

CM extends financial help to three patients

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a noble gesture, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, during his visit here on Saturday, promised to provide financial assistance to two families.

He said help would be extended for better treatment to a farmer from Anantapur and two small children from Pulivendula who are suffering from various diseases. Jagan Mohan Reddy, a farmer from Gugudu village, Narpala mandal, Anantapur district, his wife Siva Jyothi along with their three children Sowmya, Haripriya, and Yamini submitted an appeal to the Chief Minister that he was suffering from a brain tumour.

In their application, Siva Jyothi said that her husband was undergoing treatment at Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore



since November 12. Doctors said Rs 20 lakh was required for treating her husband.

After talking to them, the Chief Minister assured them that Rs 2 lakh will be immedi-

ately deposited into their account and the entire treatment cost will be borne by the government.

In another case, tailor K Sivakumar, a native of

Pulivendula, and his wife G Varalakshi met the CM and told him that their two children, Haindav (8) and Kushal (5) are suffering from severe anaemia and they are being given an injection to increase their blood percentage. In his appeal, Siva Kumar informed the Chief Minister that they have consulted doctors in Chennai and Bangalore for better treatment.

At present, the treatment is not covered under the Aarogyaasri scheme and is being treated by an American oncologist in Hyderabad.

About Rs 15 lakh has been spent so far for their children's treatment and now they are not in a position to spend anymore money. Responding to the parents' plea, the Chief Minister promised to provide better treatment for the children.

Traffic curbs in city for President's visit today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the visit of President of India Droupadi Murmu, the NTR Vijayawada Police Commissionerate officials imposed traffic restrictions in Vijayawada on December 4. The traffic will be diverted from 8 am to 2 pm on the National Highways passing through the city.

NTR Vijayawada Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata, in a press release on Saturday, goods and transport vehicle traffic will be diverted on the National Highways apart from traffic restrictions being imposed in the city limits. He said that heavy and transport goods vehicles will not have permission to enter Vijayawada city. He said heavy and transport vehicles going from Visakhapatnam to Hyderabad would not enter Vijayawada



and are diverted at Hanuman Junction toward Nuzvid, Mylavaram, G Konduru, and Ibrahimpatnam. Similarly, vehicles from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam would be diverted at the Ibrahimpatnam Ring and diverted toward G Konduru, Mylavaram, Nuzvid, and Hanuman Junction, he said.

Also, the traffic from Visakhapatnam to Chennai

will be diverted at Hanuman Junction and allowed via Avanigadda, Repalle, Bapatla, Chirala, and Trovagunta. These vehicles would not be allowed to enter Vijayawada, he added.

The traffic from Chennai to Visakhapatnam will be restricted on December 4 from 6.30 am to 9 am, and vehicles diverted at Throvagunta in the Prakasam

district and allowed to Visakhapatnam via Chirala, Bapatla, Repalle, Avanigadda, and Hanuman Junction, he said.

Traffic from Guntur to Visakhapatnam would be diverted at Budampadu and allowed via Ponnuru, Repalle, Avanigadda, and Hanuman Junction, the CP said.

Tata said goods and heavy vehicle traffic will be diverted at Medarametla in the Prakasam district, and allowed via Addanki, Piduguralla, Nadikudi, and Narketpally, he said.

He made it clear that the goods and heavy transport vehicle traffic from Machilipatnam to Vijayawada would be stopped at Kankipadu from 9 am to 2 pm. No heavy, and transport vehicles will be allowed from Machilipatnam to Tadigadapa, he added.

Gambling mafia ruling the roost in AP: Anagani

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

MLA and senior Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader, Anagani Satya Prasad, on Saturday, said that the gambling mafia, run by the YSRCP leaders, is ruling the roost in the State, throwing hundreds of families onto the roads.

In an open letter to the Chief Minister, Jagan Mohan Reddy, the TDP MLA said that several gambling dens are set up on the Krishna river bed which are being run by the YSRCP leaders involving hundreds of crores of rupees. Recalling the statement made by Jagan on the floor of the Assembly on December 1, 2020, that running gambling dens will not be tolerated by whoever is there behind the dens, Anagani Satya Prasad said that no action has been taken till now though two years have passed since the Chief Minister gave the assurance to the people.

Though it is more than



two years since the issue of the family members of the YSRCP MP have been operating a club at Nizampatnam in Repalle constituency where cards were being played, till now no action has been initiated.

They are still running the clubs, he added. Such clubs are being freely operated with the blessings of another YSRCP MP, Mopidevi Venkata Ramana, on the river bed near Repalle, he said, adding that the river bed has become the care of address for such clubs. While several restrictions

are being imposed for a common man to visit the river bed, special boats are being arranged to carry those who are indulging in such anti-social activities, Satya Prasad said.

People from various parts of the State are visiting the river beds where the clubs are in operation and they are indulging in various anti-social activities, he said.

The ruling party leaders have made such an arrangement on the river beds that whatever these elements want is available there and there is no time limit for them, he said with serious concern. No action has been taken against the councillor, Jameer, of the 25th ward in Repalle, though he has been organising clubs illegally where cards are being played, Anagani Satya Prasad said and demanded immediate action to check such illegal activities and initiate action against Mopidevi Venkata Ramana and others.

HC directs TN govt to enforce mobile phone ban in temples

PNS ■ MADURAI

The Madras High Court has directed the Tamil Nadu government to implement a ban against the usage of mobile phones in temples across Tamil Nadu, "so as to maintain the purity and sanctity."

Justice R Mahadevan and Justice J Sathya Narayana Prasad of the HC bench here gave the direction to the State Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment (HR&CE) Department on Friday while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL).

Petitioner M Seetharaman sought a direction to the authorities concerned to take effective measures to prohibit the possession and usage of android cellphones inside the premises of Arulmigu Subramaniya Swamy Temple at Tiruchendur in Tuticorin district in the State. It is one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga.

Among others, the petitioner contended that since the said temple is an ancient shrine, for free and peaceful dharsan, the usage of camera to videograph or photograph the Deeparathanai, poojas and

other rituals is a hindrance. All the devotees are in possession of mobile phones and they take photographs or videos within the premises of the temple, without any restrictions.

Taking photographs of the valuable idols is not only contrary to the Agama Rules (related to a temple's rituals), but also endangers the security of the temple and its valuables, he submitted.

The petitioner also expressed apprehension of photographs of women devotees being taken without their consent, which will be misused.

The court was informed by the temple authorities that steps have been taken to impose restrictions for usage of cell phones by the priest, devotees, public and others inside the shrine, appoint self-help groups to supervise the usage of cell phones and set up security counters for deposit of cell phones.

"In the light of the aforesaid report, which discloses that the second respondent (Executive Officer/Joint Commissioner) has already taken all effective measures for ban on mobile phones, decent dress code, etc.

CLAT may not help select law students with right ethos: CJI

PNS ■ PANAJI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dr Justice D Y Chandrachud on Saturday said the current model of selection of students for National Law Universities, which involves cracking the CLAT, may not result in the selection of those with the "right ethos".

He was speaking after inaugurating the first academic session of the India International University of Legal Education and Research (IIULER) in Goa, an initiative of the Bar Council of India Trust-PEARL FIRST (BCIT-PF). The varsity should be a center for "cutting-edge research," Justice Chandrachud said, adding that IIULER should have a system which makes its students' body more inclusive.

Entrance tests like the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) do not necessarily allow entry to all the deserving candidates, he added.

"One of the problems that the National Law Universities have faced is perhaps that the model which we use to select

"One of the problems that the National Law Universities have faced is perhaps that the model which we use to select students does not always promote value-based education because we have common law entrance examination and we test the students' ability to crack the CLAT," the CJI said.

students does not always promote value-based education because we have common law entrance examination and we test the students' ability to crack the CLAT," the CJI said.

"Cracking the CLAT does not necessarily result in students who have the right ethos to perceive career in law....I appeal the vice chancellor and faculty to place importance on value-based legal education for the students from diverse background," Chandrachud added. Quality education requires resources, but it should not be so designed as to shut out students who can not pay for it, he said.

He also urged the first-batch students to be always inquisitive.

Apart from the CJI who is ex-officio visitor of the insti-

tute, Supreme Court judge Justice P S Narasimha who is the Chancellor of the university, SC judge Justice B R Gavai, Attorney General R Venkataramani and Bombay High Court's Chief Justice Dipankar Dutta were also present.

Prof Srividhya Ragvan, the vice-chancellor of the university, said India has the potential to disrupt the global legal sector the same way it did in Information Technology (IT).

Chancellor Justice Narasimha said the county lacks high-standard legal writing and qualitative standard law books. He stressed the need to establish institutions of excellence with focus on research to provide data-based opinions on various legal subjects.

Defamation case against Rahul Gandhi: Hearing adjourned to Jan 7

PNS ■ THANE

The hearing of the defamation case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was on Saturday adjourned to January 7 by a court in Bhiwandi in Maharashtra's Thane district as he is busy with the nationwide Bharat Jodo Yatra. The exemption from personal appearance for Gandhi was granted by Bhiwandi Judicial Magistrate First Class IC Wadikar.

"The defamation matter came up for hearing on Saturday. It has been adjourned for January 7, when arguments will be heard regarding permanent exemption of Gandhi," the Congress leader's advocate Narayan Iyer told PTI.

The complainant Rahul Kunte was not present in court either during the day as he is out of station.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹293
Without Skin	₹312
Broiler at Farm	₹160

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	411
VISAKHAPATNAM	420
HYDERABAD	346
RETAIL PRICE (IN VIJAYAWADA)	₹4.11

‘Navy to open all branches for women from next year’

Continued from page 1

"Come next year, we are looking at women officers being inducted across all branches and not just seven or eight branches that they are restricted to as of today. Next year onwards, all branches will be opened for women officers as well," the Navy Chief said.

The Navy celebrates December 4 as Navy Day to commemorate its daring attack on the Karachi harbour and its decisive victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

"It has been our effort to constantly query and challenge the 'status-quo' to ensure

that the Navy remains on an aspirational and dynamic trajectory into the future," the Chief of Naval Staff said.

He said that while the past year has been "operationally busy and satisfying" for the Navy, it has also been transformational in many ways.

"The most notable aspect was commissioning of India's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on September 2. Without a doubt, it was a seminal event in the history of the nation and the Navy," he said.

He said INS Vikrant's commissioning was a manifestation of sustained efforts of generations of naval leadership,

planners, designers, yard workers and industry partners.

"The ship will remain the torch bearer of Atma Nirbhar Bharat, inspiring our future generations towards self-reliance," Admiral Kumar said.

He said that at the same time, Vikrant's commissioning was also marked by another momentous change, as the Navy adopted a new Naval Ensign.

"This change, reflecting the larger National intent to shed colonial vestiges, was brought about in a swift and decisive manner reflecting the Navy's organisational agility and responsiveness," the Navy Chief said.

‘Rayalaseema Garjana’ tomorrow

Continued from page 1

He appealed to make the 'Rayalaseema Garjana' a success. The leaders held a special meeting with the unions of advocates, university students, government employees, teachers, and non-teaching staff to make the 'Rayalaseema Garjana' a mega success.

The non-political JAC supports the move of Kurnool as the judicial capital and decentralisation of governance. As part of this, arrangements are being made to organise a huge public meeting in Kurnool, which has been proposed as the judicial capital.

The JAC is going to organise the public meeting in the name of 'Rayalaseema Garjana'. It is expected to mobilise people from all the districts of Rayalaseema on a large scale. Over one lakh people are expected to attend the meeting. The non-political JAC representatives are making arrangements accordingly. It is said that this has been planned to coincide with the public meeting held in Visakhapatnam.

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy said those who do not attend Rayalaseema Garjana meeting will remain traitors of Rayalaseema. He said that the

JAC will fight for the rights of Rayalaseema besides demanding the establishment of a High Court in Kurnool. The committee consists of NGOs, lawyers, businessmen, students and educational institutions and the ruling YSRC will support the meeting. The Minister said that Rayalaseema is a severely backward region and it was resolved that the capital or High Court should be established in Rayalaseema during undivided Andhra Pradesh.

The Minister said that after the bifurcation of the State in 2014, injustice was done to the Rayalaseema region once again, During Chandrababu's

regime, all parts of the State were cheated to develop Amaravati.

The YSRC government has brought decentralisation for the development of all regions. For the development of all regions in the State, three capitals, administrative capital, judicial capital and legislative capital should be established with decentralisation of development.

On Monday, December 5, the 'Rayalaseema Garjana' will begin at 8 am with cultural programmes by the Gopal troupe, later at about 10.30 am there will be a welcome dance organised by Montessori School.

After the welcome dance, students of various JACs will address the gathering that includes JAC from Pullaiah College, Adhimoolam Satish College, KV Subba Reddy college, Sreenivas Reddy School Association president, Vijay Kumar Reddy Chairman, Vengal Reddy NGO president, Sunil students JAC, Sriramulu Students JAC, Chandrapa students JAC, Nagalakshmi Advocate and Nakkalamitta Sreenivas BC organization.

The other political stakeholders who will speak on the occasion are district presidents, ministers, local MLAs, and others.

Amara Raja still in AP...

Continued from page 1

"His mental condition is not good and the TDP-supported media are trying to lift him with jacks," he alleged.

The Minister slammed Naidu for misleading the people with false propaganda expecting political mileage.

Amarnath said that Amar Raja company is still in AP and has signed an MoU with Telangana for Rs 9,500 crore and the TDP leaders are foul-mouthing that the company will be totally shifted to the neighbouring State. He said that none of the company officials said they are shifting.

The Minister said that

Heritage of Chandrababu was doing its business activities in AP without any hindrance. The YSRC government under the leadership of Jagan Mohan Reddy never saw the establishment of industries in a political sense. If industries come to the state, the income of the state will increase. We have no other idea except the idea of getting employment for the youth. The people who wrote this news have industries in this state and they are running their business.

He alleged that the TDP-supported media says that industries are leaving AP and also claim that new industries are being established in the state.



'BREAK DARSHAN' TIMINGS CHANGED

TTD's new initiative reduces pressure on accommodation

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

TTD EO AV Dharma Reddy has said that the 'Break Darshan' timings have been changed to provide 'Srivari Darshan' to common devotees waiting overnight in compartments. The change saved three hours and provided 'Srivari Darshan' to over 15,000 common devotees. Devotees need not come one day earlier to Tirumala but can now stay at Tirupati.

They can obtain 'break' tickets and come to Tirumala directly for Darshan in the morning. The new initiative reduced the stay of pilgrims by one day at Tirumala and also reduced pressure on TTD for accommodation at Tirumala. The experimental initiative will be operative for one month.

With an aim to facilitate 'Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan' to more common pilgrims, TTD has dispensed with all other formats of privileged Seva and 'Arijita Sevas' from January 2 to 11, said TTD EO AV Dharma Reddy.

After a detailed review meeting with the senior officers of various departments at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala on Saturday over the arrangements for the ensuing 'Vaikuntha Ekadasi Dwara



Accommodation

Advance booking of accommodation will be cancelled from December 29 to January 3 in view of New Year, Vaikuntha Ekadasi and Dwadasi. For registration of accommodation, only CRO will operate by opening up more counters to have transparency in allotment of accommodation.

Darshanam', the EO briefed the media on the important decisions. Excerpts from the meeting:

The auspicious day of 'Vaikuntha Ekadasi' occurs on January 2 and 'Vaikuntha Dwadasi' on January 3 in 2023. But following the practice of opening the 'Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan' for 10 days as in the last two years, TTD will enable the unique 'Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan' till January 11.

After the early morning rituals including 'Tiruppavai',

'Dhanurmasa Kainkaryams', 'Bali', 'Sattumora Suddhi', First Bell etc., the darshan will commence at 5 am for common pilgrims (tentatively). On a day, nearly 80,000 pilgrims will be provided Darshan. TTD has dispensed with all privileged darshans while the Arijitha Seva will be observed in Ekantam. Devotees having SRIVANI, SED tickets and SSD token holders will be provided with 'Maha Laghu Darshan' (from Jaya-Vijaya) point only.

Release of TICKETS

TTD will release 25000 tickets of Rs.300 SED every/day and for these 10 days 2.50 lakhs tickets will be released on-line. All these tickets will be released while the online quota for the entire month of January 2023 is released online. A total of five lakh tokens of SSD will be issued with 50,000 tokens on each day at 10 venues with nine in Tirupati and one at Tirumala which is exclusively earmarked for Tirumala locals. Aadhaar card is mandatory to procure tickets to avoid duplication. The nine places where SSD tokens will be issued will be divided into two clusters and each one will be under the supervision of JEO Tirupati and JEO Education respectively. While the CVSO in coordination with the District authorities will ensure security measures at all points. Every day 2000 SRIVANI tickets will be released online during these ten days. Every day 2,000 donors shall also book their darshan quota online. Only Self-Protocol VIPs alone will be allotted darshan tickets and no recommendation letters will be entertained for Vaikuntha Ekadasi.

VMC holds voter enrolment drive

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) conducted a special campaign in the city on Saturday on Special Summary Revision -2023 on voter registrations and asked 18-year-old persons to enrol as voters. Electoral Registration Officer and VMC Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar visited Central Assembly Constituency's polling booths 231 to 235 at CVR High School at Suryaraopet in Vijayawada.



Swapnil Dinkar instructed the booth-level officers to display the number of every polling station correctly at the polling booth, and BLOs must know the

ratio of the voters in their respective polling stations. The location map must be with them. He said that 18-year-old

persons should be registered as new voters and suggested that a banner related to new voters registration be placed at the polling location. Swapnil Dinkar said that the BLOs should have good knowledge about Forms 6, 7, and 8 and also said that the voters' signatures must be taken in Form 6 B.

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation conducted a special campaign in Vijayawada city on Saturday on Special Summary Revision -2023 on voter registrations and asked 18-year-old persons to enrol themselves as voters.



CM attends wedding of his PA's daughter in Pulivendula

PNS ■ PULIVENDULA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, along with his wife YS Bharathi Reddy,

attended the wedding of his personal assistant (PA) D Ravi Sekhar's daughter at SCSR Gardens here on Saturday.

The Chief Minister and his wife blessed the couple Hema Latha and Gangadhar. Several ministers and public representatives were also present.

Sriram elected president of APNGO Assn's Vja unit

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted Officers (APNGOs) Association Vijayawada city's new committee was elected unanimously on Saturday.

Before the filing of nominations, APNGO Association NTR district president A Vidyasagar supported the panel, NGO Association leaders and cadre organised a rally from NGO Home to Alankar Centre and later, the candidates filed nominations before the election officer Md Iqbal.

Ch Sriram (Child and Women Welfare Department) was unanimously elected as APNGO Association Vijayawada unit president. BV Ramana (Medical and Health)

was elected associate president, K Sampath Kumar (Panchayat Raj) was the general secretary, and VV Prasad (Information & Public Relations) was the organising secretary. The new committee will be in office for three years.

AP NGO Association NTR district secretary Md Iqbal acted as the election officer, organising secretary B Satish Kumar as an assistant election officer, and Ch Dilip Kumar as the election observer.

In this connection, a felicitation programme was held at the APNGO Home at Gandhinagar in Vijayawada. AP NGO Association NTR district president A Vidyasagar, and other leaders attended as chief guests. Speaking on the occasion,



NGO Association NTR district president A Vidyasagar said that the main agenda of the NGO Association is to resolve the problems of government employees. It is not correct for the State government to keep the DA arrears, GPF Insurance and surrender leaves pending, he said.

He further said that the majority of the employees' prob-

lems including the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) are pending without solutions. The State government is conducting meetings with the employees' associations, but in vain, he lamented. Government employees are disappointed with the attitude of the State government, he said and made it clear that the government should take steps to resolve the employees' problems.

APNGO Association former leaders G Narayana Rao, Raja Rao, T Satyanarayana, Koneru Ravi D Satyanarayana Reddy, M Nagarjuna, B Anand, V Surya Rao, and a majority of employees, and departmental unit's leaders attended.

NGO Vijayawada City Unit: President: Ch Sriram (Women and Child Welfare), Associate President: BV Ramana (Medical

and Health), General Secretary: K Sampath Kumar (Panchayat Raj), Organising Secretary: VV Prasad (I & PR), Vice President: Ch Madhusudana Rao (Polytechnic), B Raja Chowdary (Medical and Health), Sk Kaseem Saheb (Veterinary), ChCVR Prasad (Malaria), Joint Secretary: KRS Ganesh (Commercial Tax), ChS Radha Krishna (ITI), P Srinivasa Rao (PAO), G Vara Prasad (Revenue), Women Secretary: B Vijaya Sri (Medical and Health), Executive Members: K Siva Sankar (R & B), A Nagaraju (Jails), M Rambabu (APGLI), SK Nasiruddin (Water Resources), Ch Madhusudan Rao (Polytechnic), B Raja Chowdary (Medical and Health).



Steps for 'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana' inspected

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Sub-Collector Aditi Singh inspected the arrangements for the cessation of 'Bhavani Deeksha' at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanams atop the Indrakeladri in Vijayawada, which will begin on December 15, on Saturday.

The Sub-Collector, along with Durga Temple Executive Officer D Bhramarambha, started her inspection from the Vinayaka Temple. They visited queue lines, tonsuring centres, bathing ghats, 'prasadam' counters, and parking places and gave suggestions to the officers concerned.

Speaking on the occasion, Sub-Collector Aditi Singh said that the 'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana' is scheduled for December 15 to 19. The Durga Temple authorities should coordinate with the police, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, Revenue, and other departments to successfully conduct the 'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana' programme, he said.

She further said that the Police department should chalk out a plan for traffic diversion. The devotees would take part in the 'Giri Pradakshina'. Precautionary steps should be taken at the ghats where the Bhavanis and devotees will take holy bath, she added. All departments should work in coordination to provide better facilities to the Bhavanis and pilgrims who visit the Durga Temple. Vijayawada West Zone ACP Dr K Hanumanta Rao, One-Town Inspector Suresh Reddy, temple executive engineers Koteswara Rao, and L Rama Devi participated in the programme.

ENC chief lauds State govt on Navy Day eve

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

On the eve of Navy Day 2022, Vice Adm Biswajit Dasgupta FOC-in-C Eastern Naval Command addressed a media conference onboard INS Jalashwa at Visakhapatnam on Saturday. A large number of media personnel attended the conference where the CinC appraised them about important activities undertaken by ENC in the preceding year including the Long-Range Deployments across the Indo-Pacific region, with ships visiting more than 25 ports and



participating in 13 bilateral and five multilateral exercises with friendly foreign countries, including the maiden multilateral Maritime Exercise Milan 22 at Visakhapatnam. The CinC also highlighted the 12th

edition of the Presidential Fleet Review which was held at Visakhapatnam, wherein, the President reviewed more than 120 ships, submarines and aircraft of the Indian Navy and other maritime agencies.

During the interaction, the CinC answered queries posed by media personnel across a wide spectrum of issues, including the 'Atmanirbharta' programme and 'Agnipath' scheme.

Vice Adm Dasgupta expressed gratitude to the Govt of AP, the city administration as well as residents of Visakhapatnam for partnering with the ENC in all its endeavours, big or small. 'It is an honour for the State, city and the Navy to host the President for the Navy Day celebrations,' he said.



Srinivasa Rao takes over as Traffic DCP of Vja

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR Vijayawada Police Commissionerate Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) K Srinivasa Rao took charge at the KS Vyas Traffic Complex in Vijayawada on Saturday. He was promoted as Superintendent (Non-Cadre) from Additional SP recently and posted as Traffic DCP. Later, he called on Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata at the police commissionerate in Vijayawada. He discussed the traffic problems in the city with the Police Commissioner Ratna. CP Kanti Rana suggested to the new DCP Srinivasa Rao to curb the traffic problems in the city.

'Disability certificates hard to come by for kids with spl needs'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former chairman of the Krishna district unit of the Child Welfare Committee, BVS Kumar, visited a child home at Nunna on the outskirts of Vijayawada, on International Day of Disabled Persons on December 3.

He interacted with the inmates of the home and its organisers. He said it was noticed that most of these unfortunate children could not avail of the welfare schemes introduced for disabled children because of various problems in getting Aadhaar cards and the S A D A R E M (Software for Assessment of Disabled for Access, Rehabilitation, and Empowerment) certificates. These persons with special needs face problems in affixing fingerprints and facilitating IRIS in obtaining the Aadhaar at the designated Aadhaar centers. The lack of an Aadhaar is hindering them in applying for SADAREM certificates, for which the disabled person has to book a slot online. In the online procedure to book a slot, Aadhaar is a must. Without an Aadhaar number, slots will not be allotted.

He appealed to the government to liberalise the procedure for getting Aadhaar and SADAREM certificates to these children with the support of the local Grama/Ward Secretariat staff or local Volunteers. Children without SADAREM certificates are also forgoing the

disability pension of Rs 3,000 per month. The AP government is giving YSR Vikalangu Pension only to children having parents or guardians and not to orphan children. The government should show more concern towards orphan or abandoned children, who are under the care of child homes run mostly by NGOs without any grant in aid either from State or Central government. The pension for orphan disabled children should also be given on par with other children, who have parents or guardians.



B Ram Kumar, Assistant Director (FAC) Krishna/NTR district, said that differently-abled children are being taken care of by special schools funded under Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS). He said that there are Bhavitha schools mostly in villages under the 'Sarva Siksha Abhiyan' (SSA) Project Officer taking care of children with disability and they are given MR kits. He said that children with disabilities are identified by Bhavitha schools. He said that the children are provided with government schemes applicable despite not having Aadhaar cards, biometric/iris/photo-graph options are given to children with disability, he added.

Railman Subbaiah receives 'Sreshtha Divyangjan' award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Subbaiah Thirumalai Kumar, Booking Supervisor, at the Vijayawada Railway Station, is bestowed with 'Sreshtha Divyangjan' award for individual excellence in the sports category for the year 2021. On the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Subbaiah Thirumalai Kumar received the award from Droupadi Murmu, President of India, at

an awards function held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi on Saturday. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, announced these awards recently.

Subbaiah Thirumalai Kumar is an international para sportsman who represented India in many international events like Asian Para Games (6 times), Common World Wealth

Games, World Games (2 times), IPC World Para Athletic Championship in Swimming, Athletics and Archery events. He won 11 gold, five silver, and four bronze medals in international events and 28 gold, seven silver and four bronze medals in national events.

Shivendra Mohan, Divisional Railway Manager, congratulated Subbaiah Thirumalai Kumar for doing the division proud by winning

the national award. He praised the contributions of Subbaiah Thirumalai Kumar in the field of sports and called upon the staff to emulate his services for earning recognition with excellence.

D Srinivasa Rao, ADRM, Infrastructure, M Srikanth, ADRM, Operations and V Rambabu, Sr. DCM, Valleswara B Thokala, Sr DSC & Divisional Sports Officer congratulated Subbaiah Thirumalai Kumar.



‘Canal repair works should be completed expeditiously’

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Endowments Kottu Satyanarayana has directed the officials concerned to prepare plans to complete the desilting and modernisation works of irrigation canals after water release is stopped. Addressing the district Irrigation Advisory Board meeting here on Saturday, the Minister said that desilting works and repairs to the regulators should be carried out after the stopping of water release. The estimates should be prepared and approvals should be obtained by December 10 to begin the works, the Minister asked the officials.

Kottu Satyanarayan directed the officials that if a complaint is received from the AE, the district officials should immediately respond to it and take steps to resolve the same. Kottu Satyanarayan who is also



Deputy Chief Minister, informed “84 O&M works have been sanctioned for West Godavari district this year but only 15 have been completed so far and 37 works are still pending,” asking the officials why no one has come forward to file tenders for 31 works.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that 46 works of drains were sanctioned but only three were completed and 34 are in progress. He said that irrigation water is being supplied to 3,78,745 acres of agriculture fields. As many as 8,96,507 acres in East and West

Godavari districts require 87 tmc of water and 7.220 tmc for drinking water needs. A total of 94.220 tmc of water is required, while 101.505 tmc of water is available at Sileru and Polavaram projects.

“The water release to the irrigation canals will be stopped on April 15, 2023, after completion of the Rabi crop, and water release will be resumed on June 1, 2023, for the Kharif crop. All the repair works, modernization and desilting works should be carried out and completed during the period,” the Minister told

the officials. All the works should be identified and tenders invited within the stipulated time. The Minister asked the farmers to complete paddy transplantation work during the Rabi season by January 15.

The Minister said that the embankments of canals were breached at various places and steps to close the breaches should be taken up. If contractors do not come forward to take up works worth less than Rs 5 lakh the works should be given to the Agriculture Advisory Board.

Collector P Prasanthi said that irrigation water is not reaching the tail-end fields in some mandals and directed the officials to resolve the issue.

Joint Collector JV Murali, district in-charge DRO Dasi Raju, Irrigation Superintending Engineer K Srinivasa Rao and district irrigation officer P Nagarajuna Rao and other engineers were present.

Focus on tech to make farming easy: Kakani

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Agriculture Kakani Govardhan Reddy has asked scientists to invent more sophisticated technology and machinery which would be available at cheaper prices for the farmers. He also asked them to evolve strategies that could make farming easy.

The minister reiterated that the government is committed to making agriculture profitable and revolutionary reforms are being brought in the farming sector.

The Agriculture minister inaugurated ‘Agritech 2022’ at Acharya NG Ranga agriculture university at Lam, on Saturday. The minister visited the stalls set up by the horticulture and agriculture departments on the premises and saw the stalls of various companies selling seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, and agricultural machinery. The minister expressed happiness in organising the Agrotech 2022 in order to create awareness among the farmers on modern agriculture equipment and appreciated the university officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that Chief Minister



Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has initiated key changes in the agricultural sector to make agriculture profitable and is providing cutting-edge technology and new agricultural management methods to the farmers at the village level.

“The University of Agriculture, which was previously ranked 33rd, has now reached the 11th position and it will soon reach a higher position due to the intensive research done in the field of agriculture after Vishnuvardhan Reddy took charge as the Vice-Chancellor,” Minister Govardhan Reddy said.

The Minister highlighted that 75 percent of the varieties of rice and Bengal gram seeds being used in the country were developed here.

“The Rythu Bharosa Kendras have come as a boon to the farmers in the state as fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds are supplied to the farmers through the RBKs. The input subsidy is disbursed to the farmers by the government. Soil tests are conducted to know the fertility of the soil and find defects and soil health cards are issued to the farmers,” the minister informed, adding that awareness is being created among the farmers on the culti-

vation of crops.

He said that custom hiring centres for agricultural machinery needed by 75 percent of the small and marginal farmers in the state, Godowns for marketing facilities, and primary processing units for value-added products have been set up within the limits of each Rythu Bharosa Kendras and the management responsibilities were handed over to the Farmers’ Production Associations.

Govardhan Reddy said that revolutionary reforms were being implemented in the agricultural sector in the state. Natural agriculture is encouraged to conserve the soil, and the crop products grown without the use of chemicals are used as offerings to Lord Venkateswara at the famous hill shrine Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam, he announced.

University vice-chancellor Dr. A Vishnuvardhan Reddy and MLA Undavalali Sridevi also spoke. Director of Agricultural Research Dr. L Prasanthi, Registrar G Rama Rao, Extension Director P Rambabu, Director M Dinesh Babu, and Horticulture Deputy Director Sujata were among those who were present.

Work hard to achieve goal

NTR District Collector tells IAS aspirants

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao has said that in the present competitive world, students should excel in all fields for the overall development of skills. The Collector was the chief guest of Sarat Chandra IAS Academy Annual Day celebrations here on Saturday. The students participated in various cultural programmes on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the students who wish to crack the Civils exam should aim at the target and strive hard with self-confidence. The students should have a goal to get a gov-



ernment job and serve the people.

Railway divisional engineer B Vijayawa Keerthi said that the students should focus on social issues apart from studies. The students should

acquire knowledge in all fields apart from studying competitive exam books.

T Sarat Chandra, MD of the Academy, said that the institute produced many rank holders at the national-level.

Use technology to scale new heights: DC

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has exhorted students to use technology at the student stage itself and scale new heights by achieving the goals.

The Collector participated in the programme of ‘Coffee with Collector’ here on Saturday. The Collector enquired about the family backgrounds of the students.

The Collector asked the students not to feel poverty is an impediment to pursuing studies. He asked the students to utilize the schemes being implemented by the government and excel in their studies.

He exhorted the students to set major goals for them to be achieved. The Collector inquired about the holding of career guidance classes in the school.

DEO Vijay Bhaskar and school teachers HCM were present



Kannada actor worships at Mantralayam

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Popular Kannada film hero Shiva Rajkumar worshipped Sri Raghavendra Swamy at the famous temple at Mantralayam on Saturday.

He participated in a special ‘pooja’ in the temple. Later, he also worshipped the local Goddess Manchalamma. Seer of the Matralaya mutt Subhendra Theerdhulu blessed Shiva Rajakumar.



UoH Prof held for sexually harassing foreign student

DEEPIKA PASHAM ■ HYDERABAD

A senior professor of the University of Hyderabad was arrested by the Cyberabad police for alleged sexual harassment and outraging the modesty of a female student.

The police said the professor was arrested based on a criminal complaint (FIR No: IPC 1391/2022) registered under Sections 354 and 354 (A) of the IPC at the Gachibowli Police Station. The foreign student was a student in the Hindi Language Department. She knows to speak only her native language and was allegedly asked by the professor to come to his residence as he wished to share a book on Hindi.

The student went to the house of her teacher and was later dropped at the varsity hostel. Then the student was found weeping and her friends asked her to speak out. It came to light that she was intoxicated with alcohol and that the professor had tried to exploit the situa-

tion. The university students union said that they had complained immediately to the Registrar when a group of female students approached on Friday at 9 pm. But the Registrar ignored the matter and asked the students to keep quiet to protect the university’s reputation.

“This is a serious issue and our officials did not bother to take action. We have been waiting since night and found that it has been ignored. Then we came out on the road to protest. This made them take action. Our demand is to conduct an investigation and punish the professor. The police also troubled the complainant by asking her to give a written complaint. When the victim has no idea of the local language and was in trauma how can she give a complaint,” said PhD scholar Abhishek.

Meanwhile, the University of Hyderabad declared that Prof. Ravi Ranjan of the Department of Hindi has been suspended.

Interstate thief held, booty recovered

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The police arrested a notorious interstate thief and recovered booty including 334 grams gold jewellery.

Pakala CI Rajasekhara told the media at Pakala on Saturday that the police arrested a notorious interstate thief and recovered gold jewellery weighing 334 grams and silver ornaments weighing 570 grams.

The CI said that the interstate thief Raghavan Vijay was involved in several offences including burglaries in AP and Tamil Nadu states. He belongs to the Tiruvannamalai district in Tamilnadu. He targeted the Tirupati district to commit thefts and burglaries. He committed a series of thefts in Tirupati, Pakala, Chandragiri, and Ramachandrapuram mandal where 8 cases were registered against him. He was arrested at Desireddypalle village located on Damalacheruvu-Nendragunta road, the CI said.



7 Injured as car rams culvert

PNS ■ KAKINADA

As many as seven persons were injured, one of them seriously, when the car in which they were travelling crashed into a Godavari culvert wall and came to a grinding halt near Gouthami old bridge in Ambedkar Konaseema district, 75 km from here in the early hours of Saturday.

Police said that all seven occupants of the car were on

their way to Rajahmundry from Hyderabad when the accident occurred on the outskirts of Jonnada village on the National Highway.

The highway patrolling police shifted the injured in an ambulance to Rajahmundry and admitted them to the Government hospital. The Alamuru Police Sub-inspector S Sivaprasad visited the scene of the accident and registered a case, police added.

Two Bhavani devotees run over by car

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Two Bhavani devotees were killed when a speeding car knocked down them when they were walking on National Highway 16, on the outskirts of Tuni town on Saturday.

Police said the accident occurred when the devotees were on their way from Srikakulam to Vijayawada by walking in a group to have the darshan of the Goddess Kanaka Durga.

The Tuni Rural police, who registered a case, identified the deceased as Eeshwara Rao (38) and Santhosh (28). The bodies were shifted to the Area Hospital at Tuni for post-mortem. Further investigation is on, police added.



Staff pulled up for piling up iron rods on school premises

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has vented his anger at the school staff on seeing iron rods piled up on the premises and asked them who would be responsible if the students suffer injuries because of them.

The Collector conducted a surprise inspection of the ZP school at Dharmajigudem village in Lingapalem mandal on Saturday. He inspected the renovation works in the school taken up under the ‘Nadu Nedu’ programme. The Collector and other officials had tasted the mid-day meals in the school.

The Collector noticed iron rods being laid on the school premises in a precarious manner. The iron rods were brought to take up works under the ‘Nadu Nedu’ programme. The iron rods were piled up on the ground which the students use for playing games.

Collector Venkatesh vented his anger at the headmaster for dumping iron rods on the ground and questioned him

about who would be responsible if the children got injured. The Collector expressed anger at the school staff ignoring his repeated instructions to keep the construction material away from the reach of school students.

The Collector warned of stringent action if the same was repeated again at the school. She directed DEO Ganga Bhavani to take action against the school staff responsible if the same was repeated.

The school headmaster explained to the Collector that 474 students are studying at the school. The Collector inspected the dining hall and asked for an explanation from the headmaster why the dining hall is not being used.

The Collector also noticed paddy produce was spread on the school ground for drying purposes and asked them to show alternative places to the farmers. JC P Arun Babu, Sub-collector Adarsh Rajendra, DEO RS Ganga Bhavani and Tahasildar Muralikrishna were among those who accompanied the Collector.

16-year-old girl commits suicide after gang-rape

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

In a shocking incident, a 16-year-old girl committed suicide at her home after a savage sexual assault on her when her parents were away. The incident happened at Tirumalagiri Thanda under Balanagar mandal in Mahabubnagar district. According to police, a man, who was related to the girl, and two others assaulted her sexually. The incident triggered tension in the village. The police picket was set up. The girl’s family members attacked the houses of the alleged rapists and set a shop on fire. Three persons raped the girl, a 10th-class student when she was alone at the house when the three men barged into her house and raped her. Her parents, along with their elder daughter, had gone to Hyderabad to attend a function when the incident took place. The accused took advantage of the absence of elders at home and savaged the girl, the police said. The girl in the early hours of Saturday called her parents and enquired about their whereabouts. Later, she reportedly committed suicide by hanging. One of the accused was identified as Srinu Nayak. He is reportedly related to the girl.

Good response from sportspersons in Gudivada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Krishna District Sports Authority (DSA) organised ‘Jagananna Kreedha Sambaralu’ at the NTR Stadium in Gudivada in Krishna district on Saturday. The sports meet evoked a good response from Machilipatnam, Gudivada, Pamarru, Penamaluru, and Gannavaram constituencies in the district.

The Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) is

conducting the ‘Jagananna Kreedha Sambaralu’ in all districts to select district teams. Later, the AP CM Cup tournament with Rs 50 lakh prize money will be conducted in all three regions.

Machilipatnam MP Vallabhaneni Balashowry, along with the former minister and Gudivada MLA Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani), inaugurated Jagananna Kreedha Sambaralu. They received salutes from the sportspersons.

Speaking on the occasion, MP Balashowry said the State government aims to find sports talent in rural areas and for that, the government is conducting the ‘Jagananna Kreedha Sambaralu’. In addition to studies, playing sports and games is also important for students, he said.

He further said that outstanding players have an identity across the world. If students excel in sports, then

they will overcome problems during their life, he said. The Central and State governments are providing jobs under sports quota, he added.

Krishna Zilla Parishad Chairperson Uppala Harika, NTR Stadium Committee vice president Paleti Venkata Siva Subrahmanyam, joint secretary Parvathaneni Anand, YSRCP youth leader Perni Krishna Murthy, DSA chief coach K Jhansi, RDO P Padmavathi, DSP N Satyanandam, and oth-



‘India never favours war’

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said India neither troubles others nor does it spare those who trouble the country.

India never favoured war and violence but it cannot remain neutral to injustice and oppression, Singh said.

"We all believe that India is a country which had always been peace loving. War and violence were never our nature. India neither attacked any other country, nor it occupied even an inch of any other country's land. This is India's character," the Defence Minister said.

Singh was speaking at the Gita Dana Yajna organised by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) at its magnificent Rajadhiraja Govinda temple in Vasantapura in Bengaluru.

"The world should also know that India doesn't like war and violence, but staying neutral to the injustice and oppression is also not part of



"That's why I often say that India never troubles others but if someone troubles us, India will not spare them. This is the message of Bhagwad Gita," Singh said.

our character," he said without elaborating.

The Union Minister explained the circumstances that led to the Battle of Mahabharata.

It was on the battlefield of Kurukshetra where Lord Sri

Krishna delivered his epic lecture which came to be known as Srimad Bhagwad Gita, he said.

The Defence Minister told the gathering that the Pandavas, the central character of the Hindu epic

Mahabharata were ready to settle for five villages after spending years in exile but the Kauravas were not ready to part with land measuring the cusp of a needle. This denial had led to the battle, which ended by establishing the victory of virtues.

"That's why I often say that India never troubles others but if someone troubles us, India will not spare them. This is the message of Bhagwad Gita," Singh said.

He also told the audience that the content of Gita makes it eternal and universal. Reading Bhagwad Gita and imbibing it in life makes a person fearless, he added.

The ISKCON Bengaluru has decided to donate one lakh copies of Bhagwad Gita through out this month, apart from organising cultural and religious events. Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and ISRO chairman S Somanath were among the dignitaries who were present on the occasion.

Indo-Bangla smooth ties to usher in development: Momen

PNS ■ SILCHAR (ASSAM)

Bangladesh Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen on Saturday said the current smooth bilateral relations between his country and India will usher in an era of development in the region.

The dynamic Prime Ministers of both countries have given emphasis on building a common platform of understanding and cooperation to further strengthen Indo-Bangla ties, Momen told PTI on the sidelines of the first Sylhet-Silchar Festival here.

A new era of development will be witnessed as many new areas of cooperation has been found and business between both the countries will increase rapidly, the Bangladesh foreign minister said.

Cooperation in waterways navigation has been given importance and Bangladesh has already expressed its goodwill to open all its port for Indian ships, he said.

This will not only help Bangladesh to earn revenue but also help in the proper use of waterways and other resources, he said. Momen said the rail route between Akhaura-Agartala has been almost completed and train services were most likely to start by March 2023.

AMID KARNATKA CM's REMARKS ON BORDER ROW

NCP slams Maharashtra govt

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Nationalist Congress Party on Saturday questioned the "eerie silence" of the Maharashtra government, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Centre on the "uncalled for" statements made by Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on the border dispute between the two states, which it claimed brought the differences to the fore again.

Bommai had recently sought a merger of "Kannada-speaking" areas in Maharashtra's Akkalkot and Solapur and had also said some villages in Jat taluka in Sangli district wanted to join the southern state.

A day earlier, he said the visit of Maharashtra ministers Chandrakant Patil and Shambhuraj Desai to Belgaum was not good in the given situation.

Maharashtra and Karnataka have been involved in a long-standing border dispute, with the former seeking administrative control of Marathi-speaking Belgaum and some other villages of the neighbouring state.

"Why is an eerie silence being maintained by the Central government, BJP and CM of Maharashtra on the uncalled for statements made and issues raised on the border row by Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai," NCP national spokesperson Clyde Crasto



asked in a statement.

"Firstly, he (Bommai) made statements on the sub-judice border issue, which led to disturbance of peace in both the states. Now, he says ministers from Maharashtra should not come to Belagavi as the situation is not conducive, given the differences over the border," Crasto added.

He said it was Bommai's statements that started giving rise to differences on the ground again, adding Maharashtra ministers Patil and Desai were going to Belgaum to liaise with the legal team and other stakeholders of the dispute.

"Talking will always help in getting a solution to the border issue, so why is Karnataka CM not permitting dialogue? Bommai should not be allowed to dictate terms. Therefore, it is

important for the Centre to intervene and stop him in his tracks and make sure peace is maintained in both the states," Crasto added.

Ministers Patil and Desai were appointed by the Eknath Shinde government recently to coordinate with the state's legal team on the border issue. They were likely to meet leaders of the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), which has been spearheading the movement to merge Belagavi with Maharashtra for decades.

Speaking to reporters in Belgaum on Friday, Bommai said, "Already our chief secretary has written to the chief secretary of Maharashtra through fax. In the given situation it is not good for them (Patil and Desai) to visit here and hence, they should not come here."

Dalit girl gang-raped, strangled

PNS ■ MATHURA (UP)

A 14-year-old Dalit girl was allegedly strangled to death after gang-rape in a village under Mahavan Police Station area of Mathura district.

According to Police, the girl had gone to a forest area near her house to relieve herself at around 8.30 pm Friday night. She had taken her nine-year-old sister with her.

Three men of the village caught the girl there and allegedly gang-raped her, and strangled her to death later, they said.

Her younger sister somehow managed to escape from there and told her family about the incident.

When they heard about it, the family along with other villagers began a search for the girl and ended up apprehending two men.

Superintendent of Police Rural Trigun Bisen who visited the spot pacified the agitated villagers, and took Deshraj and Yogendra, the two men caught by the villagers, into custody.

Police are now conducting raids in search of the third accused, Sachin, who is on the run.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Alok Singh said prima facie it appears that the girl was killed after rape.

An FIR has been lodged and police are investigating the matter.

Navy aims to become self-reliant by 2047: Navy Chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy is contemplating whether to go for indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC) II or prefer a repeat order for the IAC I, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar said on Saturday while setting a timeline of 2047 for making his force 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliant).

Addressing a press conference ahead of Navy Day, Admiral Kumar said the proposed procurement of a fleet of Predator drones from the US is under process and that the Navy is on course for a major capability enhancement to deal with myriad security challenges.

The Chief of Naval Staff also said that an exercise is underway in the force to shed the colonial past as "we strongly support the view that we have



to get away from this "Ghulami ki mansikta" (slave mentality).

On modernisation of the Navy, he said assurances have been given to the government that the force will become 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) by 2047 and several measures are being initiated to meet the target.

He also said that the Navy keeps a strong vigil over movements of various Chinese mil-

itary and research vessels in the Indian Ocean Region.

"We are still working on what size it should be and what its capabilities should be. Right now we have put a hold on it because we have just commissioned INS Vikrant. We are quite happy with the ship. The way the ship performed in the trial," Admiral Kumar said when asked about the IAC II.

The Navy has been making a strong push for having the IAC-II having a displacement of 65,000 tonnes which was estimated to cost close to Rs 50,000 with the envisaged specifications.

India's first indigenously-built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant (IAC I) was commissioned in September. The aircraft carrier, with a displacement of 40,000 tonnes, was built at a cost of around Rs 23,000 crore.

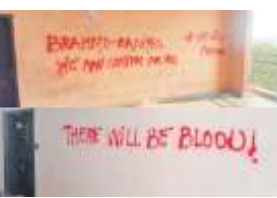
JNU has adopted nationalism: VHP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The VHP on Saturday described as "coward leftist" those who wrote anti-Brahmin slogans in the JNU and asserted that such activities will never succeed in disrupting "peace and amity" on the campus.

It said that the university has adopted the idea of "nationalism and social harmony" which cannot be undermined by such slogans.

In a video statement, VHP working president Alok Kumar also said he was confident that



the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) administration and Delhi police will conduct a probe into the incident and take legal action against them.

On Thursday, several walls of a School Of International Studies building on JNU cam-

pus was found defaced with anti-Brahmin slogans, photos of which were shared on social media.

Some of the slogans on the university walls were "Brahmins leave the campus", "there will be blood", "Brahmin Bharat chhodo", and "Brahmins-Baniyas, we are coming for you. We will avenge."

Slamming those behind these slogans, Kumar said, "JNU is a strange world. Some coward leftist wrote 'Brahmin Bharat chhodo' slogan in the dark of night.

High-voltage campaigning ends for II phase of Gujarat Assembly polls

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The high-voltage campaigning for the second and final phase of the Gujarat Assembly elections ended at 5 pm on Saturday.

As many as 833 candidates are in the fray across 93 constituencies which will go to polls on December 5. Votes will be counted on December 8.

Prominent candidates in the second phase include Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel from Ghatlodia, Patidar leader Hardik Patel from Viramgam and OBC leader Alpesh Thakor from Gandhinagar South. Both Hardik Patel and Thakor are contesting on BJP ticket.

The first phase of voting for 89 seats in Saurashtra, Kutch and south Gujarat was held on December 1 with average turnout of 63.31 per cent, lower than the last time.

The main contenders in the elections are the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress and Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

The 93 constituencies where polling will be held on Monday are spread across 14 districts of north and central Gujarat including Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Gandhinagar.

There are 2.54 crore registered voters in these constituencies.

○ Voting tomorrow

Polling will be held at 26,409 booths and nearly 36,000 Electronic Voting Machines will be used.

The Election Commission will deploy 29,000 presiding officers and over 84,000 polling officers in 14 districts, said an official release.

The ruling BJP is also facing a challenge from rebel candidates in some places in the second phase.

Sitting BJP MLA from Waghodia, Madhu Shrivastav is contesting as an independent after being denied party ticket. Former BJP MLAs Dinu Solanki, Dhavalsinh Zala and Harshad Vasava are also in the fray as independents from Padra, Bayad and Nandod seats.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted a whirlwind campaign for the BJP on December 1 and 2, including two back-to-back roadshows in Ahmedabad.

He also addressed seven poll rallies in Panchmahal, Chhotaudepur, Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Patan, Anand and Ahmedabad districts in the last two days.

No rule of law in Rajasthan

○ BJP targets Cong govt over Sikar killings

PNS ■ JAIPUR

The opposition BJP attacked the Congress government in Rajasthan over the double murder case in Sikar on Saturday, saying there is no rule of law in the state as Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is focused only on saving his chair.

Notorious gangster Raje Theth was shot dead at the gate of his house on Piprali road in Sikar in broad daylight. Another man who had gone to meet his daughter studying in a coaching centre also died in the firing.

State Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra condemned the incident and hoped that the police would restore the confidence of the common people by arresting the accused.

The BJP targeted the government over the incident.

"The review of law and order by the chief minister, who is also the home minister, is only limited to clicking photographs. He does not have any concrete action plan to strengthen law and order nor is he concerned about the safety of the people of the state,"

BJP state president Satish Poonia tweeted.

He said the chief minister should resign on moral grounds.

Deputy Leader of Opposition Rajendra Rathore said the murder of notorious gangster Raju Theth in Sikar in a gang war raises a question mark on the law and order situation in the state.



He said the Shekhawati area today has become a place of refuge for criminals where gangsters are challenging the police by committing murders openly and confessing it on social media.

Rathore said the police administration seems helpless.

"On one hand there is open firing, murders, gang wars, extortions and the common people are forced to live under fear and on the other hand the government has left the security of the people to the hands of the criminals and is engaged in the hospitality of Rahul Gandhi and Bharat Jodo Yatra," Rathore said. The Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra is slated to enter Rajasthan from Madhya Pradesh on Sunday evening.

LIQUOR SCAM

Sisodia will have to 'face the music': Sambit Patra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday claimed that the AAP used the Delhi Excise policy to "receive kickbacks" and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia who was "instrumental" in framing it will "face the music and the law".

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy have been weaving stories through press conferences to spread a "lie" that there was no "scam" in the implementation of the excise policy and that Sisodia was innocent, alleged BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra.

An immediate reaction was not available from the AAP on the issue.

"The probe against Sisodia is underway and the allegations against him are very serious," Patra said at a press conference citing the remand note of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) presented in a court recently against a liquor "scam" accused Amit Arora.

A case against Sisodia and several other persons was registered by the CBI

in August this year over the alleged irregularities in implementation of Excise Policy 2021-22.

The policy implemented in November 2021 was scrapped by the Kejriwal government after the CBI probe into it was recommended by Delhi LG VK Saxena.

A study of the excise policy leaves no one in doubt that Sisodia will have to "face the music and the law", Patra claimed.

Citing the remand note, Patra said Sisodia along with top Excise officials who are suspended now, were "instrumental" in framing the Excise policy without required approvals to provide "undue benefits" to liquor licensees.

"The excise policy was a device used by the AAP to receive kickbacks," he alleged.

The AAP dispensation had earlier assailed the BJP and it's government at the Centre for trying to frame Sisodia and send him behind bars to prevent the good works of Delhi government.

Malayalam actor-comedian Kochu Preman passes away

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTAPURAM



Well-known Malayalam film-theatre actor Kochu Preman died in a private hospital here following a brief illness on Saturday, his family members said. He was 68. The actor was undergoing treatment for lung-related ailment, they said. Known for his unique style of dialogue delivery and facial expressions, Preman acted in over 250 films in his decades-long acting life. Comic roles in blockbuster movies made him popular among film buffs.

52 people with disabilities conferred national award

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday felicitated 52 persons with disabilities for their laudable contribution in their fields, including a 66-year-old Mridu Ram Goel, who is an expert in access audit.

Goel, who suffers from 81 per cent locomotor disability and is wheel-chairbound, has been raising issues related to the construction of ramps in government buildings in Lucknow. Vidhya Y, 29, another recipient of the award, was honoured by the president for, among other things, developing "the world's most affordable" electronic Braille book reading solution for children.

Murmu presented the National Awards for the



Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for 2021 and 2022 here on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Vidhya, who is visually-impaired and has done her Msc in Digital Society, founded Vision Empower (VE) in 2017 which was incubated at the IIIT-Bangalore Innovation Centre.

In 2020, she also co-founded

Vembi Technologies' to design and manufacture assistive technology solutions to make education accessible and inclusive for visually-impaired students, according to her citation.

Vembi has developed the world's most affordable electronic Braille book reading solution for children called Hexis-Antara which automatically converts digital print to braille.

Delhi set for high-stakes MCD polls 1.45 cr voters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The stage is set for the high-stakes civic polls in Delhi on Sunday, with poll authorities and security forces all geared up for the elections, largely being seen as a three-way contest among the AAP, the BJP and the Congress.

Over 1.45 crore electors are eligible to exercise their franchise in the elections to the 250 wards of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, in which 1,349 candidates are in the fray.

Polling will be held from 8 am to 5:30 pm and the votes will be counted on December 7.



According to data shared by the State Election Commission officials, the total number of voters in Delhi is 1,45,05,358 -- 78,93,418 males, 66,10,879 females and 1,061 transgender persons. There are 250 wards in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

This will be the first civic election after the fresh delimitation exercise, and the poll will be held days after the first phase of the Gujarat assembly elections, and a day ahead of its second phase. Authorities have set up 13,638 polling stations across Delhi for the exercise.

There were 272 wards in Delhi and three corporations -- NDMC, SDMC and EDMC -- in Delhi from 2012-2022, before being reunified into an MCD that had formally come into existence on May 22.

The erstwhile MCD, established in 1958, was trifurcated in 2012 during Sheila Dikshit's tenure as the chief minister. With the announcement of the MCD polling date on November 4 by State Election Commissioner Vijay Dev, the Model Code of Conduct came into immediate effect in the national capital from that day itself.

Both the AAP and the BJP have exuded confidence that they will

emerge victorious in the polls while the Congress is seeking to regain lost turf.

The high-decibel campaigning for the December 4 polls, which saw roadshows of AAP and BJP heavyweights criss-cross through the national capital amid a political slugfest, concluded on Friday.

Giving campaigns of their parties one final push on Friday, BJP leaders held over 200 public meetings and roadshows, while Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia held a town hall with 400 traders to discuss issues faced by them while dealing with the civic body.

SETS UP 4-5 TASK FORCES TO BOOST TELECOM MANUFACTURING

Govt to tighten scrutiny of imports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government will come up with a methodology to check imports from neighbouring nations, which are non-compliant to trusted source rules of the telecom sector, Union minister for communications and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Saturday.

The minister had a meeting with over 40 CEOs of telecom gear makers that have qualified for production linked incentive scheme and decided to set up 4-5 task forces to provide market support to them as well as streamline their business for value addition in the economy.

Telecom gear makers expressed concern around import of network gear from China, which is being routed through other neighbouring countries.

When asked about concerns around such imports, the minister said, "This issue was discussed. Representatives from customs department, finance ministry and other ministries... work will be done on it to devise how to check it in a methodical manner."

The minister said that the companies under telecom PLI are close to start export of their gears and India will become an exporting nation very soon.

"During the meeting, many new ideas came, for which we have set up 5-6 task forces. A task force has been set up for creating the component ecosystem. Another task force has been set up for developing 4-5 chips, then taking those chips from design to production. Third task force has been set up to develop highly skilled workers, designers in the telecom sector," Vaishnaw said.

He said that the companies asked for support testing and certification, which is required for exporting products, for which another task force has been set up to optimise the use of test beds in IIT Madras, Telecom Engineering Centre.

"From my interaction, industry is confident that they are in good traction and India should become a technology exporter in the coming years in a very sure and certain way," Vaishnaw said.

The minister said a task force has been created to

aggregate demand under various government departments like railways, power and defence, and channelise it to players who are manufacturing under the PLI scheme.

He said that telecom operators in the country are also supporting local manufacturers. "There are demands in various departments.

If those demands are organised and channelised and are given to units under the 'make in India' and PLI then it will be a significant boost for manufacturing," Vaishnaw said.

The Department of Telecom has selected 42 companies that have committed investment of Rs 4,115 crore. The government estimates that the scheme is expected to generate additional sales of Rs 2.45 lakh crore and create additional employment of more than 44,000 over the scheme period. Telecom Secretary K Rajaraman asked PLI-shortlisted companies to invest in skill sets to develop talents, which is also necessary for making world-class products.

Telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC) CEO Arvind



Bali said the minister in the meeting asked companies to become market leaders and create world-class skill sets in the country for increased share in the global market.

During the meeting, industry players said that revenue generated out of PLI investment is committed to Rs

50,000 crore, and an investment of Rs 1 crore is creating about 15 new employment opportunities.

GX India CEO Paritosh Prajapati said the hand holding from the government will help in taking MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) to the next level.

IMF says it fully supports India's G20 agenda

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

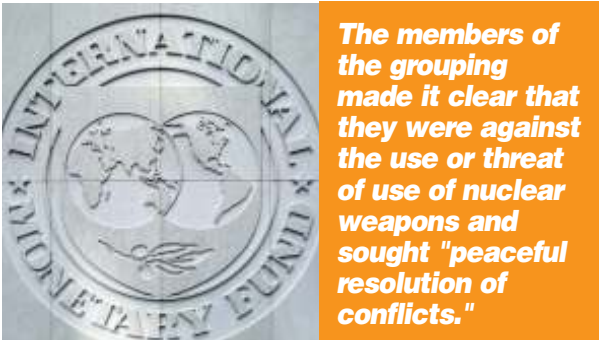
The IMF "fully supports" the G20 agenda of India, which is planning to use the ongoing global crises as an opportunity to seek consensus on issues that require urgent attention, a senior official from the international financial body has said.

India formally assumed the G20 Presidency on Thursday.

"They (India) are putting together a collective agenda for a much more prosperous future," Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, Director of the Strategy and Policy Review department at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), told a group of reporters ahead of her trip to China and India next week.

"They (India) plan to use the ongoing (global) crises as an opportunity to seek consensus on issues that really require urgent attention," she said on Thursday. Pazarbasioglu was apparently referring to the food and energy crises due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

The IMF "fully supports" the G20 agenda of India, she



The members of the grouping made it clear that they were against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and sought "peaceful resolution of conflicts."

said.

The theme of India's G20 presidency is "One Earth, One Family, One Future."

"This means that India is prioritising the need to set aside differences and work at the local level, the federal level, the international level," explained the IMF official.

India, she said, played an important role in negotiating the G20 declaration in Bali, Indonesia.

"As you know, we haven't been able to have a declaration or a communique in the past two ministerial meetings, they were chair summaries. I will not go into details on how

many hours those took. But so this was a major achievement, which included very strong language, that most members condemned the war in Ukraine," she said.

The G20's Bali Declaration last month acknowledged differences among members on the Russia-Ukraine war but stressed that it was essential to adhere to international law, including the protection of civilians caught in conflicts.

The members of the grouping made it clear that they were against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and sought "peaceful resolution of conflicts."

India's bio-economy has grown 8 times since 2014: Union Minister

PNS ■ JAMMU

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday said India's bio-economy has grown eight times in the last 8 years under the Modi government from 10 billion dollars in 2014 to over 80 billion dollars in 2022.

The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office said three biotech startups were incorporated every day in 2021 and a total of 1,128 biotech startups were set up last year alone, signalling the rapid growth of the sector in the country.

Addressing an International Conference on Emerging Trends in Biosciences and Chemical Technology- 2022 here, Singh said the biotech startups have grown 100 times in the last 8 years from 52 odd startups in 2014 to 5,300 plus in 2022.

The conference is being organized by Shri Mata



Vaishno Devi University, School of Biotechnology, Jammu in collaboration with CSIR-IIIM Jammu and the Biotech Research Society of India, from December 3 to 5.

There are 14 international participants like USA, Greece, South Korea, Scotland, Singapore, Thailand, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Malaysia and Vietnam and 24 National keynote and invited speakers and around 300 par-

ticipants from almost every state of India who are presenting their work in the form of oral and poster presentations, an official release said.

The minister pointed out that from a paltry investment of Rs 10 Crore in bio-economy in 2014, the fund growth saw 400 times hike to Rs 4200 crore in 2022, creating over 25,000 high skilled jobs.

"The number of biotech incubators have increased from six in 2014 to 75 now, while biotech products have increased from 10 to more than 700 today," he said.

Dwelling on the growth of India's bioeconomy, Singh said India administered nearly four million doses of COVID-19 vaccines per day and a total of 1.45 billion doses in 2021.

"Similarly, we conducted 1.3 million COVID-19 tests each day in 2021 and overall 507 million tests in 2021," he said.

OYO to downsize 3,700-employee base, cut 600 jobs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IPO-bound travel tech firm OYO on Saturday announced it will downsize about 10 per cent of its 3,700-employee base by cutting 600 jobs in the technology and corporate verticals and hiring 250 members, primarily in the relationship management teams.

OYO said the move is part of implementing wide ranging changes in its organisational structure. It is downsizing its product & engineering, corporate headquarters, and OYO Vacation Homes teams, while it adds people to the partner relationship management and the business development teams. "OYO will downsize 10 per cent of its 3,700-employee base, which includes fresh hiring of 250 members and letting go of 600 employees," a statement said. Product and engineering teams are being merged for smoother functioning, it added.



The downsizing in tech is also happening in teams which were developing pilots and proof of concepts such as in-app gaming, social content curation and patron facilitated content, the company said. Additionally, members of projects which have now been successfully developed and deployed such as 'Partner SaaS' are being either let go or are being redeployed in core product & tech areas such as AI (artificial intelligence) driven pricing, ordering and payments, it informed.

Gold worth Rs 4 cr seized at Mangaluru Airport in Nov

PNS ■ MANGALURU

Customs officials at the Mangaluru International Airport (MIA) have in different cases seized 7,692 gm of gold worth over Rs 4 crore between November 1 and 30. A total of 10 people were taken into custody in connection with the cases, a Customs release here said Saturday. The gold was found concealed in LED bulb, watch, mobile phone, keypad, beading of trolley bag, coffee maker motor, silver plated plate, powder, paste form, two-layer banian, socks, undergarments and also in rectum.



Bengaluru may see highest growth in office rent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Office rentals in Bengaluru is expected to grow by 5-7 per cent -- highest in the Asia-Pacific region -- during the next year, according to Knight Frank India.

In its latest report on 'Asia Pacific Outlook 2023', property consultant Knight Frank said that rent growth in the APAC region is expected to moderate in 2023 as corporate occupiers are looking to optimise overheads and generate savings. "The steady performance of the Indian office markets seen in 2022 is expected to sustain in 2023," it said. Bengaluru's prime office rental is expected to grow in the range of 5-7 per cent YoY (year-on-year) in 2023, highest amongst the 24 APAC cities tracked in the report.

Mumbai and New Delhi are the other Indian cities tracked in the report. New Delhi's prime office rental is expected to grow in the range of 4-6 per cent YoY followed by Mumbai in the 3-5 per cent YoY in 2023. The consultant attributed the expected growth



Bengaluru's prime office rental is expected to grow in the range of 5-7 per cent YoY (year-on-year) in 2023, highest amongst the 24 APAC cities tracked in the report.

in office rentals to a comparatively strong economic outlook, potentially increased outsourcing from the west due to cost constraints and rupee depreciation.

Shishir Bajjal, Chairman and Managing Director at

In housing segment, the report mentioned that Bengaluru's residential price is expected to grow by up to 5 per cent YoY in the next calendar year. "Consistent growth of startups and unicorns coupled with rising income levels makes the city a strong market in the APAC region," it added.

Mumbai's residential price is expected to grow by up to 4 per cent YoY in 2023.

The residential price in New Delhi is expected to grow in the range of 2-3 per cent in 2023.

SET UP SEMICONDUCTOR UNIT SRAM & MRAM to invest Rs 2 lakh crore in Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

United Kingdom-based SRAM & MRAM Group vice-chairman Gurujee Kumar Swami on Saturday announced that the group will invest Rs 2 lakh crore in Odisha to set up semiconductor unit in the state. The announcement was made at the Make in Odisha (MIO) Conclave, 2022 here.

Swami and the company's Odisha in-charge Debadutta Singh Deo said the group will invest Rs 30,000 crore in the first phase. Earlier they met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and briefed him on the proposed project. They also discussed in detail about the project with chief secretary SC Mohapatra, Industries secretary Hemant Sharma and other officials. Meanwhile, the Odisha government received large investment commitments and signed multiple MoUs in Electronics and IT at the MIO Conclave. A direct

investment commitment of Rs 8,200 crore has been received which is likely to create over 40,000 jobs in the state, an official said.

The big names which made investment commitments or signed MoUs include Intel, Oracle, Global Foundries, Jupiter Solar, Deloitte, IBM, Happiest Minds, Adani Group, EY, and Aaron Capital.

RailTel, a cpsu under the Ministry of Railways signed an MoU with the state government to set up a neutral submarine cable landing station in Puri which will improve data connectivity and facilitate further growth of the state's IT sector. As per its understanding with Odisha Government, Intel will facilitate the state in experiencing emerging technologies such as Industry 4.0, IoT, AI/ML, 5G

Communication, Wireless Sensor Networks, AR/VR/XR, etc, in real-time and enable it to become a test bed for innovators.

Book seeks to dissect economic ideas right at their roots

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new book seeks to find interconnected economic thoughts that stand out and make one question neoclassical and orthodox economics.

Mumbai-based fintech entrepreneur Swapnil Pawar says his book "Titled Rethinking Money and Capital: New Economics for QE, Stimulus, Negative Interest and Cryptocurrencies" is all about economic concepts that have added to the global financial crisis. "Money and capital are essential part of our lives. But they are just bidding tokens," he says.

"When you rethink of their

nature, humanity is free from the shackles of fake economic constraints. When the reader analyses my book, he starts rethinking and discovers alternate endings. Rethinking Money and Capital gets many such deductions for a broader picture that will change the economic policies for the better," Pawar says.

With recent global economic crisis and following government decisions regarding money and capital, he "examines the erroneous approach to mainstream macroeconomics in academia, media, and government, and its heavy reliance on oversimplified models of human economic organisation."

The analysis in this book, published by Leadstart, leads to many counterintuitive conclusions. For example, the fiscal deficit is the counterpart of the demand for net savings by individuals and not an evil to be battled. Inflation is sometimes an indicator of more egalitarian distribution of incomes and not always a scourge that hurts the poor. There is a strong case for negative real interest rates on risk-free debt. Pawar says the intent of the book is twofold - firstly, he has attempted to examine some of the major themes like fiscal deficits, inflation vs growth and monetary policy in recessions from first principles

instead of using an existing theory. This, he says, leads to several interesting conclusions.

Secondly, he says he has tried to arrive at some implementable solutions for our times, in the context of both developed economies and emerging economies.

According to Pawar, given the topic at hand, the book explores multiple connected themes. "The defining characteristic of capitalism is protection, accumulation, and growth of wealth for individuals. It is not, efficient allocation of resources and maximization of production of goods and services, as is usually claimed," he writes. "Money and financial

wealth are contracts, not resources. They originate, move about, and disappear within their own self-contained circuit, dissociated from real economy. The total stock of money is endogenously determined by the economic actors and institutional constraints.

The same goes for the total stock of financial capital," he says. And then, "most of the conventionally accepted economic 'laws' (supply and demand, marginal utility, etc) do not apply to money and financial capital. Instead, we need to use stock-flow consistent accounting coupled with behavioral tendencies of economic actors to arrive at the

He says he has tried to arrive at some implementable solutions for our times, in the context of both developed economies and emerging economies.

drivers of the evolution of money and financial capital", he writes.

MONEY MATTERS

SJVN bags Maharashtra discom's 200-MW solar project



State-owned SJVN Ltd on Saturday said that its arm SJVN Green Energy has bagged a 200 MW solar project worth Rs 1,200 crore from Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd. "Company through its wholly-owned subsidiary SJVN Green Energy Limited has bagged 200 MW solar power project on Build Own and Operate (BOO) basis from Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) through e-A (Reverse Auction) conducted on December 2, 2022," a BSE filing said. The tentative cost of this project is around Rs 1,200 crore and the project is expected to generate 455.52 Million Units (MUs) in the 1st Year and the cumulative energy generation over a period of 25 years would be about 10,480.82 MUs, it said. The commissioning of the project is expected to reduce 5,13,560 tonnes of carbon emission and would contribute to the government of India's mission of reduction in carbon emission. Currently the company's renewable portfolio stands at 4,320.5 MW, out of which 179.5 MW is under operation, 1,385 MW under construction and 2,756 is at different stages of implementation.

BGauss Auto ties up with GoZap to offer 50 e-scooters



Electric scooter manufacturer BGauss Auto Pvt Ltd has partnered with Go Zap, a subsidiary of GoFuel, to provide electric vehicles to employees of food and vegetable delivery agents, the company said on Saturday.

As per the agreement signed between the two companies, in the first phase of the launch 50 electric scooters would be provided to employees of private companies who deliver food and vegetables to consumers, a press release said. The aim is to ensure environmental protection along with creating world class electronic scooters. BGauss Auto Pvt Ltd, founder-managing director Hemant Kabra said GoZap is an electric vehicle rental company promoted by GoFuel. GoZap chief technology officer Muthuraman said after launching the initiative in Tamil Nadu, the company has planned to expand this project across the country.

Govt clears 24th tranche of electoral bonds



The government on Saturday approved issuance of the 24th tranche of electoral bonds that will open for sale on December 5. The sale of

bonds coincides with the second phase of the Gujarat assembly elections scheduled on December 5. Electoral bonds have been pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency in political funding. State Bank of India (SBI), in the 24th phase of sale, has been authorised to issue and encash electoral bonds through 29 authorised branches from December 5-12, the finance ministry said in a statement. The last phase of electoral bonds (23rd tranche) was open for subscription between November 9-15, 2022. Usually, electoral bond tranches are open for sale between 1-10 of a designated month. For instance, the 22nd tranche of bond sales took place from October 1-10, 2022 while 21st tranche was from July 1-10, 2022. Sale of the first batch of electoral bonds happened from March 1-10, 2018. The authorised SBI branches include those in Lucknow, Shimla, Dehradun, Kolkata, Guwahati, Chennai, Patna, New Delhi, Chandigarh, Srinagar, Gandhinagar, Bhopal, Raipur, and Mumbai. SBI is the only authorised bank to issue electoral bonds. An electoral bond will be valid for 15 days from the date of issuance. No payment would be made to any political party if the bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period, the statement said.

Meditation is a great way to keep my body well-centered while juggling shooting schedules and recording sessions
— Ariana Grande



REVDI CULTURE IS HERE TO STAY

Despite so much debate and discussion of the revadi culture in the recent past, all political parties have gone all out of the way to offer sops to woo voters in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh assembly polls, writes DIPAK UPRETI

Childhood stories like that of ‘Kabuliwala’ remind one of the street hawkers announcing their arrival and selling goodies like ‘budia ke baal’, peanuts, ‘channa’, ‘gazak’, and also ubiquitous sweet, ‘revdis’.

The last selling item has recently taken a political colour with no less a person than Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself giving a condescending look at the humble “revdis” and decrying what he called “revdi culture” of freebies spawned by certain political parties and more specifically by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of Arvind Kejriwal ruling Delhi and Punjab and currently making a high-pitch foray in PM’s home state Gujarat.

‘Revdis’ themselves are popular sweet meat available even as ‘prasad’. But now all political parties are showcasing ‘Revdis’ in their poll campaigns to distract the voters from their political rivals to their own decorative election campaign carts..

The ‘freebies’ or ‘revdis’, though, seen in the larger context, could also include tax cuts for corporate sectors, waving off of Non-performing assets, and also sanctioning projects and schemes in the poll-bound states by the ruling parties.

They have been in vogue for long but received currency of late in the political dialogue which is increasingly turning bitter unlike the ‘revdis’, which have always been a good ‘time pass’ sweets for an average Indian to be taken without much fuss ...!

The debate raised is that freebies are a waste of tax payers’ money which should be invested in such a way that it institutionalizes benefits and that too on a ‘permanent basis’ and is unlike offering a free laptop, cycle or a monthly allowance without any accountability to available finances or the budget.

In a welfare state, free health, education, and a minimum subsistence allowance to poor should not be viewed as ‘freebies’ but be welcomed as a step towards positive discrimination.

For example, the ‘Janaushadi kendras’, under Central Scheme, offering allopathic medicines at less than half the market prices go a long way in relieving the pain of economically backward and middle class who are already facing the mercenary grind of an insurance-based healthcare system.

A free or highly subsidized health and education system catering to the economically poor section should be an obligation of the state and must not be considered ‘bad

economics’ and part of the “Ravadi culture” as has been made out by some of the advocates of ‘globalization’.

The poll-time ‘revdis’ are, however, polished goods whose shine go away, once elections are over and at a time never delivered or fulfilled.

In circulation on the eve of poll season, all political parties rigorously decorate their ‘election face’ with goods and items which could fetch them easy and enough votes to win. And like wily hawkers, political leaders announce them in their manifestos as if these could be the vehicles of transformation in a developing country like ours.

Despite the Prime Minister’s disapproval of freebies, BJP’s Gujarat manifesto is full of revdis and has also drawn sharp criticism from the Congress and AAP, for its “striking commonalities” with the sops, guarantees or ‘revdis’ promised by them.

The BJP manifesto titled “Agresar Gujarat Sankalp Patra 2022” pledges to provide free education to girls from kindergarten to post-graduation. This promise mirrors the Congress manifesto released on November 12.

The AAP too has promised free education to all children. At a rally at Mahidarpura in Surat’s diamond market, the AAP candidate from Varachha, Alpesh Kathirya, charged that the BJP manifesto was a “xerox copy” of the AAP guarantees.

Targeting the BJP, Gujarat AAP president Gopal Italia makes taunts, “When we announce our guarantees, the BJP calculates cost and tells us where will you get the money from.”

The BJP manifesto promises to provide free medical treatment by doubling the cap of ‘Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana’ to ₹10 lakh from the existing ₹5 lakh.

The Congress has also promised a ₹10 lakh free medical health cover to all citizens.

While the BJP has promised two free LPG cylinders annually for women under the ‘Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana’, Congress has pledged subsidized cylinders at ₹500 per unit.

Gujarat Congress spokesman Manish Doshi says, “The Congress manifesto announced well in advance forced the BJP to focus on education and health. Their promises follow ours.”

“In 2012, when we announced the ‘Ghar nu Ghar’ scheme (promising houses to voters)’ the BJP promised to build 50 lakh houses,” he says.

‘Revadis’ distributed by political parties, in the game of winning elections, are more or

ON THE EVE OF POLL SEASON, ALL POLITICAL PARTIES RIGOROUSLY DECORATE THEIR ‘ELECTION FACE’ WITH GOODS AND ITEMS WHICH COULD FETCH THEM EASY AND ENOUGH VOTES TO WIN. AND LIKE WILLY HAWKERS, POLITICAL LEADERS ANNOUNCE THEM IN THEIR MANIFESTOS AS IF THESE COULD BE THE VEHICLES OF TRANSFORMATION IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY LIKE OURS

less the same except for their packaging and carry bags..!

Congress has pledged to write off farmers’ debt up to ₹3 lakh each in the state, while the figure promised in this regard by the AAP is ₹2 lakh. Both Congress and the AAP have promised electricity to farmers during the daytime for irrigation purposes.

In its manifesto, BJP promises to host Olympic Games in the state by 2036 and provide 20 lakh jobs in the next five years.

As part of their poll pledges, both the Congress and the AAP have promised 300 units of free electricity for people, which the BJP has not done.

Giving an example of the first Solar-powered village in Modhera in Gujarat Prime Minister sought to counter rivals by claiming that it is time to “sell electricity” instead of receiving it free.

As against the BJP’s promised 20 lakh new jobs in the next five years, Congress and the AAP have promised to fill 10 lakh vacancies in the state government’s departments and PSUs.

Congress also pledged to regularise contractual government employees.

Both the Congress and the AAP have also promised to provide ₹3000 unemployment allowance to jobless youth and restoration of the Old Pension Scheme which the Congress has also promised in Himachal Pradesh that voted on November 12.

The party has also promised an unemployment allowance of ₹3,000 per month, ₹2,000 pension to ‘divyangs’, widows, senior citizens, and needy women, and waiver of loans of up to ₹3 lakh of all fishermen.

The AAP has also promised free water to farmers, ₹3,000 unemployment allowance, and a waiver of electricity bills.

All three parties have promised assistance for cows and livestock and sought to milch cows for votes even though the emaculated bovines themselves are eating plastic in cities and towns of Indian streets.

While the BJP in its manifesto pledges to roll out “Pashu Aadhar cards” and subsidised cattle feed for calves, Congress has promised ₹5,000 for every family seeking to buy a cow. The AAP has promised ₹40 per day for the maintenance of each cow in the state.

Besides, the Congress has offered a ₹2,000 pension to ‘divyangs’, widows, senior citizens, and needy women, and a waiver of loans of up to ₹3 lakh for all fishermen.

The AAP has also promised free water to farmers, ₹3,000 unemployment allowance, and a waiver of electricity bills.

With an eye on tribal constituencies, the BJP manifesto promises to set up 25 residential schools for tribals. The AAP too has matched it by promising to build residential schools for tribals in all districts besides constructing houses for them.

The women voters are being increasingly enticed by the political parties with the ‘revdi’ offerings with Congress in Himachal Pradesh promising monthly ₹1500 to each woman above the age of 18. AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal has offered ₹1000 monthly ‘financial assistance’ to all women in Gujarat above 18 of age saying “it is not a freebie but people’s money which is theirs”.

Leave aside Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh elections, the humble Municipal Corporation of Delhi elections have attracted a rainbow of ‘revdis’ by AAP, Congress, and the BJP too.

The ruling BJP in the MCD has promised to provide free cycles to meritorious girl students of class V studying in MCD-run schools in Delhi and to set up 50 ‘Annapurna Rasoi’ run by women in which citizens will get food at ₹5 !.

It is estimated that over 84 percent of Delhi government schools, mostly run by the AAP government, don’t have Principals. This apart, teachers in the MCD-run government schools are missing their salaries and schools are grossly understaffed with a single teacher teaching many subjects and some primary schools don’t have money to even employ a guard. Many government schools have been closed or on the verge of being closed even though DDA land is available with the MCD to open new government schools.

The ‘revdi culture’ could not be a substitute for real development lest there would not have been potholes, broken drainages, miserable hospitals, and schools without teachers. But when the political intent is to be in power and not the transformation of the ‘basics’, ‘revdis’ come in handy to outplay the voters as deceiving lollypops. They are superficially created to treat the symptoms of ‘development’ but rarely contribute to it and create undesired inequalities and nepotism.

It would be apt to quote the traditional idiom to describe the crafty mist created by the political class during the poll season : “andha baante revdi, apne apnon ko de”, that is, a sightless person will distribute revdis only to his near and dear ones.

(The writer is Special Correspondent of The Pioneer)

Hapless victims of borderless cyber terror

Globalisation accompanied by multiple waves of advanced information and communication technologies has made nation states and their citizens more prone to attacks by unknown enemies.

The cyber enemies are fast creating a world devoid of trust, creating a brand new vocabulary of conflict and chaos. James Adams, one of the founders of a cyber security firm called iDefense, had in 2001 warned that cyberspace is fast going to be a “new international battlefield”.

Cyber warfare is a new reality.

A decade ago, then US Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta declared the dangers of a “Cyber Pearl Harbour”. Further then US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano cautioned for a “Cyber 9/11”. In 2015, James Clapper, the then Director of National Intelligence, stated that the US must get ready for a “Cyber Armageddon”.

Since the 9/11 terror attack on the US, the most powerful nation has been exposed to external threats. No one, even the US intelligence and other top security agencies would have thought of a terror assault on the US.

But it happened that too at an unparallel magnitude, and terrorism received a new nomenclature called “global terrorism” and the fight against this scourge came to be known as “Global War on Terrorism”. The massive global terror network starting from the dreaded al-Qaeda to the Islamic State has in fact redefined the contours of global terrorism.

Precisely, this phenomenon has grown like an industry accompanied by a large institutional mechanism all around the world. While these monstrous radicals are taking on humanity irrespective of region, religion and race, the devil of cyber terror has emboldened them. And frankly, the nation states have once again encountered an unidentified, borderless and all-encompassing catastrophic regime of terror.



In the light of the latest cyberattack on the e-services at the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, in the last week of November, the possible threat of ransomware is surfacing again. With this horrendous strike, nearly three crore data storage of patients, including the VVIPs like the former Prime Ministers, Presidents, etc, are either lost, damaged or seriously compromised.

With immediate steps taken by the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations of the Delhi Police, there is every chance that the perpetrators will be identified soon. At the moment, we do not have sufficient legal and security measures to prevent such malware attacks in India. Since the establishment of the Indian

Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) in 2004, a national nodal agency, the collection, and analysis of data, and preventive measures to avert cyber security threats have become stronger than before.

The National Cyber Security Coordinator under the National Security Council Secretariat coordinates with multiple institutions at national level on various cyber-security matters. Besides, the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre established in 2014 under the 70A of the Information Technology Act 2000 (amended in 2008) makes necessary arrangements to protect all institutions of national critical importance.

Again, the Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and

Malware Analysis Centre) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) is providing us adequate preventive mechanisms to stop such malicious viruses into our cyberspace. In fact it is part of Digital India Initiative of the Government of India that aims to create a secure cyber space by detecting botnet infections across the country. This centre also helps to notify, clean and secure systems for all end users to protect them from possible malware attacks.

But it is pertinent to know whether such mechanisms are enough to protect our national and regional critical infrastructures against hundreds of malwares released by various nefarious actors? If not what more can our Government do? At the moment, the nation-

al cyber security agencies and all other civil-military organisations are certainly not sufficient to counter possible cyberattacks. It must be noted here that no nation, even the mighty US, is completely protected against such attacks. While global organisations like the Interpol and other top security and intelligence agencies can be the hope for countries like India, the US, China, Russia, the UK, the EU, etc, an immediate global-level cooperation and safe data sharing to fight cyber crime is the only way to minimise threats emerging from the cyberspace.

Today, national governments are facing single most serious security threats not from air force, navy, or infantry divisions but from cyberspace. A simple computer or any digital device linked with the

Internet is open to such attacks.

Indeed, nation states are facing an existential threat not only from their real and perceived enemies but also from growing corporate conglomerates around the world. At this juncture, governments at all the four levels — global, national, regional and local — are grappling to safeguard their territorial boundaries from cyber enemies.

The current Ukraine war is a testing ground for cyber warfare. This conflict has provided extensive insights into the current domain of the digital war zone. Leaders like Putin are once again shaking people's confidence in national and international institutions, making them rather irrelevant for some time.

It's time to stop him and save democracy and basic

human rights of the people on both sides of the border of Russia. Putin's designs have no place in a civilised world like ours. His nasty cyber tactics have already brought immense loss to hapless Ukraine.

The moot question is whether we will be able to overcome the chaos in the near future? Experts say there is a very remote possibility to completely destroy the cyber enemies. No nation is safe today, not even those who launch cyberattacks. It is time to realise the fact that we are living in an open world, wherein there is no place to hide from enemies. All the nations are interdependent, and no one can claim to be fully protected from enemies, both physical and virtual.

It is high time we realised that cyberspace is not an isolated realm. It binds all of us together. We are creating our enemies. The irony is that these viruses are man-made. But we are unable to keep them under control. But we are still struggling to grasp the underlying reality.

For an emerging global power like India, we do not need to wait for another AIIMS like cyber attack chaos. Delhi must respond to the crisis effectively. Its security and intelligence agencies must stop any future attacks over Parliament, the Reserve Bank of India, All India Radio, Prime Minister's Office and all other critical infrastructures.

The magnitude and cyber threat is increasing at an unimaginable rate. But strategies to counter it are purely inadequate at the moment. Today biggest challenge is to remain isolated. It is beyond our control. Many security experts predict that cyber threats might push many countries into physical conflicts. Cyber enemies are creating distrust, pitting one against another and making us suspicious of each other.

(The writer is the Head of the Department of Arts and Humanities at Geeta University, Panipat)

In the light of the latest cyberattack on the e-services of the prestigious AIIMS-Delhi that hacked nearly three crore data storage of patients, including VVIPs like the former Prime Ministers and Presidents, the possible threat of ransomware is resurfacing at an unimaginable scale



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

Twitter — A signature takeover?

A social media platform must consider all possible solutions to flush out junk, spam, bots, and other secondary data points. This will keep the focus on first-hand data, which can lead to impressive engagement levels for users and advertisers to rely on and spend more time on the platform



SIDHARRTH SHANKAR

What started as a data-heavy world wide web is no more just about the internet and data. Since Twitter's launch in 2006, social media platforms have been on a roller-coaster ride.

Beyond data content, the focus is on privacy and security shackles entangled in data transmission. It is the Web3 era where the fundamental right of equality also has a digital interpretation. Users on the internet seek democracy in the digital world with their share of rights and duties.

While content and publishing were the triggers for a long time, the platform's health and hygiene are much more critical than any other aspect. Today, it is more about building sustainable digital and social media platforms than the age-old aggression-driven conversation platforms. While excitement and real-time content pull from the users still prevail, the time now is for social media barons to pause and look at the nextGen social verse.

A scrutiny of the rules for social media players reveals the following most impact guidelines.

Priority to user privacy & trust

Social media episodes are presently rife with controversies, harassment, fake information, privacy attacks, and other disturbing trends. This infiltration of the mischief-oriented environment has led to an excessive loss of trust by users from diverse platforms. It is time that the back-end innovators restore this trust by



bringing in content moderation and AI-driven default rules that debar users from crossing the line.

Quality & insight-driven data strategy

Given that what's visible on the platform defines the level and quality of the information being perused, whether or not it's used, platforms must consider all possible solutions to flush out junk, spam, bots, and other secondary data points.

This will keep the focus on first-hand data, which can lead to impressive engagement levels for users and advertisers to rely on and spend more time on the platform.

Monetise better

Platforms now need to move towards more innovation-driven monetisation models, which are economically more viable than the current ones. Elon's announcement addressing a new high for advertising on Twitter is an effort in the right direction to monetise it in a better way. Setting standards being his goal, he says: “Twitter aspires to be the most respected advertising platform in the world that strengthens your brand and grows your enterprise.”

The bitter truth

While the bird app's fall after a series of failures has been criticised worldwide, it

must be appreciated that both Elon and Twitter have joined hands to take on the challenge ahead, which is a reboot of all operating mechanisms: from its workforce to policies, product environment, revenue models, and so on. Musk's takeover of the Twitter world may prove to be one of the most important benchmarks for the social media champions of the future.

A change hero but not a leader?

Musk's competence for being an efficient change agent but not the right fit for leadership has been the topic of speculation. However, enough examples from the past prove that the own-cum-CEO for-

mats of running entities are barely successful.

Notwithstanding the constructive criticism that Musk has been facing for his failed leadership and unreliable management decisions, his ideas on the kind of innovation and change that would benefit Twitter have received support and appreciation. These innovative ideas can create a historical transition point for the bird app if these are coupled with the appointment of inspired leadership officers. It will also provide pointers for others in the field to learn how the life graphs of social media platforms become messy if not the same is dealt with promptly.

Binge watch on legal episodes

That Musk is a lawyer's nightmare is a proven fact. Tesla's changing three legal heads within two years speaks volumes about Musk's penchant for an experiment. Keeping aside Musk's dramatic brushes with the law, it is relevant to look at how the legal battery was at work for Musk to make the Twitter deal happen the way he wanted it and how he continues to grapple with the issues arising out of layoffs.

In July 2022, Musk and his legal team got another jolt when Twitter sued him as he tried to escape the deal. He was pushed to adhere to the contract he had signed. This was again a moment when the legal minds behind Musk built up a strong case emphasising that he had every right to seek more details about the compa-

ny about his decision to take over.

Musk & his legal muscles

Musk was never short of options. While the Twitter Board struggled to stop the deal, Musk and his advisers always held the trump card. Upon the Board's denial, Musk approached the shareholders. It made an offer sweet enough for the Board to consider it seriously in the interests of the shareholders, given that Musk had made it clear that if the Board denied it, he would strive to remain a shareholder with the power to harm the tank further. During this contentious period, Musk was engaged in arranging funds that he was short of. Buyback, stock repurchase, and sale of assets are other powerful options that could have made Musk's hostile bid less lucrative, ultimately dealing a death blow to the takeover.

Musk's current anxiety

After the bloodbath of strategies to take over the bird app, Musk is not enjoying a beach side vacation. Having laid off nearly half of the company staff, he faces many challenges in turning a socially-free platform into a profitable one. But his taste for haste has not gone down well with critical stakeholders - advertisers, regulators, and of course, the tweeters.

Whether the feverish sale of each official blue tick at \$8 or many other such tools in the making, Musk is all out to create cash-ringing models for the social media platform to reg-

ister profits.

It's not all Musk's act

Regardless of the diatribe around the Twitter-Musk saga, it's time to look at essential numbers and stop relating everything to Musk's takeover of Twitter. As per Sensor Tower's data, during the days Musk announced his plan to terminate the agreement to buy Twitter amid spambot and fake account debates, the mean average weekly advertising spending in the US had touched \$945,800. Come September, this dropped to \$944,200, when tensions were building up further over Twitter's deposition in the lawsuit filed in Delaware Court of Chancery. Despite the looming law, the deal seal was expected to be postponed for a while.

By October, before the deal went through, the mean dropped to \$877,200 and plunged to \$589,100 a week after Musk's takeover. Such figures beg further scrutiny.

Logging out

As much as social media users may criticise the entire Twitter takeover, the sheer number of installs on App Store and Google Play Store is testimony to the world's choice of Tweeting on the app. The 6.3 million worldwide installs through October 15-26 jumped to a staggering 7.6 million between October 27 and November 7, which is when the takeover saga started.

(The writer specialises in general corporate commercial, mergers & Acquisitions, and private equity)

Built to disappear: World Cup stadium 974

Of the seven stadiums Qatar built for the World Cup, one will disappear after the tournament.

That's what the games' organizers have said about Stadium 974 in Doha a port-side structure with more than 40,000 seats partially built from recycled shipping containers and steel.

Qatar says the stadium will be fully dismantled after the World Cup and could be shipped to countries that need the infrastructure. Outside experts have praised the design, but say more needs to be known about what happens to the stadium after the event.

"Designing for disassembly is one of the main principles of sustainable building," said Karim Elgendy, an associate fellow at the London-based Chatham House think tank who previously worked as a climate consultant for the World Cup.

"It allows for the natural restoration of a building site or its reuse for another function," he said, adding that a number of factors need to be considered "before we call a building sustainable."

Buildings are responsible for nearly 40% of the world's energy-related carbon emissions. Of that, about 10% comes from "embodied" carbon or the greenhouse gas emissions related to the construction, maintenance and demolition of buildings.

Qatar has faced international criticism for its treatment of low-paid migrant workers who built over

200 billion worth of stadiums, metro lines and other infrastructure for the World Cup. Qatar says the criticism ignores labor reforms enacted in recent years.

Stadium 974, named after Qatar's international dialing code and the number of containers used to build the stadium, is the only venue that Qatar constructed for the World

idea was to avoid building a "white elephant," a stadium that is left unused or underused after the tournament ends, as happened following previous World Cups in South Africa, Brazil and Russia.

Qatar says it has developed plans for the other six stadiums after the games are over. Many will have a number of seats removed.

dismounted stadium will go after the tournament or even when it will be taken down. Organizers have said the stadium could be repurposed to build a venue of the same size elsewhere or multiple smaller stadiums.

Where its components go matters because of the emissions implicated by shipping them thousands of kilometers away.

Carbon Market Watch, an environmental watchdog group that investigated Qatar's World Cup sustainability plans, said whether Stadium 974 has a lower carbon footprint than a permanent one comes down to "how many times, and how far, the stadium is transported and reassembled."

FIFA and Qatar acknowledge that in a report estimating the stadium's emissions. If the stadium is reused only once, they estimate its emissions would be lower than a permanent one as long as it is shipped fewer than 7,000 kilometers (about 4,350 miles) away.

If it's repurposed more than once, it could be shipped farther and still be less polluting than a permanent venue, they said, because of how energy-intensive building multiple new stadiums is.

Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the organizing committee for the World Cup, did not respond to a request for more information about plans after the tournament.



Cup that isn't air-conditioned. During a match Friday in which Switzerland defeated Serbia, the air was noticeably more humid and hot than in other venues.

The stadium is hosting only evening matches, when temperatures are cooler.

Fenwick Iribarren Architects, which designed Stadium 974 and two other World Cup stadiums, says the

The multi-coloured shipping containers are used as building blocks for Stadium 974 and also to house facilities such as restrooms in the interior of the structure. Like giant Lego blocks, the bright red, yellow and blue corrugated steel boxes appear suspended between layers of steel. The design gives the stadium an industrial feel.

Qatar has not detailed where the

Disabled-accessible cities remain a mirage

Accessibility remains a major challenge for the physically challenged in India, and on International Day for People with Disabilities on Saturday, they called for urgent redressal as many buildings, even in tier 1 and 2 cities, remain unapproachable for them.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provided a timeline of five years for making all existing public buildings accessible by June 14, but out of the total 2,839 buildings, 585 state buildings and 1,030 central government buildings have been made barrier-free for the disabled.

More than two per cent of India's population are persons with disabilities. Experts feel that including compliance related to disabled-friendly constructions while clearing building plans would be a significant step in addressing the accessibility issue.

"Recently, I had to visit a government building to get some documents and it was an absolute nightmare," wheelchair-bound Anwar Ali, a resident of

Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan, said. "The office was on the third floor and the lift was not functioning most of the time. I had to visit the building regularly over two months and it was a torture," he said.



The government last year launched the Sugamya Bharat app which aims to enable people with disabilities and the elderly to register accessibility-related problems in buildings, in modes of transport, or any infrastructure by uploading pictures on it.

But according to an I filed by PTI, around half of the complaints were pending resolution till August with

states and UTs. There were a total of 1,009 complaints received through the app till August this year and 509 complaints were pending resolution at the state/UTs concerned authorities, the Department of Disabilities said in its response.

Asked for the reason behind the pending complaints, the Department of Disability Affairs in its reply said the complaints received through the Sugamya Bharat App are directly forwarded to authorities concerned of the state/UTs with a request to take appropriate action to make the premises accessible.

"There is no specific reason for non-redressal of the grievances available," the department said.

However, sources at the department said there are practical problems related to logistics associated with the resolution of some complaints which is the main reason for the backlog with the states and UTs.

Among states and UTs, Gujarat has received the highest number of complaints on the app at 406 out of which 311 are pending resolution.

Delhi has received the second-highest number of complaints on the app at 128 and out of that 60 are pending resolution.

The situation worsens in private sectors and rural areas, activists and people with disabilities say.

Lagoon dries up as drought grips Peru's southern Andes

From her home under the baking sun of Peru's southern Andes, Vilma Huaman can see the small Conchacota lagoon, the axis of her community's life. It has been a source of trout, fun for children eager to swim, beauty as flamingos flew from over the mountains and water for thirsty sheep.

Nowadays, all Huaman sees of the lagoon 4,100 meters (13,120 feet) above sea level is a plain of cracked and broken soil surrounded by yellow grass.

"It has totally dried up," she said.

The rainy season in this part of South America should have started in September, but the area is experiencing its driest period in almost a half century, affecting more than 3,000 communities in the central and southern Andes of Peru.

A light rain last week only the second in almost eight months prompted residents to set bowls outdoors to collect some water. The drops lifted dust as they hit the ground, and by the next morning, the sun had evaporated the scant moisture.

Dead sheep and lambs so weak they can barely stand can be found among sparse yellow grass. The planting of potatoes, which is the only crop that grows in Huaman's village, has been delayed, leading many to expect food shortages in the coming months because people are already feeding themselves from their dehydrated potato reserves.

"Every day, I ask I hope the rain falls ... when there is rain the grasses grow, the potatoes (grow)," said Huaman, 38, who moved with her four children from Peru's capital, Lima, to Conchacota in 2020 in an effort to flee the coronavirus pandemic.

The absence of rain in part of the Andes occurs as a result of the La Niña phenomenon, present in 2022 for the third consecutive year, according to

the United Nations' meteorological agency. The drought is also hitting parts of Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina.

Yuri Escajadillo, a climatologist with Peru's National Meteorology and Hydrology Service, said an index used to measure droughts qualified the region as "extremely dry."

"It is a record value," Escajadillo said.

In Conchacota, there is no drinking water, sewage or telephone service. People drink water they get from a nearby



What's the effect of Russian oil price cap, ban?

Frankfurt, Dec 2 (AP) Western governments are aiming to cap the price of Russia's oil exports in an attempt to limit the fossil fuel earnings that support Moscow's budget, its military and the invasion of Ukraine.

The cap is set to take effect Monday, the same day the European Union will impose a boycott on most Russian oil its crude that is shipped by sea. The EU reached a deal for a

60-PER-BARREL THRESHOLD FRIDAY.

The twin measures could have an uncertain effect on the price of oil as worries over lost supply through the boycott compete with fears about lower demand from a slowing global economy.

Here is what to know about the price cap, the EU embargo and what they could mean for consumers and the global economy:

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has proposed the cap with other Group of 7 allies as a way to limit Russia's earnings while keeping Russian oil flowing to the global economy. The aim: hurt Moscow's finances while avoiding a sharp oil price spike if Russia's oil is suddenly taken off the global market.

Insurance companies and other firms needed to ship oil would only be able to deal with Russian crude if the oil is priced at or below the cap. Most insurers are located in the EU or the United Kingdom and could be required to participate in the cap.

HOW WOULD OIL KEEP FLOWING TO THE GLOBAL ECONOMY?

Universal enforcement of the insurance ban, imposed by the EU and U.K. in earlier rounds of sanctions, could take so much Russian crude off the market that oil prices would spike, Western

economies would suffer, and Russia would see increased earnings from whatever oil it can ship in defiance of the embargo.

Russia, the world's No. 2 oil producer, has already rerouted much of its supply to India, China and other Asian countries at discounted prices after Western customers shunned it even before the EU ban.

WHAT EFFECT WOULD DIFFERENT CAP LEVELS HAVE?

A 60 cap would not have much impact on Russia's finances, said Simone Tagliapietra, an energy policy expert at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. That "will almost go unnoticed," he said, because it would be near where Russian oil is already selling.

Russian Urals blend sells at a significant discount to international benchmark Brent and fell below 60 for the first time in months this week on fears of reduced demand from China due to outbreaks of COVID-19.



Pentagon debuts its new stealth bomber: B-21

America's newest nuclear stealth bomber is making its public debut after years of secret development and as part of the Pentagon's answer to rising concerns over a future conflict with China.

The B-21 Raider is the first new American bomber aircraft in more than 30 years. Almost every aspect of the program is classified. Ahead of its unveiling Friday at an Air Force facility in Palmdale, California, only artists' renderings of the warplane have been released. Those few images reveal that the Raider resembles the black nuclear stealth bomber it will eventually replace, the B-2 Spirit.

The bomber is part of the Pentagon's efforts to modernize all three legs of its nuclear triad, which includes silo-launched nuclear ballistic missiles and submarine-launched warheads, as it shifts from the counterterrorism campaigns of recent decades to meet China's rapid military modernization.

China is on track to have 1,500 nuclear weapons by 2035, and its gains in hypersonics, cyber warfare, space capabilities and other areas present "the most consequential and systemic challenge to U.S. national security and the free and open international system," the Pentagon

said this week in its annual China report.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other invited guests will be on hand Friday to witness the bomber's public unveiling.

"We needed a new bomber for the 21st Century that would allow us to take on much more complicated threats, like the threats that we fear we would one day face from China, Russia," said Deborah Lee James, the Air Force secretary when the Raider contract was announced in 2015. "The B-21 is more survivable and can take on these much more difficult threats."

While the Raider may resemble the B-2, once you get inside, the similarities stop, said Kathy Warden, chief executive of Northrop Grumman Corp., which is building the Raider.

"The way it operates internally is extremely advanced compared to the B-2, because the technology has evolved so much in terms of the computing capability that we can now embed in the software of the B-21," Warden said.

Other changes likely include advanced materials used in coatings to make the bomber harder to detect, new ways to control electronic emissions, so the bomber could spoof adversary radars and disguise itself as another object, and use of new propulsion technologies, several defense analysts said.

In a fact sheet, Northrop Grumman, based in Falls Church, Virginia, said it is using "new manufacturing techniques and materials to ensure the B-21 will defeat the anti-access, area-denial systems it will face."

Warden could not discuss specifics of those technologies but said the bomber will be more stealthy.

"When we talk about low observability, it is incredibly low observability," Warden said. "You'll hear it, but you really won't see it."

Six B-21 Raiders are in production. The Air Force plans to build 100 that can deploy either nuclear weapons or conventional bombs and can be used with or without a human crew. Both the Air Force and Northrop also point to the Raider's relatively quick development: The bomber went from contract award to debut in seven years. Other new fighter and ship programs have taken decades.

Food festival brings cuisines from across continents

With more than 100 dishes from countries including Spain, Italy, Turkey, the United States, and Greece, 'Around The Globe' food festival began here on Saturday.

Organised by Edesia, a global cuisine restaurant at Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla, the theme of the first edition of 'Around The Globe' food festival is Food Carnival.

Over the course of 15 days, food enthusiasts can munch on Mexican Tacos or chop their way through the delectable Dimsums, dip the Churros in the hot chocolate or live the Hot Dog culture from USA.

Few of the menu highlights include Prawn Bisque, French Onion Soup, Falafel, Pita Breads, Burritos, Crepes, Burgers, Ratatouille, Sandwiches, Harissa

Chicken Wings, Paella, Rice Pilaf, Lebanese Kibbeh, Popcorn Chicken, Tiramisu, Greek Mousakka, Burgers, Tiramisu, Chicken & Cheese Enchiladas, and Espinacas con Garbanzos.

"We have been constantly striving to curate immersive dining experiences for our guests to mesmerize all their senses when they visit our restaurants. Our Around The Globe menu features the dishes which have gained cult status across continents and countries making the food festival an adventurous ride for the palate," Pradipt Sinha, director of Food & Beverage said in a statement.

The festival will offer delectable recipes at interactive stations such as 'Swirling Soup' (opening act), 'Fire Show' (live street food), 'Whistling Starters' (mime show), 'The Great Indian Main Course' (circus), 'Salad Jugglers' (filler act), 'Rice Pyramids', 'Drinks Pit stop' (break time), 'The Dancing Ice Cream' (show stopper), 'The Bread Carpet' (VVIP Zone), 'The Wheel Of Desserts' (grand finale) from across continents.

The buffet will be available at a cost of Rs 2399 per person.

The festival will conclude on December 18.

