



In brief

Beef biryani stalls emerge at Chennai food fest

In a pleasant surprise to beef biryani enthusiasts, organisers of the Chennai Food Festival have put up three stalls to offer a rich treat to the food lovers. A huge crowd thronged the stalls that sprang up around noon on Saturday at the Island Grounds, where the three-day festival commenced on August 12. After the inauguration on Friday, state Health Minister Ma Subramanian had said beef biryani stalls could not be established as no caterer offered to put up a stall. "The absence of a beef biryani stall at the three-day food festival is not deliberate. The delicacy was skipped as no caterer offered to put up a stall," Subramanian replied when reporters drew his attention after the inauguration.

Cheetah unlikely to land in India this month as MoU with SA yet to be signed

Cheetahs are unlikely to arrive in India in August as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with South Africa to import the animals from that country has not been signed yet, an official said here on Saturday. The spotted animal, which went extinct in India 70 years ago, is going to be reintroduced in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno-Palpur National Park (KNP). Cheetahs, known as the fastest mammals, would be sourced from South Africa and Namibia. Earlier, some media reports had claimed that the government was planning to bring the cheetahs to India before Independence Day.

Man kills his estranged wife in family court by slitting her throat

In a shocking act, a man killed his estranged wife at a family court here on Saturday by allegedly slitting her throat, police said. The family court was organised at Hole Narasipura to settle the discord among the couple where Chaitra (28) and Shivakumar (32) had also come. After the judge heard them, the court gave the couple the next date of hearing. Superintendent of Police R Srinivas Gowda told reporters. "After one hour of counselling, Chaitra went to the washroom, where her husband Shivakumar slit her neck with a knife. Our staff rushed her in an ambulance to the hospital by putting her on an artificial respiration.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Aug 14 12:53 AM to Aug 14 10:36 PM

Tithi: Tritiya: Aug 14 10:36 PM to Aug 15 09:02 PM

Chaturthi: Aug 15 09:02 PM to Aug 15 09:02 PM

Nakshatram: Purva Bhadrapada: Aug 13 11:28 PM to Aug 14 09:56 PM

Uttara Bhadrapada: Aug 14 09:56 PM to Aug 15 09:07 PM

Rahukalam: 5:04 PM to 6:39 PM

Yamagandam: 12:20 PM to 1:55 PM

Variyam: 07:12 AM to 08:45 AM

Gulika: 3:29 PM to 5:04 PM

Amritakalam: 02:26 PM to 03:56 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:55 AM to 12:46 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 27°C

Humidity: 69%

Sunrise: 6:02 AM

Sunset: 6:39 PM

Updated: AUGUST 13, 2022 5:00 PM

OBTUSE ANGLE



PRESTIGE ISSUE

MEIL to fund restoration of Kaleshwaram pump houses

Company to bear the entire cost even after end of warranty

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

While political parties in Telanagana continue to politicise the damage to the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project's pump houses due to the recent 'once-in-hundred-year' floods, the agency that constructed the prestigious project has taken it as a prestige issue and decided to fund the entire restoration works. Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Pvt Ltd (MEIL) is learnt to have decided to bear the entire cost of restoration of Lakshmi pump house and Annaram pump house, though the warranty period for the original works relating to the pump houses is over. MEIL, though not obliged, has taken up the



restoration works using its own funds as a goodwill gesture. "Ours is a professional engineering company executing projects in 18 countries across the globe. Though we are not obliged to restore the pump houses after the warranty period, we decided to reconstruct two major pump houses even though it is costing us Rs 800 to Rs 1,000 crore. We are not an ordinary infrastructure company. We are not interested in the blame game initiated by different political parties. We will restore two pump houses and hand over them as early as possible," said a senior official of MEIL.

IN MUNUGODE BY-ELECTION

Cash catchier than caste!

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Cash is going to play a major role than caste in the Munugodu Assembly by-election. All the three main parties are likely to select candidates who are financially on a good wicket. In one way the voters of Munugodu Assembly constituency are lucky to have a by-election. According to election experts, there is a chance of spending a minimum of Rs 25 crore by each candidate. If the contest between the main candidates is very close the poll expenditure will be much more, they said. In Munugodu Assembly constituency the Reddys have more influence than other castes. So far for Munugodu Assembly constituency elections were held

According to election experts, there is a chance of spending a minimum of Rs 25 crore by each candidate. If the contest between the main candidates is very close the poll expenditure will be much more, they said.



12 times and eight times Reddy candidates and four times Velama candidates won. In the Munugodu Assembly constituency, there are 2.20 lakh voters and the Reddy caste has around 7,000 and the Velama has 2,300 voters. The Gouda caste has the highest number of voters with 35,150 followed by the Mudiraj caste with 33,900 voters. In Telangana, both these castes play a crucial role in elections. On behalf of the Congress the late Palvai Govardhan Reddy won five

BJP candidate Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy is a big contractor and Congress candidate Ch. Krishna Reddy is an industrialist. He is the director of Krushi India company. TRS probable candidate K. Prabhakar Reddy won educational institutions. He started his career as a teacher and later started an education institution. The TRS

TRS brass worried over inactive leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Many TRS leaders have become inactive and are keeping away from party activities. This is seen across the board from junior workers to MLAs and Ministers. A year ahead of polls, this has reportedly become a headache for the TRS leadership.

Sources indicated that apart from the laid-back approach that 'KCR will fetch the votes,' the constant threat of raids, arrests, and the unfounded fear of having to lock horns with BJP karyakartas on the ground has resulted in many opting



to be spectators. The TRS leadership is reportedly drawing up plans to charge them up and to end the inactiveness of the leaders who don't want to fight. However, many attempts regarding this have turned out to be futile. The TRS brass is constantly trying to call up party workers to stage protests or to engage in party activities to ensure that they remain engaged and don't lose their momentum. Sources indicated that the party has pinned its hopes on gaining momentum through the Swatantra

Bharat Vajrotsavulu and by the tying of Rakhi on KCR's photo by welfare beneficiaries and also through the protest against imposing GST on dairy products.

This is happening despite repeated appeals from the TRS working president to Ministers, MLAs, MLCs, MPs and other elected leaders and those holding party posts at various levels to spare some time for the party every day and to work for strengthening the party. The leaders were asked to closely coordinate to create a good image for the party as well as the government. Sources said that people usually connect only to local issues and the problems of commoners.

25 injured as Banswada-Hyd bus hits divider

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

Twenty-five passengers of the Banswada-Hyderabad RTC bus were injured, some of them critically when the bus met with an accident near the Kamareddy Collectorate on Saturday. Eye-witnesses said the express bus lost control on the old national highway and climbed on to the road divider and then landed on its side.

AICC to appoint Priyanka as south India in-charge

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Many changes are taking place in the Congress after the resignation of former Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy and AICC official spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan. It is learnt that the party doesn't want to entertain resignations in Telangana that may damage the party and hence it wanted to make changes in the party. As part of it, the AICC decided

to appoint AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi as the in-charge of South India and the full-time in-charge of Telangana and Karnataka, it is learnt. According to sources, the AICC will replace TS Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore with Priyanka Gandhi soon. It is also learnt that the high command has been thinking about whether to continue the services of political strategist Sunil Kanugolu or not.

Minister opens fire into air with cop's service SLR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Minister for Prohibition and Excise, V. Srinivas Goud, opened fire into the air using the service weapon of a policeman during the Freedom Rally held in Mahbubnagar.

The video of the Minister firing into the air using the self-loading rifle (SLR) of a policeman on Saturday went viral on social media. Srinivas Goud sought to justify his firing saying that he had fired only rubber bullets into the air. He denied having committed any mistake by firing a 'rubber bullet' into the air. He went to the extent of saying that the District Superintendent of Police had given him the rifle and



had encouraged him to fire into the air. The police, however, are tight-lipped about the incident. The Minister blamed his opponents for deliberately launching a vilification campaign against him. District Superintendent of Police R. Venkateswarlu, when asked for clarification said, "Only dummy bullets were loaded into the rifle with which the minister fired into the air." He admitted that the policeman had given the rifle to the Minister.



Sonia Gandhi tests positive for COVID-19 again

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over two months after contracting the coronavirus infection, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday tested positive for COVID-19 again and will remain in isolation.

'Dedicate your life to protecting national flag'

PNS ■ MEERUT

BJP national president J P Nadda on Saturday exhorted all citizens to dedicate their lives in protecting the national flag, saying it is a symbol of pride and honour from which everyone needs to take inspiration. Nadda, who arrived here to flag off the Tiranga Yatra to mark the 75th anniversary of India's Independence, said the national flag 'is a symbol of dedication and nation-building'.

GHMC organises Freedom Rally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) organised a Freedom Rally from its headquarters to the Vivekananda Statue on Tank Bund on Saturday to mark the 75th anniversary of India's Independence. The Freedom Rally was held to inspire the current generation about the struggles for India's Independence. Tricolour balloons were also released during the event which was followed by the singing of the National Anthem. The rally was attended by Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani

Srinivas Yadav, Home Minister Mahmood Ali, Hyderabad Mayor Vijayalakshmi Gadwal, GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and others.

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar appealed to the people to participate in the mass singing of the National Anthem on August 16 at 11:30 am. Everybody should stop wherever they are and respect the national anthem, he added.

On flag distribution, Somesh Kumar said that about 1.2 crore flags have been distributed across the state.



Salman Rushdie on ventilator, likely to lose an eye

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Salman Rushdie was on a ventilator with damaged liver and may lose an eye after the Mumbai-born controversial author was stabbed in the neck and abdomen by a man at a speaking event in New York state, sending shockwaves across the literary world which condemned the incident as an attack on freedom of expression. "The news is not good," the 75-year-old writer's agent, Andrew

CMD of TSNPDCL. He directed all electricity officials to organise similar programmes in all electricity offices throughout the state.



Wylie said after a profusely bleeding Rushdie was airlifted from a field adjacent to the venue in Western New York on Friday to a hospital in northwestern Pennsylvania and underwent surgery for several hours.

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

Spirits run high but 'Chinese manjha' threat cuts deep



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India gears up to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its Independence, kite-selling markets in old Delhi are doing brisk business, but police and NGOs are on the watchout to prevent sale of the dreaded 'Chinese manjha' that has injured many people or cut short lives of some this year. With

spirits of people soaring amid the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, skies are slowly getting filled with colourful kites, big and small, humble and designer ones, but at times this rather harmless traditional sport leads to blood in the streets, directly or indirectly related to a glass-coated thread, the sale or storage of which is banned in Delhi. A 34-year-old

man died in northeast Delhi's Shastri Park after his throat was slit with Chinese manjha while he was going to celebrate Raksha Bandhan at his in-laws' house, police said on Saturday. In old Delhi's Lal Kuan area, Indian flags dot the streets, while kite-selling shops are seeing a rush of customers. On Saturday, many customers were seen carrying a big stock

of large kites and thread spindles in the market area. On the same day, an NGO accompanied by a police team conducted surprise inspection at a few shops in Lal Kuan, and "seized some thread spindles" which were then taken to the local Hauz Quazi police station here. 'Chinese manjha' is a threat to humans on ground and birds in flight.



Achieving 11% growth rate in next decade possible: Patra



Will strike last nail in coffin of terror in one year: Sinha



Scientific breakthrough raises serious ethical questions



Let’s recall freedom-fighters’ sacrifices, perform our duties

Independent India will be turning 75 very soon. The year-long Diamond Jubilee celebrations to mark the occasion, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, began quite early. It does not mean that all the problems of the country are over. Some old problems have been resolved, but other problems still remain. Besides, there is an addition of new problems. The cycle goes on and on. Irrespective of the plethora of problems, celebrating the Amrit Mahotsav with happiness is the most natural emotion.

On August 15, 1947, we got the power to establish a government of our choice and other systems. The struggle for Independence, waged by Indians against the foreign rule, was countrywide. People of all sections of society were part of it. The armed struggle, non-violent methods of agitation and social awareness programmes ran concurrently to achieve Independence.

As the country celebrates the Diamond Jubilee, there is all-round enthusiasm. We should remember our heroes who got us Independence with their hard work and sacrifices. It is necessary to enlighten society about those who had bravely laid down their lives with a smile on their faces.

Those who sensitised people and fought for the country's Independence through violent and non-violent methods also prepared people on how to safeguard the freedom. They explained this objective in more ways than one. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, in a poem penned by him, titled '*Chitt jedhaa bhayshoonya unnat jatho shir*' explained the ingredients needed to achieve Independence. Freedom-fighter Veer Savarkar, in his poem titled '*Swatantrata Devi Aarti*' said that when the country becomes independent, it will emerge as an exemplary, best and lofty country. Mahatma Gandhi, in his work '*The Hind Swaraj*' described how independent India will shape up. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, in his two lectures delivered while piloting the Constitution in Parliament, explained the objective of the country becoming independent and the duty that we should perform to achieve the objective.

Evil and selfish thoughts that creep into our mind due to factors such as nationality, caste, language, geographical differences and our lust for name and riches should be wiped out completely. We can safeguard our Independence by evolving an egalitarian society that is free from exploitation.

Vested interests are active hatching a conspiracy both inside and outside the country to create misunderstandings, trigger unrest, and foment trouble in society to fulfill their selfish goals. A united and capable society gives no scope to such forces.

People of a democratic and independent country elect their representatives. In a democratic system, people should be prudent to achieve comprehensive development of the country. They should understand the ideologies of various political outfits, law of the land, statutes, and duties of subjects as it is essential to fulfil those duties.

To move forward on the basis of a clear understanding of what 'self' is, knowledge about 'self', pure patriotism, a sense of personal and social passion as well as unity are essential. Only then physical knowledge, capabilities and administrative machinery will come in handy.

On the occasion of the Amrut Mahotsav, industry of our ancestors to achieve Independence should be remembered. An administrative system that is conducive to self-rule should be built to take the country to a glorious phase in all fields of activity. "Come; let us march ahead with more alacrity and with enthusiasm on the path (*tapo-margam*)".

(The author is Sirsangchalak, Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh)

Why Revanth stayed away from padayatra?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President Revanth Reddy stayed away from the Azadi Ka Gourav Yatra that started in Munugode on Saturday.



Revanth had decided on party programmes without informing Venkat. Revanth decided not to participate in the Munugode padayatra after getting directions from

the high command, which has been trying to make Venkat campaign in the Munugode by-poll. However, the high command seems to have failed to convince Venkat.

Party sources said that Revanth is staying away from the Munugode Padayatra due to the intervention of the high command as TPCC Star Campaigner Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has been demanding that Revanth should not participate in the Munugode padayatra.

It is learnt that Venkat asked the Congress high command including Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore to stop Revanth from taking part in the padayatra as

the high command, which has been trying to make Venkat campaign in the Munugode by-poll. However, the high command seems to have failed to convince Venkat.

Meanwhile, many senior Congress leaders have filed complaints with the high command orally against Revanth regarding his 'Home Guard and SP' comments against Venkat. The seniors were also not happy with the comments made by TPCC official spokesperson Addanki Dayakar against Venkat. Responding to their complaints, the high command directed Revanth to go slow regarding Venkat and the Munugode by-poll campaign issue.

Poster war against Rajagopal in Munugode

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An anonymous poster war was launched against former Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy on Saturday in Munugode.

The wall posters said, "Munugode will not forgive you. You are a traitor who sold 13 years of trust for a Rs 22 crore contract."

He was the one who bargained with Amit Shah on the day when the ED was harassing Soniyamma who gave Telangana." The poster claimed that it has been "Issued in public interest."

Reacting to hostile wall posters, Rajagopal said that he has been fighting against corruption in Telangana.

"The TRS government released funds only after my

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resignation. The TRS government announced Nethanna Bima only after my resignation," Rajagopal said.

He said that Congress leaders have been targeting him and had pasted wall posters against him even though he had said that he has respect for AICC Chief Sonia Gandhi.

He reiterated that the Munugode by-poll is an election against KCR's family rule. Rajagopal said that he had joined politics only after finishing his contracts.

He said that he had not



If the purpose of freedom is the manifestation of 'self', we have to think about what 'self' actually is. In the context of global living, what capabilities India should acquire to enable it to play its role? What is our duty to accomplish this? How we should prepare society to fulfill the duty?

The country has given message to world at large through its *sanatana dharma*, perspective and culture. They are characterized by holistic concepts based on empirical and scientific truths.

To remain united, all people need not become similar. Making everyone the same, separating them from their roots would create conflict. A cohesive society is created when everyone forges ahead preserving their uniqueness and recognising the uniqueness of others.

Being sons of the soil, the umbilical cord that is uniting one and all is our patriotism. Ideals of valiant and virtuous ancestors are guiding us. By treading the path shown by our elders, setting aside our differences, we should work for the good of the country. The need of the hour is to prepare society to achieve the goal.

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Left to wait to find out the strongest opponent to BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Left parties are waiting to find the strongest opponent to the BJP in Munugode. The Left would decide to whom to extend their support in Munugode by-poll only after the political parties announce their candidates.



CPM's Telangana Secretary Thammineni Veerabhadram said that their party has been considering the BJP as its main enemy in Munugode. Thammineni made it clear that the CPM will go all-out to defeat the BJP wherever elections are held across the nation. Participating in the Munugode constituency's leaders' extensive meeting held here on Saturday in Choutuppal, Thammineni said that the Munugode by-poll arose due to the opportunistic politics of Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy.

Thammineni asked whether Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy, who has been stating

that he had submitted his resignation for the development of the constituency, would bring funds from the Centre for the development of Munugode.

He said that Rajagopal has been hurting the sentiments of the people by joining the BJP.

Thammineni said that they have already held first phase talks with the CPI and they will decide on whom to support only after knowing who the strongest opponent to the BJP is in Munugode after all parties announce their candidates. He said the Left would defeat the BJP in the by-poll and that Rajagopal has been engaging in vote trading with local leaders.

Salman Rushdie on ventilator...

Continued from page 1

Rushdie, who faced Islamist death threats for years after writing "The Satanic Verses", was stabbed by a 24-year-old New Jersey resident identified as Hadi Matar on stage while he was being introduced at a

literary event of the Chautauqua Institution in Western New York.

"Salman will likely lose one eye; the nerves in his arm were severed; and his liver was stabbed and damaged," Wylie told 'The New York Times'.

Rushdie, who won the

Booker Prize for his novel "Midnight's Children", is still unable to speak, he said.

The suspect was from Fairview, New Jersey, State Police Troop Commander Major Eugene J Stanisewski said in a Friday evening news conference.

MEIL to fund restoration...

Continued from page 1

Touted as world's largest lift irrigation project, Kaleshwaram pump houses of Kannepally, Annaram were submerged after the recent floods in Godavari and its tributaries following abnormal rainfall, described as "occurring once in 100 years (100 year frequency flood)".

When a construction is close to a river, it is not rocket science to expect floods. Experts opine that the TS government's preparedness to tackle floods was not adequate, especially in respect of protection measures such as walls around pumping stations. With the current level of technology and advance forecasting systems, it appears the submergence of pump houses could have been prevented.

Telangana can and must take up specific measures to

prevent future flooding of the pumping stations, considering that the contractor might not be very kind enough to do it ever again.

Dismissing allegations that the project did not have necessary permissions, Irrigation Department officials pointed out that the CWC had given hydrology clearance to the designs for the Kaleshwaram project to withstand flood frequency of up to 28.8 lakh cusecs, after taking into consideration data covering 500 years. Accordingly, 85 gates were also fixed to the barrage. The highest flood level of 107.05 metres was recorded at Kaleshwaram in 1986, based on which the CWC gave approvals for the full reservoir level, gate hoisting level and bridge level. The pump house and protection walls too were designed accordingly. As per the Commission, the flood

level of 103.5 metres in Godavari River is considered as warning level and 104.75 as danger level.

But on July 14, the Godavari River recorded 108.18 metres at Kaleshwaram, which was above the previous record of 107.05 metres registered in 1986. Further, the flood frequency of about 28-29 lakh cusecs was recorded at Kaleshwaram as per the CWC, indicating that the project faced an unprecedented flood level. Hence, it may be concluded that the pump houses submerged due to unprecedented flood, but not due to bad design or construction quality. The State government, instead of being proactive in handling the disaster, focused on disaster relief and at announced that it would take 45 days to complete the repairs and make pump houses operational again.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹300
Without Skin	₹320
Broiler at Farm	₹165
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	411
VIJAYAWADA	405
VISAKHAPATNAM	420
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.11

'Dedicate your life for...

Continued from page 1

"All citizens need to dedicate their lives in protecting the national flag. It is not just a flag but a symbol of pride and honour from which everyone needs to take inspiration," he said.

Nadda also joined the Tiranga Yatra along with 5,000 bike riders.

Earlier, Nadda paid floral

tributes at the martyr memorial and also visited the Amar Jawan Jyoti built in remembrance of the heroes of the Revolt of 1857.

"The national flag has Dharma Chakra in it. This means the country is run by law. Today, the Tiranga is hoisted from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and national unity is visible in our ideology," the BJP president said.

'Swatantra Spoorthi' at SITAM a huge draw

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

The 'Swatantra Spoorthi' campaign, being organised by the Swatantra TV news channel across the State as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', has won accolades at a programme held here on Saturday.

The 'Swatantra Spoorthi' programme was held on the campus of the Satya Institute of Technologies and Management in the city on Saturday. The national flag was hoisted on the college campus. The college students, faculty members and the NCC cadets took out a huge rally with a 300-feet National Flag. The slogans of 'Vande Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' resonated during the entire course of the rally.

Sports, essay, quiz, drawing and songs competitions were organised for students on



Dr. DV Rama Murthy, Principal, SITAM, Vizianagaram, Dr. M Sashi Bhushana Rao, Director, Satya Group of Institutions, Pilla Vijay Kumar, Ex-Corporator, Vizianagaram and M. Ganapati Rao, District Revenue Officer (DRO), Vizianagaram, saluting the National Flag at a function organised as part of the 'Swatantra Spoorthi' campaign organised on SITAM campus in Vizianagaram on Saturday. (Right) NCC cadets of the SITAM taking out a huge rally with the Tricolour

the occasion and prizes were given away to the winners. Former corporator Pilla Vijay Kumar and DRO M Ganapathi Rao attended the programme as chief guests.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr DV Rama Murthy,

Principal, SITAM, Dr M Sashi Bhushana Rao, Director, Satya Group of Institutions, Pilla Vijay Kumar, Ex-Corporator and M Ganapati Rao, District Revenue Officer (DRO) extolled the Swatantra TV

news channel for organising the 'Swatantra Spoorthi' programmes infusing patriotism among the students.

The 'Swatantra Spoorthi' programmes are receiving overwhelming support from the students, they said.

AICC to appoint Priyanka...

Continued from page 1

It is learnt the AICC took this decision after thoroughly considering the comments of Dr Dasoju Sravan during his resignation from the party.

The Congress seriously considered the comments of Dr Dasoju Sravan that Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore and Congress Political Strategist Sunil Kanugolu were sailing with TPCC President Revanth Reddy. Dr Dasoju also said that 'Revanth is behaving like a feudal and weakening the original Congress leaders and party loyalists, especially the SC, ST and BC leaders.

Dr Dasoju also said that he had complained about Revanth's caste-based comments to Manickam Tagore and to even Rahul Gandhi,

but there was no response.

Before Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy and Dr Dasoju Sravan defected from the party, a senior Congress MLA had lodged a serious complaint with the high command against Manickam Tagore as well as Sunil Kanugolu for submitting a negative report about him.

The high command gave the AICC post to that MLA immediately after his serious complaint about convincing him.

However, the high command started concentrating seriously in Telangana affairs only after Dr Dasoju's resignation. As part of it, the newly appointed AICC Secretaries in-charge Rohith Chaudhary and Nadeem Javed have been seriously working in Telangana and are sending reports from time to time.

25 injured...

Continued from page 1

Locals immediately came to the rescue of the injured. They broke the glass window panes and safely extricated all the 29 passengers from the bus. Workers of an FCI godown nearby also took part in the rescue operation.

The 25 injured were rushed to Kamareddy District Headquarters government hospital for treatment. The seriously injured have been rushed to Hyderabad for treatment.

RTC officials are conducting an inquiry into the accident. Bus driver Bapu Rao told the police that he had been suffering from fever since two days. It seems that he lost control over the bus as he swooned when the bus started approaching the Collectorate.

Sonia tests...

Continued from page 1

Earlier this week, her daughter and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had also tested positive.

"Congress President Smt. Sonia Gandhi has tested positive for Covid-19 today. She will remain in isolation as per Govt. protocol," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a tweet Saturday.

Sonia Gandhi had tested positive for COVID-19 in early June as well.

Days after she had tested positive, the 75-year-old leader was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here on June 12. She was discharged on June 20.

"Congress President Smt. Sonia Gandhi has tested positive for Covid-19 today. We wish her speedy recovery and good health," the party said on

its official Twitter handle on Saturday.

Several leaders including Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, wished Gandhi a speedy recovery.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said, "Concerned to hear that Smt Sonia Gandhi ji has tested positive for Covid. Wishing her a speedy recovery and good health."

Congress leaders Sachin Pilot and Srinivas BV, among others, also wished her a speedy recovery.

Several Congress leaders have contracted Covid recently including Kharge, party general secretary Ajay Maken, communications department head Pawan Khera and party MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

Medical gadgets will be repaired immediately: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Harish Rao inaugurated the Programme Management Unit (PMU) at the Telangana State Medical Services Infrastructure Development Corporation's (TSMISIDC) headquarters in Koti here on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said the government has allocated Rs 17 crore for implementing its maintenance policy.

"There are around 1,020 medical gadgets across the state and each one of them costs around Rs 5 lakh. Earlier, in government hospitals, if a piece of equipment develops a snag, it would take ages to get it repaired and that would result in patients having to go to private firms. This policy will change that. Through this,



the equipment will get repaired within hours just like the way it is done in private hospitals," Harish said.

The government has set up the helpline number 8888526666 and a dedicated email ID where the hospital superintendent can file a complaint stating the problem. The government will then inform the concerned technician

immediately so that the problem can be solved.

The Health Minister also spoke about maintaining an Essential Medicines List (EML) and an Additional Medicine List (AML) at all hospitals. For this, a team of doctors was sent to Tamil Nadu to identify how they are managing the list and the same policy will be implemented in Telangana. These

lists will help the government to keep a check on medicines available at every hospital. Earlier, there were 720 medicines in the list. After evaluating the Tamil Nadu form of the list, the number has increased to 850. Apart from this, from the Rs 500 crore allotted for medicines in this year's health budget, 20 per cent has been given to hospital superintendents so that in case a particular medicine is not available during an emergency, the superintendent can use the funds to procure the medicine.

On Covid-19 vaccination, Harish said that the Centre had recently released 5 to 10 lakh doses of Covishield against the requested 50 lakh doses. He appealed to the people to come forward and get the precautionary vaccine dose.

Harish also touched on the

C-Section rate in TS government hospitals. He said it has come down to 45 per cent from 47 per cent in a year and in the private sector it has declined to 76 per cent from 81 per cent.

He said that due to the KCR Kit scheme, institutional deliveries have increased in the state and currently stand at 66.8 per cent.

Harish also said the government will be distributing 'KCR Nutritional Kit' to pregnant women.

The kit will be given twice times during pregnancy to improve the health of the woman as well as the child.

The scheme is currently being implemented in the nine tribal districts which have a high rate of anaemia in children and after that the scheme will be implemented statewide, Harish added.

Secretary can make or break boss' career, says Governor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A secretary can make or break the career of his/her boss or the future of the organisation, said Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Saturday. She was addressing the 46th Southern India Regional Conference of Company Secretaries.

The Governor mentioned many stories from her personal life and how one should adjust to situations instead of cursing people and things.

All you need to do is start liking what is good in people rather than cribbing about what is not, she added.

Dr Tamilisai advised corporate professionals to set themselves challenging goals.

She referred to what Prime Minister Modi said about achieving the five trillion dollar economy and how he was criticized for it. The Prime Minister then said that it is possible if you keep challeng-



ing targets, the Governor recalled.

The theme of the conference was "Governance Professional-Walk the Talk-to be or not to be." It is a two-day conference being attended by 350 delegates mostly comprising company secretaries and students from southern states. Keynote speaker Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa, who is also the President of the Hare Krishna Movement Hyderabad spoke about the guru-shishya relationship in the gurukul school of education where humility was taught as the first lesson. Shishyas would observe their guru and

The Governor mentioned many stories from her personal life and how one should adjust to situations instead of cursing people and things.

learn from his deeds. He also referred to the Bhagavad Gita and said that it is an Indian contribution to the world's peace.

Bank of Maharashtra tops in loan, deposit growth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Pune-based Bank of Maharashtra recorded a 27.10 per cent increase in gross advances to Rs 1,40,561 crore at the end of June 2022, according to the quarterly statements of public sector banks (PSBs).

Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has emerged as the top performer among public sector banks in terms of loans and deposit growth in percentage terms during the first quarter of 2022-23.

The lender recorded a 27.10 per cent increase in gross advances to Rs 1,40,561 crore at the end of June 2022.

BoM was followed by the Indian Overseas Bank and the Bank of Baroda with 16.43 per cent and 15.73 per cent rise in advances growth. The

country's largest lender, the State Bank of India (SBI), stood at the fourth spot with 13.66 per cent growth.

However, in absolute terms, the aggregate loans of SBI were about 17 times higher at Rs 24,50,821 crore, while that of Bank of Baroda was nearly five times at Rs 6,95,493 crore compared to BoM at the end of the first quarter. In deposit growth, BoM witnessed 12.35 per cent growth and mobilised Rs 1,95,909 crore at the end of June 2022.

Union Bank of India was at the second spot with 9.42 per cent growth in deposits (Rs 9,92,517 crore), followed by the Bank of Baroda at 8.51 per

cent rise at Rs 9,09,095 crore, according to the data.

During the June quarter, public sector banks raked in more profits on the back of a persistent decline in bad loans, and the trend may have a positive bearing on their balance sheets in coming quarters.

The BoM and the SBI were in the lowest quartile as far as gross non-performing assets (NPAs) and net NPAs were concerned, according to an analysis of the quarterly financial numbers published by the public sector lenders.

Cumulatively, all the 12 public sector banks reported a profit of about Rs 15,306 crore during the three months ended June, registering an annual growth of 9.2 per cent. However, two leading public sector banks—the SBI and the PNB—posted lower profits in

the June quarter.

During the April-June period of the previous fiscal, state-owned banks recorded a total profit of Rs 14,013 crore. As per the analysis, the gross NPAs reported by BoM and SBI were 3.74 per cent and 3.91 per cent of their total advances respectively, in the first quarter of the current fiscal. The net NPAs of these banks came down to 0.88 per cent and 1 per cent respectively, at the end of June.

The gross NPAs of other public sector banks ranged from 6.26 per cent to 14.90 per cent. In the June quarter, the Bank of Baroda's gross NPAs stood at 6.26 per cent and it was 14.90 per cent for the Central Bank of India, which is still under the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework of the RBI.

Workshop on National Curriculum Framework held

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) and the Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh organised a one-day workshop on the National Curriculum Framework at EFLU on Saturday.

The workshop was aimed at seeking views and suggestions of higher educational institutions and other stakeholders in coming out with the national curriculum framework in tune with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP)

2020. EFLU Vice Chancellor and UGC Member, Professor Suresh Kumar, said that NEP 2020 is a panacea to address all the ills that plague the education system of the country. "It is vital to have a curriculum framework that promotes creativity, questioning abilities, conceptual understanding and learner centric approach to realise the greater goals of NEP 2020," he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE) Chairman R Limbadri said that curriculum must ensure a right connection between the school and society.

The proposed curriculum focuses on creating connections between theory and practice and needs to be more inclusive and aspirational.

Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh Vice Chancellor TV Kattimani said the country is witnessing the third biggest public consultation, next only to the constitutional framework.

EFLU Dean T. Samson coordinated the workshop while senior academic administrators, academics, members of civil society and delegates from across the country discussed the curriculum framework.

45 lakh people travelled by TSRTC on Raksha Bandhan day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) set a record by running special buses from various places and transporting 45 lakh passengers to their destinations on Raksha Bandhan day. Apart from major bus stations like the Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station (MGBS) and the Jubilee Bus Station (JBS), stops like LB Nagar, Aramghar, Santosh Nagar and Uppal Cross Roads operated an additional 1,230 bus services for passengers. TSRTC Chairman B. Govardhan and Managing Director VC Sajjanar thanked the large number of passengers who used the service.

Burglars' gang busted, gold, cash recovered

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A minor in conflict with law, who alleged committed burglary along with two of his friends, was arrested on Saturday. The minor boy had planned and committed the burglary, the police said.

The Malkajgiri Central Crime Station police along with the Medipally police on Saturday cracked the mystery behind the theft and arrested the three persons. The police claimed to have recovered gold and silver ornaments, cash of Rs.3.9 lakh, a car and four mobile phones, altogether worth Rs.23 lakh.

The arrested persons were Balwanth Choudhary (21), Ramnivas (21) and the minor boy, all three from Jodhpur in Rajasthan. Another suspect Sunil Choudhary is absconding. Police said the minor, who is in his late teens, studied up to class nine and came to Hayathnagar two months ago and started working at a hardware shop since the last 20 days. During regular visits to his employer's house, the minor noticed valuables and decided to steal them. He shared his plan with his co-workers, who agreed.

BE course syllabus to undergo revision from this year onwards

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The JNTU-Hyderabad officials have undertaken an exercise to revise the syllabus for engineering colleges from the current academic year. The JNTU-H is understood to have completed the exercise and will declare the new syllabus in a week or 10 days.

According to the job market trends, the syllabus has been revised, it is learnt.

Meanwhile the university authorities have announced the counseling schedule to fill the seats in engineering colleges. The classes are going to commence in another two months.

In this backdrop, the university authorities held meetings many times to discuss the revision of syllabus. The AICTE also made several recommendations in this regard.



Minor girl raped in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A minor girl was raped allegedly by her uncle at Mailardevally. According to the police, a 25-year-old worker took a 12-year-old minor girl into her house and sexually violated her. The police he had gagged her mouth, overpowered her and raped her. After the ordeal, he threatened her not to tell anyone, the police said.

Finance Department clears proposal to fill 9,096 posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Finance Department cleared the proposal to fill 9096 posts in four residential educational institutions' societies in Telangana and entrusted the responsibility to fill the vacancies to TREI Recruitment Board.

In this backdrop, the number of vacancies, reservations for various categories and other indents has been prepared by the residential educational

institutions' societies.

Delay in distribution of government employees under the new zonal system has forced shelving of the proposal to fill the vacancies in the residential educational institutions. The state government has been intimated about the vacancies, but it is yet to clear the proposal to fill the vacancies. As and when the government cleared it, the societies would issue orders allotting vacancies to each society. According to

information reaching here, the majority of vacancies are in the Telangana BC Residential Educational Institutions' Society.

Out of the total vacancies, one-third vacancies have arisen in Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Backward Classes Welfare Residential Educational Institutions' society. There are at least 2,267 vacancies in the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions' Society, while

there are 1,514 posts in the Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions' Society. The number of vacancies that have arisen in Telangana Minority Residential Educational Institutions' Society is 1,445.

The way for filling the posts has been cleared as the Teacher Eligibility Test results are out recently.

The norms for filing the PG Teachers, Junior Lecturers, DL posts have been finalized.

Donor families felicitated on National Organ Donation Day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Organ donation saves many lives every year and brings happiness to the families of organ recipients.

The Kamineni Hospitals located at LB Nagar here felicitated the families of organ donors on the occasion of National Organ Donation Day on Saturday. The aim is to spread awareness about the importance of donating organs.

G. Swarnalatha, the CEO of Jeevandan said, "We are able to find only five to 10 per cent of required donors. The police are very helpful in the organ donation process. We have done around 1,000 transplants and 1,100 donations in the last 10 years. The organ donation rate



in India is eight per cent and in Telangana, it is only 4.5 per cent."

Speaking at the occasion, Mahesh Bhagwat, the Commissioner of Rachakonda said, "Do not fall into the organ selling racket. Many become emotional while donating organs. Recently, we

busted an international organ racket. Hyderabad is becoming a hub for organ transplantation. I appeal to the public to create awareness about organ donation in our families."

One person can save around eight lives by donating functioning organs. Donating organs provides a unique

opportunity to make a positive difference in another person's life. The National Organ Donation Day is the right occasion for all of us to pledge to donate our organs and kindle the lamp of hope in the lives of patients, said Dr Gayatri Kamineni, the COO of Kamineni Hospitals.

32,000 cases settled in Lok Adalat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 32,250 cases of Rachakonda Police Commissionerate have been settled during the National Lok Adalat held at the Ranga Reddy district court at LB Nagar on Saturday.

As per the schedule, the National Lok Adalat was held by the Principal District and Sessions Judge, Ranga Reddy, R. Thirupathi. Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat visited the court and personally supervised the conduct of Lok Adalat.

Learning about past will provide opportunity to build great future

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ramakrishna Matham President Swamy Bodhamayananda on Saturday spoke about radiant India, resilient India and resurgent India while addressing hundreds of students on the premises of Ramakrishna Math here as part of the Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav.

Quoting Samy Vivekananda as saying that, learning about the past will provide great opportunity to build great future, he said.

The ancient India withstood several challenges and emerged as world guru, he explained the gathering.

Chief Guest of the evening, Telangana High Court senior advocate Ravi Chander sug-

gested parents to tend their children without showing any discrimination between boys and girls to build good society.

He laid emphasis on personality development and discipline among the students besides independent thinking. Dexterity Global founder Sharad Vivek Sagar asked the students to prepare a plan if they are moved at the plight of the poor to come to their rescue. Stating that Swami Vivekananda espoused the same, he told the gathering that those who read Swami Vivekananda's literature would be able to solve their problems automatically.

Yoga performance under the direction of Yoga Master Livanker enthralled the gathering.

Police issue traffic advisory for I-Day celebrations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad City Police have issued a traffic advisory in connection with Independence Day celebrations on Monday at the Rani Mahal Lawns in Golconda Fort.

The road from Ramdevguda to Golconda Fort will be closed for traffic from 7 am to 12 am (noon) on Monday. The entry to this road will be limited to Gold, Pink and Blue car pass holders who have been invited to attend the celebrations including the flag hoisting ceremony.

All invitees coming on vehicles with the three above-mentioned passes from Secunderabad, Banjara Hills, Masab Tank, and Mehdiapatnam are requested

to come via Rethibowli and Nanal Nagar junctions and then turn left towards Balika Bhavan, the Langar Houz flyover, Tipu Khan Bridge and then turn right towards Makai Darwaza and Golconda Fort.

Gold pass holders can park their vehicles on the main road in front of the main gate of the fort towards Fateh Darwaza.

Pink pass holders must park their vehicles at the Golconda Bus Stop which is just 50 meters away from the main gate. Blue pass holders can park their vehicles on the football ground by taking a right near the Golconda bus stop.

Green pass holders coming from Seven Tombs side and Banjara Darwaza should take a left and turn towards Owaisi

Gold pass holders can park their vehicles on the main road in front of the main gate of the fort towards Fateh Darwaza.

Grounds. Green pass holders coming from Langar Houze under the flyover via Fateh Darwaza should take a right turn at Bada Bazaar towards Owaisi Ground. They can park their vehicles on the GHMC playground which is 500 meters away from Golconda Fort.

All invitees with Red passes



are requested to come to the fort via Shaikpet Nala and Tolichowki Seven Tombs side. They can park their vehicles inside the Priyadarshini School.

The general public coming to the venue is requested to take the Langar Houz Flyover and then turn towards Fateh Darwaza. Vehicles can be

parked at HUDA Park.

All invitees are requested to display their car passes on the left of the windscreen for easy identification.

Modi's 'revdi' jab irks TRS

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call last month to caution to people against 'revdi culture' or the culture of doling out freebies has not gone down well with TRS.

Minister for Industries K T Rama Rao, in a statement said, "Mr Modi, do you say that States should not provide schemes like free electricity, Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bhima which are being given to the farmers who have been exposed to nature's wrath for decades? Don't these initiatives provide succour to the distressed farming community? Anti-farmer decisions of your government such as big cut in fertilisers subsidy worries country's farmers. It is too much to expect the government that brought in the draconian anti-farmer laws to know the meaning of farmer's welfare."



He asked if Modi is against giving one kg rice a rupee to the BC, SC, ST and minority communities who are the poorest in this country?

KTR who is at home, due to leg injury said, 'Are you against providing free meals in schools to the poor and underprivileged children? Are you against the establishment of gurukul schools and free food and accommodation for poor children?' He asked, if Modi consid-

er the Arogya Laxmi, Amma Odi - 102 Vehicles, KCR Kit schemes waste of money.

'Why do you dislike a noble mission such as Mission Bhageratha which provides free drinking water to every house in the state besides ending the fluoride crisis. Your disdain for the textile sector, which provides employment to the largest number of people in the country after agriculture, is very unfortunate. Why do

you name our schemes like Netannaku Cheyutha, Nethannaku Beema, Bathukamma Sarees as freebie culture?' he asked

He asked if Modi do you want to stop our schemes like Kalyana Lakshmi, Shadi Mubarak which are a blessing to the poor parents to perform the wedding of their daughters. KTR said, 'Modiji, yours is a cruel government that has charged migrant labourers train ticket fares during the pandemic to go to their respective hometowns.

Yours is a cruel government that has refused railway concession for senior citizens. You consider waiving the loan of the poor farmer a freebie. At the same time you proactively waive off loans of your corporate friends.

Isn't it true that your government has given corporate tax concessions worth about Rs. 3lakh crore in the last three years.'

KTR's questions to Modi.
'What is your policy on public welfare..

'During your eight year rule, what's the worth of the loans that have been waived off/written off for your crony capitalist friends? How many loans were waived off to the farmers of our country?

'Will you cancel all the welfare schemes currently being implemented in the states where your party is in power?

'What is the take of BJP party on the welfare schemes to farmers, the poor and the weaker sections.

'Will you go to the next polls announcing that all these free welfare schemes will be cancelled.

'Will there be a law or a constitutional amendment in the parliament to cancel all the welfare schemes that are being implemented by various states and the central government.

Venkat Reddy accepts Revanth's apology, but rejects Dayakar's

K. VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Star Campaigner Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy's issue is under-going turns and twists every day.

Venkat's reactions indicate that the twists and turns will continue as he has been giving shock after shock to the Congress and TPCC President Revanth Reddy.

On Friday, Venkat made it clear that he will not participate in the Munugode election campaign unless Revanth apologises to him. He also demanded that the TPCC president should suspend TPC's official spokesperson Addanki Dayakar for making derogatory remarks against him at a meeting in Chanduru.

TPCC President Revanth Reddy apologised unconditionally to Venkat on Saturday. Revanth also released a video



regarding this saying that he is apologising unconditionally to Venkat for making the 'Home Guard and SP' comments and on behalf of Addanki Dayakar. In his video statement, Revanth said that the TPCC Disciplinary Action Committee will consider taking disciplinary action against Addanki Dayakar.

Addanki Dayakar, who apologised the very next day after the Chanduru public meeting apologised once again on Saturday.

Senior Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao suggested that Venkat should accept the apologies tendered by Revanth.

He also said that he will try to stop leaders who may try to quit the party. VH made it clear that senior leaders must not be subjected to injustice in the party. Reacting to the apologies of Revanth Reddy and Addanki Dayakar, Venkat said that he was happy that Revanth apologised. "But I will consider Revanth's apologies only after the party expels Addanki Dayakar permanently. Dayakar insulted me with words that should never have been used," he said.

Venkat changed his twitter profile on Saturday. "I have been working as a home guard for the Congress for three decades. I served as an MLA four times and as a minister once. I am now serving as an MP"

Minister used only blank ammunition, clarifies SP

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

District Superintendent of Police R Venkateswarlu clarified that Minister for Excise V Srinivas Goud fired a dummy bullet or blank ammunition using INSAS (Indian Small Arms System) during the Freedom Rally held in the town on Saturday morning and maintained that it is customary to use blank ammunition during the government festivals, rallies and sports events.

In a statement here, the SP, responding to the discussion raging on the issue, said that the blank ammunition would be totally safe and using it during government celebrations is lawful.

The Minister used the blank ammunition not only on Saturday but also on August 11



during the Freedom Run held in the town. The blank ammunition is used to trigger more enthusiasm among the participants.

He denied reports that the Minister used the rifle of his gun man to fire the blank ammunition. There is no truth in such propaganda, he said appealing to the people to give no room for any doubts and misgivings on the issue.

Three pharmacy students drowned in Nalgonda dist

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Three pharmacy students drowned on Saturday evening in Akkampally balancing reservoir at Angadipet under Pedda Adisherlapally mandal in the district. The students had been studying at Balaji Pharmacy College at Chilkur in Rangareddy district. The deceased were identified as Dinde Akash (20) from Bichukundha in Nizamabad district, Bantu Ganesh (20) from Vemulawada in Sircilla district and Pandit Krishna (18) from Hyderabad. They came to Nagarjuna Sagar as Saturday happened to be a holiday. According to the police, they came along with five other friends. While Akash, Ganesh and Krishna got into the water for a bath. They drowned in the reservoir.

Advocate murdered in Nalgonda district

PNS ■ NALGONDA

In a horrific incident, unidentified assailants murdered an advocate, Gade Vijay Reddy, at Yellammagudem village under Thipparthi mandal in the district on



Saturday evening. He had been practising in the district court in Nalgonda for the last five years. According to police, the assailants, who came in a car, intercepted Vijaya Reddy when he was riding a bike. The culprits brutally attacked him and stabbed him indiscriminately. He died on the spot. The assailant had thrown his body into a canal nearby. He had also brought out a vernacular magazine in the past. Vijay Reddy was the husband of Yellamgudem sarpanch's husband.

Lovers commit suicide in Jangaon dist

PNS ■ WARANGAL

In a tragic incident, a boy and his girlfriend committed suicide by consuming pesticide at Palle Prkruthi Vanam at Bhikya Thanda in Mallampally village of Palakurthi mandal in Jangaon district on Saturday. The tragic incident took place in the early hours of Saturday.

The local people found the bodies and alerted the police. The deceased were identified as Gogulothu Raju (20) and the 16-year-old girl. They both belonged to Bhikya Pedda Thanda.

According to police, the



girl, who had been studying Intermediate, came in contact with the boy. They fell in love with each other.

The duo used to talk over the phone till 11 pm and decided to end their lives as their proposal to marry was not accepted by the girls' parents, the police said. The boy was working as an auto-rickshaw driver in Hyderabad. The girl's parents blamed Raju for the incident.

The bodies were shifted to Jangaon government hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered under Section 174 CrPC, and the investigation is on.

FREEDOM RUN Patriotic fervour grips Nizamabad

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Patriotic fervour gripped the Nizamabad town as diamond jubilee celebrations were organised on a grand scale on Saturday. A Freedom Run was organised from Nehru Park to the District Collectorate.

A 75-metre-long national flag was the main attraction in the rally. People from all walks of life participated in the rally in large numbers. Schoolchildren, college students and people in huge numbers took part in the rally enthusiastically. A festive atmosphere prevailed.

Minister for Roads and Buildings Vemula Prashant Reddy, who participated as chief guest in the rally, stressed the need to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for everyone. He said that the State had introduced several welfare schemes for the welfare of the poor. Zilla Parishad Chairman Dadannagari Vitalrao, MLA Rajeswar, District Collector C



People participating in the Freedom Run in Nizamabad on Saturday

Narayana Reddy, Police Commissioner K R Nagaraju, City Mayor Dandu Neethu Kirsan, Additional Collectors Chandrashekhar and Chitra Mishra, NUDA chairman Prabhkar Reddy, District Olympic member Gadila Ramulu and others took part in the rally.

Apart from them, the employees belonging to different departments, the police and the Armed Reserve police

personnel, students belonging to government and private schools, participated. The streets reverberated with slogans like 'Bharat Mata Kit Jai.' All the main roads in the town were crammed with the people who participated in the rally. Prashanth Reddy said several freedom fighters had sacrificed their lives to liberate the country from the clutches of the British colonial rulers.



Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelligi Dayakar Rao participating in freedom run in Warangal on Saturday

Freedom Rally taken out in Warangal, Rayaparti

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Saturday flagged off Freedom Rally in the town on Saturday with the participation of students, employees and people. The rally was taken out from Hanamkonda police headquarters to the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in the city. District Collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanmanthu, Government chief whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar, City Mayor

Gundu Sudharani, City Commissioner of Police Dr Tarun Joshi, Greater Warangal Municipal Commissioner Praveenya, Additional Collector Sandhya Rani and others also took part in the rally. In Palakurthi constituency's Rayaparti village, students and civil society representatives took out a huge rally on Warangal-Khammam main road and formed a human chain as part of the Freedom Rally. They also displayed huge national flag as part of the rally.

BJP using nationalism to divide people: Shabbir

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Congress Minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir alleged that the BJP is using nationalism instead of communalism as a tool to divide people and make political gains.

Shabbir was speaking at the launch of the 75-km long 'Azadi Ki Gaurav Yatra' at Gadi Kota in the Domakonda Mandal of Kamareddy district on Saturday. He said the Congress was organising a 'Azadi Ki Gaurav Yatra' based on the theme 'Zara Yaad Karo Qurbani' to mark 75 years of Independence and pay tributes to the freedom fighters who struggled and laid down their lives for India's freedom. On Saturday, a distance of 7 km was covered from Gadi Kota to Domakonda town.

Speaking on the occasion,

Shabbir said that the yatra aims at creating awareness among the people to reject hatred and to promote unity in society. He said India could emerge as a strong nation only by adopting the Gandhian policy of peace and religious tolerance. He said that divisive politics would destroy the nation and it must be defeated at all levels. Shabbir alleged that the BJP was now using nationalism, instead of communalism, as a tool to pursue the politics of hatred and division. "I'm proud to be associated with the Congress which fought for the country's freedom. Thousands of Congress leaders laid down their lives spent years in prison and sacrificed everything to gain freedom for our country. The BJP and none of the leaders they follow had played any role in the independence struggle. But

today, the BJP is trying to politicise the 75th anniversary of India's independence and use nationalism as a tool for political gains," he alleged.

Shabbir said that today India is counted among powerful nations due to the contributions made by Pandit Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, PV Narasimha Rao, Dr Manmohan Singh and other leaders. He said when Pandit Nehru became the Prime Minister in August 1947, India had no capability to manufacture even a needle. But within a few years Nehru transformed the country into a developing nation and one after the other several projects including big companies, big dams like Nagarjuna Sagar and the Srisam Sagar Project, IITs, IIMs and other leading institutions became a reality.

Harish cautions people against 'divisive forces'

The Minister says some forces are bent upon dividing people in the name of caste and religion

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Minister for Finance T Harish Rao on Saturday cautioned the people against 'divisive forces' dividing the people in the name of caste and religion for deriving political gain.

Addressing a meeting after taking part in a Freedom Run, here, Harish Rao stressed the need to strive to ensure equal opportunities for the poor and marginalised sections of society. The country attained independence from colonial rule as freedom fighters made sacrifices under the leadership of Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi. As such, the responsibility to ensure that the fruits of development reach everyone, irrespective of caste or religion, rested on all parties, he pointed out.

Urging the people to beware of the activities of forces bent upon dividing the people, it was

high time that a bitter lesson was taught to these elements. The poor are still struggling to get even two square meals a day. Telangana State, he said, has become the role model for other State in the implementation of welfare schemes for the poor and women. Telangana State has achieved 11.5 per cent growth rate and the annual budget has increased from Rs 60,000 crore to 1.8 lakh crore while the per capita income rose to Rs 2.78 lakh from Rs 1.24 lakh in eight years.

The State government's flagship programmes, such as Rythu Bandhu, Aasara pensions and other welfare schemes are aimed at ameliorating poverty in the State. The TRS government created a number of Panchayats, Mandals, Revenue Divisions and Municipalities as part of reform to decentralise administration.

The State government's flagship programmes, such as Rythu Bandhu, Aasara pensions and other welfare schemes are aimed at ameliorating poverty in the State

Later, Rao hoisted a massive national flag at a 75-foot flag post on the premises of the Collectorate. MPs Kotha Prabhakar Reddy and B B Patil, Zilla Parishad Chairperson P Manjusri, District Collector A Siharath, MLAs Chanti Kranthi Karan and K Manik Rao, Additional Collectors J Veera Reddy and Rajaharshi Sha, TRS district unit president Chintha Prabhakar, and others present.



Minister for Finance T Harish Rao participating in the Freedom Run in Sangareddy on Saturday

Will strike last nail in coffin of terror in one year: Sinha

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Saturday claimed the government will strike the last nail in the coffin of terrorism in the union territory in one year.

He made these remarks while speaking here at a function at SKICC where he laid the foundation stone of 25 DDC, BDC buildings and inaugurated 1000 amrit sarovars across the Union territory.

The Lt Governor said it is "our sacred obligation to defend every inch of motherland and even if we have to sacrifice everything, we shall be ready".

"Some people, on behest of the neighbouring country, are trying to create disturbance in J-K. The neighbouring coun-

try which itself is living in misery, can't do any good to the people of J-K," he said.

"We have lost many innocent lives, now it has to stop. The right time has come to strike the last nail in the coffin of terrorism and its ecosystem. Your younger generation should not face the hardships that their forefathers went through. They must make the nation proud," he added.

Sinha also spoke about the thousands of youths in Tral Pulwama who paid homage to freedom fighters and reverberated the sky with slogans of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai'.

He said in August 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi bestowed the Union territory with a gift of new dawn of development and prosperity.

"For 70 years, the socio-economic system of Jammu and



Kashmir was facing serious crisis and in the last three years, the Union territory has achieved great strides in the direction of reducing the gap between villages and cities that had only widened in the last seven decades."

He said the implementation of 73rd and 74th

Constitution amendments have given a new lease of life to grassroots democracy in J-K.

"We are determined to realise Mahatma Gandhi's dream of poorn swaraj through gram swaraj. Devolution of the three Fs - funds, functions and functionaries have truly empowered the PRIs to fulfill their mandated role," he said.

Sinha said even though the three-tier system was implemented late in the Union territory, Jammu and Kashmir has emerged as a great and effective example in this system and today, the step towards institutionalization of the offices of DDCs and BDCs, at a cost of Rs. 44.92 crore, will further strengthen and accentuate the efficiency of the Panchayati Raj system, making it the engine of community development in future.

Cong need not teach patriotism to us: Minister Karandlaje

PNS ■ MANGALURU

Congress need not teach patriotism to the RSS, and the Sangh Parivar does not want lessons from the very people who joined hands with Pakistan and China, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shobha Karandlaje said on Saturday.

Addressing reporters in Udupi, she alleged that Congress is a party of people who insulted India in Italy and Europe. Karandlaje said the Congress had always found pleasure in belittling the RSS and claims it alone won freedom. There is patriotism in the body and mind of RSS, she said. Though Mahatma Gandhi had asked Congress leaders to disband the party after the freedom struggle, they still cling to the old banyan tree planted by their forefathers, she said.

'Will realise Kalam's dream of making India superpower by 2047'

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

The dream of former president A P J Abdul Kalam for making India a superpower would be realised by 2047 when the country celebrates its 100th year of independence, Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and Fisheries L Murugan said on Saturday.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance, the country is moving towards the path of becoming a superpower in the global arena, Murugan told reporters after participating in the 'Freedom Run Mini Marathon' organised by Swami Vivekananda Seva Kendra here as part of the 75th Independence Day celebrations.

"People are hoisting the national flag atop their houses to celebrate the 75th Independence Day, respecting the call given by PM Modi



as part of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign," the BJP leader said.

Tribal communities living in remote areas of the country are showing enthusiasm on hoisting the tricolour, Murugan said.

Besides, the nation is celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of V O Chidambaram Pillai, who became popular by owning

and operating a ship during British rule, while the country is honouring freedom fighters from the state like Veerapandiya Kattabomman, Dheeran Chinnamalai, Pulithevar and Subramania Bharathi, he pointed out.

The Union minister also took part in the marathon that saw over 2,000 students of various colleges participate.

Attack on author Rushdie can't be called correct: Muslim

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Senior member of All-India Muslim Personal Law Board Maulana Khalid Rasheed Farangi Mahali on Saturday said no one has the right to take law into his hand and the attack on controversial writer Salman Rushdie can't be termed as correct.

The Mumbai-born controversial author, who faced Islamist death threats for years after writing "The Satanic Verses", was stabbed by a 24-year-old man on Friday while he was being introduced at an event in Western New York in the US.

Mahali said Prophet Mohammed always gave the message of peace.

Evacuation efforts intensified as Yamuna flows above danger level

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Evacuation of people from vulnerable areas intensified as the swollen Yamuna river continued to flow above the danger mark of 205.33 metres in Delhi on Saturday, officials said.

The flood control room said the water level was at 205.99 metres at 3 pm, unchanged since 5 am. The river had breached the danger mark of 205.33 metres around 4 pm on Friday following heavy rain in upper catchment areas, prompting authorities to evacuate people from low-lying areas.

A forecast said the water level is likely to touch 206 metres around 6 pm, remain stable till 7 pm and start decreasing thereafter.



East Delhi Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Amod Barthwal said around 5,000 of the 13,000 people living in low-lying areas close to the river have been moved to tents erected near Commonwealth Games Village, Hathi Ghat and on Link Road.

"The remaining people are safe and there seems to be no

need to shift them to other places as the water level is likely to drop," he said.

Karawal Nagar SDM Sanjay Sondhi said 200 people have been moved to higher ground from low-lying areas in his district and drinking water, food and other essentials have been provided to them with the help of NGOs.

19 YRS IN JAIL DESPITE BEING JUVENILE

SC orders release of man in rape, murder

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has ordered release of a man convicted for rape and murder of a minor girl noting he has been in jail for almost 19 years despite being declared a juvenile.

A bench of justices Indira Banerjee and V Ramasubramanian said a juvenile cannot be detained in custody beyond three years according to the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, in force at the material time when the incident took place.

"The petitioner has admittedly been under incarceration in jail for about 18 years and 9 months. This is not in dispute.

"Counsel appearing on behalf of the Respondent-State seeks time to look into the case. Since there is an order of the Juvenile Justice Board passed way back in 2014, declaring the petitioner a juvenile, there can be no question of any further detention of the petitioner in custody," the bench said.

The top court directed that the petitioner shall immediately be granted interim bail on a personal bond and ordered that he report to the local police station once a week.

The apex court was told that the convict was convicted inter alia under section 302 (murder) and 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code and was imposed the punishment of death sentence.

2,100 cattle died, 60,000 affected by lumpy skin disease in Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

More than 2,100 cattle have died while over 60,000 have been affected by lumpy skin disease so far in Punjab, an official said on Saturday.

The Punjab government has intensified efforts to check the spread of the disease and has administered goat pox vaccine to more than 1.45 lakh cattle, the official said.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has formed a three-member group of ministers to monitor and control the spread of the disease.

Lumpy skin disease infects cows and buffaloes mainly through vectors like blood-feeding insects. It leads to the formation of nodes on the animal's skin or hide that look like lumps, fever, runny nose,

reduced milk yield and difficulty in eating.

Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been hit by the outbreak of the disease. The first confirmed case of lumpy skin disease was reported on July 4 in Punjab.

"Till Friday, 60,329 animals have been affected and 2,114 have died, said the official of the state animal husbandry department.

"On Friday, 30,000 doses were administered and we have a target to take it to 50,000 daily," the official told PTI.

With some people throwing carcasses in the open or even in water bodies, the animal husbandry department has urged dairy farmers to bury those in deep pits.



Twin threats of Mahanadi flood, depression for Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha may encounter a low level of flood in the Mahanadi river basin following heavy downpour in the upper catchment areas and high water inflow in the Hirakud reservoir, officials said on Saturday.

The situation may get exacerbated as another low-pressure area has formed over the northern Bay of Bengal and may intensify into a depression, prompting the Met office to issue a red alert of torrential rain in 17 districts. Water Resources engineer-in-chief Bijay Kumar Mishra said four more gates of the Hirakud dam in western Odisha's Sambalpur district were opened.

Spending on health, education can't be freebies: TN CM Stalin

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Saturday said the expenditure incurred by the government on education and health cannot be construed as freebies and stated such measures were being extended to the poor and those living in the fringes.

He also took an apparent swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for opposing freebies but said he did not want to talk much about it as "it will become politics."

In fact, the Supreme Court has said freebies and welfare scheme were different, Stalin said in an event at the Arumigu Kapaleeswarar Arts and Science College at his Kolathur constituency here.

"The expenditure on education and health cannot be freebies. Because education is about knowledge while medicine relates to health. This government wants to implement adequate welfare schemes in both these sectors," he said.

Listing out the initiatives in Health and Education, including those delivered on



doorsteps, Stalin said "these are not freebies (but) social welfare schemes."

"These are implemented to benefit the poor and those in the fringes," he said.

In an apparent reference at Modi, Stalin said, "some people have now newly emerged with the advice there should be no freebies."

"We are not bothered about that. If I talk more, it will become politics. So I don't want to talk more about this," he said.

Modi had recently said freebies are a spoke in India's effort to become self-reliant and also a burden on taxpayer and criticised some opposition parties for engaging in the politics of freebies.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

PM Modi hosts Indian contingent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The golden period of Indian sports is knocking on the door, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday as he hailed the gutsy show of the Indian contingent which returned with 61 medals from the Commonwealth Games.

Modi on Saturday hosted the Indian contingent at his residence to felicitate the players here.

The Indian athletes produced a sensational show in Birmingham, claiming



61 medals, including 22 gold, 16 silver and 23 bronze.

"The real assessment of this perfor-

mance can't be made with just number of medals, our athletes competed neck-to-neck. There may have been a difference of 1s or 1cm but we will make that up I am confident of that," Modi said during his speech.

"It is just a start and we are not going to just sit quietly, golden period of Indian sports is knocking on the door."

"We have the responsibility of making a sporting system which is the best in the world, inclusive, diverse and dynamic. No talent should be left out as they are all assets."

When seven youth died trying to hoist Indian flag at Patna

PNS ■ PATNA

Three days after Mahatma Gandhi gave a call for the Quit India movement in August 1942, a group of youths attempted to hoist the Indian flag at the Patna Secretariat but seven of them fell to the bullets of security forces before they could raise the tricolour.

The incident took place on August 11. Its 80th anniversary was marked Thursday in a solemn ceremony at a memorial -- Shahid Smarak -- erected after Independence in their honour.

Five years after the supreme sacrifices made by these seven youths, or 'Saat Shahid' as they came to be known as later -- six of them were in high school while the seventh was in college -- India saw the dawn of Independence on August 15, 1947.

The government is celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to mark 75 years of India's Independence and on August 15, grand celebrations are lined up at the Red Fort and across the country.



On August 15 when India celebrates the 75th anniversary of its Independence, the historic day will also mark the 75th anniversary of the foun-

ation stone laying of the Shahid Smarak or Martyr's Memorial in Patna.

The monument was built in honour of the seven martyrs, at

a street roundabout in front of the Bihar Assembly complex and due east of the imposing over a century-old Patna Secretariat. The foundation of this landmark was laid on August 15, 1947 by first Bihar Governor Jairamdas Daulatram in presence of Bihar premier Sri Krishna Singh.

On the 80th anniversary of their martyrdom, the Bihar government released a small video on YouTube telling the story of the Quit India movement in Patna and of the 'Saat Shahid', with a hashtag

#AzadiKaUtsav.

"Students had taken the reins of the freedom struggle in their hands, after big leaders were arrested and put behind bars," says the narration with the video.

The video also shares the names of these seven young martyrs, sometimes poetically referred to as 'Immortal Seven' -- Devipada Choudhary, Umakant Prasad Sinha, Ramanand Singh, Satish Prasad Jha, Jagatpati Kumar, Rajendra Prasad Singh and Ramgovind Singh.

INDIA CORNER

PM Modi's mother distributes national flags, joins drive



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother Hiraba, who entered the 100th year of her life in June this year, on Saturday distributed national flags to children at her residence on the outskirts of Gandhinagar city in Gujarat. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel kicked off the three-day 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Independence by hoisting a huge tricolour on a 100-feet tall flag post at Children's University in the state capital on Saturday. Under this campaign, Hiraba distributed national flags to children at her residence and waved the tricolour with them, a government release said. She lives with the Prime Minister's younger brother Pankaj Modi. 'Tiranga Yatra' was organised in different parts of Gujarat with BJP MLAs and ministers participating in rallies with people carrying the tricolour.

Ramsar tag for 75 wetlands to mark Diamond Jubilee



Eleven Indian sites have been added to the Ramsar list, taking the number of wetlands of international importance in the country to 75 in the 75th year of Independence, the Union Environment Ministry said on Saturday. The Ramsar list aims at "developing and maintaining an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits". Of the 11 sites, four are in Tamil Nadu, three in Odisha, two in Jammu and Kashmir and one each in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. A total of 26 sites were added to the Ramsar list from 1982 to 2013. Since 2014, 49 sites have bagged the coveted tag. Twenty-eight Indian sites have been declared wetlands of international importance this year itself. The new Indian wetlands of international importance are Chitrangudi Bird Sanctuary, Suchindram Theoror Wetland Complex, Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary and Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu; Tampara Lake, Hirakud Reservoir and Ansupa Lake in Odisha; Hygam Wetland Conservation Reserve and Shalbugh Wetland Conservation Reserve in Jammu and Kashmir; Thane Creek in Maharashtra and Yashwant Sagar in Madhya Pradesh. "The designation of these sites would help in conservation and management of wetlands and wise use of their resources," the environment ministry said in a statement. Tamil Nadu has the maximum number of Ramsar sites (14), followed by Uttar Pradesh (10). The 75 Ramsar sites in the country cover an area of 13,26,677 hectares. India is one of the contracting parties to the Ramsar Convention, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. New Delhi signed it on February 1, 1982.

'Wedding kits' to raise awareness on family planning in Odisha



In a first for the country, the Odisha government has decided to provide wedding kits' to newly married couples from September to raise awareness about family planning, officials said. The kits will contain contraceptive pills, condoms, a booklet on methods and benefits of family planning, and the marriage registration certificate among other items, they said. This is a part of the National Health Mission's (NHM) Nai Palah Scheme'. The objective is to create awareness among newly married couples to adopt family planning. Director of Family Planning Bijay Panigrahy said. The initiative will begin from the district and block levels, he said. We will launch it for the first time in the country, said Shalini Pandit, State Mission Director of NHM. Panigrahy said accredited social health activists (ASHAs) will visit households where marriages are scheduled and distribute the kits. The couples will also be informed about healthy spacing between child births, he added.

Modi first PM who urged people to hoist Tricolour atop homes



Union minister Smriti Irani on Saturday here claimed that it is for the first time in the country's history that a prime minister has appealed to people to hoist the Tricolour atop their homes. Speaking at a programme held to honour family members of freedom fighters, Irani said, "To hoist the Tricolour, a number of people sacrificed their lives." Referring to PM Narendra Modi, she said it is for the "first time in the India's history" that a prime minister has urged people to hoist the Tricolour atop their houses. She said hoisting the national flag from the ramparts of the Red Fort is not the right of a few, a possible reference to Congress party, which ruled the country for most part of the period after the Independence.

IF INDIA CAPITALISES ON DEMOGRAPHY, MANUFACTURING

Achieving 11% growth rate in next decade possible: Patra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India can "bend time' and catapult to an 11 per cent growth rate in the next decade if it capitalises on the demographic dividend, and boosts manufacturing, as well as exports, RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra said on Saturday.

India has a window of opportunity in terms of its demographic advantage, capability to boost manufacturing, increase in exports value as well as internalisation, Patra said while delivering a speech to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mohotsav' organised by the Reserve Bank of India, Bhubaneswar.

If India capitalises on its opportunities and overcomes challenges, it is widely believed that India will "bend time", Patra said. It is possible to imagine "India striking out into the next decade with a growth rate of 11 per cent".

He said, if this is achieved, India will become the second



largest economy in the world not by 2048, but by 2031.

With a population of 1.38 billion, India is the world's youngest at 28.4 years. By 2023, India will be the most populous country in the world at 1.43 billion, he said.

Drawing a comparison in terms of working-age population (WAP) ratio, he said India stands at an advantageous position vis-a-vis countries like China, Brazil, the US and Japan as the working-age populations of these countries

have started declining already.

While India's WAP ratio will increase till 2045, even exceeding that of China by 2030.

"Making the most of this demographic dividend is India's opportunity as well as a challenge," Patra said.

Talking about the manufacturing potential of India, he said it is another engine for the take-off of India's economic growth.

Asserting that robust growth of manufacturing is essential to boost exports, he

India has a window of opportunity in terms of its demographic advantage, capability to boost manufacturing, increase in exports value as well as internalisation, Patra said while delivering a speech to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mohotsav' organised by the Reserve Bank of India, Bhubaneswar.

said, it is imperative to overturn conventional wisdom and catch up with other leading manufacturers of the world.

To achieve this, he said three things are essential. Firstly the manufacturing sector must adapt to the fourth industrial revolution through automation; data exchange; cyber-physical systems; the internet of things; cloud computing; cognitive computing; the smart factory; and advanced robotics.

Secondly, India must develop a skilled labour force by stepping up investment in human capital and thirdly efforts must be directed to

boost international competitiveness.

"India must raise the share of manufacturing to at least 25 per cent of GDP to become a global manufacturing hub."

In terms of exports, Patra said it is an avenue to widening of markets and production capabilities beyond national borders.

From USD 800 billion worth of export of goods and services currently, which is about 2.7 per cent of the world total, he said if India can achieve the target of USD 1 trillion set by the government by 2030, it can boost India's share to 5 per cent in world exports.

DGCA issues guidelines to prevent bird hits at airports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To check incidents of collision of planes with birds and other animals at airports across India, aviation regulator DGCA on Saturday issued guidelines for them that included carrying out routine patrols in random patterns and informing pilots whenever there is any wildlife activity.

There have been various incidents of bird hits during the last few weeks. On August 4, Go First's flight to Chandigarh returned to Ahmedabad on Thursday after suffering a bird hit.

On June 19, an engine on a SpiceJet Delhi-bound aircraft carrying 185 passengers caught fire soon after it took off from the Patna airport and the plane made an emergency landing minutes later. The engine malfunctioned because of a bird



hit.

The regulator stated in its Saturday circular that all airport operators are requested to review their wildlife hazard management programme to identify the gaps and ensure its strict implementation in and in the vicinity of an aerodrome.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) asked the airports to carry out a wildlife risk assessment and rank them according to the

risk posed to aircraft.

The airports must have a procedure to monitor and record wildlife movement data, it said. The airports should also have a procedure to notify pilots "in response to any significant wildlife concentration or activity both on and in the vicinity of the airport", it mentioned. Routine patrolling is the core of the wildlife hazard management programme, it said.

NMDC targets 46 mn tonnes of iron ore production in FY23

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned miner NMDC Ltd targets to achieve 46 million tonnes of Iron ore production in the current fiscal, 10 per cent higher than that of last year, Chairman and Managing Director, Sumit Deb said. The company achieved production of 42.19 MT and sales of 40.56 MT in FY22 with a turnover of Rs 25,882 crore.

On the back of the developments mentioned above at the Bachel mine, Kumaraswamy mine and other mines, we target production of 460 lakh tonnes of iron ore in FY23. This volume is about 10 per cent higher than in FY22 and would provide a cushion against possible pressure on pricing and we hope to maintain and surpass the top line again in FY23, Deb said in the latest annual report.

He also said the company expects the demerger of its three-MT Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh to complete in



the current year as its application for demerger has been accepted by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and as directed by them, NMDC also held the meetings of Unsecured creditors and Shareholders of our company in June 2022.

We have obtained the No Objection Certificate from the stock exchanges. We expect to complete the demerger within FY23, he said. He further said NMDC has appointed new consultant for the fifth line of screening and the downhill conveyor augmentation project at Bachel mine, which is expected to be ready in the current year and add about 2.5 MT of production.

Corporate tax collections up 34 %

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tax collected on income of companies surged by 34 per cent in the first four months of the current fiscal that began in April, indicating that a simplified tax regime with low rates is yielding results, the Income Tax Department said.

The tax department tweeted on corporate tax collection growth in April-July in an apparent attempt to counter criticism of the 2019 reduction in tax rates for companies which was alleged to have dented the Centre's revenue collections, impacting its spending on social welfare schemes. The tax department said corporate tax collections at Rs 7.23 lakh crore in fiscal 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022) were 58 per cent higher than the mop-up in the previous financial year.

"The corporate tax collections during FY 2022-23 (till 31st July, 2022) register a robust growth of 34 per cent over the corporate tax collections in the corresponding period of FY 2021-22," it said without giving an absolute number for the collection.

Tax collections are one of the indicators of economic activity as higher income of companies suggest demand growth and wealth creation. The department said the



corporate tax collection in 2021-22 were higher by over 9 per cent when compared to collections of pre-COVID 2018-19 fiscal.

"The positive trend of growth continues (in current fiscal), but for the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during FY 2020-21, when the corporate tax collections took a temporary hit," it said. "This indicates that the simplified tax regime with low rates and no exemptions has lived up to its promise."

In September 2019, the government had given companies the option to switch to a lower basic rate of 22 per cent from 30 per cent while foregoing all exemptions.

This led to a 16 per cent decline in corporate tax collections in 2019-20 to Rs 5.57 lakh crore. But the decline was about Rs 1 lakh crore and not Rs 1.45 lakh crore, as was feared at the time.

Tax collections in 2020-21 were hit due to the pandemic.

While the ruling BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have launched a major offensive against freebies such as free electricity and water that they say lead to bankruptcy of a state, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has in a counter offensive accused the ruling dispensation of giving doles to corporate in form of lower taxes and waiving off their loans.

The shrill debate on freebies comes before states like Gujarat go to polls. AAP is seeking to challenge the ruling BJP in the state with its Delhi model of development where consumption of electricity and water up to a certain level is free of charge. BJP seems to be against electoral promises made without considering the fiscal health of a state.

MONEY MATTERS

Shriram Properties posts Rs 10.48 cr profit

Shriram Properties Ltd has reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 10.48 crore for the quarter ended June on better sales. It had posted a net loss of Rs 3.67 crore in the year-ago period. Total income more than doubled to Rs 145.11 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal, from Rs 60.9 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing. In a

statement, the company said it has reported 20 per cent growth on a year-on-year basis in sales volumes at 0.66 million, supported by strong sustenance sales across projects and the launch of a new phase in an ongoing project. Sales bookings rose 26 per cent to Rs 313 crore during April-June, from Rs 248 crore in the year-ago period. The construction spend was higher by 52 per cent year-on-year at Rs 137 crore. Price improvement was seen across all product segments. The company expects the price curve to improve further on the back of strong demand, cost considerations and impact of industry consolidation. The company's gross debt dropped 6 per cent quarter-on-quarter to Rs 451.2 crore at the end of June quarter. The company remains focused on reducing debt and interest costs further in the coming quarters. Post IPO, the company has prepaid debt of around Rs 200 crore and refinanced about Rs 265 crore, apart from JV debt refinancing activities," the statement said.

CCI clears acquisition of ACC, Ambuja Cements by Adani Group

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has given its approval for the acquisition of Holcim's stake in Ambuja Ltd and ACC Ltd by the Adani Group. In a tweet on Friday, the watchdog said it has approved the "acquisition of the stake in Holderind Investments, Ambuja Cements and ACC by Endeavour Trade and Investment".

The proposed combination involves acquisition of 100 per cent stake in Holderind Investments Ltd by Endeavour Trade and Investment Ltd. Endeavour Trade and Investment Ltd is a Mauritius-based company and belongs to the Adani Group. Holderind Investments is held by Holderfin BV and belongs to the Switzerland-based Holcim group and is a holding company of cement manufacturers Ambuja Cements and ACC Ltd. Holderind Investments owned 63.11 per cent stake in Ambuja Cements and 4.48 per cent stake in ACC and further, Ambuja held 50.05 per cent stake in ACC. In May, Adani Group announced a deal to acquire a controlling stake in Holcim Ltd's businesses in India -- Ambuja Ltd and ACC Ltd. Along with it, Adani Group had made an open offer to both the companies' public shareholders to acquire 26 per cent stake each in the firm. The regulator also approved Endeavour's open offer for further acquisition of stake purchase of up to 26 per cent stake each in Ambuja Cements and ACC. Deals beyond a certain threshold require approval from the regulator, which keeps a tab on unfair business practices in the marketplace.

Jain Irrigation Systems posts Rs 5.79 cr loss

Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd on Saturday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 5.79 crore for the quarter ended June. Its net profit stood at Rs 13.44 crore in the year-ago period. Total income, however, rose to Rs 2,043.23 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal from Rs 1,783.58 crore in the corresponding period of the

previous year, according to a regulatory filing. Jain Irrigation Systems has manufacturing plants in 29 locations across the globe. It is engaged in manufacturing of micro irrigation systems, PVC pipes, HDPE pipes, plastic sheets, agro processed products, renewable energy solutions, tissue culture plants, and other agricultural inputs. In June, Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd had announced that its global irrigation business will be merged with Temasek-owned Rivulis in a cash-and-stock deal, a move that will help the company reduce its consolidated debt by Rs 2,700 crore or around 45 per cent. Jain Irrigation's global irrigation business has been valued at Rs 4,200 crore, of which Rs 2,700 crore will be used to repay its all overseas debt and Rs 200 crore will come to the parent company. In the merged entity, it will have 22 per cent equity stake while Rivulis will hold 78 per cent. The deal is likely to be concluded in the next six months.

R K Tyagi takes over as director (operations) at PowerGrid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned PowerGrid Corporation on Saturday said R K Tyagi has assumed charge as its director (operations).

"R K Tyagi has assumed the charge of post of Director (Operations), POWERGRID on 12th August, 2022 till the date of his superannuation i.e. March 31, 2026 or until further orders, whichever is earlier," the company said in a BSE filing. Tyagi, 56, is an electrical engineer from Punjab Engineering College (PEC), Chandigarh and has completed MTech in Energy Studies from IIT Delhi. He has work experience of over 32 years in power transmission system, out of which over 26 years are in operation and maintenance (O&M) of sub-stations and transmission lines at various key positions in premier CPSUs in the power sector such as PowerGrid and NTPC.

Airtel gets shareholders' nod for re-appointment of Gopal Vittal as MD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel's shareholders have approved the re-appointment of Gopal Vittal as managing director of the company for a period of five years with effect from February 1, 2023.

Over 97 per cent of total votes polled were in favour of the resolution, and the same "has been passed with requisite majority", the telco said in a regulatory filing on the outcome of its Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The shareholders also approved a special resolution related to payment of remuneration to Vittal as managing director and CEO of the company, with 89.57 per cent votes in favour and 10.42 per cent against the proposal.

"Therefore the above resolution has been passed with requisite majority," the filing said.



The AGM of the company was held on August 12, 2022 (Friday).

As per the notice of AGM dated July 21, 2022, shareholders' nod was sought for "re-appointment of Gopal Vittal as Managing Director (designated as Managing Director and CEO) for a further period of five (5) years with effect from

February 1, 2023, liable to retire by rotation..."

Vittal was re-appointed as the managing director and CEO with effect from February 1, 2018 for a period of 5 years, (upto January 31, 2023). His re-appointment was due for another term of five years (that is from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2028).

Bengal can earn Rs 20,000 crore from seafood exports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

West Bengal has the potential to earn Rs 18000 crore to Rs 20000 crore from seafood exports in the next five years and the state government's recent ban on use of 20 anioitobiotics in shrimp aquaculture will go a long way in boosting revenue from the sector, an official of seafood exporters body said.

Traces of antibiotic residue are a major headwind for exports and a step toward preventing marine exports from the state, Seafood Exporters Association (SEA) president (West Bengal) Rajarshi Banerji said. "The state government has banned 20 antibiotics in the state for use in aquaculture farming. We have achieved

the feat after a decade-long fight," he said on Friday.

The West Bengal fisheries department banned the use of 20 antibiotics and other pharmacologically active substances in shrimp aquaculture on July 25 and has formed task forces at the district level to monitor it. "Seafood exports from Bengal have grown six times in eight years to Rs 8000-9000 crore now and in the next five years it can grow to Rs 18000-20,000 crore. The government should continue to take such proactive steps," Banerji said.

Shrimps account for the lion share of the export earning in marine products and the ban on antibiotics and its proper implementation by the state government will help the

industry grow and create huge employment, he said.

The prohibition came into effect in July end.

It follows the country's apex drug regulatory authority asking states and union territories to restrict the availability and use of banned veterinary antibiotics used in aquaculture, particularly for shrimps.

Kolkata will host the 23rd edition of India International Seafood Show on February 15-17, 2023, after a gap of 16 years by Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) in association with SEA, the official said. The MPEDA is a statutory body established in 1972 under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry for the promotion of marine products

The West Bengal fisheries department banned the use of 20 antibiotics and other pharmacologically active substances in shrimp aquaculture on July 25 and has formed task forces at the district level to monitor it.

export from India.

The state government has set up district level monitoring committees under district magistrates to implement the ban.





Before Nitish divorced the RJD and shifted to the BJP camp in 2017, similar talks did the round about him squaring up with Modi in the electoral ring. But during the last five years the political scenario of the country has changed completely, and chances of Nitish's acceptance as the Opposition face has increased proportionality, writes NAVIN UPADHYAY

WHY NITISH BEST BET AGAINST 'MIGHTY' MODI

After Nitish Kumar dumped the BJP and embraced the RJD-led Grand alliance comprising Congress and the Left, speculations have once again gained ground that he could be the joint Opposition face to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2024 general elections.

Sources in the know of the agreement arrived between RJD and JD(U) claim that Nitish will contest the Lok Sabha election and move to national politics vacating his chair for Tejashwi Yadav.

Nitish may have denied that he harbors any ambition of occupying the PM's office, but his warning shot to the BJP that the party may not be in power after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, is a clear indication that, as far he is concerned, the development in Bihar should not be seen in isolation and he could play a vital role in galvanizing the opposition across the nation.

Before Nitish divorced the RJD and shifted to the BJP camp in 2017, similar talks did the round about him squaring up with Modi in the electoral ring in 2019. But during the last five years, the political scenario of the country has changed completely, and the chances of Nitish's acceptance as the joint Opposition's face have increased proportionality.

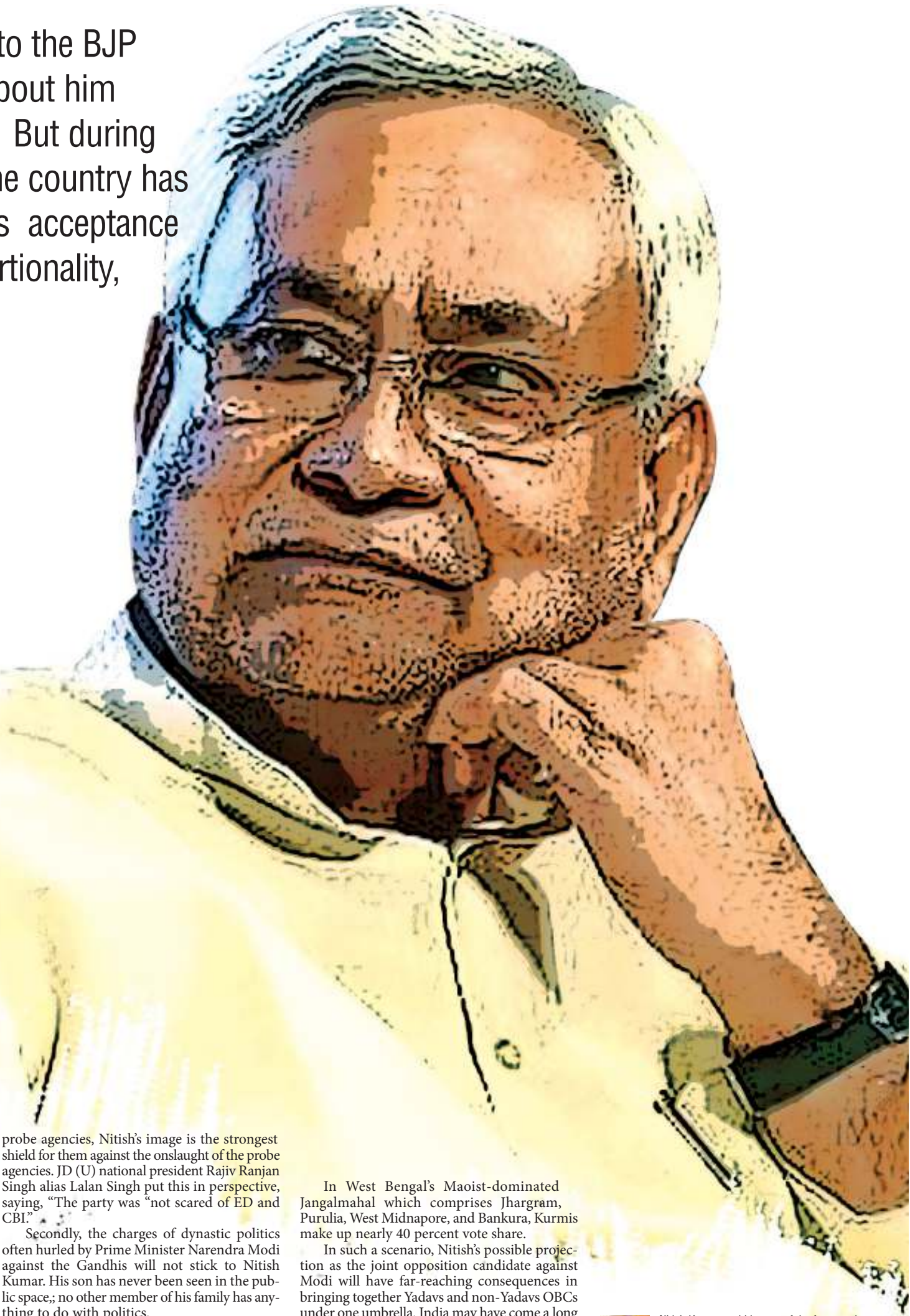
For once, Congress has done little to claim the leadership of any such Opposition formation. Rahul Gandhi may be at the forefront of fighting a verbal duel with the BJP, but on the ground, the party has gained little result. In public perception, Rahul Gandhi lacks the ability to turn the tide of public opinion against Modi. Several opposition leaders such as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, TRS chief K Chandrasekhar Rao, and Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav are unlikely to endorse any move to anoint Rahul Gandhi as the face of the Opposition.

The recent raids by the CBI and Enforcement Directorate against TMC leaders and Ministers and the discovery of huge sums of money from them have considerably dented Mamata Banerjee's image. Mamata's refusal to back the candidature of Margaret Alva in the Vice-Presidential contest has also raised eyebrows. Her pow wow with Narendra Modi during her last visit to Delhi and her decision to attend the Niti Ayog meeting, which she always boycotted, has left tongues wagging in the political circles.

In such a scenario, Nitish could be one of the best bets to take on Modi for a variety of reasons.

First, he is someone with a clean track record who need not worry about the ED or CBI. Even his political rivals agree that Nitish Kumar is a stickler to rules and attempts to question his probity and integrity could very well bounce back on the BJP. At a time when the majority of the Opposition leaders are hounded by the central

IN SUCH A SCENARIO, NITISH'S POSSIBLE PROJECTION AS THE JOINT OPPOSITION CANDIDATE AGAINST MODI WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES ON BRINGING TOGETHER YADAVS AND NON-YADAVS OBCS UNDER ONE UMBRELLA. INDIA MAY HAVE MOVED, BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND POLITICALLY, WAY AHEAD FROM THE DAYS OF MANDAL EUPHORIA, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT IN THE HINDI HEARTLAND CASTE REMAINS A REALITY IN THE ELECTORAL FIGHT. NITISH HAS ALWAYS FROWNED AT BEING IDENTIFIED AS A KURMI LEADER, BUT THAT IDENTITY, MAY BECOME HIS STRONGEST WEAPON AGAINST THE BJP AND TURN THE 2024 LS BOUT INTO A TITANIC CLASH BETWEEN VOTARIES OF MANDAL AND KAMANDAL POLITICS AND IDEOLOGIES



probe agencies, Nitish's image is the strongest shield for them against the onslaught of the probe agencies. JD (U) national president Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh put this in perspective, saying, "The party was "not scared of ED and CBI."

Secondly, the charges of dynastic politics often hurled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi against the Gandhis will not stick to Nitish Kumar. His son has never been seen in the public space; no other member of his family has anything to do with politics.

Third, Nitish is one of the most experienced leaders in the Opposition rank. He has been Chief Minister for 17 years. He will also be remembered as a successful railway minister at the center. His stint as agriculture minister was also noteworthy.

Fourthly, and most importantly, Nitish Kumar can take on Modi on the caste turf as well, because like Modi he too belonged to an OBC caste. Modi's persona as an OBC leader is one of the most important factors in the emergence of the BJP as an unbeatable force on the pan-India level and the saffron outfit's deep penetration among non-Yadav voters. That's where Nitish could be counted on to stop the BJP juggernaut. His Kurmi caste has a sizeable presence across India. If Nitish could end the traditional rivalry between the Yadavs and non-Yadav OBCs, then his Kurmi card could be a game changer in national politics.

It will be interesting to note that in the recently concluded Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, as many as 41 Kurmi candidates were elected to the assembly. Of them, SP won 13 seats, from two they won in 2107 assembly polls. Kurmis population is pegged at nearly 8 percent in UP, and if Nitish chose to contest from one of the Kurmi-dominated seats in Easter Uttar Pradesh bordering Bihar, it could galvanize the entire OBC rank in UP just as Modi's decision to shift to Varanasi did for the BJP. A Kurmi-Yadav-Muslim axis backed by whatever upper caste votes Congress drew in, could become a potent formulation in UP where the Ram Mandir issue will be certainly the BJP's trump cards in 2024.

Nitish's projection as PM's candidate could have strong repercussions in states such as Chhattisgarh (20 pc Kurmi population), Jharkhand (10-12 pc), Maharashtra (7 pc), Gujarat where Patidars are seen as Kurmis (14 pc), Odisha (7 pc). Kurmis also have a sizeable presence in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan besides West Bengal.

In West Bengal's Maoist-dominated Jangalmahal which comprises Jhargram, Purulia, West Midnapore, and Bankura, Kurmis make up nearly 40 percent vote share.

In such a scenario, Nitish's possible projection as the joint opposition candidate against Modi will have far-reaching consequences in bringing together Yadavs and non-Yadavs OBCs under one umbrella. India may have come a long way, both economically and politically, from the days of Mandal euphoria, but the fact remains that In the Hindi heartland caste remains a reality in the electoral fights. Nitish has always frowned at being identified as a Kurmi leader, but that identity may become his strongest weapon against the BJP and turn the 2024 LS bout into a titanic clash between votaries of Mandal and Kamandal politics and ideologies.

Except for Mamata whose party sees her as a rightful claimant for taking on Modi as the joint opposition candidate after the TMC thrashed the BJP in the state assembly polls, the majority in the non-Congress Opposition rank may not have any reservation in accepting Nitish Kumar's leadership. The silence of the Congress' top leaders, especially the Gandhis, on the Bihar development is significant. While Nitish rang up Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi after quitting the NDA, so far the Gandhis have not publicly welcomed his decision or congratulated him.

For the opposition, there could be two possible scenarios in the run-up to 2024. First, Congress gives its nod to accept a non-Gandhi as the face of the Opposition to take on Modi. Secondly, if Congress refuses to do so, hoping against hope that Rahul Gandhi could mobilize the congress to defeat the BJP, then the opposition could revive the Third Front. In both cases, Nitish is in with a chance to emerge as a consensus candidate.

Before he shifted to the BJP camp in 2017, in private conversation Nitish would argue that to defeat the BJP the opposition must stop reacting to the discourse set by BJP and set its own narrative and present a comprehensive economic plan before the nation. Someone who has worked with the BJP for more than two decades, Nitish Kumar is more familiar with the BJP's way of contesting polls and its stratagem. Whether or not he is the face of the Opposition in 2024, Nitish has certainly injected some interest in the battle of 2024, which looked hopelessly one-sided before he dumped the BJP and shifted to the opposition rank.

- Nitish Kumar could be one of the few people, including Sharad Pawar and Mamata Banerjee, who could be seen as prime ministerial challengers in 2024.
- NCP leader MAJEED MEMON**
- Nitish Kumar will be more of an acceptable face for a joint opposition candidate compared to Mamata Banerjee in 2024. To defeat BJP, you have to either change the rules of engagement or beat them at their own game.

Suspended Congress leader SANJAY JHA
- If you assess the personalities in the country, Nitish Kumar is eligible to become prime minister. We are not making any claim today, but he has all the qualities of a prime minister

UPENDRA KUSHWAHA, president of the Janata Dal (United) National Parliamentary Board
- Nitish Kumar is one of the most experienced Chief ministers of our time. If Narendra Modi can become PM, why not Nitish Kumar?

Bihar's deputy CM TEJASHWI YADAV
- Nitish could be a prime ministerial candidate for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Veteran RJD leader SHARAD YADAV
- The JD(U) leader has given the BJP a taste of its own medicine after it dislodged the governments of opposition parties in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Due to his bold decision, Kumar today stands in the front row in the opposition camp along with Mamata Banerjee and others to lead the downfall of 'Modi raj' in the next Parliamentary election.

Bihari Babu SHATRUGHAN SINHA
- Nitish will not be PM even in seven lives.

Former JD(U) leader RCP SINGH

Tough anti-tobacco law for Healthy Nation

At a time when a string of countries such as Ireland, Sweden, Finland, the UK, the US, Australia and Canada and a few others have set “tobacco endgame” targets to get rid of the lethal product by a certain year, India is still sitting over the COTPA (Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Act) Amendment Bill having stringent tobacco control provisions. It was expected to see the light of the day this Monsoon session of Parliament. But it couldn’t, as the session was adjourned sine die last week, four days ahead schedule. Tobacco endgame goal is generally defined as a smoking prevalence of 5 per cent or less.

A battery of anti-tobacco advocates and health experts tells The Health Pioneer that the passage of the progressive legislation could be a way forward towards achieving endgame goals whenever announced by India.

They also pinned hopes on the Government’s assurance to many Parliamentarians on at least seven different occasions in Parliament for the introduction of the Bill.

Drafted by the Union Health Ministry, the long-awaited Bill has provisions such as:

- Disallowing retail sale of loose sticks of cigarettes.
- Prohibiting sale of tobacco products to persons below 21 years.
- Restricts advertising and promotion of tobacco products at Point of Sale (PoS).
- Ban on smoking designated zones at places like hotels, airports and restaurants.

SHWETA SHALINI

BJP Leader from Maharashtra



There is an urgent and immediate need for action to eradicate tobacco menace, given that in India, over 13.5 lakh individuals per year face death due to the deadly product.

This is not a small number. If we want to make India, a world leader we must have healthy youth. But I feel that there’s strong lobby working against the Government’s dream of becoming world leader. If our youth and kids have ill health, India can never become a world Guru.

It’s good that smoking is completely banned in many public places and workplaces. The law, however, permits the establishment of smoking areas or spaces in airports, hotels having 30 or more rooms, and restaurants having seating capacity for 30 or more. This gap needs to be plugged.

A total ban on smoking in indoor public places will protect men and women from the harms of second-hand smoke, help smokers quit and reduce smoking among youth. Let’s have healthy parents and children for better India.

Over five and a half thousand teenagers in the country are getting addicted to tobacco products daily. It is time to strengthen the COTPA Act to end the conspiracies targeting these youth.

DR SHALINI SINGH

Director, ICMR-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research, Union Health Ministry



There is a need to spread awareness about not only tobacco related cancers but also a plethora of diseases caused by the harmful carcinogens in the nicotine laden product. The tobacco

lobby is every next day coming up with new product to lure the youth and kids. For instance, now synthetic nicotine is being launched, which is as equally addictive as the nicotine, but does not fall under the purview of the COTPA Act.

Also, there is a need to design gender-sensitive cessation centres so that men or women are encouraged to quit the deadly habit while doctors should take the cudgel on behalf of their patients to save them from life-threatening products.

DR JAGDISH KAUR

Regional Adviser, Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO Regional Office for South-east Asia



India’s tobacco control journey has been long and arduous. From enforcement of CORPA 2003 to implementing WHO FCTC strategies, there have been success on several fronts. India is likely to achieve NCD



Action Plan target on 30 percent relative reduction in tobacco use prevalence by 2025. Country is preparing for the third round of Global Adult Tobacco Survey. Having said that, Endgame is still a distant goal. Gaps in COTPA 2003 requires to be addressed to improve WHO MPOWER score. Best buys for tobacco control including raising tax on tobacco and enforcing bans on tobacco advertising especially indirect and surrogate ads need urgent attention.

PRIYANK KANOONGO

Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)



There is a need to increase taxes on tobacco products as well as on films, OTT platforms and other media that display use of such items in any form. This will not only

make these products out of bounds, but the additional revenues earned can be used for the treatment and rehabilitation of those suffering from tobacco-related diseases.

Imposition of greater taxation on media that displays use of tobacco will require people to pay more and help discourage glorification of tobacco products. There is a psychological warfare by the tobacco companies. They are targeting young children by positioning tobacco-related ads at their eye-level at points of sale and promoting sale of tobacco products such as gutkha and beedi, alongside sweets, candies, and toys.

PROF (DR) UMA KUMAR

Head of Rheumatology Department, AIIMS, Delhi



The number of tobacco users is rising and it is scary to note that children between 13 and 15 years of age constitute 8.5 per cent of them. People generally think that smoking affects lungs only,

but the case is different, it affects every parts and is one of the important risk factors for growing numbers cases related to autoimmune diseases. The first-hand smoke and second-hand smoke both are equally harmful for health. There is a rising smoking habits among women who think that it is in the fashion. But they must know that it may result into infertility, cases of which is also rising these days. Also, smoking may lead to premature birth.

SCARY FIGURES

After China, India has the second largest consumers (over 26 crore adults (15 years and above)) of tobacco, according to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey India, 2016-17. It leads not only to loss of lives but also has heavy social and economic costs. The total economic costs attributed to tobacco use from all diseases in India in the year 2017-18 for persons aged 35 years and above amounted to

₹177,341 crore (USD 27.5 billion), as per the WHO. According to the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS)-2019, nearly one-fifth of students aged 13-15 years are using tobacco products in India. The nationwide survey of students revealed that 38% of cigarettes, 47% of bidi and 52% of smokeless tobacco users picked up the habit before their 10th birthday [GYTS-4].

TOBACCO HAS NO BENEFITS

The most prevalent form of tobacco use in India is smokeless tobacco and commonly used products are khaini, gutkha, betel quid with tobacco and zarda. Smoking forms of tobacco used are bidi, cigarette and hookah. Smoking can lead to cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung disease, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease including emphysema and chronic bronchitis. SLT also increases risk of tuberculosis, certain eye conditions, problems of the immune system including rheumatoid arthritis.



Tobacco companies that make products like cigarettes and gutkha are specifically targeting teenagers and kids. They prominently display their advertisements near school and colleges so that they are visible to the impressionable minds. These should be completely banned. Doing away with Designated Smoking Areas (DSA) can be a game changer in the direction of health of the vulnerable population and making India’s public places 100 per cent smoke-free.

DR. RIJO M JOHN

Researcher, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences and Economist and Health Policy Analyst



With more than 100 million smokers in India, non-smokers are exposed to second-hand smoke at home, at work, and in public places. There is no known safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke, a deadly mix of

smoke-free law that still allow Designated Smoking Areas in public places like restaurants, bars, hotels, and airports.

DR ARCHANA DHAWAN BAJAJ

Gynaecologist and Fertility Expert



Tobacco-induced infertility among couples is increasing at a disturbing pace in the country. Smoking and smoke-less tobacco use can have a serious impact on the fertility of both men and

women, and consequently the quality of life in pregnancy as well as negative health on the unborn child, miscarriage, and death. If a woman is a regular smoker, then it has a double adverse impact on a woman’s fertility. Smoking can harm both the eggs and the uterus. It not only affects her egg quality, but can also have endometrial effect. Many studies too have shown that smoking can also affect sperm (which reduces fertility) and increase the risk of miscarriage and birth defects.

Smoking during pregnancy can put a would-be-mom at a higher risk of pregnancy complications, such as preterm labor and delivery. Smoking or passive smoke during pregnancy can also result in negative health outcomes for the unborn baby. From the male’s perspective, the carcinogen quality of cigarettes in general affects the motility of the sperm and excessive smoking can lead to the poor sperm count and other fertility problems.

Hence, if the couple is planning to conceive, it’s better for them to shun the tobacco butt as early as possible.

DR VISHAL RAO

Oncologist and Member of Karnataka Government’s High-powered Committee on Tobacco Control



Majority of the long-term tobacco users commence tobacco use while they are adolescents. Every individual has the right to health and the right to smoke-free public places. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees this. So when a smoker ‘smokes’ in public places, he or she is not only spoiling his/her health but also threatening the lives of all those who are in that public place. This infringes the right of non-smokers to have a healthy lifestyle. We have to amend COTPA to make our public places 100 percent smoke-free.

DR G K RATH

Oncologist and Former head, National Cancer Institute, AIIMS



Tobacco products are the major contributors for various cancers and other diseases. In India, tobacco-related cancers contribute nearly half of the total cancers in

males and one-fifth in females. Cancers caused by tobacco can affect lungs, mouth, pharynx (upper throat), nose and sinuses, larynx (voice box), oesophagus (food pipe), liver, pancreas, stomach, kidney, ovary, bladder, cervix, and some types of leukaemia.

It is very disappointing that while tobacco firms are targeting through various marketing strategies to children as young as ten years old, some Bollywood celebrities are “engaged in surrogate advertisements of health hazardous items like gutka.

DR ALOK THAKAR

Professor of Otolaryngology & Head Neck Surgery, AIIMS, New Delhi



There has been rising oral cancer cases due to unabated sale and consumption of tobacco products like cigarette, beedi, khaini, tambaku, gutka and zarda. Since these are yet to be regulated in true sense and not many people are aware about its ill-effects, it will increase the country’s health burden dramatically.

DR RAHUL BHARGAVA

Head of Heamotology Department, Fortis Hospital, Gurugram, Haryana



As long as tobacco products are easily available and affordable for poor and children, achieving ‘Tobacco Free India’ mission will remain a dream. A lot of recent cancer cases

are from rural India. Cigarettes form just one component. The bulk of tobacco addiction in rural India is due to chewable tobacco also.

DR RAMBHA PANDEY

Additional Professor, Radiation Oncologist, AIIMS, Delhi



Women are increasingly taking up tobacco consumption, viewing it as a fashion symbol. This is a very disturbing trend. The habit of smoking and chewing start at the

age of 10-12 years among kids, and once they get into the habit, it is difficult to shun. We hope that the stringent COTPA amendments having provisions such as ban on designated smoking zones will help in cutting down tobacco consumption among the public and thus suffering from cancer. People must be told that tobacco has no single benefit.

DR RAKESH GARG

Additional Professor of Anaesthesiology, Critical Care, Pain and Palliative Medicine, AIIMS, Delhi



The link between tobacco consumption and cancer is very clear. There is a need to look into the financial toxicity caused by tobacco consumption resulting in cancer. A multi-pronged strategy focussing on awareness, higher taxes and stringent laws is needed to make these killer products unaffordable and inaccessible to make India healthy.

Anemia rate among our children and adults has gotten worse in the country, putting a question mark on the efficacy of the Government’s Anemia Mukta Abhiyaan or Anemia-Free Campaign. Latest data shows that prevalence of anemia among children aged six months to five years has increased by more than nine per cent in about five years from 58.6 per cent in national-family health survey (NFHS) 4 to 67.1 per cent in NFHS-5, conducted during 2019-21. The HEALTH PIONEER reports.

Anemia is a condition in which the number of red blood cells or the haemoglobin concentration within them is lower than normal. The World Health Organization (WHO)

Rising Cases of Anemia in Kids a Concern

defines anaemic individuals as children under five with haemoglobin levels less than 11.0 grammes per deciliter (g/dL) and women in the reproductive age range with haemoglobin levels less than 12 g/dL

The Government recently revealed this disturbing fact in Parliament saying that Ladakh topped the list with 90 per cent anemic children followed by Gujarat (80 per cent), Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (76 per cent). Situation was similar in Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir (73 per cent), and Punjab and Rajasthan (71 per

cent) too.

This decline, despite a string of measures taken by the government in last several years, is a cause of concern.

Responding to a question, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya in a written reply in Parliament had said that the Anaemia Mukta Bharat (AMB) strategy is being launched under POSHAN Abhiyaan (Prime Minister’s Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) with the target of reducing anaemia in the six population groups - children (6-59 months), children (5-9 years), adolescent girls and boys (10-

HEALTH EXPERTS HAVE RAISED CONCERN AT THE RISE IN THE CASES GIVEN THAT ANEMIA HAS MANY HARMFUL EFFECTS ON CHILDREN’S LIVES AS IT REDUCES LEARNING CAPACITY, ATTENTIVENESS AND INTELLIGENCE

19 years), pregnant women, lactating women and women of reproductive age group (15-49 years) in lifecycle approach.

In fact, Anemia rate among youth and women is also not impressive.

Health experts have raised concern at the rise in the cases given that anemia has many harmful effects on children’s lives as it reduces learning capacity, attentiveness and intelligence.

Studies show that education and ethnicity of the community has played a key role in cutting down anemia rate. For instance, a research ‘Prevalence and risk factors of anemia

among children 6–59 months in India: A multilevel analysis’ published in journal Clinical Epidemiology and Clinical Health, said that “some aspects of the community influence the anemia risks of children. For instance, a 1 percent increase in the proportion of mother education in the community decreased the likelihood of anemia by 9 per cent among children.

“Northeast region was the only region at lesser risk of anemia. Higher community level ethnic and religious homogeneity is associated with decreased odds of anemia among children. Children aged 12–35 months, girl child, children having diarrhoea, mothers of age group 15–24, high parity and low exposure to mass-media were

the high risk individual factors of anemia among children,” it said.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, Director, Haematology, Bone Marrow Transplant, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram called for increasing awareness about this deficiency which can be at times life threatening.

The doctor pointed out that no doubt most common causes of anemia include nutritional deficiencies, particularly iron deficiency. But deficiencies in folate, vitamins B12 and A are also important causes. Also, diseases like thalassemia or sickle cell disease and aplastic anemia may result in severe anemia or cancer. “Such patients need regular blood transfu-

sions,” he said.

“We need a dedicated day to raise awareness about normal range of hemoglobin in females,” Dr Bhargava added.

Some of the major interventions by the Government under AMB, include prophylactic iron and folic acid supplementation, deworming, intensified year-round behaviour change communication campaign, testing of anaemia using digital methods and point of care treatment, addressing non-nutritional causes of anaemia in endemic pockets with special focus on malaria, hemoglobinopathies and fluorosis. But given that anemia continue to remain a major public health problem, its time for the authorities to re-evaluate its strategy for better outcome.

Afghans in a terrible predicament

The Taliban snatched power from the West-backed Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan in August last year after two decades of their ouster by the US troops. The Islamist group ruled Afghanistan from 1996-2001 under the leadership of Mullah Omar, but were thrown out from Kabul in 2001 when the US launched an onslaught to avenge 9/11 terror attacks and to smoke out al-Qaeda terrorists, including Osama Bin Laden, holed up in the country.

Decimated by the mighty US Army, the rag-tag Taliban took shelter in the mountains and countryside to regroup over years during the US occupation, adopting guerrilla warfare. And, finally, the radicals tactfully occupied power by mobilising both physical and diplomatic support with years of back-room negotiations with the Americans in Qatar.

And then on August 15, 2020, the mullahs succeeded in usurping power from the US-backed legitimate government of President Ghani, who ruled the country from September 2014 till August 2021.

Fearing for life and meeting the same fate as that of Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai (former president of Afghanistan who the Taliban executed after seizing power in 1996 for the first time), Ghani left the war-torn country, leaving behind embattled soldiers and residents at the mercy of the Taliban.

Though no massive protest rally came out in Kabul, the fear among residents, mostly those who had sided with the Americans, was such that there was a mad rush to leave the country for safety. There was chaos at the Kabul airport on August 16 and some seven people, including some who fell from a departing American military transport jet, died.

Thousands succeeded in leaving the country thinking that they might have to face the Taliban's extreme brutality. However, many Afghans chose to stay on as they never wanted to leave their motherland and also, they were used to such heinous treatments at the hands of the Taliban in the past.

As the chaos was unfolding in Afghanistan, the US under Joe Biden simply dumped the democratically elected Ghani Government without showing any commitment for the future of Afghanistan. Shockingly, Washington has never realised that it has handed over the baton to those monsters against whom it fought the so-called "War on Global Terrorism" (GWOT). In fact, America's withdrawal from Afghanistan was planned during the administration of President Barack Obama.

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is a grim signal for a country that may not return to democracy very easily in the near future. The Taliban is predominantly a Pashtun Islamic fundamentalist group, operating mainly in



Afghanistan. It was formed in 1994 as a resistance force against the invading Soviet forces in the 1980s.

In their heyday of the movement, the Taliban promised to impose stability and rule of law after four years of conflict (1992-96) among rival Mujahideen groups. It was in November 1994 when the Taliban entered Kandahar to pacify the crime-ridden southern city, and by September 1996 they seized the capital, Kabul, from President Burhanuddin Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik whom they viewed as anti-Pashtun and corrupt.

The Taliban wanted to impose their interpretation of repressive Islamic rule. They banned television, imposing ultra-strict rules governing the conduct of women. These measures soon made them an international pariah. Their act of destroying the 1,500 years of Buddha statues in Bamiyan province further isolated them. And sheltering the masterminds of 9/11 terror attacks proved to be the last nail in their coffin as the US destroyed the Taliban.

However, the Taliban regrouped and collected enough strength to make a comeback. And hence the group's swift move came as the US planned for the final withdrawal of troops as per the peace deal signed in 2020. Although the Afghan Government forces were well-funded and well-equipped, they could not put up enough resistance when the Taliban seized power. Also, the US

officials openly admitted that they miscalculated the speed at which the Islamists grabbed power.

A year after the Taliban takeover, what the international community can witness is nothing but chaos. Some of the areas that draw global attention are worth mentioning here.

First of all, the Taliban have broken multiple global conventions to respect women's rights and human rights. They are hell bent on destroying the fundamentals of universal human rights accepted by civil society. The mullahs in power have imposed the most severe restrictions over women rights and media freedom. Protest against Taliban rule results in certain death.

Second, unlawful killing has increased manifold. There is absolutely no control over such brutalities and anarchy. In fact, the Taliban are simply concentrating on holding Kabul and managing to survive. So they can hardly afford any time and resources for controlling mafias across the country.

Third, the country is in the grip of the worst economic downturn with stories like people forced to sell their children to earn the means to stay alive.

However, this economic breakdown has not started right now. For a long time, the country has been suffering an economic crisis as it could not properly utilise its massive natural resources.

Fourth, large scale deaths are

taking place because of a severe food crisis in the country. Barely two per cent of the Afghan people have enough food to survive their daily lives.

Fifth, the Taliban have barred girls from attending educational institutions. It displays their extremely patriarchal mindset that denies girls basic right to livelihood.

Sixth, the Taliban have refused to get engaged with international human rights and financial institutions. The foreign governments should ease restrictions on the country's financial organisations specially the banks so as to facilitate development initiatives and daily needs of the people. But at the same time, the international actors also must press the mullahs to allow basic rights and punish those responsible for abuses.

Seventh, finally, the Taliban will not be able to move away from their terror tag though they are working hard to do so. Recently, al-Qaeda chief Aiman-al-Zawahiri was killed by the US drone attack in Kabul itself. It clearly shows how the Taliban are covertly sheltering the terror heads so as to keep their hardcore cadre intact and also to spread the terror networks as far as possible.

Biden's quick exit from Afghanistan had an international impact as well. This withdrawal is a total collapse of the GWOT once launched against the Islamic radicals. However, today's global power equations are entirely different from that

of the 1970s. The allies of Washington in this GWOT in Afghanistan went clueless as the US took its decision to withdraw from the war theatre.

Many of the British ministers came out openly against Biden's move in Afghanistan. It was very clear how the UK and other European allies of the US were dependent on Washington. In fact, their opinions hardly mattered for Biden when the latter wanted to take a crucial decision.

Definitely, Beijing and Moscow are quite content to see the US leaving a two-decade old war field by creating a power void. But how long the smiles in Beijing, Moscow and lately in Islamabad will continue is a matter of concern.

Simply, the Taliban pose an immediate threat not only to the Afghan people but also for the entire central Asian region. Their coming to power has fuelled the ambitions and offensives of other Islamic jihadists like al-Qaeda, Islamic State and especially, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), mainly operating in the Afghan-Pakistan border areas.

There is a vast difference between the Taliban 1.0 and 2.0. Earlier, it was out and out a jihadist outfit. Today it has transformed itself into an organisation that can equally run diplomacy and terror together. They have learnt their lessons in the last two decades of their fighting with the US-led forces.

The future of Afghanistan, known as the graveyard of empires, hinges more on whether the Taliban rule the country as a unified force and less on the reactions of external powers like the US... Conventional wisdom is that it's really difficult for such terror groups to sustain for long in public governance



MAKHAN SAIKIA

For sure, Kabul will soon turn into a war zone. If the Taliban deny the fundamental rights to its people and go on abusing the same, the international actors could snap ties with them, accompanied by suspension of financial aid.

This could be catastrophic for a country that barely has anything to survive. Again, it is a big challenge for the Taliban to maintain cohesion among its own military ranks. Conventional wisdom is that it's really difficult for such terror groups to sustain for long in public governance. Therefore, the future of Afghanistan, known as the graveyard of empires, hinges more on whether the Taliban rule the country as a unified force and less on the reactions of external powers like the US.

It's an uphill task for the Taliban to keep the pace and peace in a country full of problems and with ISIS splinter groups fanned out in villages trying to come into power using the same guerrilla tactics which the Taliban used to topple the US-led Ghani Government.

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PERSPECTIVE

Urgency of revisiting unregulated populism

Are freebies any different from the tax concessions given to corporate entities? States are well within their rights to use public funds for public purposes. But that doesn't mean they can't be made accountable for their fiscal profligacy



PIYUSH KAMAL

Even after witnessing respectable economic growth during the post-reform period, India has somehow struggled with the equitable distribution of her wealth. The top 10 per cent of India's population hold 74 per cent of the total national wealth, while the bottom 90 per cent have to manage itself with the rest of the crumbs.

As a mature democracy, we cannot afford to ignore the existing disparity of this magnitude. Yet, all political parties despite their differences in ideologies have historically tried to ostensibly tackle this grave issue by doling freebies and sops to this vulnerable and marginalised section, especially during election periods.

For instance, free electricity, free water supply, waiver of agricultural loans, unemployment doles, and giving away gadgets like television, smartphones, laptops, and tabs have gained widespread acceptance among political stakeholders for making competitive bids for votes. And the sad part is: This indulgence in competitive bidding is rarely done keeping in mind the financial health of the States.

Is it a corrupt practice?

There is a section of diehard ideologues that sees these freebies as furtherance of Directive Principles. They think as long as public funds splurged on freebies are spent after getting proper clearance from the legislature, these populist measures can't be termed corrupt practices.

However, in our enthusiasm to sound rational, are we neglecting an important issue of moral hazard, where the beneficiaries of these freebies are as guilty as political parties dispensing these inducements? Isn't this the job of the social intelligentsia to help beneficiaries make an informed decision, where the long-term cost is rationally weighed against the immediate gains from freebies?

Is it a welfare measure?

There is another section of ideologues that fails to see any problem with freebies. For them, it is another form of welfare measure targeted at the bottom of the pyramid. There is some grain of truth in their contention as quite a handful of national welfare schemes like Mid-day Meal, National Food Security, and



PM Kisan Samman Nidhi started as freebies in different States.

However, that doesn't mean every freebie has an equal chance of becoming a welfare scheme. The distribution of free power is a case in point. In fact, the unabated culture of free power has created

an unprecedented threat to India's energy security; where State discoms are incurring an annual loss of more than ₹75,000 crore.

Is it a failure of governance?

Both eras of the post-independence economic regime (the planned as well as the mar-

ket) have failed us majorly on the social sector front. Most indicators of health, education, and employment are not yet strong enough to establish themselves as the keystone of development.

Political dispensations (both at the Centre and States) are, in fact, aware of their

inability to resolve the long-lasting challenges on these fronts. Hence, the political class rarely shies away from playing Robinhood politics. As a result, the root cause of the issue often remains unresolved. For instance, MNREGA as a job guarantee scheme is mostly a sign of failure on the part of the Government to create a conducive and long-lasting ecosystem for widespread job creation.

Is it equivalent to revenue forgone?

Are these freebies any different from the tax concessions given to corporate entities? How the revenue forgone on the pretext of concessions given to corporates often fails to qualify itself for a mainstream discussion?

States are well within their rights to use public funds for public purposes. But that doesn't mean they can't be made accountable for their fiscal profligacy. While mechanisms to keep populist schemes under restraint can be implemented as per recommendation by the finance commission, it needs to ensure that essential public services don't get affected by these restraints.

Is it possible to regulate them?

The role of electoral democracy in India's economic growth is something that should never be underestimated at any cost. It has always played a critical role in shaping and reshaping the undefined contours of the nation's polity, economy, and society. And being an integral part of this ongoing churning, the political stakeholders can afford to make numerous mistakes as long as they are allowed by their voters.

The Supreme Court's decision to examine this complicated issue by taking recommendations from the body of different key stakeholders raises an important question of whether it is right to bypass the legislature while trying to resolve such a politically sensitive issue. Because, all said and done, the issue of pre-poll freebies in the name of unregulated populism is essentially a political question that can't be outsourced to any other institution of democracy.

(The writer is a former IRS officer & author of the book "Current Perspectives on the Indian Economy")



Italy's Lake Garda shrinks to near-historic low amid drought

Italy's worst drought in decades has reduced Lake Garda, the country's largest lake to near its lowest level ever recorded, exposing swaths of previously underwater rocks and warming the water to temperatures that approach the average in the Caribbean Sea. Tourists flocking to the popular northern lake on Friday for the start of Italy's key summer long weekend found a vastly different landscape than in past years.

An expansive stretch of bleached rock extended far from the normal shoreline, ringing the southern Sirmione Peninsula with a yellow halo between the green hues of the water and the trees on the shore.

We came last year, we liked it, and we came back this year, tourist Beatrice Masi said as she sat on the rocks. We found the landscape had changed a lot. We were a bit shocked when we arrived because we had our usual walk around,

and the water wasn't there.

Northern Italy hasn't seen significant rainfall for months, and snowfall this year was down 70 per cent, drying up important rivers like the Po, which flows across Italy's agricultural and industrial heartland. Many European countries, including Spain, Germany, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and Britain, are enduring droughts this summer that have hurt farmers and shippers and promoted authorities to restrict water use. The parched condition of the Po, Italy's longest river, has already caused billions of euros in losses to farmers who normally rely on it to irrigate fields and rice paddies.

To compensate, authorities allowed more water from Lake Garda to flow out to local rivers 70 cubic metres (2,472 cubic feet) of water per second.

But in late July, they reduced the amount to protect the lake and the financially important tourism tied to it.

FIRST SYNTHETIC EMBRYOS

Scientific breakthrough raises serious ethical questions

Children, even some who are too young for school, know you can't make a baby without sperm and an egg. But a team of researchers in Israel have called into question the basics of what we teach children about the birds and the bees, and created a mouse embryo using just stem cells.

It lived for eight days, about half a mouse's gestation period, inside a bioreactor in the lab. In 2021 the research team used the same artificial womb to grow natural mouse embryos (fertilised from sperm and eggs), which lived for 11 days. The lab-created womb, or external uterus, was a breakthrough in itself as embryos could not survive in petri dishes.

If you're picturing a kind of silicone womb, think again. The external uterus is a rotating device filled with glass bottles of nutrients. This movement simulates how blood and nutrients flow to the placenta. The device also replicates the atmospheric pressure of a mouse uterus.

Some of the cells were treated with chemicals, which switched on genetic programmes to develop into placenta or yolk sac. Others developed into organs and other tissues without intervention. While most of the stem cells failed, about 0.5% were very similar to a natural eight-day-old embryo with a beating heart, basic nervous system and a yolk sac.

These new technologies raise several ethical and legal concerns.

ARTIFICIAL WOMB

In the latest study, the scientists started with collections of stem cells. The conditions created by the external uterus triggered the developmental process that makes a fetus. Although the scientists said we are a long way off synthetic human embryos, the experiment brings us closer to a future where some humans gestate their babies artificially.

Each year over 300,000 women worldwide die in childbirth or as a result of pregnancy complications, many because they lack basic care. Even in wealthy countries, pregnancy and childbirth is risky and healthcare providers are criticised for failing mothers.

There is an urgent need to make healthcare more accessible across the planet, provide better mental health support for mothers and make pregnancy and childbirth safer. In an ideal world every parent should expect excellent care in all aspects of motherhood. This technology could help treat premature babies and give at least some women a different option: a choice of whether to carry their child or use an external uterus.

Some philosophers say there is a moral imperative to develop artificial wombs to help remedy the unfairness of parenting roles. But other researchers say artificial wombs would threaten a women's legal right to terminate a pregnancy.

SYNTHETIC EMBRYOS AND ORGANS

In the last few years, scientists have learned more about how to coax stem cells to develop into increasingly sophisticated structures, including ones that mimic the structure and function of human organs (organoids). Artificial human kidneys, brains, hearts and more have all been created in a lab, though they are still too rudimentary for medical use.

The issue of whether there are moral differences between using stem cells to produce models of human organs for research and using stem cells to create a synthetic embryo are already playing out in law courts.

One of the key differences between organoids and synthetic embryos is their potential. If a synthetic embryo can develop into a living creature, it should have more protection than those which don't.

Synthetic embryos do not currently have potential to actually create a living mouse. If scientists did make human synthetic embryos, but without the potential to form a living being, they should arguably be treated similarly to organoids.

Some countries (for example Australia) have taken the position that synthetic embryos such as blastoids (which resemble five-to-six-day-old embryos) should be treated like natural embryos, because of similarities in structure. Other countries (such as the UK, the US, Japan) treat synthetic embryos as different from embryos because they can't currently produce a live baby.

Another important legal issue is the source of stem cells and consent. The synthetic mouse embryo creators used stem cells from early embryos.

However, in the future it might be possible to make synthetic embryos from induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS). The worst case scenario would be a person donates a skin cell to research into producing organs to cure disease but this is used without their knowledge or consent to produce synthetic embryos.

CLONING

IPS cells are created by taking a mature cell (such as a skin cell) from a living or dead person and applying treatments which drive it backwards to a more immature state. If the cell could be driven all the way back to an embryonic stem cell, it may one day be possible to use IPS cells to make viable embryos.

That embryo would be a clone of the cell donor. The public and scientists have huge

Each year over 300,000 women worldwide die in childbirth or as a result of pregnancy complications, many because they lack basic care. Even in wealthy countries, pregnancy and childbirth is risky and healthcare providers are criticised for failing mothers.

concerns about human cloning.

But it has been possible to clone a human being using a different process called nuclear transfer, for 25 years. Nuclear transfer created Dolly the Sheep in 1997 and a monkey in 2018. In the late 90s and early 2000s, a flurry of laws introduced around the world successfully banned human cloning.

Planet-friendly diet

Climatarian, flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan?

The food we consume has a massive impact on our planet. Agriculture takes up half the habitable land on Earth, destroys forests and other ecosystems and produces a quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Meat and dairy specifically accounts for around 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

So changing what we eat can help reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable farming. But there are several climate-friendly diets to choose from. The best known are the completely plant-based vegan diet, the vegetarian diet, which also allows eggs and dairy, and the pescetarian diet, which also allows seafood. There are also flexitarian diets, where three quarters of meat and dairy is replaced by plant-based food, or the Mediterranean diet which allows moderate amounts of poultry, pork, lamb and beef. Deciding which diet to choose is not as simple as you might expect. Let us start with a new fad: the climatarian diet. One version was created by the not-for-profit

organisation Climates Network, which says this diet is healthy, climate friendly and nature friendly. According to the publicity with a simple diet shift you can save a tonne of CO2 equivalents per person per year (equivalents just means methane and other greenhouse gases are factored in alongside carbon dioxide).

Sounds great, but the diet still allows you to eat meat and other high emission foods such as pork, poultry, fish, dairy products and eggs. So this is just a newer version of the climate carnivore diet except followers are encouraged to switch as much red meat (beef, lamb, pork, veal and venison) as possible to other meats and fish.

The diet does, however, encourage you to cut down on meat overall and to choose high-welfare and local meat where

possible, while avoiding food waste and choosing seasonal, local foods.

So saving a tonne of carbon dioxide is great but switching to vegetarianism or veganism can save even more. A western standard meat-based diet produces about 7.2 kilograms of CO2 equivalent per day, while a vegetarian diet produces 3.8 kg and a vegan diet 2.9 kg. If the whole world went vegan it would save nearly 8 billion tonnes CO2e while even a switch to the Mediterranean diet would still save 3 billion tonnes. That is a saving of between 60% and 20% of all food emissions as which are currently at 13.7 billion tonnes of CO2e a year.

WATER AND LAND USE

To save our planet, we must also consider both water and land usage. Beef, for instance, needs about 15,000 litres of water per kilo.

Some vegetarian or vegan foods like avocados and

almonds also have a huge water footprint, but overall a plant-based diet has about half the water consumption of a standard meat-based diet.

A global move away from meat would also free up a huge amount of land, since billions of animals would no longer have to be fed. Soya, for instance, is one of the world's most common crops yet almost 80% of the world's soybeans are fed to livestock. The reduced need for agricultural land would help stop deforestation and help protect biodiversity. The land could also be used to reforest and rewild large areas which would become a natural store of carbon dioxide.



Praise, worry in Iran after Rushdie attack; govt quiet

Iranians reacted with praise and worry on Saturday over the attack on novelist Salman Rushdie, the target of a decades-old fatwa by the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini calling for his death.

It remains unclear why Rushdie's attacker, identified by police as Hadi Matar of Fairview, New Jersey, stabbed the author as he prepared to speak at an event on Friday in western New York.

Iran's theocratic government and its state-run media have assigned no motive to the assault.

But in Tehran, some willing to speak to The Associated Press offered praise for an attack targeting a writer they believe tarnished the Islamic faith with his 1988 book The Satanic Verses.

In the streets of Iran's capital, images of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini still peer down at passers-by. I don't know Salman Rushdie, but I



am happy to hear that he was attacked since he insulted Islam," said Reza Amiri, a 27-year-old deliveryman. This is the fate for anybody who insults sanctities.

Others, however, worried aloud that Iran could become even more cut off from the world as tensions remain high over its tattered nuclear deal.

I feel those who did it are trying to isolate Iran," said Mahshid Barati, a 39-year-old geography teacher. This will negatively affect relations with many even Russia and China. Khomeini, in poor health in the last year of his life after the

grinding, stalemate 1980s Iran-Iraq war decimated the country's economy, issued the fatwa on Rushdie in 1989. The Islamic edict came amid a violent uproar in the Muslim world over the novel, which some viewed as blasphemously making suggestions about the Prophet Muhammad's life. "I would like to inform all the intrepid Muslims in the world that the author of the book entitled Satanic Verses' ... as well as those publishers who were aware of its contents, are hereby sentenced to death," Khomeini said in February 1989, according to Tehran Radio.

HAR GHAR TIRANGA

NIDF, Chandigarh University create Guinness World Record



UT Administrator Banwari Lal Purohit, Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi among 25,000 people gather for historic event at Chandigarh Cricket Stadium; 5885 students, dignitaries weave the tricolour formation

Turns out to be a great milestone in Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, takes campaign to international level. Strengthening Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ongoing 'Har Ghar Tiranga' cam-

paign and taking it to international level to mark the 75th Independence Day of India, the NID Foundation and Chandigarh University on Saturday created the Guinness World Record for formation of 'World's Largest Human Image of a Waving National Flag' when as many as 5885 students from Chandigarh University and other schools and colleges along with the volunteers of the NID Foundation of the UT and other dignitaries gathered for the flag formation at Chandigarh Cricket Stadium and created the history in the heart of the City Beautiful.

Overall, more than 25,000 people including youth and citizens of Chandigarh filled the air with patriotism which included Punjab Governor and Chandigarh UT Administrator Shri Banwarilal Purohit, Union Minister of State for External Affairs, and Culture Smt Meenakshi Lekhi, NID Chief Patron and Chandigarh University

Chancellor S. Satnam Singh Sandhu, Dharam Pal, Adviser to the Administrator, Chandigarh UT; Vinay Pratap Singh, Deputy Commissioner Chandigarh; Sarabjit Kaur, Mayor Chandigarh; Parveer Ranjan, DGP Chandigarh UT, Prof Himani Sood, Founder NID Foundation and other top officials of the UT administration.

The event was aimed at strengthening the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign envisioned by honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to mark the 75 years of Independence of country, and take it to international level via this world record. Besides igniting the spirit of patriotism and nationalism among the citizens of this great nation, the event will also prove to be a great milestone in achieving Government of India's target of unfurling tricolour atop 20 Crore houses.

The patriotic fervour and zest was visible in the air as more than 25 thousand people gathered at the Chandigarh Cricket stadium, where over 5885 young boys and girls formed World's Largest Human Image of a Waving National Flag, thus creating a new Guinness World Record, amidst the loud chants and cheers from the gathering. Along with the students, Banwarilal Purohit, Smt Meenakshi Lekhi, S. Satnam Singh Sandhu, Dharam Pal and other dignitaries were also a part of the flag formation.

Swarnil Dangarikar, official Guinness World Records Adjudicator, who was present at the event

verified the record. "The previous world record for the largest human image of a waving national flag achieved by GEMS Education in Abu Dhabi, UAE has been broken and a new world record has been created by NID Foundation and Chandigarh University in today's event," he confirmed.

UAE had achieved the record for the largest human image of a waving national flag with 4130 people, in 2017. However, India has broken the record comfortably, said the official.

Mr Dangarikar also handed over a copy of the GWR certificate to Punjab Governor and UT Administrator Shri Banwarilal Purohit and S. Satnam Singh Sandhu, Chief Patron, NID Foundation, and Chancellor, Chandigarh University and congratulated them.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Banwarilal Purohit said that with the successful creation of world record formed by Chandigarh University and NID Foundation, Chandigarh has given a great message to the entire world, on the 75th anniversary of India's Independence Day.

"This event has become even greater than what I had imagined. I extend my heartfelt congratulation to Chandigarh University Chancellor and NID Foundation Chief Patron S. Satnam Singh Sandhu whose team has achieved this feat. Not only their institutions, but they have made the entire Chandigarh and entire country proud," said Shri Purohit, who was the chief guest at the event.