

ANALYSIS 7
HOW TO HARNESS
NARI SHAKTI

MONEY 8
CORONAVIRUS DOES NOT SPREAD
THROUGH CHICKEN: FSSAI CHIEF

SPORTS 11
RAIN TAKES INDIA
TO FINAL

VIJAYAWADA, FRIDAY MARCH 6, 2020; PAGES 12-13

the pioneer

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ANUPAMA TO
REPRISE ANNA
BEN IN HELEN
TELUGU REMAKE
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NOVEL CONTACT LENSES TO HELP CORRECT COLOUR BLINDNESS

Researchers have developed novel contact lenses to help correct various forms of colour blindness, an advance that may lead to new clinical recommendations for the condition in which people have reduced ability to distinguish between certain colours. According to the journal Optics Letters, scientists incorporated ultra-thin optical devices known as metasurfaces into off-the-shelf contact lenses to correct deuteranomaly — a form of red-green colour blindness. "Problems with distinguishing red from green interrupt simple daily routines," said Sharon Karepov, a co-author of the study.



LOW CARB DIET MAY REVERSE AGE-RELATED EFFECTS IN BRAIN

Minimising the consumption of carbohydrates may prevent and reverse age-related effects within the brain, according to a study. The research, published in the journal PNAS, reveals that neurobiological changes associated with ageing can be seen at a much younger age than would be expected, in the late 40s. To better understand how diet influences brain ageing, researchers from Stony Brook University in the US focused on the presymptomatic period during which prevention may be most effective.



IIT-M DEVELOPS AI-POWERED DRONES TO COUNTER 'ROGUE' ONES

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, on Thursday claimed to have developed an AI-powered drone to counter 'rogue drones' (unregulated UAVs) ensuring safety at vital locations. The AI-powered system would be an assistance to law enforcement agencies, security services, armed forces in order to secure air space over critical civilian and military installations by 'rogue' drones. The drones can hack into the GPS navigation system of the 'rogue drones' forcing it to change its flight path or make a safe landing, a press release said.



INDIAN JOURNALISM STUDENTS WIN INAUGURAL IJA AWARD

Two Indian girls studying in a British university have jointly won the inaugural award instituted by the Indian Journalists Association (IJA) for Indian students producing the best content on a postgraduate journalism course in the UK. IJA is a 73-year-old organisation representing UK-based journalists covering Indian affairs. Janani Suri and Malika Malhotra, students of International Journalism in the Cardiff University, were declared joint winners of the IJA award for 2018-19.



If police fail to enforce law, democracy fails: Doval

4



Digvijaya blames five BJP leaders for 'horse-trading'

5



HC dismisses Kochhar's plea against termination

8

TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Magha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Ekadashi: 11:46 am
Nakshatram: Puranasu: 10:38 am
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 10:59 am - 12:27 pm
Yamagandam: 03:23 pm - 04:52 pm
Varjyam: 06:07 pm - 07:37 pm
Gulika: 08:02 am - 09:30 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 08:19 am - 09:52 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:03 pm - 12:50 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 34/21
Humidity: 45%
Sunrise: 06:30
Sunset: 06:23
Current Weather Conditions
Updated March 05, 2020 5:00 PM

SAFETY FIRST

330 PERSONS IN AP UNDER OBSERVATION FOR COVID-19

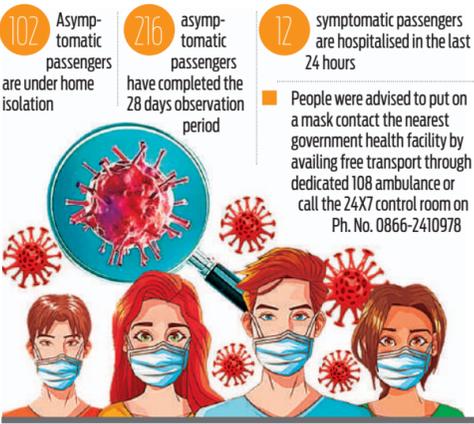
'No positive case in state; measures to contain spread, assure officials'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The director of Health and Family Welfare, Andhra Pradesh, through a media bulletin on Thursday announced that the administration has strengthened the surveillance for containment, control and prevention of COVID-19.

Till date 330 passengers from COVID-19 affected countries have been identified and placed under surveillance, the statement said, adding that as many as 102 people are under home isolation and 216 people completed the 28-day observation period.

According to the release issued by the state Nodal Officer, 12 passengers have been hospitalised for observation and are stable. The total samples collected till date are 23, of which 11 have been test-



ed negative for COVID-19 while the test result for the remaining 12 samples is awaited. The Nodal Officer said that a 24x7 control room has been set up in the state and all districts. Isolation wards have

been set up in all Government general and district hospitals.

The administration has advised the public to follow cough etiquette by covering the nose and mouth using a handkerchief /towel while sneezing/coughing.

Also, citizens were advised to wash their hands frequently with soap and water.

Those who have returned to the state from abroad, especially from countries that have been affected by coronavirus, were advised to remain under strict home isolation for 28 days from the date of arrival in India, irrespective of whether they showed the symptoms or not.

They were advised not to have close contact with other family members, allow any visitors or go out to public places.

2 coronavirus 'cases' test negative in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana on Thursday heaved a sigh of relief as samples of the two suspected cases of coronavirus — a techie and a sanitation worker in Apollo — sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune on Wednesday tested negative for COVID-19.

Health Minister Etela Rajender said, "Telangana people are fortunate. Both the suspects from Telangana tested negative. The Health Department has been working relentlessly for the past four days. I would request all people to continue the support that they have been giving us and helping people educate and give them courage."

3

AP govt proposes local body polls on March 21, 24 and 27

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a top-level meeting with State Election Commissioner Ramesh Kumar held here on Thursday, representatives of the state government suggested holding MPTC polls on March 21, municipal polls on March 24 and village panchayat polls on March 27 to complete the local body elections by the month-end.

The officials told Ramesh Kumar that this was the only way to complete the local body polls by March-end and to get the 14th Finance Commission funds to the state.

The meeting discussed the scope for holding simultaneous polls to MPTC, ZPTC and sarpanch posts. Higher authorities in the

The officials told the SEC that this was the only way to complete the local body polls by March-end



departments of Municipal Administration, Panchayat Raj and the police took part in the meeting.

The SEC told the meeting that a final decision would be taken after studying the feasibility of holding the polls by the month-end.

The official said that he would be writing to the Chief Secretary on behalf of the Election Commission for police security during the polls, drafting government servants

on poll duty and on other allied matters.

The quota for the local bodies would be decided by Friday and the details furnished to the government, the higher authorities told the State Election Commissioner.

Later, Ramesh Kumar held talks with officials of the Panchayat Raj, Municipal Administration and police departments on conducting the elections and the reservation system.

IMR-AG to invest Rs 12,000cr on steel plant in Kadapa district

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Swiss conglomerate IMR Metallurgical Resources-AG has proposed to set up a steel plant in Kadapa district by investing more than Rs 12,000 crore with an annual production capacity of 10 million tonnes.

This was disclosed by the representatives of the company who held discussions with Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at his camp office in Tadepalli on Thursday.

The representatives said that the activities of the company were spread in Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico, Columbia, Italy, Ukraine and India pertaining to mining of coal, iron ore and gold. The company is



Hans Radolf Weld, chairman of Swiss conglomerate IMR-AG, is felicitated by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at his camp office at Tadepalli on Thursday.

also involved in the power production and steel industries. The CM said that there would be scope for improving

industrialisation in Kadapa district once the proposed steel plant comes up.

3

Excise to strengthen enforcement wing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to depute two-thirds of the prohibition and excise department staff to the enforcement wing for curbing illegal liquor manufacture and sand excavation in the state.

This decision was taken at a review meeting held by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on liquor and sand policy here on Thursday.

The Chief Minister said that standard operating procedures have to be strictly adhered to for achieving best results in enforcing the policy.

He said the revolutionary changes in the governance by setting up village secretariats, Rythu Bharosa centres and YSR Village Clinics were being taken up to bring about a drastic change in the administration from the grassroots level. Illegal sand excavation and liquor manufacture were impediments in the smooth functioning of the administration, Jagan said. Hence, he said the police



Jagan said that the over 11,000-strong Mahila police should use the phones given to them to curb illegal liquor trade and sand mining

and prohibition and excise departments have to function strictly to curb such anomalies.

The services of over 11,000 Mahila police contingent has to be utilised effectively by making them use the phones given to them in curbing illegal liquor trade and sand excavation. The services of Mahila Mitra volunteers would also have to be utilised effectively, Jagan added.

Veteran journalist Potturi dead

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Veteran journalist Potturi Venkateswara Rao passed away at his residence in Vijayanagar Colony in Hyderabad on Thursday morning. He was 86.

Venkateswara Rao had been suffering from cancer and was had undergone treatment to a private hospital in Jubilee Hills. He had recently been discharged from hospital and had returned home.

He had served the field of journalism for over five decades. He was the Press Academy Chairman in undivided Andhra Pradesh.

The veteran journalist was born on February 8, 1934 in Potturu village of Guntur district. He commenced his journalism career in 1957 with Andhra Janata and went on to serve eminent dailies like Andhra Bhoomi, Eenadu and Andhra Prabha.

He authored several books. His works like Prikala Meti Viluvulu, Chintana and Chirasmaraneeyulu brought him recognition.

Former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu consoled the death and conveyed his profound sympathies to bereaved family members.

YSRCP MP Vijaya Sai Reddy and TDP leader Nara Lokesh conveyed condolence messages through Twitter.

3

MP Revanth Reddy arrested by TS cops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Narsingi police arrested TPC working president and Malkajigiri MP Revanth Reddy on Thursday for allegedly operating a spy drone to record details of TRS working president and minister KT Rama Rao's farmhouse at Janwada.

Six persons, identified as Poreddy Praveen Paul Reddy, Mangi Jaipal Reddy, Mandada Vijay Simha Reddy, Darga Rajesh, Elubandi Shiva and Veeresh, were arrested in this connection on Wednesday and remanded to custody. They were arrested for using drones without permission, while Revanth and his brother Krishna Reddy were named as the accused.

Police refuted the claim of the MP that he was arrested at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Shamshabad amidst a ruckus and said that Reddy himself surrendered at Narsingi PS. The MP argued with the police how his name



could be included in the case. Officials then explained his involvement and the evidence available incriminating him, adding that the MP refused to cooperate with the police.

The police registered cases under Sections 188, 120b, 109 of the IPC and 11a against the accused.

Following his arrest, Reddy was produced before the court, after which he was remanded to judicial custody for a period of 14 days.

TN request on water is fair, KCR tells Jagan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrababu Naidu, in response to a request from a delegation of Ministers and officers from Tamil Nadu Government, has in principle agreed to supply drinking water for Tamil Nadu in consultation with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS

Jaganmohan Reddy from a perennial and assured source. The Chief Minister suggested the members of delegation to send a formal request proposal from Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to him and also to Jaganmohan Reddy. KCR, over tele-

phone mentioned to Jagan about the request of the Tamil Nadu delegation, what he suggested to the TN ministers and how in principle it could be agreed to provide drinking water.

He told Jagan that since the suffering of Tamil

Nadu is a known fact, they can extend cooperation to the state.

KCR suggested to the Tamil Nadu Ministers that soon after receiving the proposal there should be a meeting between officials and experts of the three states to prepare a report based on the discussions to proceed further.

3

Probe if Covid-19 originated from Sonia home: MP

Uproar in Lok Sabha over shocker from Hanuman Beniwal of RLP, an ally of the BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha on Thursday witnessed uproar over a controversial remark by a RLP MP, who is a BJP ally, against the Gandhi family during a discussion on coronavirus, leading to adjournment of proceedings for over an hour.

Congress members stormed the Well of the House as soon as Hanuman Beniwal said there should be a probe on whether coronavirus is being

Rahul Gandhi had forewarned the government on the impending threat from coronavirus. There should be a probe to find out if the spread of the virus originated from Sonia Gandhi's home

— HANUMAN BENIWAL, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, RLP

spread from the "home" of Congress President Sonia Gandhi as a large number of



people who were found to be affected by the virus are from Italy.

Fourteen Italians have tested positive for coronavirus in India.

"Earlier, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that party leader Rahul Gandhi had forewarned the government on the impending threat from coronavirus.

"There should be a probe to find out if the spread of the virus originated from Sonia Gandhi's home," the Rajasthan MP remarked.

With this, the Congress

members rushed to the Well of the House strongly protesting and shouting slogans, tearing papers and throwing some on the table of the Speaker.

Rajendra Agarwal, who was in the chair, immediately adjourned the House till 2 pm.

Leaders of various parties were speaking in Lok Sabha after Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan made a statement on steps taken by the government to control spread of coronavirus.

3

DEALING WITH EXAM BLUES

Parents exhorted not to exert pressure on wards

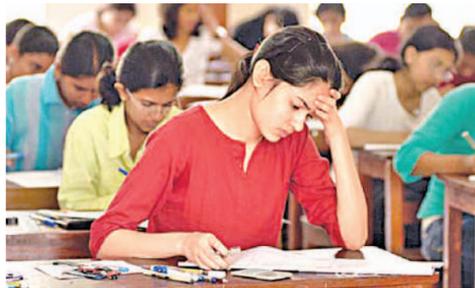
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Children's Rights Protection Commission chairperson G Hymavathi appealed to parents and teachers not to exert pressure on children during exams, as children need mental and physical health besides concentration.

Addressing a review meeting here on Thursday, she said that parents should show attention towards children till they attain the age of 18 years.

Hymavathi said that parents and teachers should not make the students feel stress about marks and rank, instead, they should encourage them to perform well in exams and added that students should spare more time on subjects, which they are weak and discuss those with friends.

She appealed to parents and the college management to judge the calibre of students and encourage them to fare well in exams. If the student does not get the result as per expectations, they should counsel them so that they would not resort to the extreme



out of frustration; they should build confidence in them stating that if they prepare well, they can perform well in the next attempt

She recalled that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has

been introducing new educational policies to encourage students of all sections to pursue education in a good environment. Programmes like 'Mana Badi', 'Nadu-Nedu', 'Amma Vodi', No bag Day and others to create interest among students to come to the school besides fee reimburse-

ment, scholarships, 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana', she said.

She further stated that rape of two minors in Visakhapatnam district was brought to the notice of the Superintendent of Police recently; a thorough inquiry will be conducted into the incident and stern action will be taken against the culprits besides providing the best treatment to the victims without delay.

As the minors underwent a trauma, protection should be provided to them, she said. She appealed to girls below 18

● Children's Rights Protection Commission chairperson G Hymavathi appealed to parents and the college management to judge the calibre of students and encourage them to fare well in exams

● If the student does not get the result as per expectations, they should counsel them so that they would not resort to the extreme steps out of frustration; they should build confidence in them stating that if they prepare well, they can perform well in the next attempt

years to complain to the Commissioner APSCPCR or mail to cp.apscpcr2017@gmail.com, if they face any problem.



CM making mockery of democracy: APCC chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president S Sailajana came down heavily on Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy for setting targets to the ministers to win 90 per cent seats in the upcoming local body elections.

The Chief Minister has no clarity between the Cabinet and the party meetings and found fault with him for setting targets to ministers failing which they would have to tender resignations. He alleged that by setting targets, he is giving them a free hand to do whatever they want to win the elections. He appealed to the Election Commission to take note of the instructions given by the Chief Minister to the ministers and make sure that elections were conducted peacefully and democratically. The Chief Minister is making mockery of democracy, he alleged.

The Chief Minister has no clarity between the Cabinet and the party meetings and found fault with him for setting targets to ministers failing which they would have to tender resignations

COMPETITION ON 'SPACE LAW' BEGINS

Moot Court helps students hone their advocacy skills

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A four-day National Moot Court competition on 'Space Law' began at GITAM Deemed to be University here on Thursday.

GITAM School of Law Moot and Advocacy Committee (GMAC) is organising the event in the name of GITAM Founder President

MVVS Murthi. Teams from leading Law Schools like NUSRL-Ranchi, RGNUL-Patnala, DSNLU-Visakhapatnam, HNLU-Raipur, NLU-Odisha, School of Excellence-Chennai, Symbiosis Law School, Dr BR Ambedkar College of Law (AU) participated in the event.

While inaugurating the National Moot Court Competition, GITAM Vice-Chancellor Prof K Sivaramakrishna mentioned that Moot Court is great platform for students to develop interpersonal and advocacy skills.

He also called for sharpening the competence of legal professionals, ensuring an enabling situation for research and creating legal awareness in the common man. He mentioned that participation in Moot Court competitions enhances the researching and oratory skills of the student at the same time preparing the student to experience reality of a court room. Competing in Space Law Moot Court competitions not only provides students an opportunity to represent their institutions but also helps develop their research and oratory skills necessary in the Space Law, he added.

DRDO former Director, GITAM Chief, Scientist MVKV Prasad, said that the growth of



GITAM Vice-Chancellor Prof K Sivaramakrishna addresses a gathering at the National Moot Court competition in Visakhapatnam on Thursday

● GITAM Vice-Chancellor Prof K Sivaramakrishna mentioned that participation in Moot Court competitions enhances the researching and oratory skills of the student at the same time preparing the student to experience reality of a court room

● Competing in Space Law Moot Court competitions not only provides students an opportunity to represent their institutions but also helps develop their research and oratory skills necessary in the Space Law, he added

orbital space debris, missile tests, failures in space experiments, accidents in space are leading to international legal issues.

GITAM School of Law Director Prof Anitha Rao said that progressive development of Space Law halted after the moon agreement in 1979 due to the divergence in the opinion of the States. She mentioned that the initial stage of space developments has been more in terms of scientific activities but the commercial use of space is leading new problems.

She observed that existing international space treaty

regime is inadequate to deal with manifold nuances of space activities. She pointed that the legal issues need urgent solution, since they are capable of overturning the gift of technological growth into a curse. She informed that GITAM Law School is planning to prepare a draft Visakhapatnam declaration of 2020 on space laws to send the same to government. Eminent panel of judges comprising academicians, policy makers, bar and bench having expertise in the area of Space Law would be judging the various rounds, informed by the organisers.

CAPSULE

Admar Mutt pontiff at Tirumala

TIRUMALA: Viswapriya Theertha Swamiji of Admar Mutt, Udipi, visited Sri Venkateshwara Swamy temple at Tirumala on Thursday. On his arrival in front of Sri Venkateshwara Swamy temple, additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy, temple deputy executive officer Haridranath and priests welcomed him with temple honours and led him to sanctum sanctorum.



LP launches book on Gona Buddha Reddy

VIJAYAWADA: N Lakshmi Parvathi, Chairperson, Telugu Akademi, launched a book titled 'Research on Gona Buddha Reddy's Ranganatha Ramayanam' compiled by Dr E Sivanagi Reddy, CEO, Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati (CCVA), which was published by Raghavendra Publishers here on Thursday. She said that Gona Buddha Reddy's Ranganatha Ramayanam occupies a prominent place in medieval Telugu literature and provides some new aspects. Hence, it could draw the attention of many critics and analysts. Lakshmi Parvathi complimented Dr Sivanagi Reddy and publisher D Raghavendra Rao for bringing out the book. Later, organisers felicitated the chief guest Lakshmi Parvathi with a shawl and memento.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES

GOLD	₹ 42,230 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 45,800 (1kg)
	₹ 900

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹96
Without Skin	₹109
Broiler at Farm	₹66

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	275
VIJAYAWADA	310
VISAKHAPATNAM	350
RETAIL PRICE (ON VIJAYAWADA)	₹3.10



Vijayawada lad enters Spell Bee finals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Manjunatha Sharma from St John's High School, Vijayawada, studying Class IX emerged as the winner in the Classmate Spell Bee Season 12 and will now compete in the finals at the national-level. Earlier, semi-finals were conducted in Mumbai. The winner will win a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh, a trip to the White House, and to witness the Scripps National Spelling Bee-2020 accompanied by a parent in Washington DC, USA, in an all-expenses-paid trip.

Shailendra Tyagi, Chief Executive, ITC's Education and Stationery Products Business, said, "Classmate believes that every child is unique and so is every word. Hence, this year's theme for the competition was on the brand's philosophy of celebrating uniqueness."

'Yoga should be an integral part of life'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A week-long special camp of the National Service Scheme (NSS) of SRK Institute organised at Enikepadu village in Vijayawada rural mandal concluded on March 4, said principal M Ekambaram Naidu here on Thursday.

He said that on the last day of the special camp, NSS volunteers in association with Patamata Datta Kriya Yoga team of Sri Ganapati Sachidananda Swamy Ashramam created awareness among students of Zilla Parishad High School about the

importance of yoga. Vijay, trainer of Datta Kriya Yoga team, said that yoga should be an integral part of human life and it helps children in physical, emotional, social and all-round development. Performing yoga regularly gives many benefits such as physical fitness and managing stress, he added. NSS unit also organised a free medical camp at Enikepadu where nearly 100 people got benefited, while the principal said that NSS volunteers will create awareness among people in the village and measures to be taken to keep coronavirus at bay.

Global digital building infra leader opens outlet in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Legrand India, a global leader in electrical and digital building infrastructure, inaugurated its 10th state-of-the-art experience centre, Innoval, housing a range of connected (IOT) devices in Vizag on Thursday.

Innoval will host its India Group company products - Legrand, Numeric and Valrack. Globally Innoval's are present in France, Greece, Chile, Brazil, Colombia and Dubai. Innoval made its first-time entry in the Asia Pacific region with its launch in Mumbai, followed by

its successful launches in Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Dehradun, Coimbatore, Kochi, Chennai, Chandigarh, Lucknow and its first voice controlled experiential centre in Bengaluru. The company is now all set to amaze the Vizag market with its experiential centre.

Tony Berland, CEO and Managing Director, Legrand India, said, "The breadth of Legrand's offer has diversified over the last 20 years in India. It has developed product solution for various industries and its user (investors, system inte-

grator, architects, panel builder, end customer etc.) To speak to these new aged customers and consolidate its credibility with regard to new offers and expertise."

"Today with the launch in Vizag, we plan to reach out to our customers and business partners in the city. Customers are evolving and becoming more involved towards the product they are buying. Innoval allows Legrand to be more than just a supplier, rather to act as a genuine partner, creating close ties with the electrical and digital trade."



Students of Uddandapuram Zilla Parishad High School in Nakkapalli mandal of Visakhapatnam district strike a pose at a cancer screening campaign organised by the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre on Thursday

Homi Bhabha holds cancer screening for girl students

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In line with vision to preventing incidence of cervical cancer among adolescents, Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (HBCH & RC) here organised a cancer screening campaign for Class VI and VII students of Uddandapuram Zilla Parishad High School in Nakkapalli mandal of Visakhapatnam district here on Thursday.

"Mothers between 30 and 35 are thoroughly screened and daughters in the age group of 10 to 14 were vaccinated for Human Papillomavirus (HPV), that causes cervical cancer, second most commonly diagnosed cancer in the

country," said Dr Leela, Gynec Oncologist of HBCH & RC. "The aim of this screening was to determine how aware mothers are about cervical cancer prevention in their adolescent daughters with a view to developing strategies for expanding primary cervical cancer prevention for adolescent girls through the mothers' involvement," Dr D Raghunatha Rao, Director of HBCH & RC.

Dwivedula Narasimha Satry and his wife Lakshmi, who run a charity from Boston, USA sponsors for the programme, and they also work for rural women's cancer screening in the north coastal Andhra Pradesh and Warangal. Chand Pasha, founder of BigHelp, a charitable foundation, which works exclusively to develop school infrastructure and dedicated for uplifting the underprivileged children in the country through education also graced the occasion.

Orka opens outlet in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Orka, an internationally inspired, wellness brand, with an intention to revolutionise healthy dining experience has now opened doors in the city. Noted actor Thakur Anoop Singh is the brand ambassador of Orka and he inaugurated it here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that it has been an association, which has grown very close to his heart as the vision is in line with his values and they have the right resources to implement the same and have been doing fantabulous so far.

Sai, franchise partner and a young entrepreneur, said that the cafe aspires to be that 'one solution' on every street of the city, that encourages a healthy lifestyle by making it approachable, affordable and appealing with its inspiring and mouth-watering food concepts and wellness-services.



Royal Bengal tigress to roar in Vizag zoo

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In exchange, Vizag zoo had sent Star Tortoises (2:2) to Kanan-Pendari Zoological Garden on March 2 by train. The tigress, Durga, is 16-month old. She was brought in from Bilaspur Zoo in Korba-VSP Express (Train No 18518).

The animal is now kept under quarantine in Animal Rescue Centre of the zoological park. "We received good support from railway officials at Bilaspur Division of South East, Central Railways and Waltair Division of East-Coast Railways for the suc-



Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam, received a Royal Bengal tiger (female) from Kanan-Pendari Zoological Garden, Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh on Thursday

cessful completion of the animal exchange programme," said the zoo cura-

tor. The tigress is under observation during the quarantine period. It will be

released into the respective enclosure for visitors display on completion of quarantine

NEET PG, MDS results announced

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NEET PG and MDS-2020 rank wise lists of candidates, who studied MBBS/ BDS in the State (Based on the information provided by the candidates in the application form), and appeared NEET PG/MDS-2020 conducted by NBE are displayed on Dr NTR University of Health Sciences website <http://ntr.uhs.ac.in>, said Dr NTR University of Health Sciences Registrar Dr K Shankar in a release here on



Thursday. He informed that the final merit position will be displayed only after submission of online application in response to the university notification, which will be issued soon, after verification of original certificates eligibility as per rules.

CAPSULE



YSRCP Vasantha Krishna Prasad offers prayers at Hazrat Syed Shah Bukhari Urs at Kondapalli village in Krishna district on Thursday

Hazrat Syed Shah Bukhari Urs begins
VIJAYAWADA: The 423rd Hazrat Syed Shah Bukhari Urs commenced at Kondapalli village on a grand note on Thursday. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy offered chadar, which was handed over to the organisers of the Urs by Minister for Endowments Velampalli Srinivas. Muslim fraternity took part in large numbers to mark the occasion. Committee chairman Md Altaf and other members were present on the occasion.



Actress Jenny Honey and model Nikita relish ice creams at Temptations after inaugurating it in Vijayawada on Thursday

Flavours of Season' ice creams launched

VIJAYAWADA: Actress Jenny Honey and model Nikita launched 'Flavours of Season' ice creams at Temptations here on Thursday. Temptations introduced flavors like apricot, red velvet in cheese valley, thandai rose and others. The actress and the model relished the exotic flavours at the launch. Speaking on the occasion, they said that Temptations is one of the recognised brands in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and has its presence in many cities across the country. Temptations is a renowned specialist for making memories into lifetime experiences and is certainly the best place to unwind, relax and explore the rich myriad tastes and flavours.

Veteran journalist Potturi dead

Continued from Page 1

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababoo Naidu condoled the death of Potturi Venkateswara Rao and prayed that his soul rests in peace. Minister Jagadish Reddy said that the void created by his death would never be filled. He was described as a "father figure in the field of journalism". Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya described Potturi Venkateswara Rao as one of the first generation journalists. In a message, he conveyed his profound grief to the bereaved family. Jana Sena president Pawan Kalyan, who called Venkateswara Rao a towering journalist, said that his passing was an irreplaceable loss to the field of journalism.

Mudasarlova may house SCoR zonal headquarters

SUMIT ONKA
 ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



During a meeting of stakeholders conducted in the city on Thursday to finalise the new Tourism Policy (2020-25), Minister for Tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, who chaired the meeting, urged the Waltair Railway Division, ADRM, Akshay Saxena, to commence the work for setting up of the new railway zone at the earliest

While there is public outcry simmering over the delay in commencement of works even after one year of announcement of new railway zone, the South Coast Railway (SCoR) with headquarters in Vizag, the Andhra Pradesh government is yet to handover the land where the railways has planned to construct the zonal headquarter office.

In a land exchange understanding with the State government, the railways gave 52 acres parcel at Mudasarlova in the city. The railways had allowed various construction projects, including the Telugu Talli flyover of the government, on its land. Hence, in 2013, the State government had assured the railways to provide the land in Mudasarlova. However, the revenue record is yet to reflect the transfer of the land from AP government to railways.

During a meeting of stakeholders conducted in the city on Thursday to finalise the new Tourism Policy (2020-25), Minister for Tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, who chaired the meeting, urged the Waltair Railway Division, ADRM, Akshay Saxena, to commence the work for setting up of the new

railway zone at the earliest. The ADRM told the minister that the funds have been sanctioned for the new railway zone, hence, the works would begin soon. However, they are waiting for the land promised to the railways in Mudasarlova to be handed over officially so as to start

any construction works there. Around 20 acres of the 52 acres land parcel is yet to be acquired by the administration here. An agreement for transfer of land was signed on January 12, 2016. However, the change in ownership in favour of railways is yet to reflect on the

revenue records. The matter is being pursued," said the official. The railways seems to have been planning to build SCoR headquarters at either Wireless Colony, which is only one km from the railway station and another is Mudasarlova, as it is a lush green area with little pollution. However, the statement of the ADRM on Thursday, hints that Mudasarlova may house the SCoR zonal headquarter office. The new zonal office will reportedly accommodate two conference halls, chambers for the general manager and assistant general manager of Disaster Management Centre, a library, a canteen, and an auditorium.

The Central government in February 2019 had announced that a railway zone in Andhra Pradesh will be implemented with Vizag as its headquarters. The zone will be named as the South Coast Railway (SCoR). It will comprise the existing Guntakal, Guntur, and Vijayawada Divisions. Furthermore, the Waltair division will be divided into two parts. One part will be incorporated in the new South Coast Railway (SCoR) and the other will be converted into a New Division under East Coast Railway in Odisha.

Kanna exhorts cadre to get ready for local body polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana called upon the party cadre to get ready for local body elections, along with Jana Sena. Addressing the media here on Thursday, he said a committee will be set up for the polls headed by Purandeswari.

He exhorted the party cadre to expose the factional politics of YSRCP and alleged that the government was promoting duplicate liquor brands and the YSRCP activists are minting money through belt shops.

He reminded that the government had assured that it would not increase electricity charges but deceived the poor by collecting development charges after coming to power. He said that fuel prices in the State are more when compared to other States and the government would shortly increase registration charges.

● BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana called upon the party workers to expose the ruling party

● People voted to the YSRCP assuming that it would provide good governance but they are repenting for their decision due to the anti-people policies of the government

● He lambasted both the YSRCP and TDP for leaving fulfilling the promise they made to people

He pointed out that the government was taking decisions against people, including capital Amaravati. He advised the party cadre to highlight the anti-people policies of the government during the local body elections and pointed out that all the development works in the rural areas are being taken up with the funds allocated by the

Central government. He said except BJP no other political party has the right to seek votes, as they took the voters for a ride by not fulfilling promises they had made during the elections. People are paying price for voting to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, as he does not have clarity about governance, he pointed out.

Naidu cheated BCs, alleges Parthasarathi

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The YSRCP has said that TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu cheated BCs on many counts and dared for an open debate while questioning why he had failed to increase the reservations during his tenure.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, YSRCP MLA K Parthasarathi said, "While the elections for local bodies were due in 2018, he did not conduct them but had run the show through special officers. He never bothered to address the issues of BCs nor did he take steps to enhance the reservations to BCs by conducting socio-economic survey."

While he did not make use of the Backward Classes Finance Cooperative Corporation to conduct the economic survey, which forms the basis for enhanced reservations, he has stalled the elections by moving to the High Court, through his cadre, against the decision of YS Jaganmohan Reddy government of giving 59.85% quota. When the court did not allow it, now he is planning to go further by moving the apex court, which shows that his intention is only to stall the elections. The Chief Minister, on the other hand, has asked the Corporation to conduct economic survey, which shows his commitment towards BCs.

BCs had benefited during



While the elections for local bodies were due in 2018, he did not conduct them but had run the show through special officers. He never bothered to address the issues of BCs nor did he take steps to enhance the reservations to BCs by conducting socio-economic survey

— K PARTHASARATHI
 YSRCP MLA

the tenure of YS Rajasekhara Reddy, and in the regime of YS Jaganmohan Reddy, while they were always taken for a ride by N Chandrababu Naidu. "We are prepared for an open debate on the issue," he said. "Our government has set up BC Corporation and has earmarked funds, provided reservations for BCs in nominated posts and contract works, gave Cabinet berths and the post of Deputy Chief Minister post," he pointed out.

IMR-AG to invest Rs 12,000cr on steel plant...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister added that the government was ready to provide all the basic infrastructure facilities.

The Chief Minister said Krishnapatnam port, railway connectivity and highways were readily available for transportation purposes. Moreover, it would provide better employment opportunities to the local people. The IMR representatives said that the steel plant would help in transforming the region into a steel hub.

Chief Secretary Neelam Sawhney, Industries Special Chief Secretary Rajat Bhargav, IMR-AG chairman Hans Radolf Weld, company director Anirudh Misra, project president Arindam De, Finance Director Sanjay Sinha, and AP Integrated Steel Managing Director P Madhusudhan were among those present during the meeting.

The Chief Minister had laid foundation stone for a Kadapa Steel Plant on December 23, 2019. The proposed plant is part of the assurances given by the Central government during state bifurcation and has a capacity of 30 lakh tonnes. The government has entered into a deal with NMDC for the supply of iron ore for the proposed Kadapa Steel Plant.

2 transport cos in dock for plying banned BS III vehicles

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On receiving information about BS-III vehicles, which were banned on March 31, 2017, are plying on the roads, the Andhra Pradesh Transport Vigilance officers launched a probe and found that two transport companies namely C Gopal Reddy and Company and Jathadhara Industries Private Limited are plying BS-III vehicles, said Andhra Pradesh Transport Vigilance Joint Commissioner SAV Prasad Rao.

He said that they had purchased vehicles from Ashok Leyland Company as scrap by producing fabricated documents and registered them as BS IV vehicles in Nagaland in August 2018.

Addressing the media here on Thursday, he said that the BS III model sales were stopped on March 31, 2017, as per the Supreme Court Order, however, these two companies registered their vehicles producing fake documents and stern action will be taken against the culprits for violating the rules under the Motor Vehicles Act and IPC.

He said the transport department seized 23 vehicles, which were registered with fake documents and has been trying to find out the remaining vehicles. He said some accused had purchased BS III standard trucks from Ashok Leyland in Chennai and Uttarakhand and registered these vehicles in Kohima of Nagaland with fake documents that these vehicles



Andhra Pradesh Transport Vigilance Joint Commissioner SAV Prasad Rao. the transport department seized 23 vehicles, which were registered with fake documents and has been trying to find out the remaining vehicles. at the earliest

were BS IV standard vehicles. He said the transport department identified some persons and booked four cases. He said two vehicles were registered in the name of C Gopal Reddy and Company and four vehicles were registered in the name of Jathadhara Industries Private Limited in Anantapur.

He said registration of BS III vehicles as BS IV vehicles is a crime, as per the Motor Vehicle Act and stringent action will be taken for doing so. He said the transport department set up a Task Force team and sent to Nagaland to verify the registrations of BS III Ashok Leyland vehicles purchased in Chennai and Uttarakhand in 2017.

He said the persons, who registered vehicles, have given temporary addresses in Kohima and permanent address in Anantapur district. He said criminal cases would be booked against the persons for producing fake documents to register the outdated vehicles with BS IV standard and producing NOC to resell the vehicles.

He said as per the norms of the transport department, the outdated vehicles are considered as scrap and these vehicles should not be registered at any cost.

2 coronavirus 'cases' test...

Continued from Page 1

Etela asked: "Are we in 21st century or primitive age? How can people fight over the issue that the virus would spread if the windows of the patient's house are open? Building was evacuated over a lady employee in Mindspace being infected with corona.

Our entire police and IT department tried to calm down the situation there. Her reports are negative; don't overreact as it will lead to bad consequences. We are taking measures". If any COVID-19 positive patient is admitted to a private hospital, the Health Department will direct them how to provide treatment, prices that can be charged. Furthermore, "CONTACTS" of COVID-19 positive cases who are advised home isolation by Health Department should be confined only to one room in their homes for a period of 28 days.

'AP fishermen using banned nets in TS waters'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav on Thursday directed Commissioner of Fisheries Dr C Suvarna to act against fishermen from Andhra Pradesh for allegedly using banned and unscientific fishing nets in Telangana river waters. The Minister wanted stern

action to be taken against those who were hindering the efforts of the Telangana government for the welfare of the fishermen in the State.

Speaking to the Collectors of Nagarkurnool and Wanaparthy districts, he said the government released fishlings worth crores of rupees into the Srisailem backwaters (Krishna River) for the benefit of

Telangana fishermen, but certain unscrupulous fishermen from AP were using banned nets and fishing in the waters. He asked them not to hesitate and initiate action on such fishermen illegally entering into the State waters.

In written orders to the district Police and Fishery Department, Talasani wanted teams to be constituted under

Mahipal, a Fishery Department officer, to restrict the movement of the illegal fishermen who were catching fishlings released into the backwaters.

The Minister also wanted the department to take the issue to the notice of their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh as a majority of illegal fishermen fishing in Telangana waters are from the sibling State.

Elaborate arrangements made for local body elections in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The authorities concerned are making elaborate arrangements for transparent and peaceful conduct of polls, said State Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar here on Thursday. The Election Commission held talks with officials of the Panchayat Raj, Municipal Administration and police. The SEC said that guidelines have been forwarded to the Collectors and Superintendents of Police to conduct elections on fair and peaceful manner.

He said that people should cast their votes freely in large numbers in the local body elections. Referring to the security, he said that the problematic areas were identified and special security measures will be taken in such areas. Check posts will be set up on the borders of inter-dis-

● State Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar said that 1.4 lakh ballot boxes are available in the State and the neighbouring Telangana and Odisha states have agreed to lend 40,000 boxes each for the local body elections

Poll

● He said that a meeting with the leaders of the political parties will be convened on Friday after conducting a meeting with the Chief Secretary, the DGP and Principal Secretaries of Panchayat and Municipal Administration departments

tract and inter-state with the help of police. The SEC said that a meeting with the Collectors and Superintendents of Police will be held on Friday to give them guidance and suggestions.

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have agreed to lend 40,000 boxes each for the local body elections. He said that a meeting with the leaders of the political parties will be conducted on Friday after conducting a meeting with the Chief Secretary, the DGP and Principal Secretaries of Panchayat and Municipal Administration departments.

RBI caps withdrawals from Yes Bank

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Troubled private sector lender Yes Bank was placed under a "moratorium" on late Thursday, with the RBI capping depositor withdrawals at Rs 50,000 per account for a month and superseding the board with immediate effect.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) took the decision in consultation with the government to protect depositors' interest. The RBI also superseded the board of Yes Bank, which has not been able to raise required capital for the last six months. It also appointed former Chief Financial Officer of SBI, Prashant Kumar as the administrator of Yes Bank.

"The Reserve Bank came to the conclusion that in the absence of a credible revival plan, and in public interest and the interest of the bank's depositors, it had no alternative but to apply to the Central government for imposing a moratorium under Section 45 of the Banking Regulation



The RBI also superseded the board of Yes Bank, which has not been able to raise required capital for the last six months. It also appointed former Chief Financial Officer of SBI, Prashant Kumar as the administrator of Yes Bank

Act, 1949," the RBI said in a statement late in the evening. The statement said the bank management had indicated that it was in talks with various investors and they were likely to be successful. The bank was also engaged with a few private equity firms for exploring opportunities to

infuse capital. "These investors did hold discussions with senior officials of the Reserve Bank but for various reasons eventually did not infuse any capital. "Since a bank and market-led revival is a preferred option over a regulatory restructuring, the Reserve Bank made all efforts to facil-

itate such a process and gave adequate opportunity to the bank's management to draw up a credible revival plan, which did not materialise," the statement said.

In the meantime, the bank was facing regular outflow of liquidity, the apex bank said, justifying its actions. The actions come hours after sources said the government has approved a plan wherein State Bank of India (SBI) and other financial institutions would bailout Yes Bank. If the plan is implemented, it would be the first major instance in many years where a private sector lender would be bailed out using public money.

In 2004, Global Trust Bank was amalgamated with Oriental Bank of Commerce and in 2006, IDBI Bank took over United Western Bank. The curbs on Yes Bank come after similar action was taken against fraud-hit cooperative lender PMC Bank in September, where depositors are still in the lurch.

TN request on water is fair, KCR tells...

Continued from Page 1

Let the officials reach a consensus for taking a final decision, he said. KCR said that as and when this materialises, "Let India learn through this as to how states can cooperate each other".

The delegation from Tamil Nadu comprised Ministers SP Velumani and D Jayakumar and PWD Secretary Dr K Manivanan, along with adviser Dr M Sheelapriya.

In the meeting the delegation held with Ministers KT Rama Rao, Vemula Prashanth Reddy and Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Chief Adviser Rajiv Sharma, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, Principal Secretary Irrigation Rajat Kumar, CMO officers S Narsing Rao, Smitha Sabharwal, OSD to CM Sridhar Rao Deshpande, Engineer in Chief Muralidhar Rao and CE Interstate water Narasimha Rao were present.



LG visits riot-hit areas of Delhi; takes stock of situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal on Thursday visited the riot-affected areas of northeast Delhi and took stock of the situation there.

Bajjal held a review meeting with officials on several issues, including security. He also held a meeting with peace committees in northeast Delhi.

The Delhi Police till Wednesday had registered 531 FIRs and arrested or detained

The Delhi Police till Wednesday had registered 531 FIRs and arrested or detained 1,647 people in connection with the communal violence that claimed at least 42 lives

1,647 people in connection with the communal violence that claimed at least 42 lives.

Forty-seven of the cases were registered under the Arms Act, an officer said. The situation in the riot-

affected areas is under control, police said. Security forces continue to be deployed in riot-affected areas and have been conducting regular flag marches to ensure that the situation remains calm.

Uproar in Raj assembly over Dalit girl's rape

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Noisy scenes were witnessed in the Rajasthan assembly on Thursday as Opposition legislators demanded that the government accept a memorandum of a delegation protesting outside the House against the rape of a Dalit girl in Alwar's Ramgarh Pachawara.

Deputy Leader of Opposition Rajendra Rathore had sought permission to raise the issue, saying the delegation wanted to submit a memorandum to the home minister, which was "not being allowed".

Speaker C P Joshi did not allow further discussion and continued with the proceedings even as the Opposition legislators raised slogans and entered the well of the House.

Leader of Opposition and Gulab Chand Kataria said, "We will not let the House function until the memorandum is accepted."

Responding to it, Power Minister B D Kalla said that the members cannot compel the Chair. He stressed that the government has not denied accepting any memorandum but the Opposition cannot compel it to do so.

As BJP legislators continued raising slogans, Speaker C P Joshi said they can't compel or "dictate" the chair.

MOSQUE IN AYODHYA

Will announce details of trust to build after Holi: Zufar Farooqui

PNS ■ GURGAON

Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board on Thursday said it would announce sometime after Holi the details of the planned trust for the construction of a mosque in Ayodhya. Waqf Board chairman Zufar Farooqui told this to reporters after a meeting of the board in which, he said, the issue of the formation of the proposed trust was not discussed today.

"The issue of the proposed trust for the construction of a mosque as well as an Indo-Islamic research centre, a hospital and a library on the five-acre plot allotted following the Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict was not on the agenda of the meeting today," said Farooqui. He said the meeting discussed other issues related to the Waqf and action taken on them. "Details about the trust and its members will be announced through a press conference after Holi," he said.

Holi falls next week on Tuesday, March 10. The Waqf Board, after its last meeting on February 24, in which it had decided to accept the five-acre land given by the state government for building a mosque in Ayodhya, had also said it would soon set up a trust for the construction of the mosque.



The issue of the proposed trust for the construction of a mosque as well as an Indo-Islamic research centre, a hospital and a library on the five-acre plot allotted following the Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict was not on the agenda of the meeting today

— ZUFAR FAROOQUI
Waqf Board chairman

The Board had also decided to build an Indo-Islamic research centre, a public library, a charitable hospital and other useful facilities on the land besides the mosque.

In a historic verdict in November on the Ramjanmabhooni-Babri Masjid dispute, the Supreme Court had ruled in favour of the construction of a temple.

If police fail to enforce law, democracy fails: Doval

PNS ■ GURGAON

Police should be seen by the common man as "credible and fair" and if it fails to enforce the law, democracy fails, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval said on Thursday while addressing young police personnel from across the country. The NSA asked police officials to ensure that impressions, such as the police only serves the privileged, which sully the image of the organisation are removed.

"Law-making is the most sacrosanct job in a democracy. It is not done by an imperial ruler or from the pulpit of a religious leader but by the representatives of the people and you are the enforcers of that law," he told the gathering. "If you fail, democracy fails," Doval said while inaugurating the 'Third young Superintendents of Police Conference' organised here by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), a police think-tank under the Union home ministry.

If the police personnel are not able to enforce the law, then framing of that law is immaterial. A law is as good as it is executed on the ground, he said. The comments by the NSA assume significance in the wake of the recent Delhi riots where the role and effectiveness of the police in controlling the violence has been questioned.

Doval said he had an over 50-



Doval said he had an over 50-year association with policing and intelligence since he joined the Indian Police Service (IPS) in 1968

year association with policing and intelligence since he joined the Indian Police Service (IPS) in 1968. "In a democracy, it is extremely important to be totally dedicated to the law. You should be doing things fairly and objectively," he said, adding it is also important that you are seen as credible.

Doval said perception about the police is important as people tend to latch on to a "stray" aberration involving a wrong policeman and then they think that to be the standard prototype of policemen and that is what

Indian police is all about.

"Perception gives confidence to the people, which enhances their trust level and makes their lives psychologically more secure," he said.

If the common man feels that they have got a police that is efficient, alert, honest, objective, professionally competent and friendly, the society gets a sense that all will be secure, Doval emphasised.

He urged the young police officers to understand the psychology of the people in the place of their posting and work

for them sincerely.

The NSA asked them to work for people in the society who feel "most neglected, unprivileged, those who feel there is lack of safety and security for them and who feel that their complaint will never reach the police".

"You should 'disabuse' the people from the impression that police is only there to serve the privileged," he said at the event.

The NSA said India being "enslaved" for long is sometimes linked to people's disenchantment with the police.

"Basically, we have been a society which has been enslaved for a very long time and an enslaved society always has a contempt for the people who are in authority and police is an instrument of government which has to enforce the law on the ground, which otherwise is only a scrap of paper," Doval said. "Police bring teeth to the law. Since they have to do that unpleasant work and since it is the mindset that the man who enforces the law is the ruler and we are the ruled or the slaves... that brings certain amount of aversion," he said.

Doval said in a democracy, when people themselves feel politically empowered, which they rightly should feel, they probably like it. This also takes the form of resistance and as part of that one sees police vehicles being put on fire during protests or violence, he said.

2 held with gold biscuits worth Rs 2.5 cr in Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Two persons were arrested in West Bengal's Darjeeling district with 5.83 kg gold biscuits, officials said on Wednesday.

The accused were arrested by sleuths of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) from two buses near the Bidhan Nagar area on Tuesday, they said.

Fifty pieces of foreign-made gold biscuits cumulatively weighing 5.83 kg, having a market value of Rs 2.53 crore, were seized from them, the officials said.

The accused admitted that the gold was smuggled from India from Bangladesh through the international border along the Coochbehar district, the DRI said.



Karnataka govt gives thrust to decongest Bangalore

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Recognising the importance of Bengaluru as the key driver of state's economy, the Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday mooted proposals to ease the notorious traffic congestion of the city by promoting the public transport system. "For the year 2020-21, a total amount of Rs 8,772 crore is provided for the Bengaluru development sector," he said presenting the State Budget in the Assembly. A comprehensive mobility programme for Bengaluru — half of the contribution of Karnataka gross state domestic product comes from the city alone — is prepared for the first time, he said.

Infrastructure facilities, transit based development and essential regulatory measures will be taken up with an objective of increasing the utilisation of public transport from 48 per cent to 73 per cent, Yediyurappa said.

The Chief Minister earmarked Rs 500 crore for the suburban railway project.

The total cost of the project is Rs 18,000 crore of which 20 per cent each will be shared by the Centre and the state, and



the rest of the 60 per cent raised through institutional loan.

The government committed in the budget to allocate Rs 100 crore every year for a period of seven years to the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) to purchase 1,500 diesel buses at an expenditure of Rs 600 crore.

As many as 30 air-conditioned electric buses will be added to the fleet of BMTC for which the government said it was providing Rs 100 crore to add 500 ordinary electric buses.

Yediyurappa said action has been taken to purchase 90 electric buses under the Smart

City Project to encourage mass transport and to provide effective Metro Feeder Transport facility for the Metro commuters. The government also proposed to implement electric bike taxi project to address the issue of last mile connectivity, and development of 'Bus Priority Lane' in 12 corridors having high traffic density in the city under Phase-2.

Taking a cue from Delhi government's free bus ride for women, the Karnataka government earmarked Rs 25 crore in this year's budget giving free passes to one lakh women labourers working in garment factories under the 'Vanitha Sangathi' scheme.

Two Keralite grannies selected for Nari Shakti award

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Centenarian Bhageerathi Amma and 96-year-old Karthiyayini Amma in Kerala have been jointly selected for the prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar for 2019 by the Central government for their exceptional contribution towards women's empowerment.

The award, the country's highest civilian honour for women, will be presented by President Ram Nath Kovind on International Women's day on March 8 at a function in Rashtrapathi Bhavan.

Proving that age is no bar in the quest for knowledge, the two had come out with flying colours in examinations conducted Kerala Literacy Mission.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had mentioned about the achievements of the two

women in his monthly "Mann Ki Baat" programme recently.

Bhageerathi amma had last year cleared the fourth standard equivalency examination, making her the oldest student in the country to emerge successful in

the test conducted by the state literacy mission at Kollam.

Karthiyayini Amma from Alapuzha had secured 98 marks out of 100 in "AkshraLaksham", a flagship programme of the state-run Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority, in October 2018. She became a role model for thousands of people who wish to be part of the literacy programmes.

The two women have received a letter from the Centre informing them about their selection for the award.

Bhageerathi amma, a great grandmother, had always yearned to study and gain knowledge.

Kerala to switch to geo-tubes for coastal conservation

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The 590-km coastline of Kerala would soon get protection from geo-tubes instead of conventional granite seawalls, thanks to the new coastal conservation plan of the Left government in the state.

Detailing the initiative at the Assembly, Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma on Thursday

said the government was planning to use off-shore breakwater system to protect the seashore.

It would bring in a change in the conventional practice of protecting coasts using boulders and sandbags.

The move was after taking into account environmental issues caused by the use of granite and other such materi-

als for constructing seawalls, the Minister said.

"The first initiative in this regard will be launched at Punnthura here this month," she said. A total of Rs 150 crore has been sanctioned from the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) for the whole project and Rs 17 crore was earmarked for Punnthura alone, the Minister said.



India becoming more prone to extreme hot weather: scientists

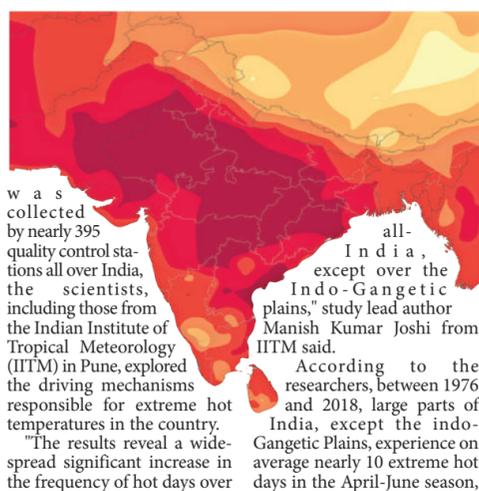
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extreme heat events such as those observed in Western Europe in 2003 and in Russia in 2010, which led to the death of nearly 1,000 people and multiple crop failures, are becoming more common in India, according to a study.

The study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, identified the factors leading to hot extreme weather events in India.

It assessed the change in frequency and intensity of such hot extremes over the country between the periods 1951-1975, and 1976-2018 using high-resolution daily maximum temperature dataset from the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Analysing this dataset, which



Before the 1976 climate shift, they said eastern and southern parts of India experienced significant increase in the frequency of hot days

which they said is approximately 25 per cent more than in the 1951-1975 period.

Before the 1976 climate shift, they said eastern and southern parts of India experienced significant increase in the frequency of hot days.

However, after this climate shift, the study noted that hot days have significantly increased over the northwestern parts of the interior peninsula, and along the western coast. Joshi and his team believe this indicates a spatial shift of temperature increasing trends

in India, particularly in the frequency of hot days.

According to the researchers, the increase in frequency of hot extremes is associated with an atypical high pressure atmospheric system over northern parts of India. This high-pressure system, the study reported, is linked to the flow of winds that make up anticyclones — large-scale circulation of winds around a central region of high atmospheric pressure which spins clockwise in the Earth's northern hemisphere, and counterclockwise in the south-



Maha: NOCs sought to rename Aurangabad as Sambhajinagar

AURANGABAD: The district administration has started the process of obtaining no-objection certificates from various departments, including Railways and India Post, to rename Aurangabad as Sambhajinagar, a senior official said on Thursday. BJP state president Chandrakant Patil had last week reiterated his party's demand to rename the city, with the Shiv Sena claiming that party supremo late Balasaheb Thackeray had already done so 25 years ago. The state government had asked the district administration to obtain NOCs from the railways and postal department to rename Aurangabad, acting Collector Bhanudas Palwe said. "The divisional commissioner's office asked us to obtain NOCs from the railways and postal department. As soon as we receive the documents, we will send them to higher officials," Palwe said.

'No bag day' on Saturdays for govt-run schools in Odisha

BERHAMPUUR: Students in government-run primary schools in Odisha's Ganjam district no longer need to carry bags on Saturdays under a new initiative that comes into force later this week, an official said. The objective of the "no bag day" programme is to allow students of the classes 1 to 5 to learn in a stress-free environment, Ganjam district Collector Vijay Amrut Kulange said. "They will be given a day-off from textbooks. On the day, the children will be allowed to grow their physical, mental and intellectual abilities," he said. The programme will be implemented in some selected schools in the district from Saturday and gradually, expanded to other schools, district education officer Amulya Kumar Pradhan said.

Won't let state become 'Uda Maharashtra': Deshmukh on drugs

MUMBAI: Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Thursday said the government would curb drug abuse in the state and will not let it become "Uda Maharashtra", referring to a film on addiction problem in Punjab. He was responding to a question asked by Congress leader Anant Gadgeil in the Maharashtra Legislative Council. Earlier during the discussion, BJP MLC Suresh Dhas said if the issue of drug abuse is not addressed properly, Maharashtra would become like "Uda Punjab". To this, Deshmukh said, "We are taking various steps to curb the supply of addictive drugs and won't let the state become 'Uda Maharashtra'." The 2016 Bollywood film "Uda Punjab" was based on drug menace in the northern state. Traffickers have started adopting new ways to smuggle addictive drugs by hiding them inside the covers of invitation cards and bangles, Deshmukh said. Last year, the Mumbai Police registered 11,706 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the minister informed.

SHORT READS



Tension in Coimbatore after attack on mosques

COIMBATORE: Tension prevailed in parts of the city early on Thursday after two mosques came under attack here, following which security was beefed up, police said. While a bottle filled with petrol was hurled at a mosque in Ganapati locality, there were reports of stones being thrown at another place of worship in Kovaijodur. The incidents came in retaliation to an attack on a Hindu Munnani worker late on Wednesday night, they said. Madukkarai Anand was attacked by some unidentified people, who came on bikes, when he was returning from a pro-CAA rally at around 10 p.m.

PM Modi hails women's contributions in different fields

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday hailed women's contribution in different fields, saying woman power is securing the country and that he has been getting many motivating stories on exceptional women achievers. "Inspiring women entrepreneurs. Nari Shakti securing India. Women excelling in sports and leadership. Women farmers showing the way. Been getting many motivating stories on exceptional women achievers. Do keep sharing more such life journeys! #ShelnspiresUs," Modi tweeted. Modi had on Tuesday said that he will be handing over his social media accounts to 'women who inspire', to mark Women's Day on March 8.

Nirbhaya: SC to hear on Mar 23 Centre's plea against HC

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Thursday said it would hear on March 23 the appeal filed by the Centre challenging the Delhi High Court order that the four death row convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case have to be executed simultaneously. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench, headed by Justice R Banumathi, that the trial court has fixed March 20 as date of execution of the four convicts who have exhausted all their legal remedies. Mehta told the bench, also comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and a S Bopanna, that these convicts have made a mockery of the system by their delaying tactics and taken it for a ride. The bench said that it would hear the matter on merits on March 23 and made it clear that no adjournments will be granted.

Court dismisses Tahir's plea to surrender; arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Abducting AAP councillor Tahir Hussain was arrested by Delhi Police on Thursday after a court here dismissed his plea seeking to surrender before it in connection with alleged killing of Intelligence Bureau (IB) official Ankit Sharma during the recent violence in northeast Delhi.



The reason given in the application for moving this application does not justify the conduct of the applicant to choose this forum for seeking the reliefs, the judge said

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Vishal Pahuja refused to entertain Hussain's plea saying that the relief sought by him was outside the court's jurisdiction. The court said that as per the provisions of 177 Criminal Procedure Code (Ordinary place of inquiry and trial), the offence shall ordinarily be inquired into and tried by court within whose local jurisdiction it is committed. "In the instant case, the offence has been committed within the jurisdiction of PS Dayalpur which falls within the jurisdiction of Karkardooma Court. The reason given in the application for moving this application does not justify the conduct of the applicant to choose this forum for seeking the reliefs," the judge said. Advocate Mukesh Kalia,

appearing for Hussain, submitted that there is a grave apprehension of threat to his life and therefore he has not surrendered before competent court as there is "charged environment" in Karkardooma District court. He said Hussain has no connection or involvement in the FIR registered by the police and he is being falsely implicated. Considering the gravity of the situation, Hussain wishes to surrender before the court, he said. The court said the Delhi High Court has specifically made a division of the jurisdictions, be that of the police stations or the courts district-wise and work has been allocated accordingly.

It said: "This court is a special designated court dealing with the matters of MPs/MLAs. The high court has designated this court as special court to deal with cases on fast track with endeavour to dispose of the same within one year as its objective. "The applicant does not fall in the aforesaid category, hence this application cannot be even entertained by this court." The court further said that the relief sought by Hussain does not fall within the domain or jurisdiction of this court, "hence, no such relief can be granted. In view of the observations, the application deserves to be dismissed".

30 honey-trapping cases booked in Raj

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Thirty cases of honeytrapping were registered in Rajasthan from December 2018 to January this year, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dhariwal informed the state assembly on Thursday. He was replying to a question raised by BJP legislator Kalicharan Saraf. Thirty cases of honeytrapping were registered in the state from December 2018 to January this year, Dhariwal said. A total of 17 cases were registered in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Ajmer divisions from January 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020, he said. Charge sheets have been filed in nine cases, investigation is pending in seven and the final report (FR) has been filed in one



case, he added. In Jaipur Commissionerate, nine cases of honey trapping were registered in the last two years. Nineteen people were arrested in six cases and charge sheets filed, Dhariwal told the House. Investigation in two cases is pending and the FR has been filed in one case, he said.

Gang of 4 battery thieves arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A gang allegedly involved in battery theft in south Delhi has been busted with the arrest of four persons, police said on Thursday. According to the police, a total of 128 stolen batteries, most of which are used in set top boxes to provide Internet service, have been seized from them. The matter came to light

after an Internet service provider firm filed a complaint with the police that some batteries installed at their office in Safdarjung Enclave have been stolen. Following this, an investigation was initiated and Guddu Gautam, Lal Bacchan, Arun Kumar and Akram were arrested. With this, seven cases of battery theft have been solved, police said.

'14 to 15 MLAs in touch with Aghadi'

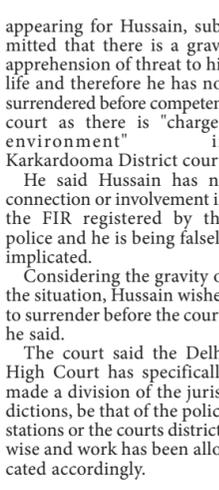
PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra minister Jayant Patil has claimed that 14 to 15 BJP MLAs from the state are in touch with the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi, but the ruling alliance is not willing to commit the mistake of "poaching" opposition leaders. Patil's comment came in the wake of the Congress' allegation that the BJP was carrying out an "Operation Lotus" in Madhya Pradesh to bring down the Kamal Nath government in that state.

Patil, who is the Maharashtra NCP chief, also accused the BJP of being desperate for power. "Fourteen to fifteen MLAs of the opposition party are in touch with us even today. We have to do their works as we share good relations with them (the MLAs concerned). We understand their mindset," Patil told reporters on Wednesday outside the state Legislature complex here. "Yet, it is not right to poach

legislators... We don't intend to make that mistake. Our focus is on ensuring our government sustains," he added. The BJP emerged as the single largest party in Maharashtra after the Assembly polls in October last year. But, it failed to form government after the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena snapped ties with it over the issue of sharing the chief ministerial post. The Congress on Wednesday alleged "poaching" bid on its MLAs and allies by the opposition BJP in Madhya Pradesh.

As many as 16,076 crew and passengers onboard ships from China or having travel history to affected countries have not been allowed to disembark at Indian ports, a shipping ministry official said on Thursday. However, all possible assistance and help are being provided to these passengers and crew -- onboard 452 ships anchored at designated places -- as per WHO guidelines in case of any fever or symptoms. "As many as 452 ships with EXIM cargo and 16,076 crew and passengers have arrived at Indian ports so far from China or a travel history to countries



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necessary facilities were being extended to them. The protocol is being maintained with all help in case of fever or sickness to those on board. The official added that at Paradip port a crew member onboard Chemstar Stellar developed fever, and he along with his wife were evacuated and transferred to SCB Medical College, Cuttack for further testing. The vessel had departed from Zapu, China on February 10 and

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday alleged that the suspension of its seven members from Lok Sabha for the entire session was a "dictatorial decision" by the government aimed at weakening the Opposition's voice ahead of a debate over Delhi riots.

Lok Sabha passed a motion suspending seven Congress members for the remaining period of the Budget session for their "gross misconduct" after they snatched papers from the Speaker's table and "utter disregard" for House rules.

As soon as the House met at 3 pm following an adjournment, Meenakshi Lekhi, who was presiding the House, named Gaurav Gogoi, T N Prathapan, Dean Kuriakose, Manicka Tagore, Rajmohan Unnithan, Benny Behanan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla.

Reacting to the development, Congress's leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said it was a "government decision" and not

PNS ■ BHOPLAL

Digvijaya blames five BJP leaders for 'horse-trading'

Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh on Thursday accused five BJP leaders, including former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, of being involved in the alleged attempt to poach MLAs to pull down the Kamal Nath-led government in the state.

The BJP, however, hit back at Singh saying that he was lying, and maintained that the party had nothing to do with the developments.

In a late-night political drama in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, the Congress claimed that the opposition BJP took eight MLAs to a hotel in Haryana as part of a conspiracy to topple the Congress government.

On Thursday morning, the Congress held a press conference in New Delhi, in which it claimed that the BJP "abducted 14 MLAs" to bring down its government in Madhya Pradesh.

Taking it to Twitter on Thursday, Digvijaya held five BJP leaders including Chouhan, responsible for the recent "horse-trading"

PNS ■ BHOPLAL

BJP welcomes Cong MPs' suspension

NEW DELHI: Calling the conduct of some Congress members in Lok Sabha as "unprecedented", the BJP on Thursday welcomed the decision to suspend seven "unruly" members of the opposition party from the House for the remainder of the session.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said his party has requested Speaker Om Birla to set up a panel to look into the continuous "indiscipline" by Congress members. "Snatching papers from the Speaker's table is utmost disrespect to the Chair. We condemn this," he told reporters.

Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said the "unruly" behaviour of the Congress MPs was "unprecedented", and it would have shocked the country's founding fathers.

Intelligent machines challenge to job creation

PNS ■ KOLKATA

With India having a vast pool of young population, the rise in use of intelligent machines poses a challenge to job creation in the country, secretary to the Union ministry of science and technology, Ashutosh Sharma, said on Thursday.

Another challenge faced by technology is ensuring sustainable development, he said.

Sharma said intelligent machines are emanating from nations with a greying population such as Japan and Germany.

"These countries cannot grow economically without intelligent machines. The situation is just the opposite in India which has a vast young population. Since we cannot stop the march of technology, planners in India must figure out how to create jobs in a

Passenger held with 5 bullets at Delhi airport

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An Allahabad-bound passenger was apprehended at Delhi airport for allegedly carrying five live bullets in his bag, a senior official said on Thursday. A Central Industrial Security Force official deputed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport detected bullet-like objects while checking the luggage of the Indian national, Chander Mohan Bali, around 1 pm on Wednesday, he said. "Five live bullet rounds of 7.65 mm calibre were recovered from the passenger who was supposed to take an Air India flight to Allahabad," the official said.

earmarked by companies can be used for R&D purpose now, he said adding that a corporate can now finance an R&D project from its CSR fund, with matching contribution by the government.

He said India is ranked third in the number of start-ups. The country has 28,000 start-ups of which 15,000 are based on technology. The department is supporting 3,000 start-ups through 120 incubators, he said.

changing environment," Sharma said at an event of the Merchants' Chambers of Commerce & Industry here. Diffusion of technology is not as rapid in MSMEs as it is in large companies, he said. Sharma said the department has introduced a new policy - Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR).

'14 to 15 MLAs in touch with Aghadi'

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PNS ■ NEW DELHI



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Uproar in LS over remark by MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha on Thursday witnessed uproar over a controversial remark by an RLP MP, who is a BJP ally, against the Gandhi family during a discussion on coronavirus, leading to adjournment of proceedings for over an hour. Congress members stormed the Well of the House as soon as Hanuman Beniwal said there should be a probe on whether coronavirus is being spread from the "home" of Congress President Sonia Gandhi as a large number of people who were found to be affected by the virus are from Italy. Fourteen Italians have tested positive for coronavirus in India. "Earlier, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that party leader Rahul Gandhi had forewarned the government on the impending threat from coronavirus.

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Haryana ex-minister, daughter launch front

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana minister Nirmal Singh and his daughter Chitra Sarwara on Wednesday floated a political front, vowing to protect interests of the northern part of the state. Nirmal Singh, who had served as a minister in the Bhajan Lal-led Congress government in the state, had quit the party after his daughter Chitra, who earlier held the post of the All-India Mahila Congress general secretary, was denied ticket from Ambala Cantonment in the assembly elections held last year.

The former minister and his daughter then contested as independent candidates from Ambala City and Ambala Cantt, respectively, but both lost the elections despite getting a sizeable number of votes. The Haryana Democratic Front, which will be headed by Singh, who has influence in the state's northern region, has appealed to all 'like-minded'

forces to come together to strengthen the new outfit. "The front will protect the interests of north Haryana. We will be holding a big conference of our workers on March 15 at Ambala," said Singh, who has been a four-time MLA. "The way people supported us in the October 2019 assembly polls, it shows that they want us to be actively involved in politics to serve their cause and raise their voice," said Sarwara. She said the front believes in "clean politics" and will encourage people with clean image to join them.

'16,076 crew, passengers onboard ships from China not allowed to disembark on Indian ports'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



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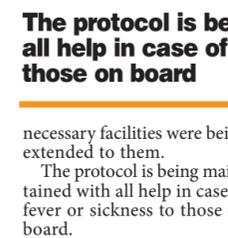
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"Modi-Shah ji, why are you looking for (black) money in other countries, it's in your party!" he added on the micro-blogging site.

— Digvijaya Singh, Congress veteran

Bhupendra Singh were ministers in the previous BJP government in Madhya Pradesh. On Monday, Digvijaya Singh had alleged his party MLAs were being offered a "huge amount of money" by BJP leaders as part of their attempt to destabilise the Kamal Nath government. The state BJP, however, termed this entire episode as the internal tussle of the ruling Congress. Talking to PTI, BJP spokesman Rajnish Agrawal alleged, "Digvijaya Singh is speaking lies. The entire episode has exposed the internal tussle of Congress. None of the MLAs, allegedly involved in entire episode, have made allegations against the BJP."

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attempt. "Horse-trading by the BJP in Madhya Pradesh has come to light. But their plans were not fulfilled. Thanks to all the MLAs," Singh said in a tweet. "BJP leaders responsible for this horse-trading: 1- Shivraj Chouhan, 2- Narottam Mishra, 3- Sanjay Pathak, 4- Vishwas Sarang, 5- Bhupendra Singh," he said in another tweet.

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The super club

IITs, IIMs & DU have made it to the world top 100 rankings in subjects but we should crack the institutional charts too



In a general global atmosphere of gloom and doom, here's a bit of good news for India. As many as 26 departments of higher educational institutions in the country feature among the top 100 in the world in their respective categories. According to the latest edition of the World University Rankings by Subject, 26 have made it to the top 100 and two of them even figured in the global top 50. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) calculates performance of institutions of higher education based on four parameters — research impact, productivity of the research faculty, academic reputation and employer reputation. Significantly, all the departments to figure in the list are in Central Government-run institutions, the usual top performers — IITs, IIMs and the Delhi University. IIT Bombay has nine programmes, IIT Delhi has five among the top 100, while IIT Kharagpur, IIT Madras and IITSc Bangalore have recorded three programmes each. The subjects featuring the highest levels of Indian representation are chemistry (20 universities); computer science and information systems (20); physics and astronomy (18); biological sciences (16); electrical engineering (15) and chemical engineering (14). But before we start celebrating, consider this: We have a whopping 993 universities, 51,649 higher educational institutions and 14.16 lakh teaching staff at the last count in September 2019. Given these mind-boggling numbers, we should have had more than 26 departments in the QS rankings. This suggests that there is something intrinsically wrong with our higher education system. What else can explain the fact that 80 per cent of our 2.9 million science and engineering graduates are unemployable? It's a sad reflection on our pedagogy skills if less than one per cent of the 1.5 million engineers, who enter the job market every year, are hired by the top 100 companies. There are constant complaints from industries that there is a major gap in what is being taught at our professional institutions and the skills required in the real world. And this is not just restricted to technical education.

So how do we change this dismal scenario? For starters, we need to invest more in research. When was the last time that innovations or path-breaking solutions emerged from Indian academic research? An increased focus on globalisation of curriculum and methods of instruction is needed so that our students become participants in the global economy. We also need to increase Government spending in higher education so that we can build better infrastructure, improve methods of research and hire world-class faculty that encourages a higher order of thinking, innovation, problem-solving, critical thinking and client handling. Though this year's Budget saw a five per cent increase in allocation for education, up from ₹94,800 crore last year to ₹99,300 crore, the fact remains that our spending is lower than world standards. In fact, it has remained almost stagnant over the last eight years. Besides, among public universities, around 97 per cent of our students go to those at the State level while the remaining three per cent make it to Central universities. Yet 57.5 per cent of the Government's higher education Budget goes to Central universities, IITs and IIMs. State universities also need funds and resources. Given this scenario, it is sad that Indian firms donate heavily to foreign universities as they feel they will get better returns by investing there. It is vital to develop a synergy between the Government, the industry and universities as big business houses are much more likely to invest in higher education if they derive value in terms of an excellent workforce and a knowledge pool. A separate research assessment body must be set up to regulate recruitment and appraisal standards. Also, stronger intellectual property protection must be enforced to encourage innovation and partnerships with the industry. Only then can we ensure that more of our universities improve their global ranking and often appear in the top 200 list.

Transparent tenders

NITI Aayog plans to review norms, particularly in the L1 category, to ensure quality and equal opportunity for players



Faster, better or cheaper, pick any two" is the mantra followed by most businesses in assessing the most viable deals. But most Government departments in India have for decades prioritised the "cheaper" over the "better" while giving out contracts, an approach which has impacted the quality of the task executed. In the end, most departments have ended up looking penny wise but pound foolish. Our tender process is askew with a notice appearing in leading newspapers inviting offers with technical and commercial specifications. The vetting committees screen them, shortlist vendors and then evaluate them on the basis of their commercial bids. The lowest of the commercial offers (L1) is selected and awarded the tender. In other words, you compromise quality on the service rendered, the equipment and talent used in doing so and the completed product. Quality comes at a price, simply because it's calculated on the basis of established industry parameters and is not open to subjective assessment or manipulated mindsets. The L1 system has, therefore, always raised questions about the credibility of our selection processes and resulted in criticism and questioning by other bidders. Sometimes, these have led to legal proceedings and stalling of the tender itself. This is why the NITI Aayog is mulling a plan to review tendering norms, particularly in the L1 category, to ensure transparency and equal opportunity for all players. Often transnational companies argue that it is difficult to cut costs for their equipment that are not manufactured in India and, therefore, lose out on many of our projects that could have done better with their expertise. Most global tenders, therefore, follow a quality-based selection process (QBS) where the emphasis is on securing the most competent candidate and where higher weightage is given to the technical proposals. There is the more practical quality cost-based selection process (QCBS), where both the technical and financial proposals are used to determine the winning submission. The idea is to identify the strongest technical proposal at the best price. Telecom technology procurement on the lowest-bid method has cost us as PSUs don't get time-tested products from market leaders in the segment.

The norms need to be reviewed simply because far too many players come up courtesy online bidding processes. With many parties to choose from, the organisation concerned, through the L1 benchmark, tries to take the competitive cost advantage and dilutes all other deciding factors. Often, a supplier makes an aggressive bid, quoting an unimaginable price that does not even cover the cost of production or promises a very slim profit margin. This is done to ensure good testimonials in the market. Once the deal is sealed, all methods of cost-cutting are applied to increase profit margins. In the process, it is not just the customer, who ends up with inferior, quality goods or services but also genuine bidders, who eventually lose the race. The NITI Aayog must give higher weightage to quality, safety, implementation schedules and technical requirements. Quality checks and technical trials must be ensured at the initial stage itself. The price bids of top rankers could be opened and the one offering the lowest price could then be signed on.

Win over thy neighbour

Given the freeze in the relations between India and Nepal, it is time for New Delhi to engage with Naya Nepal in a way that it is assured of the sincerity of its words



RISHI GUPTA

Soon after the peaceful conclusion of the civil war in Nepal in 2006, several political observers were of the view that it be referred to as "Naya Nepal" Naya, a Hindi-Nepali term, refers to a "new" nation that emerged at the cost of 17,000 lives after a decade-long civil war. Changes primarily included the ouster of the centuries-old monarchy and Nepal's transition into a democratic State, where the king was no more considered to be the sole administrator/protector, the restructuring of the country from a Hindu State to a secular one, the inclusion of the Maoist guerrilla fighters into the mainstream political process, reinstating of the multi-party political system and providing political freedom and adult franchise to the people.

Naya Nepal also faced the challenge of writing a democratic Constitution, giving justice to families who had lost their loved ones during the civil war, maintaining political stability, narrowing the thaw between the Pahadi and Madhesi groups and improving the state of the economy, which was in a shambles due to the war. While the civil war affected the internal structure of the country, it had an enormous impact on its foreign policy, especially towards India. It is often believed that Nepal, a country that falls between the two Asian giants, India and China, has been a ground for competition between them to strengthen their influence, precisely due to its strategic location. While China aims to focus on protecting its interests in Tibet, India wants a stable neighbour. Traditionally, India has been a friend of Nepal. The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, signed in 1950, recognises the "special relationship" shared between them. The uniqueness of this pact is characterised by open borders, free movement of people, deeply rooted socio-cultural ties and people-to-people relations.

However, with a change in its internal structure, there has been a change in the thought process of the new regime. Today, Nepal's narrative is so-called nationalistic, extreme and abhors pro-India sentiments. The anti-India tirade among the Nepalese population is not new. Despite all efforts to improve bilateral relations, distances have only grown. It is here that sincere engagement is essential to reduce differences.

Need for a template: The anti-India sentiment is acutely "political" and has become a part of everyday life, where a daily dose of dislike is being given to the Nepalese population, based on selective information. While in the past, several attempts were made to isolate Nepal from India, in the last five years, differences have become grave.

During several democratic move-



ments in Nepal, in 1960, 1990 and 2006, India played the role of a well-wisher to bridge the gap between the erstwhile monarchy and the democratic forces. Amid these natural ties, a fallout in the relations is not unnatural, considering the nature of interaction between the two countries in the last five years.

The beginning: The year 2014 was promising for India-Nepal relations for two reasons. One, Nepal was the second neighbouring country Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited after taking charge in August 2014. This was also the first bilateral trip by an Indian Prime Minister to the Himalayan nation in 17 years. This signalled the priority the new Government accorded to better the strained relationship with Nepal. Then again, the Prime Minister returned to Kathmandu in November 2014, to attend the 18th Annual Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This summit was another opportunity for India to minimise the existing trust deficit with Nepal and other regional neighbours.

Second, the two countries revised their diplomatic channels of communication. This was indeed a strong message for other competitive powers that India would continue to maintain its goodwill and developmental works in Nepal.

Threat perception: In 2016, Nepal implemented its first National Security Policy (NSP). While the then Nepali

Congress-led Government hesitated to use blockade as a national security threat, the present KP Oli-led Government has amended the NSP and categorised "blockade" as a national security threat. It needs to be mentioned here that through the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, New Delhi had assured Kathmandu that it would not face any external aggression on its part. In the past 65 years of diplomatic interactions, Nepal has felt secure. Therefore, Kathmandu's sudden change on matters of mutual security is worrying because it has more political connotations rather than a will to resolve issues.

Cutting people-to-people ties: The updated National Security Policy 2019 under the Communist regime in Nepal has not yet been made public and it is believed that it is the use of the term "blockade" that has ruffled feathers in New Delhi. Meanwhile, during an interaction, an advisor to the Nepalese Prime Minister indicated that Nepal intends to regulate its borders. The word "regulate" incorporates limiting the transit points at what has been a largely open border, establishing a dedicated Border Security Force and treating travelling through land routes at par with air routes in terms of document requirements for citizens of the two countries.

Nepal may well cite security reasons for these upcoming upgradations but this will

impact the movement of people from the bordering regions. Notably, people-to-people contact cannot be established between the two countries, a move that seems to be acceding to China's request. While India and Nepal enjoy natural people-to-people relations, restrictions on the free movement will come at a cost to India.

Border disputes: Last November, Nepal objected to the release of a new map of India. It said that the boundaries in the Kalapani region were shown wrongly and sent diplomatic notes to New Delhi. India clarified that in no way does "the new map revisit boundaries with Nepal." It still maintains this position on the issue. The two countries have resolved 98 per cent of border disputes. The Indian side believes that an objection on Kalapani, too, can be resolved diplomatically. However, this does not seem to be the case in Nepal.

Eminent persons group: In 2016, the two countries appointed an Eminent Persons Group (EPG), consisting of relevant experts from India and Nepal, to review bilateral treaties and agreements between the two countries, including the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship. While the group has submitted its report with recommendations to both Governments, it remains under wraps. Reasons are unknown but it stands as a ticking bomb for India. The EPG report may not be a critical issue for us but it is a matter of national prestige for Nepal. Not making it public will put all the blame on India.

In international relations, diplomacy is considered to be the first and the last best resort to resolve bilateral or multilateral issues. India may have assured full diplomatic support to Nepal. However, until these issues are part of the political mandate, the present challenges cannot be resolved. From a foreign policy perspective, Naya Nepal is more challenging and complex for India. The alleged border blockade, the Madhesi movement and now the Kalapani dispute have all become part of our neighbour's national narrative which is undoubtedly hateful and extreme. While all is not lost for the two countries, the increasing presence of China in Nepal and pending bilateral issues between New Delhi and Kathmandu require the best efforts from India's side.

(The writer is doctoral candidate, Centre for South Asian Studies, JNU)

SOUNDBITE

The Health Minister saying that the Government has the coronavirus crisis under control is like the captain of the *Titanic* telling passengers not to panic as his ship was unsinkable.



Congress leader
—Rahul Gandhi

This is the digital age but yes, I am a bit particular about what I post and what I don't. I like certain things to be private and people respect that about me.



Actor
—Karisma Kapoor

The Indian Government must confront extremist Hindus and their parties. It must stop the massacre of Muslims in order to prevent India's isolation from the world of Islam.



Iran's Supreme Leader
—Ayatollah Khamenei

Law-making is not done by an imperial ruler or from the pulpit of a religious leader but by the representatives of the people and you are the enforcers of that law.



National Security Advisor
—Ajit Doval

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bulk up infrastructure

Sir — Shortage of doctors and trained staff is a serious issue India has to deal with as we face the Coronavirus threat. Tackling the widespread impact of the virus may not be a challenge in metropolitan cities. But just in case it reaches smaller cities or villages, the situation will be difficult to handle. It is in such times that the reality of our poor medical infrastructure comes to haunt us. India's doctor-population ratio currently stands at 1:1,457, which is lower than the World Health Organisation's recommended ratio of 1:1,000.

A better healthcare infrastructure is a prerequisite for disaster management. The present crisis may not be as threatening as it is in Wuhan, which has literally been cut off from other Chinese cities but we need to be prepared for any eventuality. Last but not the least, clear and transparent communication between the authorities and the public will go a long way in ensuring that no unnecessary panic is created within the society.

Bal Govind Noida

Safeguard Constitutional morality

This refers to the editorial, "The Bengal gamble" (March 3). To put it in journalistic parlance, Union Home Minister Amit Shah sounded the poll bugle in West Bengal. It was clear from his speech that the BJP would use the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) for whatever it is worth to try and wrest power from the Trinamool Congress (TMC). It is no surprise as for the BJP, playing the religious card to polarise voters is the name of the game. It was ominous that the incendiary "Desh ke gaddaron ko, goli maaron saalon ko" (shoot the traitors) slogan was raised by frenzied BJP supporters in a mammoth march in Kolkata. The loss of life in Delhi has not stopped them from chanting the slogan. It was jarring to hear "goli maaro" and "Bharat nata ki ja" in the same breath. It is frightening to think how many cities and regions will be converted into theatres of communal violence.

It was, however, a climbdown by Shah that he did not link CAA to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) or repeat his favourite terminology "termites." In a rally in Kolkata, he assured that "no minority will have to leave" the country owing to the CAA. While we must be beholden to him for his "generosity", things are not as easy or simple as made out to be by him. The true import of the CAA blows away the argument that it does not affect

End stalemate

Sir — The communal politics of the present regime has turned Delhi into a battleground where Muslims are being assaulted,

killed and their properties are being looted, ransacked and burnt. Inaction on the part of the Modi Government has only made matters worse. Even now, it is not willing to discuss the

issue in Parliament. With at least 48 people killed and more than 200 injured, it is for the Government to restore faith by ordering a thorough investigation into the violence and make sure



Indian Muslims. The sole question is: Why should "non-Muslim identity" be made a criterion for acquisition of citizenship? The CAA determines who refugees are and who illegal immigrants are on the basis of religion, a fact that makes it discriminatory and unconstitutional. If you are of the "right religions", you are granted citizenship, and if you are of the "wrong religion" you are denied citizenship. If this is not religious discrimination, what is it? Shah should read the Constitution to see if anywhere it prescribes religion as a criterion for citizenship before trying to justify CAA. Let us not do anything that depletes India's moral strength and compassion.

G David Milton Maruthancode

that the perpetrators are brought to book. Parliament is the ideal forum to discuss these issues.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

Questions remain

Sir — One fails to understand why the Government still does not want an immediate discussion on the issue of violence in Delhi. If it is wanting to discuss about it after Holi, why not now? Why waste the Parliament's precious time? Why isn't it taking action against those involved in the violence? Has action even been taken against those police personnel, whose videos went viral, where they were seen damaging windshields of parked vehicles and CCTV cameras? Given the importance of the issue, the Government should have allowed a discussion forthwith. In a democracy like ours, people have every right to know all about the riots and the reasons for not taking action against the leaders concerned.

Srinivas
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Collateral damage

Consumers will be left with high tariffs and a poorer and older technology telecom network if Vodafone Idea fails to make it through



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The country may take a multi-billion dollar hit besides a deep dent on its reputation as a safe place to invest in the eventuality of Vodafone Idea exiting the market. Vodafone Idea, which once was referred to as the most prized and promising asset in the Vodafone group's operating markets, is now looking at a bankruptcy procedure in India. At the heart of it all is a princely sum of \$3.9 billion in adjusted gross revenues it immediately has to deposit with the Government, over a dispute on definitions spanning nearly two decades in various courts of the country. This potential exit is likely to have a lasting negative impact on the Indian economy and most importantly the nearly 300 million consumers of the company. This may smother an already crumbling telecom sector into a duopoly market with just Airtel and Reliance Jio left in the fray. State-run telecom companies Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) jointly have a less than 10 per cent market share in the highly-competitive telecom market and have been surviving on Government economic packages for years.

A duopoly market would be a disaster for telecom equipment vendors and tower companies operating in the country. There are four large network equipment firms, which have an exposure of nearly half a billion dollars in dues towards Vodafone Idea. Recovering dues from the service provider will be a challenge for these vendors as the court proceedings arising out of bankruptcy procedures may take a significant amount of time. Meanwhile, a market with just two addressable telecom service clients is likely to see an exit or substantial scaling down of the four equipment suppliers' business operations.

This, along with the economic slowdown that the country is witnessing, will deliver a body blow to the job market in the telecom sector. Vodafone Idea has nearly 13,500 employees on its payrolls and employs another 1,00,000 indirectly through its operations. This means nearly 1.5 lakh job losses in a sector which has seen two large players, namely Reliance Communications and Airtel, exit in recent years. Add to this, the fate of a multinational tower company American Tower Corporation (ATC), which has spent nearly \$1 billion in acquiring Vodafone's standalone towers in the past. Vodafone Idea going belly up would mean ATC would have to switch off 20,000 towers.

Incidentally, each tower provides livelihood opportunities to nearly four to five people, whose jobs are in jeopardy now. A similar fate awaits other tower companies like Indus, as their tenancies or number of operators bearing from each tower is likely to be reduced. Vodafone Idea currently beams from close to 2,00,000 towers covering all telecom zones, many of which are via shared resources, with Airtel sharing half the cost of a tower. A shutdown will take away Vodafone's signals from these shared towers leading to cost increase for a single tenant (in this case mostly Airtel), as well as switching off for other towers. That would be an additional blow on employment.

A major portion of the collateral damage, however, will have to be borne by the over 300 million customers of Vodafone Idea, who will have to find a new service provider out of the two left in the market. Accommodating a customer network nearly the size of the entire European subscriber base will be a technological challenge for remaining operators. Analysts point to a nearly 15-20 per cent increase in operational expenses for Airtel due to reversal in existing tower-sharing agreements. The companies will have to invest heavily in augmenting their network capacity to accommodate the expected surge of customers. Many analysts point that the remaining two operators will have to, in a short span, deploy nearly 2,00,000 towers and get additional nodes for fibre network.

The quality of the telecom network, which already has a dubious reputation in the country will go down further. The cost of services, the cheapest data and voice calls in the world right now (1 Gigabyte of data at around \$0.20, with voice calls being almost free) will go up. Already telecom operators, including Vodafone Idea, have announced a nearly 50 per cent hike in select tariff plans and in the likelihood of two players remaining, the bargaining chip available to consumers would be gone.

The Government, like telecom vendors and consumers, will have to silently bear the brunt of a two-player market. This also constrains Indian consumers from upgrading to fifth generation or 5G telecom technology at par with their counterparts in 80 plus countries. Having joined the race early, India had expressed the desire to be a global leader in the 5G technology deployment for providing high-speed wireless broadband services to its citizens. This multi-billion-dollar, new capacity addition and upgrade to faster technology may now be left crippled, with the only two players left in the fray, reluctant to make fresh investments. In the end, Indian consumers will be left with high tariffs and a poorer and older technology telecom network in case Vodafone Idea fails to make it through.

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

THEY (CENTRE) ARE BLOWING THE CORONA THREAT OUT OF PROPORTION SO THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO EXPLAIN THEIR FAILURE IN CONTROLLING DELHI RIOTS.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE

POINT COUNTERPOINT



THE PM HAS ALREADY CONDEMNED THE DELHI RIOTS BUT DIDI HAS NOT SAID A WORD AGAINST THOSE WHO BURNT TRAINS IN BENGAL IN PROTEST AGAINST CAA.

—BJP STATE PRESIDENT
DILIP GHOSH

How to harness *nari shakti*

Chetna Sinha set up the Mann Deshi Foundation with the aim of economically and socially empowering women in Maharashtra's Mhaswad village. She has never looked back



MOIN QAZI

Mhaswad village is a mere blip on India's vast geographic radar but it shines brightly on the country's development landscape. The lodestar in this parched village is a woman of indefatigable stamina and unshakable courage. Chetna Gala Sinha has dedicated her life to empowering some of the area's most impoverished and dispossessed women by giving them the tools to run businesses of their own. Her work has transformed the lives of nearly half a million women and she hopes to help one million women by 2024. Mhaswad village, which has become a crucible for some of the most revolutionary social experiments, nestles in Satara district, on the placid banks of Manganga River, some 300 km south-east of Mumbai.

Rural areas typically face several developmental impediments: Small land holdings; low savings and capital formation; stagnant factor productivity; limited market access; low levels of human development; paucity of resources and a young population alienated from farming and other rural occupations. Reliant for the most part on subsistence agriculture, villagers are packing up in droves and heading to cities. They need solutions tailored to their needs and problems. Short-term palliatives like loan waivers and cash transfers cannot cure or address the pathology of poverty or fix the deep fault lines in the rural economy. Sinha's work with marginalised communities is now a legend. Described variously as a social entrepreneur, a microfinance banker, an economist, a farmer and an activist, Sinha has set a path that continues to remain relevant and resonant. She has nurtured social entrepreneurship at the grassroots that is redefining the way the world thinks about rural distress. Sinha has been able to build women's perspectives in the context of development, enabling them to claim space in the political, economic, societal and cultural systems. Women are reframing crucial questions on burning issues, about their experiences, problems, needs and are developing a different narrative.

Sinha grew up in Mumbai where she obtained a postgraduate degree in economics. She then moved to Bihar to work with landless labourers. She came in contact with the youth movement led by Jaiprakash Narayan and was inspired by his socialist philosophy. She met her husband Vijay Sinha, a farmer from Mhaswad, during a farmers' movement in Maharashtra between 1984 and 1985. She moved from Mumbai to Mhaswad after marriage. Transplanted to a totally alien culture, Sinha initially found it difficult to strike roots. She spent time helping her husband on the farm and organising the local community on different issues. The world of inequities that surrounded her kept her restless and she soon found her bearings. With the ebullient spirit that was honed in JP's movement, she set her sights on toppling the status quo in her husband's country. She followed through to tackle inequities and eradicate dysfunction in the local society. "I found life completely different from Mumbai. It opened my eyes to the plight of people at the grassroots level and the challenge of working for their benefit came with the idealism I had grown up with," recalls Sinha.

In 1996, Sinha founded the Mann Deshi Foundation with the aim of economically and socially empowering rural women. One of Sinha's first actions was to set up a bank for village women. She believes access to finance is an important piece in the development ecosystem and has necessarily to be at the core of any economic strategy. "Financial

“SINHA'S WORK HAS SEVERAL LESSONS FOR POLICYMAKERS WHO MAY THINK OF CHANGING THE DIRECTION OF THEIR DISCOURSES. INDIA SPENDS MORE ON PROGRAMMES FOR THE POOR THAN MOST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BUT IS NOT GETTING THE EXPECTED DIVIDENDS THAT SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WOULD SEEM TO WARRANT. THE GOVERNMENT CAN COMPLEMENT THE EFFORTS OF CRUSADERS LIKE SINHA BY IDENTIFYING, ADAPTING AND SUCCESSFULLY SCALING UP PROMISING INTERVENTIONS INSTEAD OF ROLLING OUT MORE AND MORE REFORMS”



services are like safe water and clean energy — they are essential to leading a better life," says Sinha. Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank is India's first bank that runs for and is managed by rural women. It began with 840 women members, each contributing a share capital of ₹600. Today, it has nine branches, more than 28,000 members and a share capital of ₹69 crore. It has enabled thousands of women to save, insure and to responsibly borrow — allowing them to build their assets and improve their well-being and financial prospects. The bank offers specially-designed savings accounts, pension services and insurance products as well as individualised loans. Financing is perhaps the biggest problem faced by small businesses in the developing world. People need credit to increase their financial prospects. "The greatest fracture facing India is women's inequality," reiterates Sinha. "The majority of women are doing business on roads in cities and villages, selling things in *haats* but they do not have access to funds. Regular banks aren't typically an option; they have several formalities, fee and documentation that can be intimidating and require an arduous trek to the nearest town, which can compromise a day's wages. Banks find this segment unviable because they feel the costs of underwriting and originating these small loans are substantial," she says.

Mann Deshi serves as an umbrella platform for several community initiatives like cattle camps; mobile para-veterinary services; erection of check dams; running a farmer produce company; local radio stations and sports talent hunts. Some of the more modern innovations include a business school and the Mann Deshi Chamber of Commerce for Rural Women (MCCRW) in partnership with the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI).

Mann Deshi Business School for Rural Women (MDBSRW) is a unique nursery for unlettered women. It places "professional" expertise in the hands of the

weakest of the weak and the poorest of the poor: Village women. Set up in 2006, MDBSRW offers a menu of 25 courses, largely developed in-house. These include classes in finance and marketing management and vocational skills such as screen-printing, chutney-making, bag-making, tailoring and catering among others. The courses are certified by the National Skill Development Corporation of India (NSDC). This ingenuity was recognised alongside Harvard Business School and Fuqua School of Business in a *Financial Times* ranking of the best B-schools.

A unique idea is the Business School on Wheels. The state-of-the-art bus travels with computers and micro ATMs. MDBSRW also offers a Deshi MBA, which is a year-long course where women attend workshops on finance, planning, inventory, marketing and accounting. The course syllabus was developed by Mumbai's SP Jain Management Institute and acclaimed non-profit Accion. When the programme was set up in 2015 just 286 women participated. This year, 958 women graduated. A Deshi MBA student is also provided with a mentor. With chapters of the business school in 12 centres equipped with nine buses, MDBSRW has unleashed an entrepreneurial wave in villages across Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka.

Mann Desha has helped over 4,00,000 women set up businesses and access new markets. Traditionally confined to the home, these village women have now become productive, articulate and confident in their ability to think for themselves. Sinha argues that rural women should be acknowledged for who they really are — a new generation of dynamic entrepreneurs, job-creators and economy drivers, committed to bringing a change in their communities.

Women have also been trained as "barefoot professionals". Four years ago, Mann Deshi started a unique initiative to train women in goat farming, vaccinations,

first aid and artificial insemination. They are popularly known as "goat doctors." Today the team has 19 para-veterinarians.

The biggest contribution to the local economy are the cattle camps. This year, the cattle camp was set up in January in collaboration with the Bajaj Foundation and two other organisations. It provides fodder, water and shelter needed to sustain cattle from surrounding villages when periodical and recurrent drought stares at them. Spread over 100 acres, it sheltered 7,000 cows and 20,000 goats belonging to more than 50 villages. Along with the cattle shed, smaller tents — made out of cloth, straw, leaves and plastic sheeting — are built for families accompanying the scrawny cattle. People work through the day, chopping sugarcane and preparing wet fodder for the cattle.

Sinha has been awarded the Nari Shakti Puraskar, India's highest civilian award for women who work in the area of women's empowerment, Schwab Foundation's Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award (2013), Forbes Social Entrepreneurs of the Year Award (2017). She has served as a Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum in Davos (2018) and as a Co-Chair of Financial Inclusion at the W20 Summit (2018) in Argentina.

From Mumbai to Mhaswad, Sinha has come a long way. She succeeded because she looked at the familiar problems with fresh eyes. Sinha's work has several lessons for policymakers, who may think of changing the direction of their discourses. India spends more on programmes for the poor than most developing countries but is not getting the expected dividends that significant public expenditure would seem to warrant. The Government can complement the efforts of crusaders like Sinha by identifying, adapting and successfully scaling up promising interventions instead of rolling out more and more reforms.

(The writer is a reputed development professional)

Ignore the ramblings of a 'sick mind'

While a US publication printed an offensive article, many US-funded enterprises and charities provided China with aid for epidemic prevention and more than 20 countries gave emergency materials to it, says **LONG XINGCHUN**

China is under attack by the Coronavirus. As the Chinese Government and people are battling this epidemic, governments and people around the world have expressed their sympathies and support to the nation. Many countries have extended help by providing China with a large number of material for epidemic prevention. However, some individuals in some countries maliciously referred to the virus as "Wuhan virus" and "China virus" on social media.

A mainstream US media publication even printed an article under the headline *China is the real sick man of Asia*. The article also downgraded China's economic outlook. Some senior US officials even claimed that the outbreak in China would help bring jobs back to America.

The history of human development is one of constant battle with infectious diseases that have caused massive casualties. In ancient society, due to poor transportation and communication, people moved around in a limited area, thus restricting the geo-

graphical scope of infection. For example, the Black Death that occurred in Europe in the 14 century caused more than 25 million deaths, wiping out almost a third of the European population at that time. When that happened, let alone be infected, Asia, Africa and the US did not even know about the epidemic.

With the development of science and technology, as well as new means of transportation such as steam engines, came the global mobility of human beings. The emergence of airplanes, in particular, enabled people to travel from the eastern hemisphere to the western hemisphere and from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere within half a day. While enjoying the convenience, people also had to bear the concurrent negative influences, such as the rapid spread of diseases worldwide, which no country can cope with single-handedly. What is needed is global governance through all nations in the world working together. The concept of "saving others is saving ourselves" is deeply-rooted in people's hearts,

resulting in the formation of a community of shared destiny in public health. When a major natural disaster or severe epidemic hit a country, aid and help flow in from all over the world.

For instance, China's medical team has made outstanding contributions to the fight against Ebola in Africa. China is also an important contributor to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) funding, fulfilling its responsibility as a major country for international health cooperation and human health improvement.

Infectious diseases are often transmitted all over the world. In many cases, it is difficult to identify the original source. Anyone, regardless of race, may fall victim to the infection. Therefore, it is not fair to equate any infectious disease with a specific country or race. Any attempt to name the naturally-occurring viruses after a country or city will only encounter protests. The Ebola virus was not called the "African virus". The seasonal flu that infected millions of

Americans and killed thousands of them was not called the "American flu" either. Nor has any foreign Government or media called the US a "sick man", let alone blaming the US political system for its occurrence. Linking a virus with a specific country or city, or attacking the country that is combatting the epidemic, is not only a display of ignorance about the disease but it is also a racist discrimination and denial of the epidemic-control effort of the country in question. It undermines the cooperation of the international community to fight against infectious diseases. People doing such deeds are the real "sick-minded" ones.

The article that described China as "the real sick man of Asia", has not only been condemned by the Chinese Government and people but has also been widely opposed and slammed by people with a conscience around the world, including the US.

Catherine Ceniza Choy, a professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, Berkeley, criticised the article saying, "This is extremely

harmful and wrong" arguing that the consequences of publishing an opinion like this include stoking fear and anxiety and increasing hostility against the Chinese and other Asians throughout the world.

The White House website has received more than 100,000 signed petitions asking the publication for an apology. Many people wrote directly to accuse the author of the article, Walter Russell Mead. But Mead said that the headline was given by the newspaper editor and he had nothing to do with it. It is clear that Mead has already recognised the offensive nature of his piece.

The Chinese Government and people do not need to overly worry about individuals or views attacking China, nor should they be distracted. There are people with extreme ideologies in each and every country who are vicious and arrogant. However, their views can never become the viewpoint of the mainstream.

While the US publication printed such an offensive article, US-funded enterprises and charities pro-

vided China with a large amount of aid for epidemic prevention as quickly as they possibly could. Many Americans expressed sympathies and support to Beijing.

More than 20 countries, including Japan, South Korea, Russia, Singapore and Pakistan, provided emergency materials to aid China. In Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister led a countrywide prayer to invoke blessings for China and Lankan Cabinet Ministers joined in giving donations.

The Union of the Comoros, a tiny African nation, one of the least developed, has given China a symbolic gift of 100 euros. It's not a lot, but it means a lot. Governments of many countries and the WHO have recognised the measures taken by the Chinese Government to respond to the epidemic and acknowledged the sacrifices and contributions made by China to prevent the epidemic from spreading globally. In the battle against the epidemic, China is not alone.

(The writer is a professor at the School of Foreign Languages of China West Normal University)



A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

The lifting of a destructive ban on new onshore wind power is a breath of fresh air. The influence on public life of climate deniers including former chancellor Nigel Lawson has dramatically waned — with the 2019's upsurge of climate activism among the causes. The UK has a mountain to climb to reach emissions targets and the Government's record so far is not encouraging. But the return of onshore wind is a move in the right direction.

(The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



Gold falls Rs 157, silver prices decline Rs 99

NEW DELHI: Gold on Thursday fell by Rs 157 to Rs 44,250 per 10 gram in the national capital amid muted demand for the precious metal. In the previous trade, it had closed at Rs 44,407 per 10 gram, according to HDFC Securities. Likewise, silver prices also declined Rs 99 to Rs 47,517 per kg from Rs 47,616 per kg on Wednesday. "Spot gold for 24 Karat in Delhi pared previous gains and traded lower by Rs 157. Rupee fluctuation kept prices in range throughout the day," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. The Indian rupee continued its downward journey on Thursday, sliding another 5 paise to trade at 73.44 against the US dollar amid mounting fears of a coronavirus-led economic slowdown.



Facebook to help combat virus misinformation

BANGKOK: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg says the social network is stepping up its efforts to combat virus-related misinformation by giving the World Health Organization free advertising. Zuckerberg said in a post on his Facebook account that the company is working with national health ministries and global organizations like the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNICEF to get out timely and accurate information on the virus. Zuckerberg said Facebook will also give support and millions more in ad credits to other unspecified organizations.



Money laundering; ED books former Jet Airways boss Goyal

MUMBAI: Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal and few others have been booked by the ED in a money laundering case even as the agency is conducting searches at his premises, officials said on Thursday. They said a criminal case against the former chairman of the airlines has been filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after taking cognisance of a recent Mumbai Police FIR filed against him.

Zydus Cadila gets DCGI nod for Saroglitazar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Pharmaceutical major Zydus Cadila on Thursday said it has received Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) approval for its new drug application for Saroglitazar to treat a particular condition of liver, commonly known as NASH in India. Non-Cirrhotic Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH) is a progressive disease of the liver, which starts with fat accumulation in the liver known as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. This condition could progress to cirrhosis and liver failure, the company said in a statement. Commenting on the approval, Zydus Group Chairman Pankaj Patel said, "We are happy that our efforts to discover and develop a novel drug for patients living with NASH, an unmet healthcare need globally, have been successful. Saroglitazar will provide hope and new lease of life for millions of patients in India suffering from NASH".

Coronavirus does not spread through chicken, mutton, seafood: FSSAI chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is no scientific evidence to show that coronavirus spreads through eating chicken, mutton and seafood, FSSAI chief G S G Ayyangar said on Thursday and asserted that the virus would not survive in higher temperature.

"It is basically an animal virus. Let us leave it to scientists to figure out how it has been transmitted...however, ours is a tropical country and once the temperature crosses 35-36 degrees celsius, no virus will survive.

"Let us pray to God that winter ends and temperature rises," he said.

There are at least 29 confirmed cases of coronavirus infection in India.

Amid apprehensions that the infection could spread through eating chicken, mutton and seafood, the Food



Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO said there is a misconception about it. "There is a misconception that coronavirus will spread through chicken, mutton and seafood. There is nothing like that. It is scientifically not proven. "I am a scientist, I will not buy this argument," Ayyangar told reporters here. Ayyangar, who was earlier with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said it is a matter of time that vaccine for coronavirus will be developed as India has a good track of handling viruses. "Whether it is Ebola virus or

"Whether it is Ebola virus or Avian flu, we have handled them very well. It is a matter of time. We have to take precaution. We have to be on our toes," he said.

Avian flu, we have handled them very well. It is a matter of time. We have to take precaution. We have to be on our toes," he said.

Urging people to take precautions, he said coronavirus is like many other viruses and developing a vaccine will depend on the complexity of the virus.

The government is making all efforts to isolate the virus. "Once we are able to isolate the virus, then it takes sometime to find a vaccine to counter the virus," he said at an event organised by industry body

Assocham.

Addressing the event on nutrition and functional foods, Hexagon Nutrition Managing Director Vikram Kelkar said prices of vitamin supplements have been volatile recently and spread of coronavirus has affected the supply across the world.

On March 2, poultry breeders demanded a relief package from the government claiming that the sector has incurred heavy losses of around Rs 1,750 crore in a month due to fake news that eating chicken could spread coronavirus.

Poultry bird prices have plunged to Rs 10-30 per kg at farm gate level due to a slump in chicken demand while the average cost of production is Rs 80 per kg, the All India Poultry Breeders Association had said in a representation to the Ministry of Animal Husbandry.

General insurers say existing health policies cover coronavirus

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The General Insurance Council, the apex industry lobby of the 44-member strong non-life insurers, on Thursday said almost all health insurance policies cover epidemics, including coronavirus.

The statement comes after the regulator Irdai on Wednesday asked insurers to cover coronavirus cases in their existing policies and also to ensure that they expeditiously attend to the coronavirus claims.

"Almost all the existing health policies cover almost all epidemics, which includes the coronavirus too. What the regulator (Irdai) said was not to frame a new policy but asking the industry to treat coronavirus cases expeditiously," A V Girija Kumar, chairman of the General Insurance Council, told PTI here on the



sidelines of an industry event to launch an awareness campaign to increase adoption of general insurance policies.

There are 30 confirmed cases of coronavirus infection in the country as of Thursday, of which 16 are Italian tourists.

On Wednesday, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) asked insurers to expeditiously settle hospitalisation claims related to coronavirus disease under health policies. It also instructed insurers to come out with policies to cover treatment costs for coronavirus infection, which has impacted thousands of people worldwide.

"For the purpose of meeting health insurance requirements of various sections, insurers are advised to design products covering the costs of treatment for coronavirus," Irdai said in a circular.

Virus could cost airlines USD 113 bn revenue in 2020: IATA

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

The airline industry could lose up to USD 113 billion in revenue this year due to the impact of the new coronavirus, an industry body warned Thursday, as the epidemic spreads rapidly worldwide.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimated revenue losses to airlines' passenger business of between USD 63 billion and USD 113 billion -- with the higher figure for a scenario where the virus spreads more widely.

The more dire prediction amounts to a 19 per cent loss in worldwide passenger revenues, IATA said.

"Financially, that would be on a scale equivalent to what the industry experienced in the global financial crisis," said a statement from the group.



It was a far bleaker assessment than two weeks ago, when IATA forecast revenue losses would come in at USD 29.3 billion.

But since then the virus has spread rapidly outside China, where it first emerged late last year, and has now reached some 80 countries and territories. More than 95,000 people have been infected and over 3,200 have died worldwide.



Sebi bans 4 entities for fraudulent trading

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has restrained four entities from accessing securities market for two years for executing fraudulent trading in the scrip of Seshasayee Paper and Boards Ltd (SPBL).

Sebi conducted an investigation into the trading of the scrip of the firm during December 2011 and October 2014 and found a sharp rise in the scrip price and volume.

It noted that the entities had traded among each other as a connected group.

Sebi said the entities were "connected to each other and bought and sold shares of SPBL through a common connected broker, acted as a group under a premeditated scheme / plan to indulge into circular trades at BSE (con.27 per cent of total market volume) and NSE (contributing to 21.10 per cent of total market volume) ... and created misleading appearance of trading in the scrip without any intention of change in beneficial ownership."

The entities are Bharat Jayantilal Patel, Fidelity Multitrade, Pasha Finance and Acira Consultancy. Barring the entities from securities market, Sebi said if the entities have any open positions in any exchange traded derivative contracts, they can close out or square off such open positions within 3 months or at the expiry

In a separate order, Sebi restrained 21 entities from accessing the securities market for one year as they carried out fraudulent trading in the scrip of Jolly Plastic Industries Ltd.

of such contracts, whichever is earlier.

They can also settle the pay-in and pay-out obligations in respect of transactions which have taken place before the close of March 4, 2020.

In a separate order, Sebi restrained 21 entities from accessing the securities market for one year as they carried out fraudulent trading in the scrip of Jolly Plastic Industries Ltd.

Apart from 9 individuals, the 12 firms that have been banned from securities market are Aavia Buildtech, Aavia Softech, Accurate Buildwell, Aglow Financial Services, Bluechip Fincap Serve, Capital Securities, Century Buildmart, Mould Trading, Ocean Share Brokers, Steady Capital Advisory Services, Sure Portfolio Services, Surya Medi Tech.

Sensex ends 61 pts higher; SBI spurts on Yes Bank stake buzz

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Giving up most early gains, equity benchmark Sensex ended 61.13 points higher on Thursday as domestic investors weighed the impact of rising coronavirus cases in the country.

After rallying over 478 points during the day, the 30-share index settled 61.13 points or 0.16 per cent higher at 38,470.61.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 18 points or 0.16 per cent to finish at 11,269.

Top gainers in the Sensex pack



included Kotak Bank, HCL Tech, HUL, TCS, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance and SBI, while Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, ICICI Bank and Infosys ended with losses.

SBI jumped 1.05 per cent following reports that the government has given the go-ahead to the lender and other financial institutions to take over capital-starved Yes Bank.

According to analysts, despite trading significantly higher through the day on positive global cues, market failed to hold on to most gains as domestic investors turned increasingly risk averse amid rising cases of coronavirus in the country.

SBI-led consortium to buy controlling stake in Yes Bank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has approved a plan for a consortium of lenders, led by State Bank of India, to acquire a controlling stake in Yes Bank, highly placed sources said on Thursday.

An announcement is expected soon, they added. Yes Bank, which is grappling with bad loans, is looking to raise fresh capital but the plans are facing uncertainties.

It has also delayed an announcement of 2019 December 2019 quarter results due to the ongoing crisis.

The bank's capital buffers have come down due to non-performing assets. The sources said the government has cleared a plan for a SBI-led consortium to acquire a controlling stake in the bank.

In a clarification to stock exchanges on reports that the government is said to have approved SBI's plan to buy stake in Yes Bank, the state-



owned lender said it would disclose developments, if any, as per SBI regulations.

"... we will abide by the timelines under Regulation 30 of Sebi (LODR) Regulations 2015 in disclosing the developments, if any in the matter to stock exchanges," it added.

Yes Bank has been passing through a tumultuous period ever since the Reserve Bank, in August 2018, asked the then chief executive Rana Kapoor to leave by January 31, 2019, amid concerns on governance

and loan practices. Under his successor Ravneet Gill, the lender has disclosed large under-reported stressed assets.

The bank reported its maiden loss in the March 2019 quarter.

Yes Bank had initially planned to raise capital of over USD 2 billion in the current fiscal. Later, its board rejected a USD 1.2 billion investment in the bank by Canadian investor SPGP Group/ Erwin Singh Braich.



that a judicial review cannot be incurred under Article 226 of the Constitution, which empowers high courts to issue directions, orders or writs in such a matter. The bank sought dismissal of Kochhar's petition. Kochhar was terminated from the ICICI Bank months after she voluntarily left the second largest private sector lender. The high-profile former banker moved the high court on November 30, 2019, challenging "termination" of her employment by the ICICI Bank. She contended that the bank also denied her remuneration and clawed back all the bonuses and stock options between April 2009 and March 2018, for her alleged role in granting out of turn loans worth Rs 3,250 crore to the Videocon Group which benefited her husband Deepak Kochhar. Kochhar's counsel Vikram Nankani earlier argued that her termination came months after the bank approved her voluntary resignation on October 5, 2018 and therefore, the termination is "illegal, untenable and unsustainable in law".

The ICICI Bank then filed an affidavit, contending the reliefs in the petition are not maintainable and it deserves to be dismissed as ICICI is a private bank and is administered under the Companies Act, not the state or its agency. Khambata argued that ICICI was a private banking company and Kochhar's petition seeks to contest what are purely private contractual terms.

The bench in its order noted that even if an institution is performing a public duty and is amenable to jurisdiction, all its decisions would not be subject to judicial review. "If the private body is discharging a public function and the denial of any right is in connection with the public duty imposed on such body, the public law remedy can be enforced," the court said.

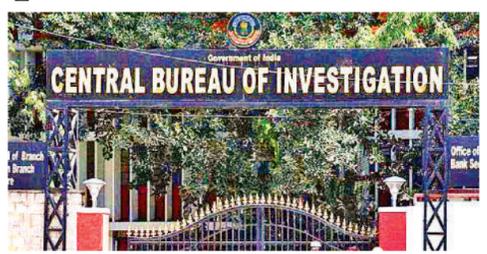
It took note of the fact that ICICI was a private bank governed by a board of directors and did not receive any funds from the government. The ICICI Bank's counsel Darius Khambata earlier argued

CBI books former senior officials of Hindustan Paper Corporation Ltd in Rs-64 cr scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited (HPCL), including its former chairman-cum-managing director MVN Rao, have been booked by the CBI in a Rs-64 crore bamboo purchase scam, wherein inflated prices were allegedly paid to the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) in Assam, officials said.

The scam pertains to alleged irregularities in the procurement of bamboo by Cachar Paper Mill (CPM) from the DHAC. Bamboo pulp is used for producing paper. Besides Rao (now retired), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has also



booked the then director (operations) SN Bhattarcharya, director (finance) Amitabh Banerjee and company secretary LR Ekanath of HPCL.

The agency has also named as accused the then chief executive of CPM Pratap Goswami, acting chief executive TR Gowda, other senior officials

and RS Gandhi, the proprietor of Hill Trade Agency, which was given a subcontract by DHAC for the bamboo supply to CPM.

The DHAC, formerly known as the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC), is an autonomous district council in Assam that

The agency has also named as accused the then chief executive of CPM Pratap Goswami, acting chief executive TR Gowda, other senior officials and RS Gandhi, the proprietor of Hill Trade Agency, which was given a subcontract by DHAC for the bamboo supply to CPM

had entered into an agreement with HPCL for the supply of bamboo in 1980 for a period of 30 years, officials said.

Till 2006, HPCL used to cut and transport bamboos, for which a fixed royalty was paid to DHAC under the agreement.

The agreement, which came into affect in 1982, had

to remain in force till 2012. However, a supplementary agreement was signed in 2006 between the two sides, under which DHAC employed a sub-contractor -- Hill Trade Agency -- for the purpose of cutting and transporting bamboo, resulting in an increase in the supply rates and transportation costs, the officials said.



Hyderabad-based rappers Zachariah Prasad and Waseem, who have emerged winners in Red Bull's Spotlight competition in the city, are all set to test their luck to become country's next big hip-hop stars in the finals scheduled to be held in April, finds
V SATEESH REDDY



Two Hyderabad youngsters Zachariah Prasad and Waseem were declared winners of the Hyderabad leg of Red Bull Spotlight, a nationwide hunt for the country's next hip-hop star season III. They have been selected for the finals to be held at the national level in April. Conducted all across the country, the city-wise winners will go head-to-head next month.

Towards India's next **HIP-HOP** star

The champions will be allowed to record a full-length album in a studio, along with a photo shoot and a music video. Each of the city winners will be given time to record one song in a studio along with a video.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Zachariah Prasad shares, "The competition started with the contenders performing a cipher. A cipher according to the hip-hop culture is where a group of hip-hop artists get together in a circle and perform one by one. As an MC, the biggest strength is how they open themselves to a huge group of audience or listeners. That

is quintessential to any performing art but when it comes to being an MC (called rappers these days) one has to generate and circulate the energy of the crowd."

About his preparation for the finals, Prasad says, "We have a set of songs and are trying to experiment a little and see how they work out. We need to be at our best so that Hyderabad has a strong hip-hop community. Our dream is to keep making authentic art and inspire the coming generations to appreciate art in

whatever form. Art is an expression of self; it's the reflection of how one perceives the world around them. Whatever we create lives on by itself, it's beautiful."

When asked about the hip-hop culture in the country, Prasad says, "Ever since the movie *Gully Boy* we've seen a spike in the number of hip-hop music consumers in India. I think it's a great start, but there is a lot of room for refinement. I am looking forward to seeing different artists let go of the current norms and make art that is true to them."

Prasad adds, "When I started rapping for fun, it was a great learning experience. This art form helped me realise that everything has its purpose and cause and there will be certain things that outlive the creator. It's been nine years since I first started freestyle rapping which eventually led me to take this up seriously."

Another rapper Waseem says, "I was very happy to meet my fellow competitors, judges during the state-level competition. The competition is hosted for college students who aspire to be a

rappers/artists. Red Bull helps people like us produce our first album. Our competitors were great rappers and we all carry different techniques."

"I have been performing rap for 16 years. I have performed in different places in Saudi and do various forms of art on stage. It has been fun performing on stage after coming back to India. I wish this continues and I keep growing through time. I'm practicing very well for the finals and I hope to become the national champion," Waseem concludes.



'My religion is love'

Asha se bhasha na mile to, iss ka matlab phoot nahin, Ik daali par reh kar jaise, phool juda hain paat juda,

Bura nahin agar yunhi watan mein, dharm juda ho zaat juda, Apne watan mein...

This song from the black-and-white era film, *Didi* (1959), stands relevant even today and makes one feel proud of the vast diversity of our country, that is resolutely battling the naked ambition of the political class. Kathak dancer Manjari Chaturvedi, who is set to open at the Jahan-e-Khusrav Sufi Music Festival 2020, believes the same. She says, "Religious differences will never cease to exist but that doesn't mean they can define the people of a nation. They cannot determine its culture and identity. We have to find a way out towards harmony. Which is why, I believe, it's very important to talk about love and also, breathe it — not only here but all over the world."

Recent examples are evidence of how political upheavals and communal differences have affected art and artists in many ways. One of the biggest one being the banning of Pakistani artists and films in India and vice versa. An incident also occurred with Manjari when a month ago, her performance was stopped midway in Lucknow. She alleged that they didn't want qawwali to

be performed there. Recalling the row, she says, "My concert was stopped for a reason but I don't believe that there is anything wrong in performing qawwali. For me, it is as spiritual as any other composition. But it did not appeal to some people. So, I turned around and told them that it was unfair to stop the show. But did I stop performing as an artist?"

Kathak dancer Manjari Chaturvedi says religious differences in a country cannot define its culture and people. And despite being stopped from performing at a concert midway, she kept her message alive, writes CHAHAK MITTAL

No. I will continue to speak about the message of love." She adds that over the past 25 years that she has been in the industry, "governments have come and gone. But my work has been the same. Hence, the work of art is not defined by the political ideology of that moment. It is what we call our *sanskriti*, and our culture is defined by its people, not their differences."

Manjari will be performing on the poetry of Rumi, "one of the most loved poets," interpreting the core emotion. "Even though I had been trying to work on this

since a long time, the Rumi project is new. It talks about how the human soul is separated from the universal soul, which is the almighty. It is aspiring to meet it, which is like *Atma ka parmatma se milan*. There are also English translations of it recited by Murad (Ali) because people might not understand Persian but they need to know what poetry is saying as dance is not just a performance, it also communicates. It is about a singular entity and not particularly a story. It is about the universal soul. It doesn't have a face, name or shape to it. It's just a soul that's being explored through dance and music. It's abstract," says she.

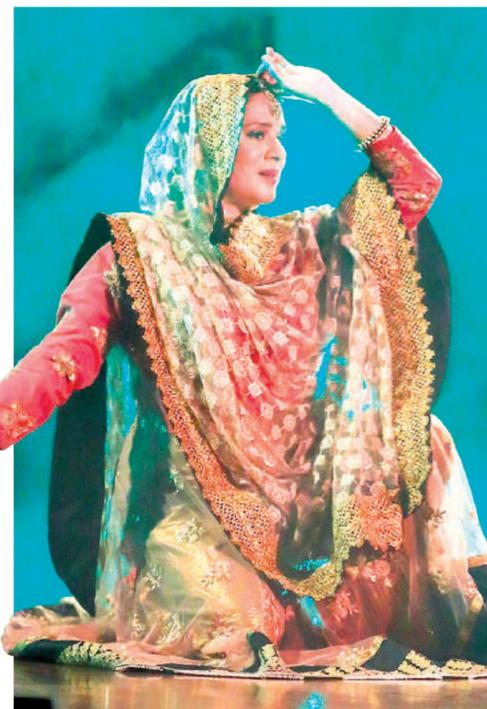
Why did she only choose Rumi as her muse? The reason is 'Ishq.' She says, "Today, we need to talk about love as much as we can. Because what else do we need? We don't require hate. We have to actually bring it to every platform. I believe the English term — love — is very limiting. And there's no right translation of *ishq*. It is that level of love where you forget your own identity and in which you burn. *Ishq* is something that burns you and I find that the intensity is higher in the term as compared to 'love'. 'I love you' is very easy to say but to burn in that intensity is different. And that is what Rumi experienced."

Social media is witness to how Rumi has been quoted

by so many — irrespective of which generation one belongs to. But Manjari feels that its right meaning has still never been completely understood or felt. Says she, "Rumi's poetry gives us the possibility that 'that' kind of love does exist. It is musical, it is magical. And I am just exploring the probability of that kind of love which he had felt."

It's her travels to different parts of the world that has made her explore a variety of artforms and cultures. Which is why she believes that festivals like the Jahan-e-Khusrav are very important. "I have travelled to 35 countries in 20 years. And nowhere did anyone ask me about how many malls there are in Delhi. Instead, they asked me how do I perform kathak? What is Krishna's philosophy? How do you find your music? How do you plan your performances? The question about how many malls are there in your city sometimes becomes irrelevant if you don't have your arts and culture alive. *Sanskriti* is important. Otherwise, there will be no difference left in a mall in Vasant Kunj and a mall in Dubai. The difference is in the essence of a place's culture," she points out.

Manjari has been known for her 'Courtesan Project', through which she has talked at length about how gender discrimination has prevailed in art. Through her performances and concerts, she has recreated the lives and magic of courtesans — who have time and again, been the muse for poets, painters, sculptors, artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers and the creative thought at large. How much has people's perspective changed since the time she started the conversation around them? "Very much!"



she says and adds, "It's been nine years since I started the project. And because I was already an established artist even at that time, when I started talking about it suddenly, there was an unhealthy buzz. People were making comments like, 'Oh! Look at her. Now she's going to do this.' 'This is what kathak is going to be reduced to now.' 'She's going to start doing Mujra now.' But now, I see, a lot has changed. They have started to understand what I am saying."

She explains that her only point of debate was that one cannot discriminate art on the basis of gender and explaining this took almost a decade. She adds, "The men performers are called *Ustads*, whereas women performers are called *Nachne-gaane vaali*. The judgement needs to be limited on what has been performed and that whether it is right or not. How can you decide that a ghazal is good or bad depending on the gender of the performer? It was

the first time in 100-200 years, even post-independence, that there was a conversation about *tawaifs*. Why do women performers only have to be linked to sexuality? It is very easy for patriarchy to bring a woman down. And this is one of my projects through which I have actively questioned gender inequality. And today, I could say that people are understanding my point of view and agreeing too."

However, she also feels that such a thought came to her due to a realisation — "I come from a privileged background." Being a brahmin and an educated person, she has had many privileges. She says, "Initially, they would laugh at me when I began the Courtesan Project. I realised that I was born with these privileges and I am grateful to it. But not everybody was born with them. So if I don't do something for the ones who don't have the privilege, what is the point of having it then?"

After exiting as director of the *Doctor Strange* sequel, filmmaker Scott Derrickson is expected to team up with Marvel Studios alum Chris Evans for the upcoming thriller *Bermuda*. According to *hollywoodreporter.com*, Derrickson is set to helm *Bermuda* for Skydance, with Evans eyed to star in the project. Ironically, Sam Raimi was at one time attached to direct *Bermuda*. Now, Raimi is set to helm *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*. *Bermuda*, about the mysterious Bermuda Triangle, had a script from Doug Miro and Carlo Bernard when Raimi was attached. Derrickson and his writing

partner C. Robert Cargill will rewrite the script. Derrickson rose to prominence with 2005's "The Exorcism of Emily Rose", and went on to direct "The Day

Derrickson remains an executive producer on "Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness". Evans, who retired the role of Captain

Chris Evans to star in thriller *BERMUDA*



the *Earth Stood Still*, *Sinister* and *Doctor Strange*, the 2016 Marvel film which brought Benedict Cumberbatch into the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

America with *Avengers: Endgame*, will also be seen in Greg Berlanti's upcoming *Little Shop of Horrors* remake.



KATY PERRY announces pregnancy through music video

Pop superstar Katy Perry is expecting her first child with fiancé and actor Orlando Bloom, and she shared the news through her new music video. The *American Idol* judge revealed the news that she is expecting in the music video of her new song *Never worn white*, reports *people.com*. The baby will be the first for Perry with fiancé Bloom. The 43-year-old Bloom is already a father to a nine-year-old son Flynn, whom he shares with former wife Miranda Kerr.

"We're excited and happy," she told her fans while eating some dried mango. The singer also opened up about her craving during her secret pregnancy, saying that she "literally never cared for spice and now I have to carry Tabasco sauce in my purse". She has also developed a love for spicy foods, some foods now are not so appealing.

"Foods that gross me out now are beef," she told her fans. Perry channels her fears of commitment through *Never worn white*, while at the same time singing about how she is ready for a life of happiness with another person.

"Because I've never worn white/But I wanna get it right/Yeah, I really wanna try with you," she sings in the chorus. "No, I've never worn white/But I'm standin' here tonight/Cause I really wanna say 'I do'."

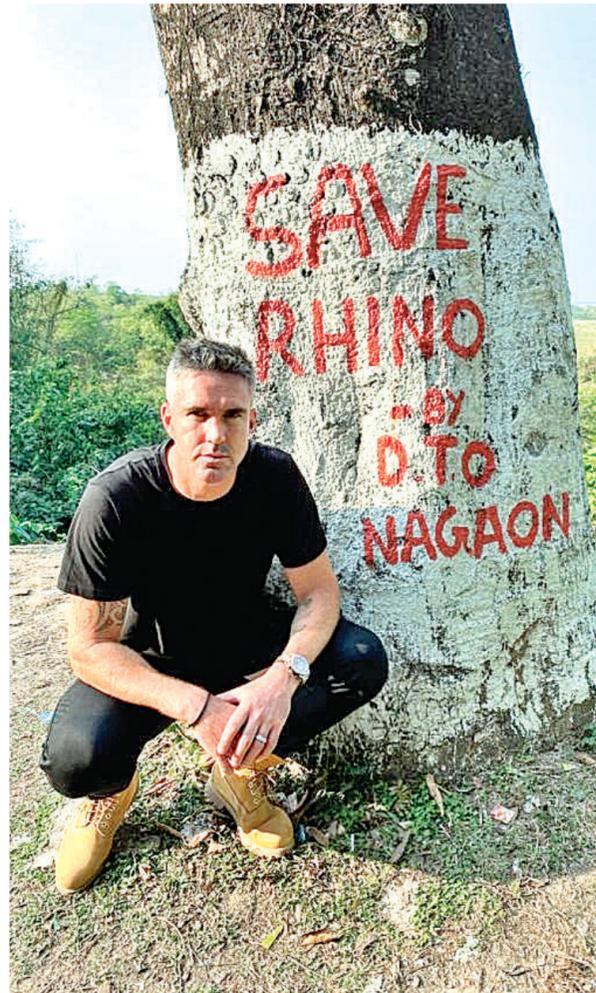
Perry went on to reveal her due date. "There's a lot that will be happening this summer, not only will I be giving birth — literally — but also figuratively to something you guys have been waiting for," she said, referring to her upcoming album. She added that she and Bloom can't wait for the arrival of the baby.

Kevin in India for wildlife documentary shoot

Former England cricket captain Kevin Pietersen is currently in Assam to shoot for National Geographic's documentary *Save This Rhino*. He also visited Kaziranga National Park, home to the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros.

In the documentary, Pietersen will be seen assessing the situation of rhinos in India while exploring new technologies and co-op solutions to spread awareness among people about rhino conservation in the country. He also posted a couple of pictures on his Instagram handle. In one of the images, he is seen sitting in front of a tree.

Save rhino, reads a slogan on the tree's bark. Pietersen earlier made the announcement about the documentary on his Twitter handle. "Final bit of prep for our @NatGeoIndia. Flag of India doco we're filming over the next few weeks. Human/animal conflict. Technology we've developed to help the people. Indian rhino poaching efforts," read his message.



FUN

ARCHIE

REG IS HAVING ME VIDEOTAPE HIS GAME SO HE CAN IMPROVE HIS FORM!
THAT'S USELESS!
THE LAST PERSON REGGIE FINDS FAULT WITH IS HIMSELF!
THE CAMERA WAS VERY SHAKY HERE! AND THE LIGHTING IS ALL WRONG! AND YOUR ANGLE--
SEE?

CALVIN AND HOBBS

THIS BOOK SAYS TIGERS ARE TERRITORIAL AND WON'T SHARE THEIR GROUND WITH OTHER TIGERS.
I GUESS WE'D BETTER DIVIDE UP THE WOODS THEN. THIS WILL BE MY TERRITORY AND THAT WILL BE YOURS.
THIS ROCK WILL SEPARATE OUR TWO SIDES. AS ANOTHER TIGER, YOU ARE HEREBY BANISHED FROM THIS SIDE OF THE ROCK.
HA HA HA! LOOK WHAT I'VE FOUND! YOU CUT THAT OUT!

GARFIELD

IT'S TIME FOR GARFIELD'S HELPFUL HOUSEHOLD HINTS
GOT A SQUEAKY HINGE ON A DOOR?
FEED YOUR CAT LASAGNA!

REALITY CHECK

HEY, I BET YOU'D MAKE A SUPER GOOD DANCER RIGHT ABOUT NOW
REALLY?
EASY, BUDDY-- THAT'S THE BEER TALKIN'--

SPEED BUMP

DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM THAT MAN? IF YOUR FATHER COULD SEE YOU, HE'D BE SPINNING IN HIS GRAY!

NANCY

HOROSCOPE: "TODAY YOU MAY REACH GREAT HEIGHTS"

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

CROSSWORD

	1	2	3	4	5				
6									
7									
8		9			10		11		
					12				
13									
14		15		16			17		18
19									

ACROSS

- A team game
- Foe
- A bamboo-eating animal
- Measure temperatures with this
- Player of bagpipes
- Stairs
- Book of word meanings
- A radio code that uses dots and dashes
- Wide awake and ready for anything
- An animal kept for milk
- Choose
- Spoil completely
- Gritty stuff on a beach
- Your hearing organs

DOWN

- Not in danger
- All right, but not especially good
- Halt
- A sign of tiredness
- A big sea bird
- A many-legged creature

SOLUTION

B	U	C	K	L	E	C	L	I	E
E	A	J	O	L					
S	O	C	K	M	A	R	B	L	E
T	T	S	N	E	V				
F	U	R	I	O	U	S			
A	S	M	A	B	N				
U	L	I	B	R	A	R			
T	K	L	Y	O	L				
H	A	N	G	A	R	K	N	E	E
O	R	Z	F						
R	O	T	S	D	E	T	E	S	T

GINGER MEGGS

AS PART OF YOUR PUNISHMENT, GINGER, YOU HAVE TO MOW THE LAWN, TAKE OUT THE RUBBISH AND WASH MY CAR!
BUT THOSE ARE ALL THINGS I USUALLY DO ANYWAY FOR MY POCKET MONEY!
WELL, NOW YOU'RE DOING IT FOR PENANCE.
BETTER A PENANCE THAN A PITTANCE.

Rain takes India to final

Women in Blue pip England by virtue of wins in group stage to enter maiden T20 World Cup summit clash

PTI ■ SYDNEY

An unbeaten run in the group stage propelled India into their maiden Women's T20 World Cup final against defending champions Australia after their last-four clash against England was washed out here on Thursday, prompting both captains to say that reserve days are essential for knockout clashes.

Persistent rain since morning delayed the toss and eventually the semifinal was called off without a ball being bowled, taking Indians into the summit clash and leaving England players in tears.

"Really frustrating. Not how we wanted the World Cup to finish for us. No reserve day, no chance of getting play, and ultimately that loss against South Africa cost us," a dejected England captain Heather Knight said after the game was abandoned.

Her India counterpart Harmanpreet Kaur also agreed that the semifinals should have had a reserve day, a request which was made by host Cricket Australia but turned down by the ICC.

"Unfortunately we didn't get a game, but there are rules and we have to follow it. Having reserve days in the future will be a great idea," said Kaur.

Knight said her team paid the price for not starting the tournament well.

"It's all very English isn't it, talking about the weather and getting knocked out. It felt that we gained a bit of momentum in the last few games and we were pumped up for the semifinals," she added.



INDIA VS ENGLAND

"Lessons are to win the first game I guess (laughs). It's become a trend, not to start well in tournaments, and that has cost us."

India had topped Group A with four victories in as many matches while England had finished second in Group B with three wins and a defeat.

"From day one, we new we have to win all the games because in case the semis don't happen, that would be hard for us. In that sense, credit to the team for winning all the games," said Kaur.

"Everybody is looking in great touch - Shafali (Verma) and Smriti (Mandhana). They are giving us good starts, and that helps. Me and Smriti are trying to spend more time in the nets," she added reflecting on her and Mandhana's so far indifferent form.

"We are looking more positive now. Unfortunately we haven't come up with big innings, but our teammates are, and at the end of the day it's a team game."

ICC regulations dictate that in the event of a semi-final washout, the winners of each group automatically go through to the final in Melbourne on Sunday. The world body had earlier declined Cricket Australia's request for a reserve day.

"They're the rules that everyone signed up to," Knight said of the absence of a reserve day.

"You'd hope now that there has been this situation and the game tonight is potentially going to be rained off as well, so you'd hope now there is going to be a rule change and moving forward, no other team will have to experience going out of a World Cup purely because of rain," she said after the abandonment of the game.

"Hopefully it changes," she added.

"It's gutting. You put in a lot of hard work. There's not a lot we can do about it. We're just going to have to rue that first game and try to move on but it's going to be a bitter pill to swallow for a few of us now."

Disappointment was writ large on the faces of England players as their campaign ended without them getting a chance to take the field.

Unhappy Knight calls for rule change

PTI ■ SYDNEY

England captain Heather Knight on Thursday called for a rule change after a rained-out semifinal clash against India knocked them out of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here.

ICC regulations dictate that in the event of a semi-final washout, the winners of each group automatically go through to the final in Melbourne on Sunday. The world body had earlier declined Cricket Australia's request for a reserve day.

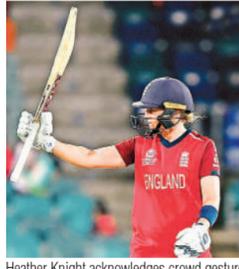
"They're the rules that everyone signed up to," Knight said of the absence of a reserve day.

"You'd hope now that there has been this situation and the game tonight is potentially going to be rained off as well, so you'd hope now there is going to be a rule change and moving forward, no other team will have to experience going out of a World Cup purely because of rain," she said after the abandonment of the game.

"Hopefully it changes," she added.

"It's gutting. You put in a lot of hard work. There's not a lot we can do about it. We're just going to have to rue that first game and try to move on but it's going to be a bitter pill to swallow for a few of us now."

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Heather Knight acknowledges crowd gesture after completing fifty

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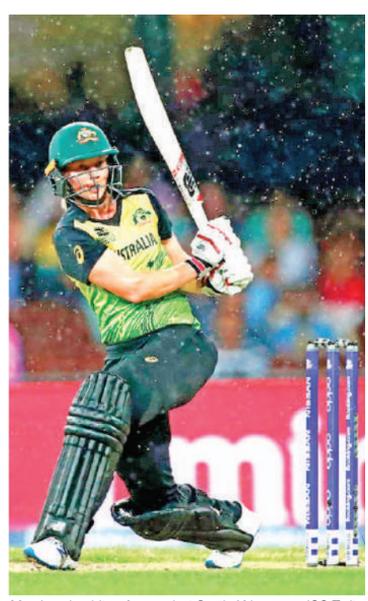
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Meg Lanning hits a four against South Africa

Lanning, Schutt lead Southern Stars win

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Four-time champions Australia used their rich big-match experience to surpass a spirited South Africa by five runs in a rain-hit semifinal here on Thursday, setting up a title clash against first-timers India.

There were fears that the second semifinal between Australia and South Africa at the SCG too will be washed out like the India and England match earlier in the day. But the weather improved just enough to get a game albeit a curtailed one.

Australia skipper Meg Lanning led from the front with unbeaten 49 off as many balls to take her team to 134 for five in 20 overs. Rain returned during the innings break and South Africa were set a revised target of 98 runs in 13 overs as per the D/L method.

South Africa ended at 92 for five despite a fighting 41 not out off 27 balls from Laura Wolvaardt, leaving them dejected.

Hosts Australia, who did not have the services of injured star all-rounder Elyse Perry, were ecstatic after Jess Jonassen was able to defend 19 runs in the final over with South Africa getting only 13.

With the win, Australia advanced to their sixth successive final out of the seven editions held so far.

"It was extremely tense. Even in the last couple of balls it just wasn't safe. They needed 19 off the last over and we knew we had to nail it. But that's T20 cricket for you; I was extremely nervous," said skipper Lanning.

On the final against India, she added: "India are a class side, they have been playing excellent cricket. We are going to have to play really well. We have been improving each day, it hasn't been an easy road."

"We wanted to give ourselves a chance of playing in the finals, and now we just need to enjoy ourselves. We are travelling to Melbourne tomorrow, train on Saturday and play on Sunday. I doubt there'd be much sleep happening tonight."

South Africa skipper Dane van Niekerk said her team tried its best.

"...We have to give credit to Australia for the way they bowled and we just came six short. We brought them back with the ball really well, they got off to a flier and we thought they'd get to 160. "All the bowlers did really well, and credit to them for how they brought it back. It was very emotional to see the ladies like that."

Double delight

Harman's parent were in attendance at SCG for first time as she leads India to final



Harmanpreet speaks during press conference

PTI ■ SYDNEY

It was double delight for captain Harmanpreet Kaur as India entered their maiden T20 World Cup final and in attendance, for the first time in her international career, were her parents.

"It was the first time they were going to watch me playing cricket since my dad did when I was in school, and my mother

has never watched me play cricket," Harmanpreet said at the post-match conference.

"They wanted to see today's game, but unfortunately, they didn't get to watch."

"It means a lot because from day one I wanted them to watch me playing cricket and today I got this opportunity. They have come here to watch all of us playing, and I hope we get all support from all the parents and try to win this tournament."

Her parents will remain in Australia to watch India play in the final at the iconic MCG, which will take place on her 31st birthday.

Harmanpreet said the team knew the importance of winning all matches from the beginning.

"From day one, we knew we have to win all the games because in case the semis don't happen, that would be hard for us. In that sense, credit to the team for winning all the games," she added.

Harman & girls have firepower to win T20 WC

IAN S ■ KOLKATA

Former captain Jhulan Goswami has put her money firmly behind the Indian team, saying that the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side has the arsenal to win their maiden Women's T20 World Cup title. India qualified for the final as their semi-final clash against England got washed out at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday.

"It is great news. They have dominated the World Cup. They topped the group and made it to the semis. The semi-final was washed out but this is part of the game," Jhulan told IANS. But in Heather Knight's England, India had the toughest challenge as they have never beaten them in the compe-



dition. However, Goswami said now that they are in the final, their real task would be to not get bogged down by the pressure of the big stage and keep playing fearless cricket.

"Pressure will be there. World Cup final is the biggest stage. Handling the pressure is the key. They have played fearless cricket so far and I am hopeful they will continue playing good cricket and will win the World Cup," said Goswami who was part of India's gut-wrenching 2017 50-over World Cup final loss to England at Lord's.

The 35-year-old added that reaching the final is an achievement in itself and the fearless brand of cricket the team has played can help them win the trophy.

"Reaching the final and in this fashion is a big achievement. They should continue playing the fearless cricket they have been playing," said Goswami who is the only player in the world to take more than 200 wickets in women's one-day internationals.

Rahul & Pant doing well, but Dhoni is missed: Kuldeep

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India spinner Kuldeep Yadav has once again highlighted the position former skipper MS Dhoni has in the Indian set-up. The bowler has said that while KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant have been performing well behind the stumps, the experience that Dhoni brings is being missed in the team.

"Mahi bhai obviously brings a lot of experience with him and he has given the Indian team a lot. So when a player like that is not playing of course you miss him. They (Rahul and Pant) are young and are doing well. Both are keeping well so it has not made too much of a difference, but yes, you do miss his presence," Kuldeep told reporters on Thursday.

While Pant was pushed as Dhoni's replacement post the 2019 World Cup, the 22-year-old's inconsistency with the bat led to Rahul taking his place behind the stumps. Consequently, Rahul's supreme form with the bat and ability to play in a variety of positions across the order seems to have led to him making the position his own.

"They are catching well and batting pretty well. I have not felt too much of a difference in that way. Every player has their good days and bad days and it's important to back them when they have bad ones. It's not that you play for one day, there are lots of days in a year for cricket," he said.

Kuldeep felt that from a bowler's point of view, adjusting to Rahul or Pant from Dhoni has not been too much of a leap.

Kuldeep and Yuzvendra Chahal's rise as a deadly wrist spin duo was a theme for India going into the 2019 World Cup. Since then however, the return of Ravindra Jadeja to the limited-overs setup has led to the pair rarely getting to play together in a match. Kuldeep said that it's all down to the team management when asked if he expects to play once again with Chahal at the T20 World Cup later in the year.

"Our team is very strong and we will make as much effort as possible to put up a strong performance. As far as wrist spin goes, it depends upon what the management decides. If there are two players who are very good at forming batting or bowling partnerships, it is always great for the team. So it will be good if we play together," he said.

"It's all on the team combination. Jadeja has been playing very well as a batsman, bowler and fielder. Because of him the combination has become stronger. He gives a lot of depth to the batting. Whenever Chahal and I get chances we try to perform to our best."

"I was given the challenge before the game by the coach (Mark Boucher) to knock over the big three."

Finch and Warner posted 50 off the first 37 balls of the innings before Ngidi had Warner caught at cover. He followed up by dismissing Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne off successive balls.

Labuschagne's wicket was Ngidi's 50th in his 26th ODI -- the fastest South African to the landmark.

D'Arcy Short, who gained a place on the tour when Glenn Maxwell was ruled out because of surgery, made 69, his maiden one-day international half-century, before he was out in the 42nd over to start Australia's slide.

Malan made 129 not out to enable South Africa to chase down a target of 272 and seal the series with a game to spare their first win in five series in all formats in home internationals this season.

Malan, 23, was out for a first-ball duck on his ODI debut in the first match in Paarl on Saturday and was not selected in a 15-man squad which will depart on Sunday for a three-game tour of India.

"They were great partners to have in the chase," said Malan. "My partners kept me calm when I was itching a bit."

He made his runs off 139 balls and hit seven fours and four sixes.

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Janneman maiden ton helps SA seal series

AFP ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

Janneman Malan, snubbed for South Africa's upcoming tour of India, hit a match-winning century as the Proteas clinched their one-day international series against Australia with a six-wicket victory in the second match at the Mangaung Oval on Wednesday.

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ANUPAMA TO REPRISE

Anna Ben in *Helen* Telugu remake



PVP acquired the Telugu remake rights of Tamil fantasy drama *Oh My Kadavule*, featuring Ashok Selvan, Ritika Singh, Vani Bhojan and Vijay Sethupathi in the lead roles. While there has been no significant development on who will spearhead the Telugu version, *The Pioneer* has now exclusively learnt that the producer has also bagged the Telugu remake rights of last year Malayalam super hit *Helen*.

According to a well-placed source, PVP, who struck gold last year with *Evaru* (a Telugu remake of Spanish film *The Invisible Guest*), has even zeroed in on the leading lady to front the Telugu version. "He has spoken to Anupama Parameswaran to headline the film and she readily accepted. She saw the film when it released in Malayalam, and was mighty impressed with it. She never thought the Telugu remake would come her way but as luck would have it, she was at the right place right time. PVP is keen on tailoring the script to suit Telugu sensibilities and work on it has begun full-swing. The project will go to floors later this summer and will be wrapped up mostly in a start-to-finish schedule," the source said.

Starring *Kumbalangi Nights* fame Anna Ben in the titular role, *Helen*, a survival drama, told the story of a girl who gets trapped in a freezer room. Directed by Mathukutty Xavier, it got both critical acclaim and commercial success alike. Just last month, the film's Tamil remake with Keerthi Pandian and Arun Pandian went to floors in Chennai. Kannada remake

Starring *Kumbalangi Nights* fame Anna Ben in the titular role, *Helen*, a survival drama, told the story of a girl who gets trapped in a freezer room, finds NAGARAJ GOUD



with Lasya Nagaraj has also been announced earlier this week in Bengaluru.



Nikhil's next gets Sukumar style title

Announced last December, *Kumari 21F* director Palnati Surya Pratap's next with Nikhil Siddhartha has been titled *18 Pages*. The film, a joint production venture between GA2 Pictures and Sukumar Writings, was launched in Hyderabad on Thursday. Sukumar, who was written the film, directed the honorary first shot as Allu

Aravind's granddaughter Arha sounded the clapperboard. While there is no word yet on when the film will go to sets, as Nikhil will begin shooting for good friend Chandoo Mondeti's *Karthikeya 2* shortly, it will, however, have music by Gopi Sunder. Yuvaraj, who shot films like *Krishnagadi Veeraprema Gadha* and *Lie*, has been signed on as the cinematographer.

The makers haven't disclosed the film's genre as well but we hear it is a quirky love story, which will tell the tale of an 18-page love story of the lead actor and so, the title. Plus, Sukumar, once a mathematics teacher, is known to have a penchant for numbers and it reflected in previous titles like *100 % Love*, *1: Nenokkadine* and *Kumar 21F*.

Naresh on a leave, Banerjee steps in



Troubles in MAA seem far from over and President Naresh VK is caught in the eye of the storm once again. With him going on a leave of 41 days over a "tight schedule", the disciplinary and executive committee of MAA has swung into action swiftly. They met at Film Chamber, Hyderabad on Wednesday evening and decided to make vice-president Banerjee as the acting president with the help of by-laws. Krishnam Raju, Chiranjeevi, Murali Mohan, Jayasudha and Ali were



among the many who attended the meeting. A source close to MAA says this is the end of the road for Naresh as the president. "The image of MAA took a severe beating ever since Naresh came into power. The fact that he was not available for the most of the time for the association meant that other members were dejected with his

conduct. Major works of the body have been pending because of his constant absence. Chirru was particularly unhappy over this and had to step in to curtail the damage further. The chances of Naresh returning to the president post are unlikely now. Banerjee has been told to conduct day-to-day operations of the body without attracting controversies," the source said. However, putting a brave face, Naresh extended his best wishes to Banerjee for his new assignment. "I thank the disciplinary committee of *maa jr da* acceptance of my leave letter *fr da* next 40 days due to my tight schedule. Our *vp mr* Banerji has been appointed as acting president wishing him and our committee *da* best to take the good work forward. All for *maa (sic)*," he wrote on Twitter.

Suresh Babu and Dil Raju join the OTT bandwagon

With their counterpart Allu Aravind consumed neck-deep with Aha app, how can one leave behind other two top producers of the industry-Suresh Babu and Dil Raju. We've reliably learnt that both the producers are planning to make their entry into streaming services later this year. While Suresh has always been cautious when it comes to embracing new forms of storytelling, Raju, who is in tune with time, has been silently listening to the scripts for the past four months. "Without naming his production house, Raju even issued an advertising sometime back that he is looking at stories for web series," says a source close to Sri Venkateswara Creations.



THE SOURCE ADDS THAT BOTH SURESH AND RAJU BELIEVE OTT PLATFORMS ARE THE FUTURE AND THEY DON'T WANT TO LAG BEHIND ARAVIND

The source adds that both Suresh and Raju believe OTT platforms are the future and they don't want to lag behind Aravind. "Suresh is getting help from his older son Rana, while Raju is seeking the counsel of his brother Sirish and directors who he worked with. Both the producers are looking at Telugu content like Aha. The fact that they've produced a good number of films over years mean that those films can always be streamed on their platforms, helping them to attract initial viewership," adds the source.



Vijaya Shanti is my inspiration, says PAYAL

At a presser in Hyderabad recently, the makers of Payal Rajput's next have announced the film's title as *5Ws*. The film marks the directorial debut of Pranadeep, who assisted director Gunasekhar in the past, and is crime investigative drama. Produced by Kaivalya Creations, it is in the last leg of shooting. Speaking later, Payal, who will be seen as a cop in the film, said that it's any actor's dream to play an IPS officer and she realised that with *5Ws* very early in her career. "I thank Pranadeep sir for showing faith in me. It's a challenging role and I hope I did it well. The film helped me to learn and do many things that I haven't done in my career previously. I've performed the stunts on my own without a body double," she pointed out. She added that Vijaya Shanti is her inspiration in the industry. "I saw a lot of her films where she played a cop. So when Pranadeep narrated me the story, I didn't think twice to greenlight it. The film will shed the glamorous image I have. As a part of my prep for the role, I interacted with cops who are a part of my friends circle. The conversations helped me with my body language," she informed.