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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

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:

Tithi: Tritiya:

Chaturthi:

Aug 14 12:53 AM

Aug 14 10:36 PM

Aug 14 10:36 PM

Aug 15 09:02 PM

Nakshatram:

Purva Bhadrapada:

Uttara Bhadrapada:

Aug 13 11:28 PM

Aug 14 09:56 PM

Aug 14 09:56 PM

Aug 15 09:07 PM

Rahukalam:

Yamagandam:

Variyam:

5:04 PM to 6:39 PM

12:20 PM to 1:55 PM

07:12 AM to 08:45 AM

03:29 PM to 5:04 PM

Gulika:

Amritakalam:

Abhijit Muhurtham:

02:26 PM to 03:56 PM

11:55 AM to 12:46 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 27°C

Humidity: 69%

Sunrise: 6:02 AM

Sunset: 6:39 PM

Updated: AUGUST 13, 2022 5:00 PM

NRI docs ready to help AP govt in healthcare reforms

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A group of NRI doctors from the USA called on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Saturday to extend their support in various ways to the State government in the revolutionary reforms in the healthcare sector. The NRI Doctors Association facilitated the CM Jagan.

Dr Ravi Kolli, president, the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAP) invited CM to the 16th Annual AAP Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) in Visakhapatnam from January 6-8, 2023. Also, Dr Prakash Kabbur briefed the CM about the objectives of Train and Help a Baby Organization (TAHB) aimed at limiting neo-natal mortality.

Dr Ravi Kolli briefed about the Summit's aim to raise awareness of key health care issues affecting the Indian subcontinent such as Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, Women's & Children's Health, Infectious Diseases, and Mental Health. The highlight of the Summit is to reaffirm NRI physicians' commitment to improving health care and creating model programs for the management of various diseases and improving outcomes universally. Also, the focus will be on mental health, reducing the stigma for seeking mental health, and working on physician burnout. Further, Dr Ravi expressed that AAP Physicians are showing interest to work under the CM Jagan administration to make the state of AP a model state in



development, especially in the areas of Health Care. Tele Consultations, Training the Trainer sessions, learning modules for different specialties, etc. will be supported by AAP Physicians.

Dr. Prakash said that his TAHB voluntary organization was working to reduce neonatal mortality through prevention, treatment, and follow-up. TAHB is supporting the other southern states and came forward to support the Government of AP and to be a part of the GoAP's Health Care initiatives. TAHB carries out Maternal and Child Health Programmes on which NeoNatal Natal Healthcare is primarily focused. TAHB works with Teaching Institutions, Primary Health Centers, etc., and collectively improves healthcare delivery and outcomes. TAHB also provides equipment and support which are necessary for dealing with high-risk pregnancies and critically ill

The highlight of the Summit is to reaffirm NRI physicians' commitment to improving health care and creating model programmes for the management of various diseases and improving outcomes universally

newborns. The CM expressed interest in taking NRI Doctors and NRI Associations' expertise and support to train the medical staff at Village Clinics, Primary Health Centers, Mid-Level Health Providers as well as the teaching institutions who will get the necessary understanding which can be used while dealing with high-risk pregnancies and critically ill newborns. CM showed interest in the AAP's Mental Health program and

opined to assign the counselors at schools who can be trained in psychological first aid which will be useful in time of need. Dr. N Vasudeva Reddy, Advisor to Government on NRI Medical Affairs requested CM to include the Post Graduate program in Family Medicine in all the medical colleges in AP which will be useful in the Family Doctor Concept. Further, CM suggested that more than 15,000 ASHA workers can be oriented through virtual sessions on continued education to improve their skills at the grass root level to assist the patients.

The NRI doctors team also called on and expressed a special note of thanks to Minister for Health Vidadala Rajini, Naveen Kumar, Spl Secretary Health, Medical, and Family Welfare for readily coming forward to welcome and support NRI doctors towards Health initiatives of the AP government.

Now, EHS services in other states

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Along the lines of the Aarogyasri health scheme, the State government has issued orders allowing medical services on the Employees Health Scheme (EHS) cards of government employees in other states. It has been decided to apply 565 medical procedures to the employees which are not been covered till now under the employees' health insurance. To this effect, the MT Krishna Babu, Principal Secretary, Health Medical & Family Welfare has issued orders. It has agreed to pay medical bills through EHS through Auto Debit Scheme within 21 days as in the case of Aarogyasri. Retired employees and their family members have been allowed to avail of medical services on



EHS cards in other states. On the other hand, the State government has said that it will issue instructions to Aarogy Mitra for the coordination of EHS cards at network hospitals. The government has issued the order on EHS related to the employees after the meeting of the committee of ministers held with the

employees' unions recently. The employees' unions thanked the government for issuing the order. According to reliable sources, there is a possibility that an order will be issued soon to extend the medical reimbursement scheme demanded by the employees' unions for one more year.

Salman Rushdie on ventilator, likely to lose one of his eyes

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 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. 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.

'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 Ji' resonated during the entire course of the rally. Sports, essay, quiz, drawing and songs competitions were organised for students on the occasion and



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

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.

1.05 cr precautionary Covid vax doses given in AP

C PRADEEP KUMAR ■ VIJAYAWADA

A total of 1.05 crore precautionary vaccine doses were administered across Andhra Pradesh on Saturday. The AP State government has administered more than 10.27 crore Covid vaccine doses to the people across the State including first, second, and precautionary doses to people of age groups above 18 years. As per the details available with the health department 4,46,68,756 dose 1, 4,75, 626 dose 2 and 1,05,57,022 precaution doses

were administered as on Saturday. Interestingly more than 95 percent of Health Care Workers received the precautionary doses. Out of 4,98,511 HCWs who have received both the vaccine doses and 4,88,062 have received precaution doses. Out of 15,73,302 front-line workers who have received both doses, 13,57,189 have received precautionary doses with 88 percent, as per the latest information. The precautionary dose for the population between 18 years and below 60 years is very meagre with 11 percent while 60 percent of senior citizens aged

above 60 years have taken the precautionary doses as of date across the State. The districtwise precautionary doses administered are Krishna with 9,18,163, Guntur 9,71,835, YSR district Kadapa 6,29,904, Kurnool 8,17,194, Visakhapatnam 10,56,206, Anantapur 8,45,011, Chittoor 9,68,293 East Godavari 9,85,052, Prakasam 8,15,147, Sri Potti Sriraulu Nellore 6,57,599, Srikakulam 5,03,336, Vizianagaram 5,26,660 and West Godavari 8,62,622.



OBTUSE ANGLE



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 country-wide. 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. We should remember their supreme sacrifice. We should remember our duties towards the nation and dedicate ourselves to fulfill them.

One of the motivating factors for achieving Independence is self-expression. People will be able to feel good governance only in independent living. According to Swami Vivekananda, every country takes birth only to contribute something to global living. To be able to con-

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.

tribute anything to the world, the country should be independent. A country by declaring its self-rule will be able to contribute *yogadaan* to global living.

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 bhayashoonya 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 objec-



MOHAN BHAGAWAT

tive. 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.

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 system 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 (*tapomargam*)". (The author is Sirsangchalak, Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh)

Services of pulmonologists during Covid pandemic hailed



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR University of Health Sciences Vice Chancellor Dr P Shyama Prasad praised pulmonologists as the doctors who played the most important role when the Covid epidemic shook the world. On the second day of the three-day Apsacon-2022 conference organised by the Association of Pulmonologists at Koneru Lakshmaiah University at Vaddeswaram near Vijayawada, speakers

addressed various topics on Saturday. The VC participated in the event as a Chief Guest and addressed the gathering. He explained that the coronavirus mainly affects the lungs and pulmonologists are the key to treat them at that time. In the situation where thousands of covid victims come to the hospitals every day, the pulmonologists tried their best to stay in the hospital theatre and save everyone. The guest of honour, Director of Medical Education Dr M Raghavendra Rao said

that Corona could be controlled in the country because of the pulmonologists and doctors who risked their lives to provide medical services and they did not get the expected recognition, praise and publicity. Guest of Honour, Nandigama MLA, Renowned Pulmonologist Dr Monditoka Jagannathan Rao said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is providing welfare fruits to everyone, and is giving the highest priority to the medical sector.

1.05 cr Covid vax doses...

Continued from page 1

The vaccine doses administered across the State are 29,87,728 in 12-14 age group, 50,61,610 doses in 15-17 age group, 4,83,89,174 doses in 18-44 age group, 2,51,56,091 doses in 45-60 age group and 1,64,95,627 in 60 above age group. On the other hand, with rising Covid positive cases across the country, the Central government on Friday issued an advisory to states and Union Territories to avoid large gatherings while celebrating India's 75th Independence Day, as a precautionary measure, according to reports. The advisory from the Ministry of Home Affairs came at a time when India is reporting over 15,000 Covid-19 cases. On Friday, India logged 16,561 new infections. The advisory urged the states and UTs to ensure that the general public should follow Covid protocols. The home ministry also asked all states and UTs to carry out a 'Swachh Bharat' campaign at a prominent location in each of the districts.

94,263 cases settled during Lok Adalat in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A total of 94,263 cases were settled during the National Lok Adalat in Andhra Pradesh held on Saturday. The Lok Adalat was held under the directions of Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra, Chief Justice and Patron-in-Chief, Justice C Praveen Kumar, Executive Chairman AP State Legal Services, Justice AV Sesha Sai, Chairman AP High Court, Legal Services, according to M Babitha member secretary, AP State Legal Services Authority.

She said that for the National Lok Adalat 380 Lok Adalat benches have been constituted across the state and settled 94,263 cases including 87,805 pending cases and 6,458 pre-litigations cases in various districts and 451 cases were settled in the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

She said that with the support of the Advocates, active participation of the public,



officials of stakeholders departments, press and media and staff, the National Lok Adalat was a grand success and expressed thanks to one and all for their efforts, continued support and active participation.

Discoms lose Rs 80 crore due to floods

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Due to the recent floods, Discoms faced a loss of Rs 80 crore. The CMD of TSGENCO and TSTRANSCO, D. Prabhakar Rao, appreciated the efforts of engineers in taking up rectification works on a war footing during the recent heavy rains and sudden flood which caused havoc on the distribution network. In TSNPDCL, the loss due to the heavy rains is assessed at Rs 70 crore on account of water-logged substations, damaged poles and distribution transformers.

The TSSPDCL's loss is around Rs 10 crore. He said that normalcy has been restored in almost all areas of the state. The power utilities organized the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Independence at Hyderabad on Saturday. After leading a huge rally of electricity employees holding the tri-colour the CMD hoisted the national flag in the presence of G. Raghuma Reddy, the CMD of TSSPDCL, and A. Gopal Rao, the CMD of TSNPDCL.

'Maha Padayatra' by Amaravati farmers...

Continued from page 1

As part of the plan, the Amaravati farmers have proposed to hold a big public meeting at Venkatayapalem village on September 12, when the agitation will complete 1,000 days. The JAC has planned to invite leaders of all the political parties except the ruling YSR Congress party. It may be mentioned that all the three opposition parties have extended their support to the Amaravati capital cause and are bringing pressure on the Jagan Mohan Reddy government to complete the works in the Capital region, as per the directions of the State High Court.

TDP sources feel that the meeting would be the first step in the direction of a possible alliance among the three parties in the coming days.

A top BJP leader and a senior Union minister would attend the concluding public meeting at the culmination of the padayatra at Arasavalli on November 14.

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City soaks in patriotic fervour

- Har Ghar Tiranga' rally a huge hit in city
- 20,000 students take part in the prestigious event
- 3.5-km human chain formed with the National Flag

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A 3.5-km human chain was formed with the National Flag Human as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' that marked the 75th Independence Day celebrations in the city on Saturday. More than 20,000 students took part in the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' rally. Taking the NTR district authorities by surprise, a large number of students from every nook and corner of the city and its outskirts participated in the event.

Minister for Health, Medical and Family Welfare Vidadala Rajani, Minister for Housing Jogi Ramesh, MLAs Malladi Vishnu, Velampalli Srinivas, Special Chief Secretary for Revenue Department Rajat Bhargav, and NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao inaugurat-

ed the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' rally at Benz Circle in Vijayawada. Thousands of students carried Indian National Flags and raised slogans like 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', 'Amar Rahe freedom fighters', and 'Vande Mataram' during the rally. The district administration expected about 10,000 to 15,000, but more than 20,000 students took part in the prestigious event. The rally passed through the MG Road from Benz Circle to the Police Control Room.

At 8 am, Benz Circle was packed with thousands of students wearing school uniforms and participating in the rally by carrying the National Flag. At 9.30 am, the city was thrilled with a Human Chain and cultural activities performed at Trendset Mall, Benz Circle, PVP Mall, Labbipet, Swaraja Maidan grounds, and Old Bus Stand.

Minister for Health, Medical and Family Welfare Vidadala Rajani, and Minister for Housing Jogi Ramesh lighted the lamp and inaugurated the rally. They paid tributes by garlanding the portrait of Indian National Flag designer Pingali Venkayya.

Revenue Department's Special Chief Secretary Rajat



Bhargav and NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao monitored the rally by riding a bike on the MG Road. They gave suggestions to the students and people who participated in the rally.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Jogi Ramesh said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had ordered the officials to conduct the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', 'Har Ghar Tiranga',



and 'Amrit Sarovar' programmes grandly in the State. He said that the programmes were conducted with big rallies throughout the State.

Further, he said these rallies

are being conducted in remembrance of the then Indian Freedom Struggle. Great men sacrificed their lives to get Independence for the country, he added.

"During the Quit India Movement, several national leaders and freedom fighters sacrificed their lives. Several leaders were arrested by the British government and sent to jail," he said.

He said that Vijayawada had played a key role in the freedom movement and an All India Congress Committee meeting was held at PWD grounds and later, it inspired the freedom movement. CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is taking several bold steps for the development of the State.

Vijayawada-Central MLA Malladi Vishnu said that students should know the biographies of the freedom fighters, he said.

Vijayawada-West MLA and former minister Velampalli Srinivasa Rao said the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' programme is being conducted by commemorate the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters. The National Flag should be hoisted atop every to provide inspiration for the future generations, he added.

Later, ministers Vidadala Rajani, Jogi Ramesh, MLC Ruhulla, MLAs Malladi Vishnu, Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, and other dignitaries released Tricolour balloons and pigeons into the sky.

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Mayor Rayana Bhagya Lakshmi, Deputy Mayors Avuthu Sri Sailaja, Bellam Durga, Vijayawada East Constituency YSRCP in charge Devineni Avinash, APIIC Chairperson Bandi Punyaseela, School Education Department Special Chief Secretary B Rajasekhara, Commissioner S Suresh Kumar, AP Higher Education Council Chairman Hema Chandra Reddy, Vijayawada City Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar, joint collector S Nupur Ajay Kumar, Deputy Collector Rama Lakshmi MEPMA MD Vijaya Lakshmi, DWAMA PD J Sunetha, and DEO CV Renuka were present.



Gift of life through organ donation is a noble act: CP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Hundreds of people took part in a 2K run organised to mark World Organ Donation Day on Saturday. The rally was flagged off by NTR district Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata at Sarada College in Satyanarayanapuram of the city on Saturday. The rally was organised by the Rotary Club of Vijayawada Mid-town and Svara Super Specialty Hospital.

On the occasion, the CP said that gift of life is exemplary and organ donation contributes to it. Advancement in modern medicine has now enabled doctors to transplant organs and save lives. Currently, the need for organs is high and the availability is low. There are many misconceptions about organ donation in society. Awareness should be created among the people about organ donation that will give life to many in need. He said that everyone should come forward to donate an organ as their responsibility, donate an organ and live again.

Central MLA Malladi Vishnu said that organ donation is better than all donations and that only through organ donation one

can bring a person back to life. He called upon everyone to come forward for organ donation regardless of caste, religion, race, and age.

Svara Hospital Chief Nephrologist Dr. G Anvesh and CEO Dr. Venkat said that those who want to donate organs should first inform their family members, relatives, friends, and everyone they know. He said that due to this, organ donation can be done after the death of the person. Organs from brain-dead cases will be collected through the Jeevandhan programme and donors should register their names on Jeevandhan website.

They said that in our country, 1.30 lakh people are brain dead in road accidents every year, out of which only 150 to 200 people donate organs. Every year three lakh people die of kidney diseases in our country and they can be saved by transplanting kidneys collected from brain-dead cases. Although the government and voluntary organisations are promoting organ donation widely, many people still have misconceptions about organ donation, which are not true at all.



Uphold sanctity of the church: MLC

PNS ■ GUNTUR

YSRCP leader and MLC Lella Appireddy asked the committee members of St. Mathews East Parish Church to uphold the sanctity of the church.

The committee members of the Mathews East Parish Church located near the Old Bus Stand called on Lella Appireddy in his camp office on Saturday.

The MLC told them that the responsibility of upholding the sanctity of the 181 years old church lies on them. He asked

them to manage the church activities without giving room to controversies.

Those who met the MLC were the chairman of the committee V Shyam Karunanidhi, Dasari Janababu, the committee president Rev Dr. D Jesudaman, treasurer Ravikumara, pastors P Devasahayam, A Joshua, V Balasundara Rao, committee representatives V Peturu, Dasari Johnson, V Kishore and Y Chandrasekhar. Later, the church committee members blessed the MLC.

Youth accused in idol vandalism case arrested

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Chilakalapudi police nabbed the accused in Mother Mary statue vandalism case at the Holy Christ Church in Machilipatnam on Saturday. He was identified as Kolleru Ashok (33) of Sukarlabad in Machilipatnam. Police said Ashok had vandalised the statue in an inebriated condition on Thursday.

Ashok is said to have indulged in binge drinking on Thursday. On Thursday, he stopped at the Holy Christ church while returning home from a bar. Under the influence of alcohol, he broke the glass shield of the Mother Mary statue and then pulled the statue out, breaking it in the process.

On Friday, the church management lodged a complaint



with the Chilakalapudi police station and a case was registered under Sections 427, 447, 295.

The police formed teams on Friday to nab the culprit. The police nabbed the culprit Ashok at Sai Baba temple on Saturday morning during vehicle checks. On questioning, he admitted that he had broken the statue under the influence of liquor. The police produced Ashok in

a court. Addressing the media persons on Saturday, Additional SP S Venkata Ramanjaneyulu said that the vandalised Mother Mary idol was taken seriously by District SP P Joshua and four special teams of CI level officers were formed under the supervision of the Port Incharge DSP. He said that there is no intention to create any communal harmony in this case.

Nandyal II town CI suspended in constable murder case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Nandyal Two Town CI Venkataramana has been kept under suspension by the government in constable Surendra's murder case. Orders were issued to One-Town Inspector Adinarayana Reddy and ASI Krishna Reddy sending them to VR. The murder case of constable Guduru Surendra Kumar in Nandyala has created a sensation in the Telugu states.

The authorities have mentioned in the order that the CI was sent to VR due to security failure within the station.

Officials revealed that action was taken against the CI and ASI for lack of observation of rowdy sheeted Sai Kumar.

It may be recalled that constable Surendra Kumar (35) was working as a clerk in the DSP office in Nandyal town. He was going home on a motorcycle from the DSP's office after fin-

ishing his duties on Sunday night. He was intercepted by six people near the theatre and forced into an auto. They threatened the auto driver at knife-point and took the constable on the bund of the lake in the suburban of Nandyala. There Constable Surendra Kumar was stabbed indiscriminately in the chest and back with a knife.

Later, while returning to the town in the same auto, they told the auto driver to take the constable Surendra to the hospital and got a gown in the midway. The auto driver took Surendra Kumar to the hospital and the doctors said that constable Surendra was brought dead to the hospital.

On receiving information, SP Raghuvveer Reddy and DSC Maheshwar Reddy reached the spot. A search was launched to nab the accused. Are the rowdy sheeters responsible for this atrocity?

Kin of bike mishap victim closes pothole

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A relative of a road accident victim demonstrated responsibility by closing a pothole where his father-in-law fell down from the bike and died.

Ravva Subba Rao, while going to the railway station from the DRM office on his bike, lost balance as his bike fell in a pothole and he fell down from the vehicle on August 4. He suffered a serious head injury and was admitted to a private hospital. After battling for life for two days in the hospital, he succumbed to the injuries on August 6.



Krishna District lifts Seniors Swimming Championship

Kurnool and Chittoor districts attain second and third positions respectively; best performers in tournament will represent State in Nationals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna district emerged victorious in the 8th Inter District Swimming Championship for senior men and women with 144 points followed by Kurnool in second place with 46 points and Chittoor in third place with 31 points. Krishna district swimmers bagged 15 gold medals, 19 silver, and 12 bronze medals.

The 8th AP Inter District Swimming Championship for men and women was held at the Sir Vizzy Municipal Corporation Swimming Pool in Vijayawada on Saturday. Both men and women swimmers have won medals in the tournament.

Swimmers enthusiastically participated in the tournament and won medals by exhibiting their talents. Those who performed well in the state meet would participate in the senior national swimming championship which will be held in Gauhati in Assam from September 6 to 10.

Vijayawada Municipal

Corporation Director of Sports T Uday Kumar inaugurated the 8th AP inter districts swimming championship at Sir Vizzy swimming pool organised by the Krishna District Aquatic Association. About 172 swimmers and officials participated in the tournament.

Speaking on the occasion, Uday Kumar said that the State government is encouraging sports and games as they are additional qualifications for job recruitment and higher education. Also, cash incentives would be given to those who perform with outstanding talent at the national and international level tournaments, he added.

Andhra Pradesh Aquatic Association secretary A Mohan Venkat Ram, Krishna district association secretary I Ramesh, vice president P Bala Murali Krishna, treasurer Kodali Ramesh, swimming pool in charge KVV Mohan Raja, coaches Malayadri Rao, Lakshman Rao, Rafi, SAAP swimming coach Suresh and others were present.



MEN'S RESULTS

50M Freestyle:	1. S Viswas (Chittoor), 2. K Johnson (Krishna), 3. JS Sarat Chandra Pani (Krishna)
50 M Backstroke:	1. D Venkatesh (Kurnool), 2. B Bala Gangadhar (Krishna), 3. K Yuvaraju (Krishna)
50M Butterfly:	1. KNS Charan Kumar Reddy (Nellore), 2. S Viswas (Chittoor), 3. K Gowtham (Krishna)
50M Breaststroke:	1. P Dhanunjaya Reddy (Kadapa), 2. Kedari Johar (West Godavari), 3. T.Pardhu Murali Krishna Balaji (Krishna)
100M Freestyle:	1. S Viswas (Chittoor), 2. K Yuvaraju (Krishna), 3. K Johnson (Krishna)
100M Backstroke:	1. Kedari Johar (West Godavari), 2. P Arun Reddy (Krishna), 3. P Dhanunjaya Reddy (Kadapa)
100M Butterfly:	1. D Venkatesh (Kurnool), 2. B Bala Gangadhar (Krishna), 3. V Ashis (Visakhapatnam)
100M Breaststroke:	1. KNS Charan Kumar Reddy (Nellore), 2. S Jagadeesh (Krishna), 3. K Gowtham (Krishna)

200M Freestyle:	1. T Gunasekhar (Chittoor), 2. S Jagadeesh (Krishna), 3. J Johnson (Krishna)
200M Breaststroke:	1. Kedari Johar (West Godavari), 2. T Pardhu Murali Krishna Balaji (Krishna), 3. R Nithish Kumar (Krishna)
200M Individual Medley:	1. G Sampath Kumar Yadav (Krishna), 2. KNS Charan Kumar Reddy (Nellore), 3. B Bala Gangadhar (Krishna)
200M Butterfly:	1. S Jagadeesh (Krishna), 2. KNS Charan Kumar Reddy (Nellore), 3. Boddu Teja (West Godavari)
200M Backstroke:	1. T Gunasekhar (Chittoor), 2. B Bala Gangadhar (Krishna), 3. KK George (Krishna)
400M Freestyle:	1. S Vswas (Chittoor), 2. G Sampath Kumar Yadav (Krishna), 3. V Gowtham (Kurnool)
400M Individual Medley:	1. G Sampath Kumar Yadav (Krishna), 2. T Gunasekhar (Chittoor), 3. Kedari Johar (West Godavari)
800M Freestyle:	1. G Sampath Kumar Yadav (Krishna), 2. KK George (Krishna), 3. V Gowtham (Kurnool)
1500M Freestyle:	1. G Sampath Kumar Yadav (Krishna), 2. KK George (Krishna), 3. V Gowtham (Kurnool)

WOMEN'S RESULTS

50M Backstroke:	1. Kongara Sanvi (Krishna), 2. V Sunitha (Srikakulam), 3. S Keerthana (Guntur)
50M Butterfly:	1. U Premamrutha (Krishna), 2. B Madhumathi (Kurnool), 3. Shaik Samiya Tanzeem (Kurnool)
50M Breaststroke:	1. Kongara Sanvi (Krishna), 2. K Baby Spandana (East Godavari), 3. K Ramya (Guntur)
50M Freestyle:	1. B Madhumathi (Kurnool), 2. Siddhi Jain (Krishna), 3. Shaik Samiya Tanzeem (Kurnool)
100M Breaststroke:	1. Kongara Sanvi (Krishna), 2. K Baby Spandana (East Godavari), 3. K Ramya (Guntur)
100M Butterfly:	1. B Madhumathi (Kurnool), 2. Shaik Samiya Tanzeem (Kurnool), 3. U Premamrutha (Krishna)
100M Freestyle:	1. B Madhumathi (Kurnool), 2. Siddhi Jain (Krishna), 3. V Sunitha (Srikakulam)
100M Backstroke:	1. Kongara Sanvi (Krishna), 2. V Sunitha (Srikakulam), 3. KH Meghana (Krishna)
200M Individual Medley:	1. U Premamrutha (Krishna), 2. S Keerthana (Guntur), 3. S Bhavika (Guntur)
200M Butterfly:	1. Shaik Samiya Tanzeem (Kurnool), 2. U Premamrutha (Krishna), 3. K Shanmita (E G)
200M Backstroke:	1. Kongara Sanvi (Krishna), 2. V Sunitha (Srikakulam), 3. Rani Sri Radha Sahasra Rani (Guntur)
200M Breaststroke:	1. K baby Spandana (East Godavari), 2. V Sruthi Sirisha (Krishna), 3. Ch Nikitha (Visakhapatnam)
200M Freestyle:	1. B Madhumathi (Kurnool), 2. Siddhi Jain (Krishna), 3. S Bhavika (Guntur)
400M Individual Medley:	1. U Premamrutha (Krishna), 2. S Bhavika (Guntur)
400M Freestyle:	1. Siddhi Jain (Krishna), 2. B Akanksha (Krishna), 3. S Bhavya (Guntur)
800M Freestyle:	1. Siddhi Jain (Krishna), 2. KH Meghana (Krishna), 3. S Bhavya (Guntur)
1500M Freestyle:	1. S Bhavika (Guntur), 2. S Hari Priya (Gunturu).

Officials directed to speed up Jagananna Colony works

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Guntur Collector M Venugopal Reddy has directed the officials concerned to take steps to expedite the construction of houses in the Jagananna colonies and provide basic amenities.

The Collector held a video conference with the officials of the Panchayat Raj, Engineering, RWS, Public health, DWAMA, DRDA, and electricity departments on the construction of houses in the Jagananna colonies and providing facilities.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector told the officials to take steps to provide drinking water taps and electricity meters for the supply of protected drinking water through Jala Jeevan Mission to the houses which had been completed in the layouts for the houseless poor. The works of levelling and constructing of approach roads, sanctioned to the layouts, should be completed at the earliest, he directed the officials.



Collector Venugopal Redy instructed the Panchayat Raj Engineering officials in rural areas and Public Health Engineering Officers in urban areas to constantly monitor the works and take necessary measures to complete them at the earliest.

"The works sanctioned for water supply should be completed immediately without any disturbance to the construction of houses in the layouts. In addition to setting up poles in the layouts for the electricity facility, the electricity department officials should take steps to install LED lights

and provide electricity to the houses that have been completed," the Collector told the officials.

The work of moving the electric wires, which were hanging horizontally and disorderly in the layouts to the side, should be completed immediately, he told them and asked the DRDA and MEPMA officials to coordinate with the lead bank manager to sanction loans through banks to the beneficiaries of DWCRA community.

The Collector suggested that drains should be constructed with the MGNREGA

funds to ensure that water should not stagnate in the colonies. Providing basic amenities in the colonies should be carried out expeditiously and the engineering officials should monitor them to complete the works by the prescribed time.

Housing PD KV Sainath Kumar, Panchayat Raj Engineering SE Brahmaiah, RW SSE Satyanarayana Raju, Public health engineering SE Srinivasulu, DRDA PD Hariharanath and MEMPA PD Venakata Narayana and DWAMA PD Yugandhar Kumar were present.

Pawan to take part in I-Day fete at Jana Sena HQ

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief K Pawan Kalyan will participate in the

Independence Day celebrations on August 15 in the party's state headquarters located at Mangalagiri.

A Jana Sena party statement here on Saturday said that Pawan Kalyan would hoist the national flag in the party's state headquarters and participate in the Independence Day programme.

Pawan Kalyan would also address the Jana Sena party IT coordinators and IT volunteers on August 14. The IT professional would explain to the Jana Sena chief on how to utilise the IT services for strengthening the party base.

JSP Political Affairs Committee chairman Nadendla Manohar and IT cell chairman Srinivas Miriyala and other leaders would also participate in the meeting.



‘Venkateswara Vaibhavotsavam’ at Nellore from August 16-20

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After a break of two-and-a-half years of the Covid pandemic, TTD has revived the 'Sri Venkateswara Vaibhavotsavam' beginning from August 16 and concluding on August 20 at Nellore.

With the objective to showcase the daily 'Kainkaryam' that is being performed at Srivari temple for the benefit of

devotees at their home places, TTD is set to conduct the fete at the AC Subba Reddy stadium in Potti Sriramulu Nellore District in a big manner

Nitya Kainkaryams: 'Suprabatam', 'Tomala Seva', 'Koluvu', 'Archana', 'Nivedana', 'Sattumora', 'Pratyeka sevās', 'second nivedana'. 'Sarva Darshan' for devotees from 10 am to 5 pm. In the evening 'Sahasra Deepalankara Seva', 'Veedhi

Utsavam', 'Night Kainkaryams' and 'Ekantha Seva'.

Special Sevās: The special sevās include 'Astadala Padā P a d m a r a d h a n a ' , 'Vasantotsavam' on August 16, Sahasra Kalasabhishekam on August 17, Tiruppravada Seva on August 18, 'Abhishekam' on August 19, 'Pushpa Yagam' on August 20 and 'Srinivasa Kalyanam' on the same day evening.

Webinar on ‘Conservation of Wolf’ held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr Hem Singh Gehlot, Director, Wildlife Research & Conservation Awareness Centre, Jodhpur said that there are only about 3150 wolves in India at present and they will become endangered like tigers in near future. On the occasion of "International Wolf Day" on Saturday Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam organized an online webinar on the topic of "Issue and Challenges for Conservation of Wolf".

Dr Hem Singh Gehlot, said that wolves are described in terms of their habitats, morphology and behaviour. He explained the reasons for the decrease in the number of wolves. He said that the main reason for the decrease in the

number of wolves is the over-consumption of livestock, which is the main food for wolves. The measures to be taken to protect wolves are explained by the speaker. Conservation methods such as public awareness programs to reduce pressure on natural resources, collection of information on wolves, effective enforcement of laws were explained and the doubts of the viewers were clarified.

Later, the keepers' talk was held at the wolf enclosure. The concerned animal keeper explained to the visitors about the wolf couple Yuvraj and Avantika in the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park. Many details like how he takes care of wolves from morning to evening and their eating habits were explained.

Kanna distributes veggies on his birthday

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national executive member Kanna Lakshminarayana celebrated his 69th birthday here on Saturday. He cut a 69 kg cake on the occasion. A large number of his followers participated in the event.

Talking to the media on the occasion, Kanna Lakshminarayana said that the Indian government is celebrating the diamond jubilee of Independence Day in such a way that the next generation would remember it. Prime



Minister Narendra Modi is striving to take the country forward to realise the dreams of

Mahatma Gandhi Sardar Vallabhai Patel. India has become formidable in the

defence, he lauded.

The BJP leader called upon people to hoist the National Flag atop every house to reflect national integrity, he added.

Later Kanna Lakshminarayana distributed vegetables and a national flag on the occasion. BJP district president Patibandla Ramakrishna, BJP Morcha national executive member and Andaman Nicobar in-charge Talla Venkatesh, Bandi Shivaram Prasad, Korrapati Suresh, E Raja Rao, Paleti Madhav, and Chitala Anil were among those who were present.



SRKR Engg College NSS wing takes out rally

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The SRKR Engineering College NSS wing took out a rally holding national flags as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' programme here on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, SRK Nisant Varma, secretary and cCorrespondent of SRKR Engineering College, said that a rally was taken out by the College NSS wing on the occasion of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahostv programme on Saturday from freedom Alluri Sitarama Raju statue in which about 5000 students and staff participated.

He said that about 50

hoardings with the images of freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for independence would be erected at the Sagi Ramakrishnam Raju Marg in Bhimavaram town.

College Principal Dr. M Jagapati Raju said that the College NSS, Women Employment and UBA (Unnat Bharat Abhiyan) wings had organized many programmes during the last ten days as part of Azadi Ka Amrita Mahostv. College Vice president SV Ranga Raju, NSS In-charge Dr. R Krishna Chaitaya, NSS Coordinators KSS Prasada Raju and KNV Satyanarayana participated.

SHORT TAKES

Bhoomi pooja performed for Disha Police Station

KAKINADA: Superintendent of Police M Ravindranatha Babu performed Bhoomi Poojan for the construction of modern buildings to house the Disha police station at the vacant space now used as Traffic Park behind the three town police station here on Saturday. The Disha Police station would be constructed at a cost of Rs 2.73 crore. Speaking on the occasion, the SP said that the buildings would have all modern facilities in tune with the spirit of the Disha Act and modalities. It would consist of a counseling room, waiting hall, feeding room, toilets, and other basic amenities for the convenience of the womenfolk that visit the police station. The SP informed that the Disha Police station building provides an ideal atmosphere for the police officials and staff to discharge their duties effectively. Police Housing Board would construct the buildings and already detailed plans were approved. The construction would soon commence so as to complete it within the time frame" the SP added. Additional SP administration P Srinivas and Disha DSP Sunkara Murali Mohan were among a host of officials who attended the programme.

Lorry fatally knocks down home guard

KAKINADA: A speeding tanker lorry fatally knocked down a home guard and another person at the Check post at Bendapudi in Thondangi mandal on the national highway on Saturday in the wee hours, police said. The Home guard V Govindarajulu died while being shifted to the GGH. The injured was admitted to the hospital and his condition is stated to be out of danger. The tanker driver fled away abandoning the vehicle at the accident spot. In another road accident which took place at Ampapuram village in Bapulapadu mandal, five persons of a marriage party were injured when the car in which they were going to Hyderabad overturned after hitting a road divider. The bridegroom was injured critically in the accident and he was admitted to a private hospital in Vijayawada. The four persons including the bride were injured in the accident. The marriage was held in Attili yesterday and the bride and bridegroom were going to Hyderabad to the bridegroom's house when the mishap occurred.



Rally taken out with National Flag

ELURU: A huge rally was taken out carrying a long national flag here on Saturday as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' programme. Joint Collector P Arun Babu flagged off the rally which began at the Municipal Corporation office and concluded at the Ambedkar statue. Hundreds of school students were among those who took part in the rally. The Joint Collector, Additional SP Chakravarthi and municipal Commissioner Sk. Shahid were among those who participated in the programme.

‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ held

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The 'Har Ghar Tiranga' programme was celebrated in the Jyothi Granite and Quartz Surface Industries premises by hoisting flags at Gullapalli on Saturday.

Amid the presence of a large number of employees, the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' programme was held infusing patriotism among all. The management distributed National Flags on the occasion.



Road mishaps down in Bapatla: SP Vakul Jindal

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal has said that road accidents were reduced considerably in the Bapatla district by implementing effective measures.

The SP said that many effective measures were being implemented across the district with a special focus to prevent road accidents which reduced road accidents considerably not only in Bapatla town but across the district. He said that the number of accidents and the number of deaths had been significantly reduced in the jurisdiction of 32 police stations in the district.

The SP explained that during the month of May 2022, there were 26 deaths across the district in road accidents, while in the month of July 2022 there were 15 deaths and

the percentage of deaths decreased by 43%.

In the month of June 2022, 28 deaths occurred in road accidents across the district. In the month of July 2022 there were 15 deaths and the percentage of deaths decreased by 47%. While 19 deaths occurred in the month of July 2021, 15 deaths occurred in the month of July 2022 and the percentage of deaths decreased by 22%, the SP stated.

To create a special activity to prevent road accidents and implement a "NO ACCIDENT DAY" special drive program every Saturday in the district in 77 areas of the district where there is a possibility of accidents, the SP himself should educate motorists about road safety and traffic rules, and educate the public and motorists about road safety which reduced the road

accidents in the district, he claimed.

The District Police is giving wide awareness to motorists as well as town and rural people on road safety rules. Police are effectively implementing traffic enforcement to enforce traffic rules across the district. Police impose fines for violations like not wearing seat belts, speeding, triple riding, underage driving, overloading, drunk and driving, auto side sitting, unauthorized parking, etc. The rules and regulations of the Motor Vehicles Act are strictly enforced to reduce



road accidents.

To control the speed of vehicles on the roads and to control the accidents, signboards were erected showing danger signs at 27 places in the district. Moreover, interventions like focusing on black spots, speed breakers, lighting systems, painting works, traffic cones, sand-filled drums in a zig-zag pattern, solar blinkers, and radium stickers to prevent accidents.

In order to prevent road accidents, programs like the removal of dangerous bushes on the roads and filling of potholes had been undertaken in collaboration with other departments, the SP said.

"A joint inspection report on road accidents has been prepared and police officials were coordinated with the officials of the transport, engineering, and municipal departments of the district. The causes of accidents have been analyzed from various aspects", he stated.

The district SP discussed with the police officers in the crime review meeting and issued many guidelines to prevent road accidents. Also, the performance of the highway mobile vehicles is also regularly reviewed and the highway patrol has been strengthened to ensure that the police personnel reach the spot immediately after the accident and take the injured to the hospital in golden hours without any loss of life.

Lovers commit suicide in Jangaon dist

PNS ■ WARANGAL

In a tragic incident, a boy and his girlfriend committed suicide by consuming pesticide at Palle Prakruthi Vanam at Bhikyā Thanda in Mallampally village of Palakurthy 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 Bhikyā 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.

Anchalavaripalem tank to be developed as a tourist spot

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Minister for Water Resources Ambati Rambabu has said that the Anchalavaripalem irrigation tank will be developed as a tourist place. The minister participated in a rally taken out as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' programme at Anchalavaripalem village in Rajupalem mandal.

He performed pooja to the irrigation tank water. The tank was modernized at a cost of 13 lakh with the ITC and MGNREGA funds. He suggested that the

villagers should develop the tank further as it helps to enhance the underground resources and meet the drinking water requirements of the village. He said that all irrigation tanks were being filled with water. The minister said that he, along with MP Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayalu, met the ITC officials many times regarding the modernization of the Anchalavaripalem irrigation tank. He wished that the tank should be a model tank.

The minister said that various programmes were being carried out as per the call given by Prime



Minister Narendra Modi from August 1 to August 15 on the

occasion of 75 Independence Day celebrations. Minister

Ambati Rambabu called on the villages to strive altogether for the development of the village.

MP Sri Krishnadevarayalu emphasized the need for modernisation of tanks stating that the tanks would help to do away with the drinking water scarcity besides providing irrigation water to the farmers. He assured to modernise the remaining irrigation tanks in the next two years.

Collector Lotheti Shiva Shankar said that various programmes had been organised so far in the district under the Azadi

Ka Amrit programme. A rally with a 1000 metres national flag was also taken out here, he said, adding that a 100 feet national flag was hoisted.

The Collector said that 2,50,000 national flags had been distributed in the Palnadu district.

DWAMA PD Joseph Kumar said that on the occasion of 75 years of Independence it had been decided to modernize 75 irrigation tanks in the district of which 18 tanks had already been modernized for which the ITC contributed Rs 60 lakh.

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 pharmacologic ally 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.



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

more than 7,000 chemicals that are known to cause premature death and disease in children and adults who do not smoke.

Our recent study has shown that the annual direct economic costs attributable to Second-Hand Smoking in India amounted to Rs 567 billion. This accounts for 8 per cent of total annual health care expenditures on top of the staggering Rs 1773.4 billion (\$27.5 billion) in annual economic burden from tobacco use.

Against such scary scenario, India needs to take strong measures to reduce its large number of smokers and the economic burden of treating tobacco-related diseases. Increasing tobacco taxes is one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking, yet India has not had any significant tax increase on any tobacco products for the past four years. The current tobacco tax collected in India from all tobacco products combined is less than the Rs 567 billion in health care costs caused by exposure to second-hand smoke.

Second-hand exposure continues to be high in India because of the gaps in India’s

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, Haemato – Oncology and 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.



Even before you've earned it, treat yourself and your career with the level of respect that you hope to one day deserve
— Catherine O'Hara

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.

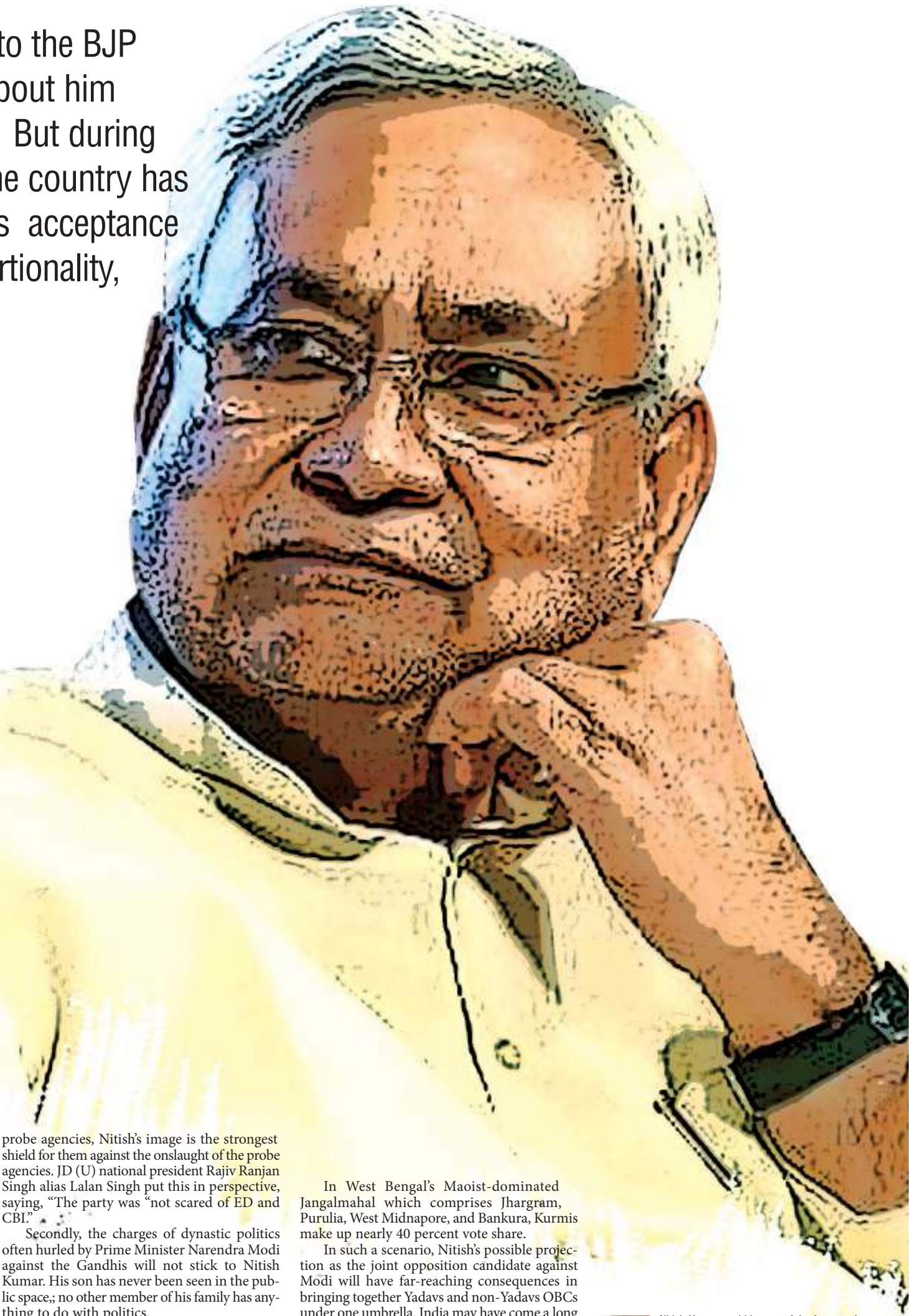
For once, Congress has done little to claim the leadership of any such Opposition formation. Rahul Gandhi may be at the forefront of fighting a verbal duel with the BJP, but on the ground, the party has gained little result. In public perception, Rahul Gandhi lacks the ability to turn the tide of public 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, up 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.

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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.
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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.
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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
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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?
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Bihar's deputy CM TEJASHWI YADAV

Nitish could be a prime ministerial candidate for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.
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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.
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Bihari Babu SHATRUGHAN SINHA

Nitish will not be PM even in seven lives.
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Former JD(U) leader RCP SINGH

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.

(Dr Makhan Saikia has taught political science and international relations for over a decade in institutions of national and international repute after specialisation in globalisation and governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He is the chief editor of the Journal of Global Studies, an international research journal)

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.

tate 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.



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.

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.



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.