longer views West Asia as critically important to its economic well-being as it did in the past, when its economy depended on the oil from that region. For it, the geostrategic value of that region lies more in the adverse impact that any exacerbation of tensions there would have on the Chinese economy, as it is bound to, given Chinese dependence on oil from that region. It, therefore, stands to reason that it no longer finds it necessary to maintain a large troop presence in the region and can achieve its long-term aims through the use of proxies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel. In this context, much has been made of the Russian attempts to fill the vacuum that the US withdrawal has left. However, President Putin must be aware that he is punching well above his weight given the fact that the Russian economy is just around 1/20th that of the US.

Finally, with regard to the US-Iran imbroglio, while it is certainly extremely far-fetched to suggest that World War-III is just around the corner, one can also safely assume that the existing stalemate is not going to last forever and probably the situation is going to get far worse, before it gets better. This is more so if in the coming months the Iranians attempt to utilise their considerable irregular warfare assets to force the Americans out of Iraq, if not the Middle East. Escalation in tensions would then be unavoidable and that would have serious repercussions, with unintended and unpredictable consequences for the world at large.

In this context we would do well to recall the innocuous events that triggered one of the darkest chapters in world history, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife by a 19-year-old Serbian terrorist, Gavrilo Princip. While that event may have occurred in far-away Sarajevo, it did set the world aflame, bringing untold misery to tens of millions over the next four years. It would indeed be unfortunate if this tragedy were to be repeated.

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

I WANT TO TELL AAP THAT AFTER THE REJECTION OF THE REVIEW PETITION, BECAUSE OF YOU THE CONVICTS COULDN'T BE HANGED IN TIME.

—UNION MINISTER
SMRITI IRANI

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



PLEASE DON'T DO POLITICS ON THIS. I DON'T BLAME THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FOR THIS. BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE TRYING EVERYTHING THEY CAN.

—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
ARVIND KEJRIWAL

Change or perish

There is no alternative to sustainability and the present trajectory of economic growth divorced from environmental considerations is dragging us towards mass extinction



BKP SINHA

Despite the concerns of policymakers and planners regarding the efficient management of natural resources, the threat to them is growing exponentially by the day. This is because the country's efforts towards market-led development are eating up our social, natural and cultural capital faster than ever. Unfortunately today, the core issue of a preferred pattern of growth is hidden behind the innocuous facade of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth as the supreme objective. Decisions on all matters related to development require the adoption of a holistic approach because the need for environmental improvement is not able to attract appropriate investments. This is mostly owing to the fact that they are essentially long-term in nature and their support to sustained economic growth is seldom appreciated or quantified. In a world which refuses to adopt the concept of a steady state of long-term economic growth, sustainability is seen as absurdity.

Gradually, however, the world is coming to realise that there is no alternative to sustainability and the present trajectory of economic growth divorced from environmental considerations is dragging us towards the reckless path of mass extinction. The fact remains that there is no alternative to a concerted effort towards sustainable management of natural resources that demands collective action at the regional, national and global level.

The key areas in which action is required are big investments designed towards land, water, and biodiversity conservation, apart from simultaneous reduction in emissions on a mass scale. That includes Herculean efforts in jealously safeguarding forests; reduction and diversion in investment in new sources of energy away from dirty sources like coal, crude and nuclear power; improvement in availability and affordability of public transport systems with metro and light rail systems everywhere; switching to material and energy-efficient houses; smart electrical grids carrying renewable energy and all these supported by massive research efforts to improve efficiencies as we move on. Considering the increase in the pressure on forests, sincere efforts to mobilise agroforestry initiatives coupled with adequate scientific support, extension and education in resource literacy are a must. This great leap, however, will necessitate the shedding of our preoccupation with short-term gains that creates hurdles in integrating economic growth-related issues and sustainable management of natural resources. In short, the planners have to accept without any inhibitions the holistic approach which considers ecology, economics and ethics as a part of a whole interconnected circle — which at present appears to have been broken.

A careful consideration of the policy impact of different sectors, the essential trade-off between different sectors for restoration and development of natural resources, would have created huge economic demand and job opportunities for a wider base of poor like tribals and others residing in far-flung areas. One cannot overlook the fact that the economic health of any society or country in the ultimate analysis is supported by its basic ecological status.

Let us take forests as their management is important. However, effective linkage of forestry with other important sectors of the economy is not yet in place. Forest-based activities have largest forward and backward economic linkages. Just to elaborate: Along with the flexibility of capital, skill and energy requirement; it has a spectrum of activities, ranging from value-

“ A CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE POLICY IMPACT OF DIFFERENT SECTORS, THE ESSENTIAL TRADE-OFF BETWEEN DIFFERENT SECTORS FOR RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, WOULD HAVE CREATED HUGE ECONOMIC DEMAND AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR A WIDER BASE OF POOR LIKE TRIBALS AND OTHERS RESIDING IN FAR-FLUNG AREAS. ONE CANNOT OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF ANY SOCIETY OR COUNTRY IN THE ULTIMATE ANALYSIS IS SUPPORTED BY ITS BASIC ECOLOGICAL STATUS ”



addition activity at the household level to micro industries and small sawmills to forest-based industries and to a totally computerised ayurvedic drug as also the paper industry. Policy measures and activities in other sectors mar the ability of the forests to perform their economic, social and environmental roles, as much as the policies set in forestry do.

In fact, policy decisions taken outside the forestry sector may be detrimental or beneficial for effective functioning of services from forests on a long-term basis. Let us take, for example, the development of infrastructure. The policy instruments attempting modernisation of transport, telecommunication and highways do create both positive and negative impacts for forest conservation and development. They do improve forest firefighting and public awareness of environmental issues but also create backlash in the shape of forest degradation. Pucca roads through forest habitats serve as barrier for dissemination of pollen grains, mating of smaller animals and recharging of underground water reserves, loss of hybrid vigour due to inbreeding and related extinction, noise and other disturbances resulting in the decline of reproduction or mating of many wildlife species. Measures are needed to strengthen the positive impacts and reduce the negative fallout.

Careful planning and strict implementation could avoid many such backlashes. Provision of compensatory afforestation elsewhere can never be a substitute for loss of natural forest and its ecosystem services at the point of concern.

An overarching policy of creating a platform for dialogue can remove barriers between sectors and institutions currently working with different myopic mandates. Understanding of involved trade-offs in natural ecosystems and benefits of harmony among forestry and other land-based sectors are urgently needed. Canada

already has the provision for removing barriers between institutions and orienting them towards a philosophy of common goals. An outcome of this is a model forest programme in which forests are managed by a partnership of diverse interest groups of industry, conservationists, community, aboriginals and so on.

Professional forestry in a country like India needs a radical change. Our Government, committed to social justice, has so far failed to adequately recognise that the services needed by people cannot come from the Forest Department staffed by men trained as professional foresters in the core subject.

It is well understood by now that forest ecosystems have multifarious roles to play in helping the country in halting the downward spiral of land degradation; in restoring the vitality of the land; in protecting land from wind and water erosion; in job creation in far-flung areas; in carbon sequestration and of course in combatting climate change-related problems.

A location-specific proper model of agroforestry can promote and sustain an intrinsically-sustainable and resilient agriculture system especially under marginal conditions. There is a whole range of local problems of forestry that requires different solutions based on different strategies. Placements of Indian Forest Service Officers in different development Ministries are adequate proof of the fact that forestry professionals can handle various dimensions of administrative work. Their special inputs, in fact, through provision of new insights in relating conservation and sustainable management of natural resources to their respective sectors of economy will be their most worthwhile contribution to the country.

Gradually provisions are being made for placement of environmental personnel in industries and other Government departments too. Their roles, more often

than not, are generally confined towards pollution abatement measures. It will be better if they are designated as natural resource managers with additional mandate of looking at the use or abuse of natural resources for sustainable development. In addition, the time has come for university courses to be re-designed and made compulsory in all branches of education apart from promoting and subsidising the courses of management of natural resources on a sustainable base as the core subject.

The horizon of knowledge about natural resources is ever-expanding and accordingly conservation is reinventing itself. New models in forestry as well as agriculture incorporating the role of trees that are known to exert an influence far beyond their immediate environment, can go a long way to save the farmers from committing suicides and help them go ahead on the path of sustainable development.

Conservation of resources and sustainable development is the bedrock of survival of mankind but conservation today is much more than merely a choice in favour of one's long-term economic self-interest.

It entails moral choices and responsibilities, too, involving the community of all life forms in the company of which we have evolved and to which we essentially belong. Further, it has to be alive to the issues of inter-generational equity. Conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, within this perspective, is a radical endeavour to save Earth itself and that will essentially have to derive strength from knowledge, ethical value, wealth of our dreams and an understanding of nature as a sacred space.

(The writer is Advisor at Amity University and former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttar Pradesh)

States also responsible for economic growth

If we take stock of all the major areas which need improvement for attracting investment then, barring fiscal and monetary policies, almost all the key items are either in the State List or the Concurrent List of the Constitution



SHSHANK SAURAV

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present her first full Union Budget on February 1 and people are expecting some out of the box initiatives to stimulate the economic growth of the country. Some of the key macroeconomic indicators like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, tax collection, credit growth and so on, indicate that the economy is grappling with a slowdown which is largely due to a decline in demand.

Global trade protectionism, a looming oil crisis and a rise in retail inflation are further aggravating the situation. Given the current economic scenario, it would be too optimistic to believe that growth will jump and

the private sector will start investing all of a sudden in the coming fiscal. India has a federal structure where sufficient autonomy has been given to State Governments. This autonomy is not just for making legislations and administration over the territory but it extends to the fiscal arena also. The States are getting their fair share of revenue after the implementation of the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission.

Our constitutional mechanism empowers the State Governments to deal with the matters which come under the State List, as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, and they have joint control over the matters coming under the Concurrent List.

Despite the enormous powers given to States and the responsibility entrusted upon the State Legislature, it is a fact that whenever the question of economic growth arises, people always look to the Union Government. The fact that the union is nothing but a sum of all States should be appreciated and,

therefore, the journey towards economic prosperity is the equal responsibility of both the Centre and the States. A common man doesn't want to be entangled in a tug of war between warring politicians but unfortunately, gaining and retaining power is more important for people who are sitting at the helm of affairs than the welfare of the people who put them there.

There is a general perception that a State which is ruled by the same political faction for a relatively longer period offers far more policy certainty and enhances its ability to attract investors. It is also perceived that having a Government of the same party/coalition at both the Centre and State helps in the unimpeded growth of the State.

However, if we see the data for the two most populous States of the country viz. Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar, then these notions will prove to be a myth.

Bihar has been continuously ruled by Nitish Kumar for the last 15 years (except for a short while when Jitan Ram Manjhi was at the helm).

In the case of UP, most of the time the State was ruled by Governments which had allies at the Centre.

However, despite this favourable political environment, these States are not doing well economically and are called the BIMARU States. This means that the State-level politicians are not doing good enough work for their development. This lackadaisical attitude of State Governments stems from the fact that economic growth and job creation are considered the sole responsibility of the Union Government, which it is not.

For Chief Ministers it is easy to pass the buck on to the Centre in case questions regarding the economy and development are asked.

The persona-centric politics of the major parties like the BJP and the Congress is also to be blamed for not grooming the State leadership and not pushing regional leaders to present a development role model for others.

The people of the country all want jobs and a higher income and

a better quality of life. For this, we have to start making State-level leaders accountable and question their inability to deliver on their promises made during the election campaigns.

Economic reforms are an ongoing process and investors continuously evaluate various investment options before committing their resources. Land and labour reforms are the most critical of all the structural changes which this country needs. Land comes under the State List and matters related to labour are part of the Concurrent List. Among various things, an investor looks for infrastructure and the law and order situation. These two vital prerequisites for development also fall under the domain of States. If we take stock of all the major areas which need improvement for attracting investment then, barring fiscal and monetary policies, almost all the key items are either in the State List or the Concurrent List of the Constitution.

The rural economy and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector are fac-

ing severe distress. The rural economy is largely driven by agricultural activities and as a matter of fact, the farm sector accounts for almost half of the workforce employed in our country and contributes 18 per cent to the GDP. Similarly, the MSME sector contributes almost 29 per cent to the GDP and more than 45 per cent of product exports come from this sector. State Governments are uniquely positioned to understand local needs and tailor schemes as per those requirements, including tax concessions by reducing State Goods and Services Tax rates. Central schemes are applied across the country and "one size fits all" may not be true in every situation.

If India has to grow, then State Governments should take ownership for development and people should also ask regional leaders to deliver on their promises. This nation belongs to all and therefore development is the collective responsibility of all of us, particularly those who have been given the mandate to rule.

(The writer is a Chartered Accountant)



TRUMP'S TRIAL A DEFINING MOMENT

US President Trump's trial is not just a defining moment for him but also for the presidency and the Senate. If the Senate votes on party lines to acquit and Trump is then re-elected, this would be an infamous outcome. The idea that a president can abuse his office would be accepted. A new and lawless presidential legitimacy would be sanctioned. And the checks and balances of the US constitution would no longer exist and would need to be built afresh.

(The Guardian editorial)

'Amazon to create one mn jobs in India by 2025'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

World's largest online shopping platform Amazon on Friday announced plans to create one million new jobs in India over the next five years as it firefights comments from Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on the firm not doing a favour to the country by making the investments.

Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, in a statement on Friday, said the company plans to create one million new jobs in India over the next five years. The new jobs - created both directly and indirectly - will be across industries, including IT, skill development, content creation, retail, logistics, and manufacturing.

These jobs are in addition to the seven lakh jobs Amazon's investments have enabled over

the last six years in the country.

The statement comes a day after Goyal said the US-based company was not doing a favour to the country by the investments, and questioned how the online retailing major could incur such "big" losses but for its predatory pricing.

Bezos, who is in India this week, had on Wednesday announced USD 1 billion (over Rs 7,000

crore) investment in the country to help bring small and medium businesses online and committed to exporting USD 10 billion worth of India-made goods by 2025.

"We've seen huge contributions from our employees, extraordinary creativity from the small businesses we've partnered with, and great enthusiasm from the customers who shop with us - and we're excited about what lies

ahead," Bezos said in the statement on Friday.

The company noted that the Indian government has prioritised job creation and skilling initiatives - including the training of more than 400 million people by 2022 - in rural and urban areas.

"Amazon's job creation commitment and investment in traders and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) complement these social inclusion and social mobility efforts by creating more opportunities for people in India to find employment, build skills, and expand entrepreneurship opportunities," the statement added.

The company's

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new investments will help hiring talent to fill roles across the company in India, including software development engineering, cloud computing, content creation, and customer support, it said.

Since 2014, Amazon has grown its employee base more than four times, and last year inaugurated its new campus building in Hyderabad - Amazon's first fully-owned campus outside the United States and the largest building globally in terms of employees (15,000) and space (9.5 acres).

The e-tail giant had previously committed USD 5.5 billion investments in India - Amazon's most important market outside of the US and a key growth driver.

The investments, Amazon said, will also help in expanding growth opportunities for the more than 5.5 lakh traders and micro, small, and medium-sized businesses - including local shops - through programs like Saheli, Karigar,

and "I Have Space".

In a post on the Amazon.in website, Bezos said more than 60,000 businesses are exporting 'Make in India' products globally with cumulative exports exceeding USD 1 billion.

"I fall more in love with India every time I return here. The boundless energy, innovation, and the grit of the Indian people always inspire me," he wrote.

Bezos' visit has been marked by Competition Commission of India initiating a formal investigation into alleged deep discounts, preferential listing and exclusionary tactics adopted by Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart. Many store owners, led by traders' body Confederation

All India Traders, had also organised protests in 300 cities against online retailers alleging that these e-commerce companies were violating FDI rules and following predatory pricing in India.

Last year, the government had tightened rules for e-commerce marketplaces with foreign investment. These rules barred such platforms from offering products of sellers in which they hold a stake and banned exclusive marketing arrangements among other clauses. Following this, Amazon restructured its joint ventures to ensure compliance.

The government has asserted that e-commerce companies have to follow Indian rules in letter and spirit and not find loopholes to make a backdoor entry into multi-brand retail segment.



CAPSULE



Xiaomi India spins off POCO as independent brand

NEW DELHI: Smartphone maker Xiaomi on Friday said it is spinning off 'POCO' as a standalone brand. With this restructuring, POCO will run independent of Xiaomi with its own team and go-to-market strategy, a statement said. "POCO started as a sub-brand of Xiaomi in 2018 with a small team. Its first smartphone, POCO F1, was incredibly successful and remains an extremely popular phone till date," it added. Xiaomi Vice President and India Managing Director Manu Jain said POCO has grown into its own identity in a short span of time. "We feel the time is right to let POCO operate on its own now, which is why we're excited to announce that POCO will spin off as an independent brand," he added.



Adani, Azure top bidders for solar tenders

NEW DELHI: Adani Green Energy and Azure Power have emerged as successful bidders in Solar Energy Corporation of India's first manufacturing-linked solar tender, a top government official said on Friday. Adani has bid for 1.5 GW solar cell manufacturing capacity and 6 GW generation capacity, MIRE Secretary Anand Kumar said on the sidelines of India Energy Forum-Renewable Energy Summit here. He also said that Azure Power bid for 500 MW solar cell manufacturing capacity and 2 GW generation capacity. With the green shoe option, the capacity for Adani would increase to 2 GW of solar cell manufacturing capacity and 8 GW generation capacity, Kumar said.

Auto Expo to focus on new emission technology

LUCKNOW: The upcoming Auto Expo at the India Expo Mart in Greater Noida will feature new emission technology products and act as a launchpad for some key brands entering the Indian market and unveiling new products. The biggest bi-annual extravaganza of the automotive industry is slated to be inaugurated on February 6, Co-chairman, SIAM Trade Fair Group and Vice President, Corporate Communications, Maruti Suzuki India Sanjeev Handa said here on Friday. The week-long show will feature new emission technology products and vehicles with more stringent safety standards under one roof, Handa said, adding that the event will showcase Indian automotive industry's preparedness to adopt the BS-VI norms ahead of the government's specified deadline.

India must continue structural reforms to boost growth: UN report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A UN report on Friday said continued structural reforms are necessary to boost growth in India, which is currently facing an economic slowdown.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020 (WESP) report has also lowered GDP growth estimate for India while expressing hope that combination of fiscal stimulus and financial sector reforms will help boost consumption.

"After experiencing a sharp economic slowdown from 6.8 per cent in 2018 to 5.7 per cent in 2019, India has committed to an ambitious fiscal expansion to complement the country's already loose monetary policy. "The combination of fiscal stimulus and financial sector reforms, boosting investment and consumption, is expected to support a recovery in growth to 6.6 per cent, but it will take continued structural reforms to bring India's growth back to its previous levels," it said.

However, the data related to India was revised to 5 per cent for the current fiscal and 5.8-



5.9 per cent for the next financial year, Nagesh Kumar, Head, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, said.

While presenting the report, he said the GDP forecast in WESP did not take into account the latest growth numbers released by India's National Statistical Office (NSO).

The report, he said was computed in October 2019 and NSO's advanced growth estimates were released in January 2020 suggesting coun-

try's growth would slip to 5 per cent during 2019-20 fiscal.

Kumar further said India's macro economic fundamentals are strong as ever and recovery in growth is expected in the next fiscal.

According to the UN study, one in five countries will see per capita income stagnate or decline this year, but listed India among few countries where the per capita GDP growth rate could exceed 4 per cent level in 2020.

A prolonged weakness in

However, the data related to India was revised to 5 per cent for the current fiscal and 5.8-5.9 per cent for the next financial year.

—NAGESH KUMAR Head of SSWA, UNESCAP

global economic activity may cause significant setbacks for sustainable development, including the goals to eradicate poverty and create decent jobs for all. At the same time, pervasive inequalities and the deepening climate crisis are fuelling growing discontent in many parts of the world.

In the European Union, manufacturing will continue to be held back by global uncertainty, but this will be partially offset by steady growth in private consumption, allowing a modest rise in GDP growth from 1.4 per cent in 2019 to 1.6 per cent in 2020.

IRDAI chief cautions insurers against predatory pricing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) chairman S C Khuntia on Friday cautioned insurers against indulging in predatory pricing, saying it is not a sustainable model while citing examples of airline and telecom sectors.

Highlighting that the insurance industry is different from other business, he said if an insurer fails, it has bearing on customers as well.

"I would like to give a word of caution here. Though your (insurance brokers) share is very high in group health insurance, the loss ratio in group health insurance is also very high. Probably, it is not very sustainable at present," he said at an event organised by Insurance Brokers Association of India here.

"So the insurance companies, intermediaries and policyholders need to unite to create a sustainable atmosphere. In other industries if there is unfair competition, the industry suffers but the client-



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S C KHUNTIA (IRDAI) chairman

tele don't suffer. While this has happened in airlines and telecom industries but we cannot afford that kind of a situation in the insurance industry because insurance is an industry for protection," he said.

"So if the industry suffers, then clientele also suffers. And as a regulator we would not like that to happen. One should not overcharge and also not undercharge," he said, adding, there is need to create efficiencies so that to bring down premium and minimise the risk.

Asked if companies are engaging in predatory pricing

to up their volume, the regulator acknowledged it by saying "of course, of course."

"Regulator will have to ensure that the industry runs sustainably. There will be host of actions not one kind of action (to check predatory pricing) but we will ensure that the health of insurance industry does not deteriorate," he said.

To a query on LIC stake reduction roadmap for IDBI Bank, Khuntia said IRDAI has reminded LIC and they are yet to come forward with it.

He, however, expressed hope that it will be done quickly.

Shipping Ministry seeks land from Bengal for CEZ

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Shipping Ministry has sought land from the West Bengal government for setting up a coastal employment zone (CEZ), an official said.

Setting up CEZs across the country will promote port-led development conceived under the 'Sagarmala' project of the government.

The ministry is in talks with the state government for getting the land, Director (Sagarmala), Shipping Ministry, Abhishek Chandra said at a BCCI event here on Friday. Under the plan, the state government will give the land as equity while funding will be done by the Centre.

"CEZs will be set up using the challenge methodology of Niti Aayog," Chandra said.

Under this system, all projects under different ministries will be rated on more than a half-dozen parameters on a scale of zero-to-100 and the state that gets the highest score will get the project automatically.



Gowda launches bid to revive three sick urea units; unveils logo, slogan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fertiliser Minister D V Sadananda Gowda on Friday unveiled the logo and brand 'Apna Urea Sona Ugle' of Hindustan Urvarak and Rasayan Ltd (HURL), which is in the process of reviving three sick urea units.

The sick urea units are located at Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), Barauni (Bihar) and Sindri (Jharkhand).

HURL, a joint venture firm promoted by three PSUs -- Coal India Limited (CIL), NTPC Ltd and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) -- is in the process of putting in place all logistic and marketing infrastructure.

After the launch, Gowda said five sick urea units are being revived at present.

HURL's three units are

The sick urea units are located at Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), Barauni (Bihar) and Sindri (Jharkhand)

expected to be commissioned in February 2021, while Ramagundam (Telangana) and Talcher (Odisha) units are also likely to commence operations next year.

"I hope all units will be commissioned on schedule. This is the need of the hour," he said.

At each location, a new plant with 12.7 lakh tonnes capacity of neem coated urea is being set up which will make the country self-sufficient in urea, Gowda said,

adding that the country still imports about 70-80 lakh tonnes of urea annually.

Fertiliser Secretary Chhabildendra Roul asked HURL to promote balanced use of fertilisers and not just focus on marketing its urea product.

He also advised the company not to focus on single brand urea, but diversify its product portfolio to include agro-chemicals, compost, and nanofertilizers.

Senior officials of Fertiliser Ministry, CIL, NTPC, and HURL were also present at the event.

According to HURL, the commissioning of three units in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand will open forward and backward linkages for business activity in the eastern part of the country.

Centre pushes centres for vehicle tracking system

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With little progress on setting up monitoring centres by states on vehicle tracking system, the Centre has stepped in to ensure effective implementation of the project under the Nirbhaya Framework with an assistance of Rs 332 crore.

In a letter to Principal Secretaries of states and UTs, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has asked them to apply for the assistance by February 15.

"Since very little progress could be achieved on setting up the Monitoring Centers, it was felt necessary to support the

States under Nirbhaya Framework at the earliest so as to effectively implement the vehicle tracking system and ensure safe commute to the women and children in public passenger transport vehicles," the letter said.

The ministry earlier had mandated vehicle location tracking device and emergency buttons be fitted in all public service vehicle w e f from April 1, 2018, which was re-examined and it was decided to give exemption to all public service vehicles that were registered till December 31, 2018 (old vehicles) from these requirements till notified by state/UT governments.



Vodafone Idea shares nosedive over 39 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Vodafone Idea on Friday plunged over 39 per cent after the Supreme Court dismissed review petitions of top telecom firms seeking review of its earlier order asking them to pay Rs 1.47 lakh crore in past statutory dues by January 23.

The company's scrip tanked 39.30 per cent to Rs 3.66 on the BSE.

On the NSE, it plummeted 39.16 per cent to Rs 3.65. Bharti Airtel, however, was trading in the green after initial losses of 0.83 per cent on the BSE.

The Supreme Court Thursday dismissed review petitions of top telecom firms including Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea seeking review of its earlier order asking them to pay Rs 1.47 lakh crore in past statutory dues by January 23 saying it did not find any "justifiable reason" to entertain them.

In a big blow to telecom sector, India's apex court has dismissed the review petition filed by telecom companies to grant a relief on AGR liabilities, said a report by Motilal Oswal Institutional Equities.

China's economy slumps to 6.1%, lowest in 29 years

PNS ■ BEIJING

China's GDP grew by 6.1 per cent last year, the lowest in 29 years, the government said on Friday, as weak domestic demand and the bruising 18-month trade war with the US took their toll on the world's second-largest economy.

The new data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) comes a day after China and the US signed a long-awaited phase one deal, marking a ceasefire in the 18-month-long trade war which saw the world's two largest economies slap 25 per cent tariffs on about half a trillion-dollar worth of each other's exports.



The world's second-largest economy grew by 6.1 per cent last year, its worst performance since 1990, but it remained above the psychologically important six per cent mark.

The GDP growth remained well within the 6 to 6.5 target set by the government, the NBS said.

However, significant from the Chinese government's per-

The world's second-largest economy grew by 6.1 per cent last year, its worst performance since 1990, but it remained above the psychologically important six per cent mark.

spective, the GDP expanded to USD 14.38 trillion from last year's USD 13.1 trillion.

In 2018, China's economy sank to a 28-year low slowing down to 6.6 per cent year on year, lower than the 6.8 per cent growth registered in 2017 as it grappled with the continued slowdown amid the trade war with US and declining exports.

There is a sense of relief among the officials here as the official growth rate remained above the psychologically important 6 per cent as mandated by Chinese President Xi Jinping who in the past directed that GDP should not go down below six per cent, which could cause serious disruption to the world's second largest economy.

Chinese economy was hit hard by the US tariffs as a result of the trade war between the two countries.

After signing the phase one deal on Wednesday, US President Donald Trump said 25 per cent tariff hike on USD 360 billion worth of Chinese products would continue until the phase-2 deal is worked out.

"The phase one deal is only an interim agreement between China and the US. In fact, to push for negotiation in the next stage, the US will keep existing tariffs on imports from China unless the two countries manage to reach a phase two deal," said Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief Asia Pacific economist at Natixis.



Hyd was treated to a celebration of dance by the Battery Dance Company from New York. SIDDHESH SUMAN writes about the performance of the troupe and their mission to bring people together through dance

A WORLD UNITED BY DANCE

Hyd was treated to a celebration of dance by the Battery Dance Company from New York. SIDDHESH SUMAN writes about the performance of the troupe and their mission to bring people together through dance

event and the performance was received well. The show started off by Shreenath Muthyala, founder of the Monsoon Raga Foundation, and Jonathan Hollander, director of Battery Dance, introducing the performances to the audience. The performances that followed were presented in three parts. The first segment 'Observatory' kicked off the show with an energetic performance and was choreographed by South African choreographer Thero Ndinwa. Its pulsating rhythm kept the audience at their edge of the seats. The second segment 'The Red Line' choreographed by Tadej Brdnik was emotionally moving and heartwarming. The final segment and the main element of the show 'Shakti' featured guest artist Unnath Hassan Rathnaraju, an Indian Classical contemporary dancer. The final act was a fusion of Bharatanatyam and modern contemporary and featured Indian music. The show also featured two incredible solo acts from guest artist Guru Swathi

THE DANCE COMPANY PERFORMED ITS CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED PRODUCTION, SHAKTI: A RETURN TO THE SOURCE, AT THE SHILPA KALA VEDIKA. A THEATRICAL ELEMENT OF THE SHOW WAS THAT EACH PART OF THE SHOW WAS A STORY TOLD IN DANCE AND THE MEANING WAS LEFT TO THE AUDIENCE TO INTERPRET

Gundapuneedi Atluri, a highly respected Kuchipudi artist. The final part of the show ended with the artists receiving a standing ovation in the auditorium. The sound of applause electrified the hall and people left with tears and a big smile because of the connection the performance and the artistes made with the audience. A theatrical element of the show was that each part of the show was a story told in dance and the meaning was left to the audience to interpret. Vivake Khamsingsavath, dancer and choreographer of the Battery Dance, discussed with *The Pioneer* his experience of performing and teaching in Hyderabad. He says, "It was an honour to teach and perform in Hyderabad. Bethany, also a dancer and choreographer at the Battery dance, and I taught a workshop specifically connecting emotions to movement. It was inspirational to watch the students work



through their feelings and find a way to show what they felt through dance. Our host at the school, Anjali, from HY dance studio created a safe environment for the students to learn and try new things. Shreenath took amazing care of the company in preparation of our performance. The stage was spacious allowing us to go bigger than any other show we have done so far. Afterwards, the reception we received from the audience was an

overwhelming feeling of appreciation and admiration. It was a true privilege to share our work in Hyderabad." The Hyderabad tour of Battery dance lasted for three days. A screening of Moving Stories was held followed by a panel discussion on January 8 at the Prasad's Labs. Three workshops on personality development for children and adults were also conducted. The Battery Dance Company is a New York-

based dance company which has been performing and teaching dance around the world for 44 years. From integrating refugees into dance to presenting NYC's longest-running public dance festival and bringing education in the arts to thousands of youngsters in public schools, Battery Dance redefined the meaning of dance and its power in bringing the world together. India has always been their favourite spot where the company

has appeared several times in various cities bringing the east and the west together. Jonathan Hollander expressed his love towards Indian music and especially Indian classical dance which has always been an inspiration for his work. The India tour team of Battery Dance included Robin Cantrell, Sarah Housepian, Bethany Mitchell, Sean Scantlebury and Vivake Khamsingsavath.

Dance as an art form has always served as a medium of emotional communication. Artists have used dance as a platform to express joy and sadness and find common ground among communities for centuries around the world. Recently, the Monsoon Raga Foundation, in association with the United States Embassy and SBI, presented the Battery Dance Company from New York in Hyderabad. The dance company performed its critically acclaimed production, Shakti: A Return to the Source, at the Shilpa Kala Vedita. People from across Hyderabad turned up for the



Turn the page for a better future

Hyderabad-based P Narayana Rao, through his magazine, Environment and People, seeks to inspire people to join the fight against the climate crisis, finds V SATEESH REDDY

In recent times, we have seen marches being held by people from all walks of lives globally to spread awareness on the climate change. Many experts warn that the optimum climatic conditions necessary for our survival are in danger and immediate action need to be taken to save it for future generations. One cannot forget Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg's speech at the Climate Action Summit, 2019 at the United Nations General Assembly. "We are at the beginning of mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!" she had lashed out at the governments of the world. Like Greta, many people are doing their bit to safeguard the present environmental state. Hyderabad-based Dr P. Narayana Rao started a monthly maga-

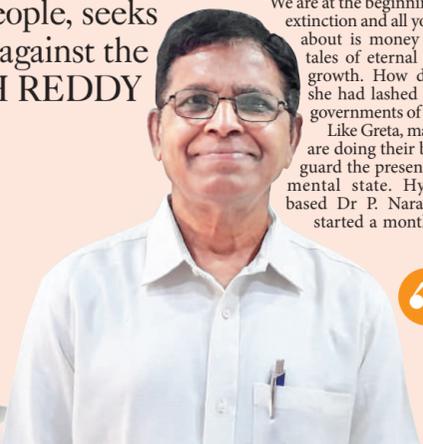
THE MAGAZINE HAS 36 PAGES THAT HAS ARTICLES ABOUT GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES, HUMAN INTEREST STORIES AND CARTOONS ABOUT THE CAUSE. EVERY MONTH A QUIZ IS FEATURED IN THE MAGAZINE URGING THE READERS TO TEST THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

zine called Environment and People in 1994 and has been publishing articles on environmental issues and about people who were working hard to save the environment. The magazine carries articles written by eminent journalists, academicians and administrators. Narayana Rao said, "I was interested in social activities since my childhood and used to participate in various programmes. I started my NGO, Society For Environment and Education, in 1993 after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992, in Rio de Janeiro. I thought there is a need to explain to the youth about the impor-

ance of saving mother earth for future generations. I go to various colleges in Hyderabad and explained students about the issues regarding the climate crisis. Later, in 1994, I started printing a monthly magazine titled Environment and People to forward the same cause." The magazine has 36 pages that has articles about good environmental practices, human interest stories and cartoons about the cause. Every month a quiz is featured in the magazine urging the readers to test their knowledge about the environment. The money to run the magazine is obtained by crowdfunding, said Rao.

climate issues and the action required to save ourselves for drastic climate change, he said. Narayana Rao had also worked as a Pollution Control Board member from 1994 to 1998 which opened his eyes to the various problems plaguing the environment. He said that after the Earth Summit in 2002 at Johannesburg in South Africa, he began working on the issues highlighted at the conference - water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity also called as WEHAB. "As I worked as a PCB member, I know many people who work for the environment. I meet and learned from them their methods. Later with their permission, I published their work. I also read various newspapers, magazines, websites to check people who were working hard for the environment and publish their stories by referring the particular media name as a source," he said. "Till date, we got a great response from people regarding the magazine. I believe that more should involve themselves in working towards the issues regarding the climate to make earth safer for the next generations," he added.

"I started my NGO, Society For Environment and Education, in 1993 after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992, in Rio de Janeiro. I thought there is a need to explain to the youth about the importance of saving mother earth for future generations



what's brewing?



Motherhood limits my choices on screen: EVA MENDES

Actress Eva Mendes likes to 'set an example' for her daughters with the roles she plays on screen. Mendes has not been seen in anything since she appeared in her partner Ryan Gosling's movie *Lost River* back in 2014, reports *aceshowbiz.com*. Since becoming a mother, her absence from the screen has not gone unnoticed by her fans, one of whom took to Instagram to question Mendes on when will she be seen in a film. "When can we the fans going to see you in some new movies @eva-mendes," the fan questioned.

The actress replied: "hi! When there's something worthwhile to be apart of." "As a mother now, there are many roles I won't do. There are many subject matters that I don't want to be involved with, so it limits my choices and I'm fine with that. I have to set an example for my girls now. But no worry, I got some side hustles. Ha! Thanks for asking. All the best for 2020."

Mendes shares two daughters — Esmeralda, five, and Amada, three — with Gosling.

JOHN CENA says acting career not transition from wrestling

Wrestler-actor John Cena is not finished with wrestling despite his blossoming acting career.

Cena has followed fellow World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) legend and actor Dwayne *The Rock* Johnson's path to Hollywood, having rarely stepped into the ring since taking a hiatus from the sport in 2018, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

He says his success as an actor doesn't mean his wrestling career is at an end — even if movie commitments are keeping him out of the ring for now.

"I'm not done with WWE yet. Keep in mind that being a sports entertainer is like being an actor. You have to invest your full passion into it. Due to insurance liabilities for movies, you can't do other stuff... I am far from done with the WWE. I am trying to change perception — it's not a transition," Cena told portal *Extra*.

The star went on to say that there's a "great chance" his fans will see him back in the ring at some point. Cena is set to join Johnson as a member of the *Fast and Furious* franchise, debuting in *Fast*



and *Furious 9* later this year, and said he was welcomed by his new castmates — despite some initial rivalry.

He added: "At first it was like being the new member of a family. Everyone is sizing you up... They were all so open-minded, and I got to know everyone quickly and was welcomed into the family."

When SRK made Jeff Bezos say Don dialogue

Superstar Shah Rukh Khan gave a filmy touch to his meeting with Jeff Bezos when he made the Amazon's global CEO say a dialogue from his hit film *Don*.

It was a starry evening for Bezos in Mumbai as he opened up about his journey and his bond with India during a conversation with superstar Shah Rukh Khan and filmmaker Zoya Akhtar. The event was attended by Riteish Deshmukh and his wife Genelia, Vidya Balan and her husband Siddharth Roy Kapur, Arshad Warsi, Rajkumar Rao, Pankaj Tripathi, Kamal Haasan and Ali Fazal among others.

When Bezos opened up about getting a role in *Star Trek Beyond*, Shah Rukh went in and asked him to practice the art of giving an audition for a Hindi movie, leaving Bezos surprised.

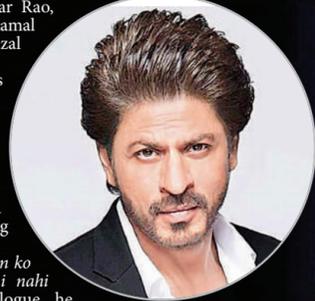
Modifying his *Don ko pakadna mushkil hi nahi namumkin hai* dialogue, he

made Bezos say *Jeff ko pakadna mushkil hi nahi impossible hai*.

The moment was shared by actor Riteish on his Twitter handle, which has gone viral on social media.

SRK was a super host of the evening and made Bezos comfortable. At one instance, he opened water bottle and offered to him.

Looking at his gesture, Bezos said: "You are so humble". To which, SRK joked: "That's because my last few films haven't done well."



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Sour-tasting
- A fruit with a stone
- Hit with your hand open
- Ran after trying to catch
- Assistants
- Went in
- Having a doze
- Very small
- Scramble, boil or fry these
- A light wind
- Reduce the length of
- Loosen or tighten nuts with this tool
- Store a car in here
- Make up your mind
- A slimy creature that eats lettuce leaves
- A rubber cover on a wheel

DOWN

- Finest
- Go on a journey
- Mislead
- Noon



GINGER MEGGS



PRABHAS' picture sends fans into frenzy

For the past couple of months, Prabhas' fans have been patiently waiting for an update or two about their darling's next with Jil fame Radha Krishna. While they expected some news by New Year's eve or during Sankranti festivities, it didn't happen, leaving them dejected. Finally, to bring back their smiles, the macho actor posted a picture of him on the sets of the yet-to-be-titled film, on Friday.

"Elated to share that I'm resuming shooting for my upcoming film. Looking forward to a fun schedule (sic)," he wrote on his social media pages. Soon #Prabhas20Update became a nationwide trend for a good part of Friday evening.

It's been more than six months since the *Baahubali* star faced arc lights. Although he shot for the film in a couple of short schedules last year, post-*Saaho* release he chose to take an extended break, which he utilised to work on his looks and physique.

Set in Europe in the 1970s, the film is a love story between a schoolteacher (Pooja Hedge) and a palm reader (Prabhas). It won't boast of any action and would be high on music. Sets depicting bygone era have been erected at multiple studios across the city under the supervision of production designer S. Ravinder.

Being made simultaneously in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, the film is a joint production venture between Gopi Krishna Movies and UV Creations. Amit Trivedi is the tunesmith.



DIL RAJU targets May release for *Pink* remake

Pink, which became a nationwide phenomenon for its take on women's rights and patriarchy, will be seen in Telugu too. The shooting for the remake will begin on Monday and Dil Raju is planning the release date keeping PK's popularity in mind

With Pawan Kalyan's return to celluloid attached to the Telugu remake of the Hindi movie *Pink*, the anticipation surrounding the film is high. The film's shooting will kick-off in Hyderabad beginning Monday, with director Venu Sreeram set to film scenes with Anjali, Nivetha Thomas and Ananya on day-one, while Pawan, as has been a norm with him, will join the sets later. According to the grapevine, producer Raju already has a release date in mind. It is said that he is toying with the idea of releasing the film for Eid — in the fourth week of May. Although May 23 is favoured, it wouldn't be a surprise if the film arrives a day early. Some of Pawan's biggest blockbusters *Kushi* and *Gabbar Singh* were a summer treat.

Pawan, who will be drawing more than Rs 50

crore for the project as his remuneration, has allotted close to a month for the film. Also, it seems the makers are in talks with Pooja Hedge for a cameo appearance in the film. They've added a track with Pawan and Pooja acting as a husband and wife, similar to the story in *Nerkonda Paarvai* (Tamil remake of *Pink* with Ajith Kumar) and it remains to be seen if negotiations with her fructify. She wouldn't be required to shoot for more than a week.

Released in 2016, *Pink* created waves in the country with its portrayal of problems young women face in a patriarchal country and made the nation understand that if a woman says no she means it. It won the National Award for the Best Film on Social Issues in 2017. The Telugu remake, a joint production venture between Boney Kapoor and Dil Raju, will have music by S.S. Thaman.



CHAY-SAM acquire a place in Goa

Besides Europe, Goa has been a preferred holiday destination for Naga Chaitanya and Samantha whenever they get time off from their schedules. They even tied the knot there three years ago. Taking their love for Goa forward, the couple has bought a place there sometime back to construct a villa. "Both Chay and Sam make it a point to visit Goa every three months for a quick getaway. In fact, they both welcomed 2020 in Goa along with their family. All this while they've stayed at rented villas. It was Sam's wish that they have their own property in Goa as she is a water girl and Chay obliged readily. It did cost them a bomb. The construction work is underway and by the end of first half of this year, they will be proud owners of a sea-facing villa," said a source.

On the work front, Chay is currently busy with Sekhar Kammula's next, *Love Story*. He is charging close to Rs 8 crore as remuneration for a project, while Sam is shooting for *The Family Man 2*. She has projects like *Mahasamudram* and Ashwin Saravanan's next in her kitty though her official participation in both the films is awaited. She is also rumoured to be in talks with another Tamil filmmaker Gopi Nainar for a hard-hitting women-centric drama. She is charging somewhere around Rs 1.25 crore to 1.50 crore per film.

SARILERU... TEAM OFFERS PRAYERS AT TIRUMALA

Celebrating the success of *Sarileru Neekevuru*, the principal cast and crew of the film — comprising Mahesh Babu, Vijaya Shanti, Rajendra Prasad, Dil Raju, Anil Sunkara and Anil Ravipudi — offered prayers to Lord Venkateswara Swamy at Tirumala, on Friday. The team left for Tirumala on Thursday evening and spent the night there. Producer N.V. Prasad received them. They took the blessing of the Lord early Friday morning.

Mahesh's wife Namrata and their children Goutham and Sitara, along with Vamshi Paidipally's family also had a darshan of the Lord of Seven Hills. Paidipally, who will direct Mahesh later this year, offered his hair to the lord. Mahesh also met TTD (Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam board) chairperson Y.V. Subba Reddy and congratulated him on his new job. The team left for Warangal in the noon for a massive event to celebrate the film's success.



AL VIJAY in awe of ARVIND SWAMI as MGR

Extending their tribute to former chief minister of Tamil Nadu MGR on his 103rd birth anniversary on Friday, the makers of the Tamil, Telugu and Hindi trilingual, *Thalaivi*, unveiled Arvind Swami's first look from the film. The actor plays MGR in the film, directed by A.L. Vijay. Kangana Ranaut is playing J. Jayalalitha, the late CM of Tamil Nadu, on whom the title is based upon. MGR was instrumental in grooming the actress into a neta.

Vijay said they had considered many before zeroing in on Arvind. "Finally, we felt Arvind Swami would fit the role perfectly. In simple words, we are now completely drenched in extreme astonishment to find him breathe life into the legendary character. Apart from our inputs, he spent sumptuous time and energy in getting to know deeply about the legend's life," he added.

Besides the first look, the makers have also



released a small teaser of Swami as MGR filming the iconic song *Naan Ungal Veetu Pillai* from the film *Pudhiya Bhoomi* which starred Jayalalitha as lead actress. Needless to say, Arvind looked strikingly similar to MGR in both the promotional materials.

Beginning with her journey as an actress, *Thalaivi* will end with Jayalalitha becoming the CM. The ups and downs she weathered will be a part of the film.

Produced by Vishnu Vardhan Induri and Shaalish R. Singh for Vibri Motion Pictures in association with Karma Media and Entertainment, *Thalaivi* will open in cinema halls on June 26.



India launch Olympic bid with pro opener

Manpreet led side host the Netherlands in FIH pro league game today

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Olympics-bound Indian men's hockey team will kick-start its preparations for the quadrennial showpiece when it debuts in the FIH Pro League against world No.3 the Netherlands here on Saturday.

After having missed the first edition of the event, India will take on the 2019 Pro League and European Bronze medal winners, the Netherlands, in two matches in their opening tie at the Kalinga Stadium here. The second match will be played on Sunday.

With all the top teams of the world in fray, the home-and-away Pro League will be ideal preparation for world No 5 India ahead of the Summer Games later this year.

After the Dutch side, India will host world champions Belgium on February 8 and 9 followed by two more home fixtures against Australia on February 22 and 23.

The Indian team will then leave for the away games in Germany (April 25 and 26) and Great Britain (May 2 and 3).

India will return to play on home soil on May 23 and 24 against New Zealand before travelling to Argentina to play on June 5 and 6.

The Manpreet Singh-led side will play the last leg of the Pro League round-robin matches in Spain on June 13 and 14.

India's head coach Graham Reid will be aware of the challenges that await his team in the Pro League opener.

Having served as a former assistant coach to the Dutch, Reid knows exactly what to expect from Netherlands in the double header.

The matches will also provide India a chance to avenge their heart-breaking 1-2 loss in the quarterfinal of the 2018 World Cup.

A look at the previous 10 meetings between the two teams reveals



Manpreet Singh in a file picture

Manpreet Singh/Twitter

that there is little to choose between them.

The Netherlands have won five of those meetings, with India victorious on four occasions and one match ending in a draw.

Reid too insisted that they are looking at the Pro League outings as a platform for Olympic preparation.

"It will be important to start strong and sharp in the Pro League with our first three encounters against the top three teams in the world," Reid has said.

"We will be focussing on getting our structures right and honing our set plays as preparation for our Olympic campaign."

The Indians would also benefit by their familiarity with the Kalinga Stadium turf, having trained and played numerous matches here.

It is the same venue where the eight-time Olympic champions qualified for the 2020 Games after thrashing Russia 11-3 on aggregate in the two-leg FIH Qualifiers in November last year.

"The matches against India are a very important opener. Playing against India at their home ground is challenging no doubt but it is also very exciting because we love playing in Bhubaneswar," Netherlands coach Max Caldas said.

Caldas too is looking at the Pro League as preparation for Olympics.

"The players and combinations we wanted to test were experimented during the previous edition of Pro League. This edition we will have our most competitive team as this will be the stepping-stone for us to be the best at Tokyo," he said.

India will field a full-strength team which will witness the return of midfielders Chinglensana Singh and Sumit, who were out with injuries.

Chinglensana was on the sidelines with an ankle fracture since the National Championship last year, while Sumit suffered a wrist injury in June during the FIH Men's Series Final.



Sania Mirza in action during Hobart International Hobart International/Twitter

Sania storms into Hobart final

PTI ■ HOBART

Indian tennis ace Sania Mirza cruised into the women's doubles final of the Hobart International with her Ukrainian partner Nadiia Kichenok here on Friday.

Sania and Kichenok sailed past the Slovenian-Czech pair of Tamara Zidansek and Marie Bouzkova 7-6 (3) 6-2 in the semifinal contest that lasted one hour and 24 minutes.

The fifth-seeded Indo-Ukrainian combination will lock horns with second seeds Shuai Peng and Shuai Zhang of China. The Chinese pair got a walkover after Belgium's Kirsten Flipkens and Alison Van Uytvanck conceded the other semifinal match because of injury.

While Sania and Kichenok had to fight hard in the opening set, the second set was a cakewalk for the combination.

The first set was a tough contest between the two pairs, bringing the tie-breaker into the equation after it was level at 6-6.

In the tie-breaker, Sania and Kichenok upped their game by a few notches to out-

smart their opponents and take the lead.

The second set was a no contest as Saina and Kichenok broke their opponents thrice - in the second, sixth and eighth game - to easily pocket the set and a place in the summit clash.

Saina and Kichenok got 11 break chances out of which they converted four, while their opponents utilised two out of the five break chances that came their way.

The 33-year-old Sania is returning to WTA circuit after two years. During her time away from the game, she battled injury breakdowns before taking a formal break in April 2018 to give birth to her son Izhaan. She is married to Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik.

Before the ongoing event, Sania last played at China Open in October 2017.

A trailblazer in Indian tennis, Sania is a former world No.1 in doubles and has six Grand Slam titles to her credit.

She retired from the singles competition in 2013 after becoming the most successful Indian woman tennis player.

Title most imp goal for Salah



Mo Salah celebrates with Sadio Mane after scoring Liverpool/Twitter

AFF ■ LIVERPOOL

Mohamed Salah says Liverpool's focus is solely on ending a 30-year wait to win the Premier League title, rather than doing so by going the whole season unbeaten.

Jürgen Klopp's men have dropped just two points in 21 games to set a new record for Europe's top five leagues of 61 points from a possible 63 to start the campaign.

That has propelled the European champions into a

14-point lead over title holders Manchester City with a game in hand, but Salah insists the Reds are still taking their title challenge one game at a time ahead of Manchester United's visit to Anfield on Sunday.

"We don't think about being unbeaten until the end of the season. If we do that, it would be great, but at the end of the day we just want to win the Premier League. That's the most important thing," Salah told Premier League

Productions. "Unbeaten or not, it's not necessary - we want to win the Premier League."

Liverpool could move a massive 30 points clear of United with victory on Sunday, but the Red Devils are the only side to take points off them this season after a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford in October.

Salah missed that match through injury and is keen to make up for lost time in the clash between English football's two most successful sides.

Harry replaces Young as captain

AFF ■ MANCHESTER

Olle Gunnar Solskjaer has confirmed Harry Maguire as Manchester United's new captain less than six months after his £80 million (\$104 million) move from Leicester.

Maguire will take over as skipper from Ashley Young, who is expected to complete his move to Inter Milan on Friday.

The England international, 26, has led the side in games when Young has been absent and was an obvious choice for the role having played in every Premier League match this season. "Harry has been wearing the captain's armband and he will keep wearing it," said Solskjaer, whose side take on runaway leaders Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday. "He's come in and been a leader in the group. I have not been surprised

but I've been impressed by his leadership skills."

"He is part of a group that we've had that have been leading this young group," added Solskjaer.

"Ashley has been of course, Marcus (Rashford) is a young lad but he has been involved, David (de Gea) and Harry, so Harry will keep on wearing the armband now."

Young, who moved to Old Trafford in 2011, will link up at the San Siro with former United teammates Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Sanchez.

"Ashley has been a good servant for the club, he's been captain, he's won trophies, the league, various cups," said Solskjaer.

"But we've got players coming through and when Ashley's head and mindset was, I want to try this, why not do it now?"

"We need to win, we need to carry on in our way - the way we've been doing since the beginning of the season and since last year," added the Egyptian.

"Of course we know it's big for the fans, for the city and for us. But at the end of the day, we play the game to win."

Yastremska downs Sabalenka for finals place

AFF ■ ADELAIDE

Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska defeated her third top 20 opponent in a row to make the Adelaide International finals with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over Aryna Sabalenka on Friday.

The 19-year-old's blitzed world number 20 Donna Vekic

in the quarter-finals of the Memorial Drive tournament a day after 18th-ranked Angelique Kerber retired from their match with back pain from a set down.

Yastremska, ranked 24th, will play for the fourth title of her career on Saturday against either Australian world number one Ashleigh Barty or American Danielle Collins.

"I'm pretty happy, this new season is off to a good start," Yastremska said after defeating Sabalenka of Belarus for their third match in as many meetings.

"I'm just doing my job on court, playing my game. I do what I can on court."

"I feel confidence heading to the Australian Open." Yastremska broke once per set while losing her own service once in the 106-minute showdown.

She finished on a third match point in the tiebreaker as Sabalenka hit the net on a return.

Yastremska claimed two WTA trophies last season at Strasbourg and Hua Hin, Thailand.

Prajesh out of Australian Open



Prajesh Gunneswaran plays a return shot AFP

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

India's top-ranked player Prajesh Gunneswaran failed to make the main draw of the Australian Open men's singles event after going down in straight sets to Ernest Gulbis of Latvia in the final round of the qualifiers here on Friday.

Prajesh, ranked 122nd in the world and seeded 17th in the qualifiers, lost 6-7 (2) 2-6 to Gulbis in his final round qualifying match. Prajesh had earlier defeated local wildcard Harry Bourchier and Germany's Yannick Hanfmann.

It was a close first set which went into tie-break, where Prajesh faltered to hand early advantage to his opponent.

In the second set, Gulbis broke Prajesh in the first and third games to race to a 3-0 lead.

From there on, the Indian found it tough as Gulbis held his serve to close out the contest that lasted for one hour and 20 minutes.

With Prajesh's ouster, India's campaign in the singles ended in the qualifiers.

Earlier, Sumit Nagal suffered a straight-set loss to Mohamed Safwat of Egypt to crash out in the first round of the qualifiers on Thursday.

AFF ■ BERLIN

Jürgen Klinsmann is planning a party if Hertha Berlin beat his former employers Bayern Munich on Sunday despite doubts about the validity of his coaching licence, as the Bundesliga resumes this weekend after a four-week break.

Since taking charge in November, the 55-year-old former Germany and US national team coach has pulled Hertha up from the relegation places to mid-table with 10 points from a possible 12 going into their clash with third-placed Bayern at Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

However Klinsmann, who led both the US and Germany at World Cup finals, has been left red-faced after it emerged his coaching licence, held since 2000, may no longer be valid and the relevant paperwork is at the family home in California.

"It's just been a bit of a chance for the media to let off a bit of steam," Klinsmann told Sky as questions over his licence became a hot topic in the German media.

Klinsmann back to hurt Bayern



Hertha BSC Berlin head coach Juergen Klinsmann attends a news conference AP

"No one has ever approached me about a licence in 20 years - whether as coach of Germany, the USA or Bayern. Now they have looked

into it and it's expired." The matter remains unresolved but Klinsmann insists he has sent the necessary paperwork to the German FA and that there is

no problem at all".

He has a point to prove against Bayern, who sacked him in 2009 after just nine months and 43 games in charge.

Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski has recovered from recent groin surgery and will look to pick up where he left off after scoring 19 goals in the first 17 games.

The defending champions trail leaders RB Leipzig by four points and are without wingers Kingsley Coman (knee) and Serge Gnabry, who injured his Achilles tendon during a training camp in Qatar.

Bayern suffered a shock 2-0 defeat when they last travelled to Hertha in September 2018 and Klinsmann said a repeat result would spark a party in the capital.

"We have nothing to lose," he said. "Let's take a point - brilliant! Let's take three, then we'll have a party."

"We'll go in there with the

confidence of four games without defeat." One to watch: Erling Braut Haaland

Borussia Dortmund made the league's standout signing during the winter break when they paid Red Bull Salzburg 20 million euros (\$22m) for the 19-year-old Norway striker.

Haaland attracted attention last September when, aged 19 years and 58 days, he became the third youngest player to score a Champions League hat-trick in a 6-2 victory over Genk, finishing with eight goals in six group games.

"I don't think we've had that kind of striker since Robert Lewandowski," Dortmund captain Marco Reus told Sky. Head coach Lucien Favre has not said when Haaland will make his debut. Fourth-placed Dortmund hope a deluge of goals by their latest signing will help close the seven-point deficit to RB Leipzig, starting with a win at Augsburg on Saturday.

Quique era starts in Barca

AFF ■ MADRID

Barcelona's appointment of Quique Setien, a fervent disciple of Johan Cruyff, came the day after Zinedine Zidane won his ninth final out of nine as coach of Real Madrid.

With both teams level on points at the top of La Liga, Spain's closest title race in years will be as much a contest of identity and beliefs as points won and lost.

Real Madrid, the club that defines itself by winning, against Barcelona, where winning is seen as the result of something more profound, a style heralded by Cruyff that has become their footballing philosophy.

Atletico Madrid and Sevilla, both five points behind, are still in touch but playing catch-up. Setien once said he would have given his little finger to play under Cruyff. Now, 34 years later, he has the chance to resuscitate those ideals after



two years under Ernesto Valverde when pragmatism took a greater hold.

Barca's new coach is not well-known outside of Spain and, at 61, he may be in the twilight years of his career.

"For me this is the pinnacle," he said at his unveiling on Tuesday.

His previous clubs are not illustrious. They include Lugo, Logrones, Las Palmas, Poli Ejido, Racing Santander, Real

Betis and one game in charge of Equatorial Guinea. His list of trophies begins and ends with one Spanish Super Cup in 1985 with Atletico Madrid.

But his work and words up to this point could leave the impression of someone that has been preparing to coach Barcelona his entire life.

"When I was a player, coaches tried to set guidelines for me," Setien, a former Spanish international, told Marca in 2018.

It remains to be seen how Setien's appointment will affect La Liga's title race. Will Real Madrid's players feel their chances are boosted or harmed by Valverde's removal? They are now up against a team with a coach that has never won, or even competed for, a top-flight trophy. But they might feel wary too, of the possibility Barcelona could be released by Setien's attacking beliefs and accelerate.