

ANALYSIS 7
2020 MUST BE ABOUT
IMPLEMENTATION

MONEY 8
GOLD TO SHINE IN 2020; MAY
TOUCH RS 45K PER 10 GRAM

SPORTS 12
KOHLI MAINTAINS TOP
SPOT IN ICC TEST RANKING

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY DECEMBER 31, 2019; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



SATYADEV, NITHYA
MENEN TO STAR IN
PERIOD DRAMA

Page 11

www.dailypioneer.com

ADITYA THACKERAY GETS MAHA CABINET POST

Aditya Thackeray has been made a Cabinet minister along with other Maha Vikas Aghadi heavyweights like former Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, ex-Leader of Opposition in Council Dhananjay Munde, ex-Speaker Dilip Walse-Patil, and NCP spokesperson Nawab Malik. The Cabinet has three women: NCP's Aditi Tatkare (MoS) and Congress' Varsha Gaikwad and Yashomati Thakur, both Cabinet rank. For the first since 2014, the ministry has four Muslims - Shiv Sena's Abdul Sattar Nabi (MoS), NCP's Malik and Hasan Mushrif, and Congress' Aslam Shaikh, all Cabinet rank.



ARMY CHIEF BIPIN RAWAT NAMED FIRST CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

Indian Army chief General Bipin Rawat has been named India's first Chief of Defence Staff, said sources. An official announcement on the same, however, remains awaited. General Rawat was named the CDS just a day before he was to retire from service after completing a full three-year term as the Chief of Army Staff. The Union Cabinet on December 24, approved the CDS post and its charter and duties. The CDS will act as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister on tri-services matters.



BACK TO MARATHI ROOTS, IRISH PM RELISHES KONKANI CUISINE

It was like an extended Christmas and an advance New Year celebration for the 3,500-village folk of Varad in the coastal Konkan region, bound on one side by the Arabian Sea and on the other by the Western Ghats. For, visiting them on Sunday was none other than the Maharashtrian-origin Leo A. Varadkar, the Prime Minister of Ireland, who visited his father's village and spent a night in the family's ancestral home. In June 2017, Varadkar, 40, became the 14th Prime Minister or 'Taoiseach' of Ireland.



INDIAN NAVY BANS SMARTPHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA ON BASES, SHIPS

After the recent arrest of seven navy personnel for allegedly leaking sensitive information to an espionage racket with links to Pakistan, the Indian Navy has issued direction to ban the use of all smartphones and social networking platforms onboard ships and naval bases. "All social networking platforms including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other messengers from here on now will not be allowed at the naval bases and ships," said a senior Indian Navy officer.



AP EAMCET from April 20

Minister for Education A. Adimulapu Suresh on Monday announced that Andhra Pradesh Common Entrance Tests will be conducted a few days prior to TS-CETs. Speaking after releasing the schedule of various common entrance tests that will be conducted in AP, Suresh informed that AP EAMCET will be conducted in the State from April 20 to 24. JNTU-K will organise the examination. APECT will be conducted on April 30, 2020. He said that the schedule was prepared for the convenience of the students and without any clash with the national and other states' schedule.

SBI cuts interest rate on home loans

State Bank of India has again cut its lending rate making it more attractive for borrowers to avail loans from the bank. The quantum of cut is 25 basis points, from 8.05% to 7.8%. This new rate will be effective January 1, 2020. With this reduction, interest rate for existing home loan customers as well as MSME borrowers who have availed loans linked to External Benchmark Based Rate would come down by 25 bps. New home buyers will now get loans at an interest rate starting from 7.90% p.a. (previously at 8.15% p.a.).

Fog disrupts air, rail traffic in north India

The thick blanket of fog resulting in poor visibility in the winter-battered north India has affected the operation of over 300 flights, with around 260 delayed between 6 a.m. to 12 noon, Delhi airport website said on Monday. Besides, another 50 flights scheduled for departure as well as arrival between 12-6 p.m. have been delayed as well. Private airlines IndiGo and Vistara on Monday issued a travel advisory for their passengers saying flights to and from the national capital have been impacted due to bad weather and poor visibility.

Modi launches Twitter campaign on CAA, tweets Sadhguru's clip

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In order to garner people's support on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a Twitter campaign.

He wrote on @narendramodi_in: "#IndiaSupportsCAA because CAA is about giving citizenship to persecuted refugees & not about taking anyone's citizenship away. Check out this hashtag in Your Voice section of Volunteer module on NaMo App for content, graphics, videos & more. Share & show your support for CAA."

The post got 1.3K retweets and 2.7K likes while #IndiaSupportsCAA trended on Twitter with 386K Tweets. BJP leader Meenakshi Lekhi tweeted: "Don't let the power of reason cloud the mind or allow the thinking be hijacked by cruel fanatics. Proud to be an Indian and have a heart to support who continue to suffer in modern times barbarity of Ghazanis, Bukshikans like iconoclasts. #IndiaSupportsCAA."

The office Twitter handle of Union minister Anurag



#IndiaSupportsCAA because CAA is about giving citizenship to persecuted refugees & not about taking anyone's citizenship away. Share & show your support for CAA

Thakur @Anurag_Office tweeted: "Myth buster. Citizenship Amendment Act 2019. #IndiaSupportsCAA. Read this and clear your doubts."

In the wake of ongoing protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Monday tweeted a video clip of Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev and asked people to hear his explanation on the issue. Modi wrote on @narendramodi: "Do hear this lucid explanation of aspects relating to CAA and more by SadhguruJV."

Continued on Page 3



Centre to go ahead with CAA: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Modi government will go ahead with the implementation of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) despite the ongoing protests against it, Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy said on Monday. "No matter how many processions and rallies are taken out, CAA will be implemented at any cost as it is not against any Indian citizen," he said.

The BJP leader slammed the Congress party for anti-CAA protests and alleged that unable to face Prime Minister Narendra Modi politically, it was dividing people in the name of religion by spreading lies about the legislation.

Continued on Page 3

Kerala tops Niti's SDG Index, AP, TS share third place

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kerala retained the top rank while Bihar was adjudged as the worst performer in Niti Aayog's SDG India Index 2019, which evaluates progress of States and Union Territories on social, economic and environmental parameters, as per a report released on Monday.

According to 'SDG India Index 2019', Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim have shown maximum improvement, but states like Gujarat have not shown any progress vis-a-vis 2018 rankings. "Kerala retained its rank as the top state with a score of 70. Chandigarh too maintained its top spot among the UTs with a score of 70."

Himachal Pradesh took the second spot while Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana shared the third spot, the report said.



Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar

Bihar, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh are the worst performing states in this year's Index for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"The United Nations' SDG target of 2030 can never be met without India... We are fully committed to achieving UN's SDG target," Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said at the launch of the report.

Speaking at the event, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said southern states have done well in health.

"West Bengal (rank 14) has also done well in Niti Aayog's SDG Index 2019, but given the education level (in the state), West Bengal should be in top 3 performing states," Kumar added.

Continued on Page 3

Another TDP MLA meets Jagan, showers praise on CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Amidst rumours of MLAs from Visakhapatnam and Prakasam districts quitting the TDP, comes news that Maddali Giri, who was elected from Guntur West Assembly seat, of resigning from the party and getting ready to join the YSRCP. Maddali Giri on Monday visited the CM's camp office along with Minister Vellampalli Srinivas.

After calling on the CM at his camp office here, Maddali Giri showered praises on Jagannathan Reddy, describing him as the man of dedication and perseverance.

He also had special words of appreciation for the YSRCP schemes. Talking to media later, he said that he had called on the CM on the problems prevalent in his Guntur West Assembly constituency. He



TDP MLA Maddali Giri poses with Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and Minister Vellampalli Srinivas at the CM's camp office on Monday.

told the CM that the condition of roads in Guntur was pathetic and sought release of Rs 25 crore for Guntur. He said that the conditions prevailed in the state also figured during the discussions.

Maddali Giri is likely to announce his decision to quit

the TDP and join the YSRCP after receiving the green signal from Jagannathan Reddy.

It may be recalled that Vallabhaneni Vamsi announced his decision to resign from the TDP after calling on the CM.

Continued on Page 3

2 AP doctors go missing in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mystery shrouds the disappearance of two doctors from Andhra Pradesh in Delhi on December 25.

The doctors who have been reported missing were identified as Dr Himabindu, 29, and Dr Dilip Satya, 28.

According to a complaint lodged with the police by Himabindu's husband Dr Sridhar, all of them were products of the medical college at Kurnool.

Dr Dilip has been working as a paediatrician in Chandigarh. He attended a job interview at Puducherry on December 24 and stayed at the residence of Dr Sridhar in Delhi on December 25 while on his way to Chandigarh.

Continued on Page 3

Sabarimala temple opens for Makaravilakku

PNS ■ SABARIMALA

Amid heavy security, the hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala opened on Monday evening for the "Makaravilakku" festival.

The temple had closed on December 27 to mark the culmination of the 41-day mandala pilgrim season.

There was a heavy rush of Ayyappa devotees when the shrine opened at 5 PM.

Chief Priest A K Sudheer Namboothiri opened the temple doors and performed the rituals inside the sanctum sanctorum as well as on the holy 18 steps after which the pilgrims were allowed to have darshan.

Head priest Kandaru

The Makaravilakku will be held on January 15 and the shrine will be closed on January 21

Mahesh Mohanaru oversaw the various rituals.

The Makaravilakku will be held on January 15 and the shrine will be closed on January 21. Chanting swamiam saranam Ayyappa, thousands of devotees thronged the temple after waiting for hours in long queues.

However, no special pujas were held on Monday.

This year it was a peaceful pilgrimage season during the first half.

Farmers challenge legality of GN Rao committee in HC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Rajadhani Rytu Parirakshana Samiti on Monday moved the Andhra Pradesh High Court challenging the legality of the GN Rao Committee and the proposal to shift the state capital from Amaravati.

Counsel appearing on behalf of the Samiti urged the HC to hear the petitions since the government appears to have decided to shift the capital location.

However, the advocate-general told the court that he was yet to receive information from the state government on the matter.

Counsel appearing for the Samiti asked the court to enquire from the advocate-general when was Boston Consulting Group (BCG) appointed, who appointed it and what were the terms of reference. Counsel told the HC that the government in a GO issued on Sunday quoted the BCG report.

The advocate general assured the court that he would be submitting the particulars as soon as he received information from the government.

Door delivery of sand from Jan 2 in Krishna dist

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has decided to start door delivery of sand from January 2 to customers in Krishna district. This facility would be extended in all the districts by January 20. Following a directive by the Chief Minister, APMDCC would stock about 15 lakh tonnes of sand every month for the next four months and about 60 lakh tonnes would be stocked for the upcoming rainy season.

Addressing the media here on Monday, Panchayat Raj Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy said that by January 20, door delivery of sand would be available in every district in the State. "At present, consumption of sand in the State is 80,000 per



Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy

day tonnes and so far, about 9,63,000 tonnes has been stored. The AP Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC) would start door delivery of sand," he said. The Minister said that sand is being extracted from de-silting lands, de-casting lands and from 258 sand reaches.

Continued on Page 3

54,000 APSRTC staff to get government tag from Jan 1

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's landmark decision will translate into reality with the RTC coming into the fold of the State government on Wednesday.

"The dream of 54,000 employees of APSRTC will come true with the New Year ushering in hope and joy," Minister for Transport and I&PR Perni Venkataramaiah said here on Monday.

Congratulating RTC staff on the occasion, he said that Jaganmohan Reddy had witnessed the travails of the RTC staff during his state-wide padayatra and had taken a decision to ameliorate the lot of the employees, though many felt that it was not possible to do so.



On the attack on some media persons during the agitation, the minister said it was unfortunate that journalists themselves were not coming forward to condemn it

The minister said stern action would be taken against private bus operators who charge extra during the Sankranti festival.

He said people can call 8309887955 to complain against private operators who charge exorbitant fares during the festival. With reference to criticism that even the RTC was increasing the fares during the festival, he said there would be no increase in the regular buses, but it was being done only in the case of special buses

that are likely to be plied during the season.

On the attack on some media persons during the agitation, the minister said it was unfortunate that journalists themselves were not coming forward to condemn it. "A number of crows gather if any harm is done to another crow, but it is surprising to see that the journalists are not coming forward to condemn the brutal attack on their fellow scribes."

Continued on Page 3

Pawan questions need for 3 Capitals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan on Monday slammed AP CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy for his moves on setting up three capital cities for Andhra Pradesh, constitution of GN Rao, Boston committees to make recommendations to government on where to set up capital cities. Pawan questioned the need for setting up these committees when CM Jagan, his ministers and other YSRCP leaders are making announcements on capital cities even before the said committees submitted their reports or recommendations.

A decision to this effect was



Pawan Kalyan

taken at the party's meeting at Mangalagiri on Monday. At the meeting, Pawan Kalyan is learnt to have taken feedback over the agitation from the party's top leaders. Already, Jana Sena leaders, including Nadendla Manohar and Pawan Kalyan's elder brother Naga Babu met the farmers' representatives. They handed over a 20-page report to Pawan Kalyan on the situation in Amaravati.

Continued on Page 3

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Paush & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi: Panchami: 04:01 pm

Nakshatram: Shatabhishta: 01:28 am (Next Day)

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 03:03 pm - 04:26 pm

Varjyam: 09:34 am - 10:56 am

Varyyam: NIL

Gulika: 12:18 pm - 01:41 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritkalam: 05:28 pm - 07:15 pm

Abhiji Muhurtham: 11:57 am - 12:40 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 30/19

Humidity: 67%

Sunrise: 06:45

Sunset: 05:52

Current Weather Conditions Updated December 30, 2019 5:00 PM

CAPSULE

'Inculcate new-age learning skills among students'

VIJAYAWADA: Inculcate new-age learning skills among students to stay relevant in the job market, said Sudhakar Lingamaneni, vice-president, Citi Global Markets, Singapore. He was the guest at a Special Invited Talk organised by the Department of Business Administration, PB Siddhartha College of Arts & Science. Addressing the students, he said with the advent of new technologies, the human interventions in various operations have greatly reduced and some of the traditional HR skills also getting obsolete. He advised students to gain knowledge in niche areas using Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Deep Learning and Reinforced Learning to be industry ready. He narrated how machines have taken control of stock trading platforms using algo-trading models. He said the high frequency and high value trades executed for international institutional investors need state of the art technologies and robust management practices. He also explained the way Singapore government leveraged the technology to create high value generating economic models. Rajesh C Jampala, Dean, explained the importance of updating skills and knowledge on continuous basis to stay relevant in the fast changing business environment.

Superfast AC special trains to clear festive rush

VIJAYAWADA: In order to clear extra rush of passengers during Sankranti festival season, 26 Superfast AC special trains will be run between Kakinada town and Lingampalli. Train No 02775 Kakinada town - Lingampalli SF AC special train will depart Kakinada town at 20:10 hrs on January 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 20, 22, 24, 27, 29 and 31, 2020 and arrive in Lingampalli at 07:30 hrs the next day. In return direction, Train No. 02776 Lingampalli - Kakinada town SF AC special train will depart Lingampalli at 19:55 hrs on January 2, 4, 7, 9, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30 and on February 1 and arrive in Kakinada at 07:15 hrs the next day.

Vizag to host Global Healthcare Summit

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam city will be hosting a three-day International Conference of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI)-14th Global Healthcare Summit from January 1.

AAPI is the largest ethnic medical organisation in the United States representing the voice of over 60,000 doctors of Indian Origin practising in America.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, AAPIs President Dr Sudhakar Jonnalagadda said over the past 12 years, AAPI physicians collaborated with several professional medical associations, academic institutions, Government of India and have made significant contributions towards addressing diabetes with the launch of Sevak programme.

AAPI decided to organise its Global Health Care Summit in Vizag in 2021. In all, 500 delegates from USA, Australia, Britain and other countries will participate in the conference.

The focus of the Global Health Summit is an Indian-centric approach with special events such as global impact and India's contribution in providing cost effective medicines, addressing global shortage of healthcare professionals.



- 500 international delegates to participate
- The focus of the Global Health Summit is an Indian-centric approach with special events such as global impact and India's contribution in providing cost effective medicines, addressing global shortage of healthcare professionals
- The Global Health Care Summits have promised to be one with greatest impact and significant contributions towards harnessing the power of international Indian diaspora to bring the most innovative, efficient, cost effective healthcare solutions to India

The Global Health Care Summits have promised to be one with greatest impact and significant contributions towards harnessing the power of international Indian diaspora to bring the most innovative, efficient, cost effective healthcare solutions to India.

This summit will focus the present health situation in

India and international advancement of healthcare. AAPI, founded in 1982, is spearheading legislative, educational, charitable and philanthropic initiatives in Indian and the United States. AAPI serves as an umbrella organisation for more than 150 local chapters.

AAPI is working with the

Government of India in making quality healthcare affordable and accessible to all people of India. AAPI recommitting itself to strengthen its efforts to work towards eradicating tuberculosis (TB) by 2025 in India in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Moreover, AAPI has partnered with TATA Trusts to improve health care in rural India. Nearly, 75% of the poor live in Indian villages and have no access to basic medical care. There is high burden of cancer in India with 1.9 m new cases per year and most cases present at late stages leading to multi-modal and multi-year treatment. More than 50% cancer patients visit the doctor for the first time, at or past the third stage of cancer.

There is significant demand supply gap especially for indigent and low to middle income patients due to limited infrastructure and high cost of care, leading to high waiting times and travel costs further adding to the overall cost of treatment and lowering survival rates. By partnering with TATA Trusts, AAPI physicians and Oncologists help to provide medical, surgical and radiation oncologists to deliver quality cancer care by spending three months in TATA cancer centres in India.

Vijayawada all set for Autocross Championship



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Motorsport is all set to enter Vijayawada as the final of the Indian National Autocross Championship will be held at Pavitra Sangamam on January 10 to 12 in which 64 cars are participating, according to Narla Vamsi of Champions Yacht Club, which is organising the event.

Speaking at the pre-event press conference, he said the motor racing will be held at the 2 km of the parking area of Pavitra Sangamam in which around 10 to 12 curves would be designed for the cars to tackle. "Top racers like Gaurav Gill, Dean Mascarenhas will set the track ablaze".

The driver eligibility for the INAC final was based on performance in the four regional rounds - South Zone, West Zone, North Zone and East Zone. Run is being held under the aegis of the Federation of

Motor Sports Clubs of India and this event is an entry point for many budding drivers to kick start a career in motorsports. The championship is based on a point system".

He said the cars will be allowed to drive a distance of 200 metres at a single stretch before they prepare to tackle a curve. "Two cars will compete in each round with a speed limit of 80 kmph".

Vamsi said efforts were on to spruce up galleries for 10,000 spectators. "Galleries will be properly barricaded and it will be spruced up 30 feet away from the track. We are taking all precautionary steps for the safe conduct of the event, which will witness several nail-biting finishes", said senior rally driver Phalgun Urs, who is in charge of the track designing. "Ambulances, fire tenders and hospital backup are arranged for the event," he

The motor racing will be held at the parking lot of Pavitra Sangamam in which around 10 to 12 curves would be designed for the cars to tackle

Top racers like Gaurav Gill, Dean Mascarenhas will set the track ablaze

The driver eligibility for the INAC final was based on performance in the four regional rounds - South Zone, West Zone, North Zone and East Zone

Run is being held under the aegis of the Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India and this event is an entry point for many budding drivers to kick start a career in motorsports. The championship is based on a point system

added. Vamsi said the cars will enter the city on the trailers and would go through various safety checks before they are allowed to hit the track.

"It is a good opportunity for the motorsport enthusiasts to witness the race and it is held for the first time in Vijayawada. After Amaravati F1H2O Power Boat Racing Championship in 2018, this is the biggest sporting event being held in Vijayawada".

GO issued for ex gratia to kin of deceased weavers

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The State government on Monday issued a GO granting ex gratia to the families of the handloom weavers, who had committed suicides due to financial problems during the previous TDP term in Dharmavaram of Anantapur district.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy during his padayatra had seen the plight

of weavers and promised to come to their rescue once he came to power.

The YSR Nethanna Nestham scheme was launched by the Chief Minister to mark his birthday at Dharmavaram in Anantapur district on December 21. About 85,000 eligible handloom weavers in the State will receive financial assistance of Rs 24,000 annually after the scheme.

Earlier, the Chandrababu



Naidu government had brought in gloom in the lives

of the weavers by not implementing the promises it had made to them during the 2014 elections. The handloom clusters and parks promised by Chandrababu Naidu had remained unfulfilled dreams for weavers.

Similarly, the ex gratia promised by Chandrababu Naidu to the families of weavers, who had committed suicide was not given, leaving the weavers in utter disillusionment and despair. The weavers lost their means of livelihood as the previous government had not sanctioned subsidy on raw silk quoting rules and regulations as a hindrance.

The Jaganmohan Reddy government has issued a GO sanctioning ex gratia to the weavers, who had committed suicide between 2014 and 2019 by releasing an amount of Rs 3, 51, 69,636.

Road works worth Rs 2 cr taken up in VMC limits



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Endowments Velampalli Srinivas and Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner Prasanna Venkatesh took part in the foundation laying programme of CC road works at Division No 29 in the VMC limits on Monday. The road work was taken up with the Corporation funds at an estimated cost of Rs 2 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that VMC authorities have taken initiative to lay roads under West constituency limits as the condition of the roads is bad and creating inconvenience

to the people. Hence, the roads works at Joginagar main road, Brundavan Colony main road and Reliance Mart west road will be developed. He told the officials concerned to complete the road work at the earliest and not to create inconvenience to people.

Later, the minister visited Bhavanipuram lorry stand and said that they would work out possibilities of relocating the bus stand to Iron Mart or Gollapudi. Superintending engineer JV Ramakrishna, executive engineer Rama Rao, health officer Dr Iqbal Hussain, deputy executive engineer Ravi Kumar and others were present.

NTPC-Simhadri to instal FGD tech to check pollution

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

To comply with the new emission norms stipulated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the NTPC Simhadri is installing flue-gas desulphurisation (FGD) technology in its all units (4x500MW) with a financial outlay of Rs 871.50 crore.

The NTPC has entrusted the work of construction, erection and commissioning of the system to General Electric Power India Limited. The commissioning of the system for all four units will be completed by March 2022.

Chief General Manager of NTPC Simhadri V Sudharshan Babu kick-started the construction works with the ceremonial inauguration of the excavation for new chimneys on December 30.

On the occasion, the CGM



Chief General Manager of NTPC Simhadri V Sudharshan Babu performing puja to kick start construction works in Visakhapatnam on Monday

expressed that the new FGD system, besides reducing SOx (oxides of sulphur) levels in the flue-gas, will also open new business avenues like gypsum sale, which is a by-product of the system.

GM (O&M) HC Verma, GM (Tech Services) Surinder Pal Singh Virk, GM (Operation) Sri Krishna and GM (maintenance) Shivam Srivastava were present on the occasion.

Elaborate arrangements for Vaikunta Ekadasi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TTD additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy said that the TTD had unleashed all out coordination of all departments for devotees' darshan on Vaikunta Ekadasi, which falls on January 6.

Addressing a review meeting at Annaiah Bhavan on Monday, the additional executive officer said on December 31 and January 1, the TTD has cancelled all Arjita Sevas and privileged darshans for senior citizens, physically challenged, parents with infants, besides tokens for Sarva Darshan, Divya Darshan and Anga Pradakshina.

He said nearly 5,000 tickets were issued for special darshan online for Vaikunta Dwadasi on January 7, while all other darshans, along with SSD and DD tokens, stand cancelled. Vaikuntadwara darshan will



TTD additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy addresses a review meeting in Tirumala on Monday

commence at 2 am onwards on January 6, while for common pilgrims after 5 am. He said the ghat road would remain open the whole day on January 5 for Vaikunta Ekadasi.

An action plan is being laid down for the distribution of Anna Prasadam to devotees waiting in VQC queue lines,

compartments, and mada street gallery sheds. Nearly three lakh water bottles are kept ready for disbursement on Ekadasi day, he said.

The TTD has plans to roll out Namasankeertana Yagnam from 11 am till midnight on January 5 in the sheds of Narayanagiri Gardens for the

benefit of devotees waiting for Vaikunthadwara Darshan. The artists of HDPP, Annamacharya, Dasa Sahitya Project and SV College of music and dance will perform Govindanam, Vishnusahasra Parayanam and Sankeertans to keep pilgrims engaged in Bhakti Sangeet, the Additional EO added.

Earlier, the additional executive officer reviewed the department wise arrangements and directed Srivari temple, vigilance and security, police to make coordinated efforts to ensure smooth darshan to all devotees.

He also directed officials to organise attractive flower and electrical decorations and keep adequate stock of laddu prasadam and also that the radio and broadcasting department to make proper announcements on all arrangements for devotees.

MRI may predict intelligence level in kids: Study

IANS ■ MOSCOW

Researchers have used ensemble methods based on deep learning 3D analysis networks to answer the global Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) prevision challenge for children.

Importantly, they made predictions for both the fluid intelligence level and the target variable independent from age, gender, brain size or MRI scanner used.

MRI is a common technique used to obtain images of human internal organs and tissues. Scientists wondered whether the intelligence level can be predicted from an MRI brain image.

"Our team develops deep learning methods for computer vision tasks in MRI data

analysis, amongst other things," said study researcher Ekaterina Kondratyeva from Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology (Skoltech) in Russia.

"In this study, we applied ensembles of classifiers to 3D of super precision neural networks: with this approach, one can classify an image as it is, without first reducing its dimension and, therefore, without losing valuable information," said Kondratyeva. The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) database contains a total of over 11,000 structural and functional MRI images of children aged between 9 and 10.

In 2013, NIH launched the first grand-scale study of its kind in adolescent brain



research, Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development, to see if and how teenagers' hobbies and habits affect their further

Skoltech researchers focused on predicting the intelligence level, or the so called fluid intelligence, which characterises the biological abilities of the nervous system and has little to do with acquired knowledge or skills

Importantly, they made predictions for both the fluid intelligence level and the target variable independent from age, gender, brain size or MRI scanner used

brain development. NIH scientists launched an international competition, making the enormous NIH database available to a broad community for the first time ever. The participants were given a task of building a predictive model based on brain images. As a part of the competition, the Skoltech team applied neural networks for

MRI image processing. To do this, they built a network architecture enabling several mathematical models to be applied to the same data in order to increase the prediction accuracy, and used a novel ensemble method to analyse the MRI data.

In their recent study, Skoltech researchers focused on predicting the intelligence level,

or the so called fluid intelligence, which characterises the biological abilities of the nervous system and has little to do with acquired knowledge or skills.

Importantly, they made predictions for both the fluid intelligence level and the target variable independent from age, gender, brain size or MRI scanner used.

The results of the study helped find the correlation between the child's fluid intelligence and brain anatomy. Although the prediction accuracy is less than perfect, the models produced during this competition will help shed light on various aspects of cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of adolescents.

Decade belongs to Narendra Modi, the harbinger of change

The last decade has seen history in the country's political realm rewritten. Till 2014, rule of anarchic, dynastic and political successors, casteism, religionism and mafia continued in the country. Those occupying the position of PM could not be an exception to the dynastic rule. Scams worth several lakhs of crores surfaced and ministers expanded their corrupt kingdom at will, cross-border terrorism raised its ugly head deteriorating the law and order situation in the country.

high road to development and make it stand among the comity of nations. Modi was born in a poor family, sold tea at a railway station, initiated into spiritualism in the Himalayas, worked at the lower-rung in the RSS, grew from position to position in the BJP and served as CM of Gujarat for 15 years. As he appeared on the political horizon of the country, hopes of bright future kindled among the people.

People have been tremendously influenced by Narendra Modi's words, his fluent and spell-binding speeches reflecting sincerity and patriotism, raising 'Modi Modi' slogans wherever he is seen

A new development began to unfold in country's political spectrum since then.

A new development began to unfold in country's political spectrum since then.



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP national secretary

be able to boldly speak about their country, their culture and their religion phasing out the situation where only one religion got priority because of the appeasement politics.

TRULY SPEAKING

ideological direction to the country. That is why his every action became novel.

Crucial decisions taken by him to replace the existing systems with new ones and new culture and to enhance the image of the country affected changes in the country's socioeconomic fabric.

In fact Niti-Aayog replacing the Planning Commission emerged as the organisation that lays down stronger financial policies for the good of the Centre and states.

It strengthened the country's federal structure, eliminated the need for CMs knocking at the Centre's doors for funds. Another example is External Affairs Ministry making India's presence felt across the globe. Every country yearns to have good relations with India. World nations recognised Indian culture and country's spiritual excellence.

Programmes like Ayushman Bhava, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, Rural electrification, Ujjwal Yojana, Swachh Bharat, digital transfer of subsidies eliminating middlemen, construction of national highways, expressways and metro network on a war-footing, GST structure, victories in the realm of space science are some of the examples of Modi's success.

Modi put Pakistan on the defence with surgical strikes and took steps to get the world to isolate Pakistan regarding it as a terrorist country.

In the second half of the last decade, Modi got ministers and systems to work with accountability and discipline.

He strengthened the administrative systems so that the middlemen find it difficult to enter the corridors of power, unlike the previous Congress regime. In one word, Modi introduced good work culture in the country.

CAPSULE

CM reviews land identification for house sites

AMARAVATI: Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday reviewed the identification of land for distribution of house sites to the poor on the Ugadi Day. He asked the officials to expedite the process by touring the districts and conducting review meetings on the targets. He asked officials if they were taking steps to ensure that the identified land was ready for distribution as house-sites. He also asked them if the plots had been marked. He directed officials to constitute special teams, if required, to see to it that the house-sites were distributed to the poor on the Ugadi day itself.

Centre creating rift among people: Sharif

VIJAYAWADA: Legislative Council Chairman Ahmed Sharif alleged that the BJP government at the Centre is trying to hamper the rights of the Muslims in the country by creating differences among the people through CAA, NRC and NPR, which need to be stopped. Sharif was addressing a gathering at the TDP Minority Cell round table organised at MBVK Bhavan here on Monday.

Vizag police gear up to make NY fete incident-free

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Reverellers make grand plans to welcome the New Year by organising or attending the parties and want to enjoy the night with gusto. But, police personnel impose curbs to ensure incident-free celebrations.

As usual this year also, reverellers in city are making plans to celebrate and welcome the New Year, but the city police have made special arrangements to tighten the noose on drunken drivers, rash drivers and also mid-night parties on December 31 night on the city's outskirts and also in parts of Visakhapatnam Agency.

Over 60 special teams would be deployed to keep an eye on the tipsy and rash drivers and the possible rave parties with advanced breath analysers and body worn cameras and also to ensure that crimes and accidents are the minimum during the New Year celebrations.

"We decided to welcome the New Year with a camp fire party and DJ event. It is not possible to host the bonfire party in Vizag city as the policy may clap down. So, we (our friend circle) are going to



Minumuluru near Paderu in Visakhapatnam Agency for the party," said K Viswanath, an M Tech student of Andhra University

As there was no CCTV surveillance at the tourists' places such as Lammasingi, Tajangi and Dallapalle in the district, where the temperature and police vigil is also low, some software professionals, employees with private firms and students from Vizag are heading for the New Year bash.

"The roads in and around Lammasingi was packed with vehicles on Sunday as several tourists visited and it seems to

be the situation will remain same on Monday night (December 31 night) as Lammasingi is the one of the best places for the reverellers," said V Suresh Kumar, a native of Lammasingi.

"We will deploy some teams to strategic places to prevent the possible rave parties and semi-nude parties in Vizag Agency," said Vizag Rural Police A Babuji. Our teams will also regulate the traffic on the Lammasingi ghat roads on December 31 night to nab the motorists, who indulge in illegal bike racings and others," he added.

City police made special arrangements to tighten the noose on drunken drivers, rash drivers and also mid-night parties on December 31 night on the city's outskirts and also in parts of Visakhapatnam Agency

Over 60 special teams would be deployed to keep an eye on the tipsy and rash drivers and the possible rave parties with advanced breath analysers and body worn cameras and also to ensure that crimes and accidents are minimum during the NY fete

"We decided to welcome the NY with a camp fire party and DJ event. It is not possible to host the bonfire party in Vizag as the policy may clap down. So, we are going to Minumuluru in Visakhapatnam Agency for the party," said K Viswanath, an M Tech student of AU

It's for AP government to decide on capital: GVL

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

In a shot in the arm for the Jaganmohan Reddy government, BJP National Spokesperson GVL Narasimha Rao has said that it is for the State government to decide on the location of the capital.

Speaking to mediapersons here on Monday, he made it clear that the Centre would not intervene in the State government's decision to shifting of the capital from Amaravati. However, the Centre would oblige the State government if it sought any suggestion in this regard.

"What I have said about our party's stand on the issue is final. If other leaders of the party express different views, they are their personal views," he said.



Narasimha Rao's views come at a time when BJP leaders were making contradictory statements on the 3-capital concept put forth by the State government. The issue has rocked the Amaravati region with the farmers taking to streets for the past two weeks. It may be recalled that on

the last day of the winter session of the Assembly, Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy had hinted that the State would have three Capitals at Amaravati (Legislative), Visakhapatnam (Executive) and Kurnool (Judicial).

Subsequently, it was assumed that the Chief Minister would formally announce his decision during the Cabinet meeting on December 27, but it was not to be. Instead, he announced that a High Power Committee would be constituted to study the GN Rao Committee report and the BCG report to be tabled on January 3. Later, the government announced that it would take a final decision after the High Power Committee submitted its report within 21 days.

VIZAB METRO PROJECT

Govt to appoint new consultant to prepare revised DPR

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government on Monday decided to appoint a new consultant for preparing a revised detailed project report for the Visakhapatnam Metro Rail project that has been hanging in balance for the past five

years. The government also decided to cancel the single bid received from Essel Infra and Consortium for developing the 42.55-km project in public-private partnership mode at a cost of Rs 8,300 crore.

"The bidder did not offer

much cost reduction. Moreover, the scope of the project has changed substantially in view of the new requirements suggested by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy," Municipal Administration and Urban Development Secretary J Syamala Rao said.

Accordingly, the government has decided to appoint a new consultant for preparing a revised DPR, he said. The Visakhapatnam Metro Rail project was mooted in 2014 in accordance with the AP Reorganisation Act and the Centre gave in principle

approval in 2015. As per the original plan it was supposed to be completed by 2018. But, the previous TDP government dilly-dallied on the project for more than two years by which time the Centre came out with the Metro Rail Policy, 2017.

Door delivery of sand from Jan 2 in Krishna dist



Continued from Page1

As many as 13 sand stock points are facing online issues due to repeat orders from some buyers and this door delivery system would overcome such issues.

"From September 5, the date of implementation of the new sand policy till now, about 4,37,000 tonnes of sand has been supplied in the State," he said, adding that the scarcity was due to failure of previous TDP government in planning and managing the stock. Sand mafia was prevalent in TDP term which is why the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had fined the TDP government Rs 100 crore, he said. Unlike the previous government, the present administration under Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is keen on

transparency in sand supply in the State without harming the environment. The government would call NGT to show that the new sand policy does not harm the environment, the minister said.

He also said that of the 444 check posts in the State, about 55 check posts in three to four districts were not needed. The construction of the remaining 381 check posts has been completed and others are about to be completed by January 9.

"As per the Chief Minister's order, the check posts would be opened by January 9," Ramachandra Reddy said.

He said that "A command control room under APMDCC would keep track on sand supply vehicles and the control room could be accessed from the CM camp office as well."

Modi launches Twitter campaign on CAA, tweets Sadhguru's clip

Continued from Page1

"He provides historical context, brilliantly highlights our culture of brotherhood. He also calls out the misinformation by vested interest groups. #IndiaSupportsCAA."

The post got 8.2K retweets and 18.6K likes as hundreds of Twitterati tweeted their support for CAA.

One supporter in reply to @narendramodi and @SadhguruJV wrote: "The things he is speaking are correct. #IndiaSupportsCAA."

One user claimed that Mahatma Gandhi had said on September 26, 1947 in a public rally that Hindus and Sikhs living in Pakistan could migrate to India if they did not wish to remain in that country.

"No need to worry about those who shout slogan of #PakistanZindabad and ruining the Constitution of India, selling the ethos and culture of India, dividing India on the basis of religion...."

A tweet read: "It seems they are not protesting against the law, they are waging an all-out war to destabilize the country!"

Centre to go ahead with CAA

Continued from Page1

He said the opposition party was behind those resorting to violence and creating law and order problems. Addressing a meeting organized by BJP in support of CAA here on Monday, he also warned that Modi government will not be a mute spectator to public property being vandalized.

Defending Uttar Pradesh police, he said the job of the police was to maintain law and order and they had nothing to do with politics. He also praised Yogi government for its handling of the situation and for making vandals pay for the damaged public property.

He claimed that 250 policemen in Uttar Pradesh were injured in the violence and 58 of them received gunshot injuries.

He questioned silence of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao and other opposition leaders on stone pelting and arson during the protests. He said some so-called intellectuals, some parties and organizations were doing a false

propaganda over CAA to malign the government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He alleged that these forces were provoking people and creating fear among Muslims by spreading lies that they will be sent to Pakistan and Bangladesh. He claimed that even some places of worship were being used for this propaganda. The Central minister claimed that CAA is not aimed at snatching citizenship of any Indian but to give citizenship to minorities persecuted in Islamic countries' Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

He said after the Partition both Indian and Pakistan had agreed to look after their respective minorities without any discrimination, but Islamabad went back on the agreement and persecuted the minorities by forceful conversions. "The population of minorities in Pakistan has come down to three per cent from 30 per cent earlier," he said. Reddy said members of minorities from these countries migrated to India 30-40 years ago and were living in miserable conditions.

'CM will render justice to Amaravati farmers'

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy exuded confidence that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy will render justice to the agitating Amaravati farmers.

Speaking to reporters here on Monday, he said

Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu had cheated the farmers for his selfish ends. All the three regions in the State would register progress after decentralisation of governance. "We are facing problems only due to centralisation of development in Hyderabad. This is the reason why the experts have

suggested that decentralisation of governance be done," he added.

After the High Power Committee's report was submitted to the government, a decision would be taken on the capital issue, Peddireddy said and alleged that Naidu was acting only for the development of one region.

Another TDP MLA meets Jagan...

Continued from Page1

Though he did not join the ruling YSRC, he had asked the Speaker of the Assembly to regard him as a special member. In 2019 Assembly polls, YSRC won 151 seats while TDP managed to secure only 23. The TDP has lost Vallabhaneni Vamsi. The lone MLA of Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena - Rapaka Vara Prasad - is also speaking in support of the YSRC. At a time when the issue of change of state capital from Amaravati is rocking the state, having triggered protests from farmers of villages in the Amaravati capital region, a TDP MLA of the area calling on the CM has assumed political significance.

Kerala tops Niti's SDG Index, AP, TS share third place

Continued from Page1

According to the report, India's composite score improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019 with major success in water and sanitation, power and industry.

However, nutrition and gender continue to be problem areas for India, requiring more focussed approach from the government.

The report said while three out of five states in the top spots perform equal to or better than the country average on 12 goals, the other two states do

the same on 11 goals. "Only three states were placed in the category of Front Runners (with a score in the range 65-99, including both) in 2018 - Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

"In 2019, five more states joined this league - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Sikkim and Goa, taking the total tally to eight," it noted.

With regard to poverty reduction, states which have done well include Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim.

POWER TO JAGAN

AMARAVATI CONUNDRUM MARKS 2019



The Jaganmohan Reddy-led YSR Congress Party storming to power in Andhra Pradesh with a landslide win, its sweeping moves, some of them controversial and the uncertainty over the future of state capital Amaravati dominated the events during 2019. The crushing defeat of the Telugu Desam Party headed by N Chandrababu Naidu in the simultaneous elections to the state Assembly and the Lok Sabha changed the political scene in the state as it completed a five year journey after bifurcation. Riding on a huge anti-incumbency wave, the YSRCP bagged 151 seats in the 175-member Assembly and won 22 out of the 25 Lok Sabha seats, decimating the opposition. The TDP could win just 23 Assembly and three Lok Sabha seats while actor Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena failed to make any impact, winning just one seat. Pawan Kalyan himself faced humiliation in both the Assembly constituencies he contested from. By defeating Naidu, a leader with 40 years in politics, Jagan fulfilled his long cherished dream of becoming the Chief Minister. An eight year long wait ended for the young leader as many voted for him as they saw in him YS Rajasekhara Reddy, his father

and mass leader who served as the Chief Minister in undivided Andhra Pradesh. Promising to set a trend for the entire country in providing best governance, Jagan took an unprecedented step by naming five deputy chief ministers, representing mostly from backward sections of the society. Undeterred by the state's financial woes, Jagan announced a slew of sops for the welfare of the poor and weaker sections to fulfil his poll promises. Taking a bold step, he started imposing prohibition in phases. Beginning with the closure of over 40,000 illegal liquor outlets, the government took over the retail liquor business and cut down the number of shops and bars to discourage consumption of liquor. He promised that in the final phase, liquor will be confined to five-star hotels. The sporadic post-poll clashes between YSRCP and TDP continued in parts of the state for 4-5 months. The main opposition accused the government of targeting TDP leaders and cadres by booking false cases against them. The YSRCP government not only reversed several decisions taken by



Jagan with Mother Vijayamma, (behind) wife Bharathi

the previous government but targeted Naidu. It dismantled 'Praja Vedika' a meeting hall abutting Naidu's house in Amaravati. This government structure was built when Naidu was the chief minister and Jagan declared that this is the beginning of the

drive against illegal constructions. Naidu was also served a notice to vacate the house alleging that he was living in a house built illegally on the banks of the Krishna river. The TDP accused Jagan of acting with vengeance. It also termed him 'the demolition man'. The change of guard had the biggest impact on Amaravati, the brainchild of Naidu. All the construction work in the capital, envisaged as a world class city by Naidu, came to a halt with Jagan deciding to review them. His allegation that Naidu and those close to him resorted to insider trading in Amaravati by buying land at cheap rates before announcing the state capital and conflicting statements issued by his ministers raised a question mark on the future of the capital city. While the Jagan government claims

the three capitals idea is aimed at ensuring decentralized development, the TDP accused it of political vendetta. The main opposition believes that Jagan is doing this just because Amaravati is Naidu's brainchild. Jagan scrapped the sand policy of the previous government and this coupled with floods led to severe sand shortage, paralyzing the construction industry especially in and around Amaravati. Suicide by more than 20 construction workers due to lack of work for several weeks provided a chance to the depleted opposition to bounce back by launching public protests. In another revolutionary move, Jagan decided to introduce English as the medium of instruction in all government-run schools, replacing Telugu and Urdu. The Opposition slammed him with some leaders, especially from the BJP, seeing it as a part of his plan to promote Christianity. Jagan, himself a Christian, came under attack from the BJP for increasing subsidy for Haj and also

Christian pilgrims visiting Jerusalem and for announcing a monthly honorarium to pastors. The sale of bus tickets in Tirupati with advertisements of Haj and Jerusalem yatra was also seen as a conspiracy to encourage proselytisation in Hinduism's holy place. Jagan also decided to review Power Purchase Agreements signed with renewable power producers during the TDP rule. His argument was that the state would have to bear the high cost of wind and solar power for 25 years. Despite repeated requests from the power developers and the union government, Jagan did not yield to pressure. The new government also took an unprecedented step by reserving 75 per cent jobs in all industries for the locals. The move drew criticism with the apprehension in some quarters that this could hamper the flow of investments into the state. The year also saw the Special CBI Court in Hyderabad dismissing Jagan's petition for exemption from personal appearance before the court during the hearings of the alleged illegal assets case.

LONG CHERISHED DREAM

- By defeating Naidu, a leader with 40 years in politics, Jagan fulfilled his long cherished dream of becoming the Chief Minister. An eight year long wait ended for the young leader as many voted for him as they saw in him YSR
- Promising to set a trend for the entire country in providing best governance, Jagan took an unprecedented step by naming five deputy chief ministers, representing mostly from backward sections of the society

JAGAN ORDERED A REVIEW OF ALL MAJOR PROJECTS, WHERE THERE ARE ALLEGATIONS OF IRREGULARITIES IN GIVING TENDERS DURING THE TDP RULE. HE CANCELLED A FEW TENDERS AND WENT FOR A PROCESS CALLED 'REVERSE TENDERING' TO SAVE PUBLIC MONEY

RISE OF TELANGANA DIALECT

After bifurcation, filmmakers gave priority to the language and places like Warangal, Bansuwada, Armoor and more are now being preferred for their natural beauty, reports V SATEESH REDDY

Mahesh Babu spoke in Telangana dialect in his 2011-hit 'Dookudu'. In the movie he essayed the roles of an MLA and police officer and used both Telangana and neutral Telugu dialects, based on the characters. This movie set the cash registers at the box office ringing and inspired many to use the dialect in their movies. Actor Srihari used Telangana lingo in various movies like Dhee, King and Brindavanam. Actress Aksha also did so in Kandireega. Some movies made during the separate Telangana movement like Jai Bolo Telangana, Komaram Bheem and more have the dialect as the platform. With introducing many actors and directors who belong to Telangana, dialect has been given top priority. Tharun Bhascker Dhassayam's Pelli Chooopulu opened the gates for more Telangana movies. It went on to become a super hit at the box office. Shekar Kammula's Fida which was shot at beautiful locations in the Nizamabad district proved the region has some scenic locales that look stunning on screen. No one can forget the Sai Pallavi's dialogues like 'Badcow balisindara bokkalarugutay' for a long time. With the movie, Sai Pallavi became a familiar face to Telugu audience. Puri Jagannadh's recent hit iSmart Shankar is all about Hyderabad slang. Also, not to forget the praises heaped for Gaddalakonda Ganesh which

DURING THE 1980S AND 1990S, TELANGANA DIALECT WAS LIMITED TO VILLAINS AND IN SOME FILMS, CHARACTERS IN COMIC ROLES. FILMMAKERS ALWAYS MAINTAINED A NEUTRAL VIJAYAWADA-GUNTUR DIALECT

was set in Telangana and the accent Varun Tej pulled off has opened doors for many actors to not hesitate using such dialect. The latest buzz is that Naga Chaitanya may use the same dialect in his next with Shekhar Kammula. Senior actor Ananda Chakrapani, who recently essayed the role of a father in Malleham, says, "After Maa Bhoomi, I acted in Malleham, a gap of almost 30 years. The view of filmmakers has changed after state formation. Many youngsters who come from Telangana region are including many cultures, traditions and slang of the region in movies and are getting great response. Malleham is a pure Telangana movie according to slang, characters and background. It is good sign that our Telangana

movies are accepted by Andhra people." Chakrapani said that many Andhra filmmakers are also trying to make movies in Telangana dialect. "Telangana has many great stories and they are yet to be presented on screen. Now I'm working with Shekar Kammula's next movie with Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi. We are presently shooting at Pipri village near Armoor town of Nizamabad district. I got offers to act in 15 movies after Malleham." Mamidi Harikrishna, director, Department of Language and Culture, Government of Telangana, was recently selected as national poet from Telugu for the Symposium of Poets 2020 organised by All India Radio. The poem titled Panduga (festival) will be translated into 22 Indian Languages and broadcast on AIR. Mamidi Harikrishna says, "Cinema is all about entertainment and cinema people wants new things in movies."



The year that Andhra economy would like to forget

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

While the rest of the country reeled due to the economy slowing down, the problem was far more acutely felt in Andhra Pradesh, thanks to the elections and the new government in the State holding up the projects sanctioned by its predecessor in the name of reviewing them to bring transparency. Earlier, the state had one of India's fastest growing economies. GDP expanded by an average of more than 13 per cent annually between 2011 and 2016, and by 11.2 per cent in 2017, and total GDP now stands at about \$125bn. The state attracted FDI inflows totalling \$18.47bn between April 2000 and March 2019, according to India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. However, in the first quarter of 2019, the TDP-led state government, which was concentrating on drawing investments since the time it came to power in 2014, switched its focus to social welfare projects, doling out freebies as the elections neared. The schemes, with plans to credit

AT THE START OF THE EYAR, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ADOPTED A WAIT AND WATCH APPROACH IN VIEW OF ELECTIONS AND SOME EXIT POLLS PREDICTING A CLOSE FIGHT BETWEEN THE TDP AND YSRCP

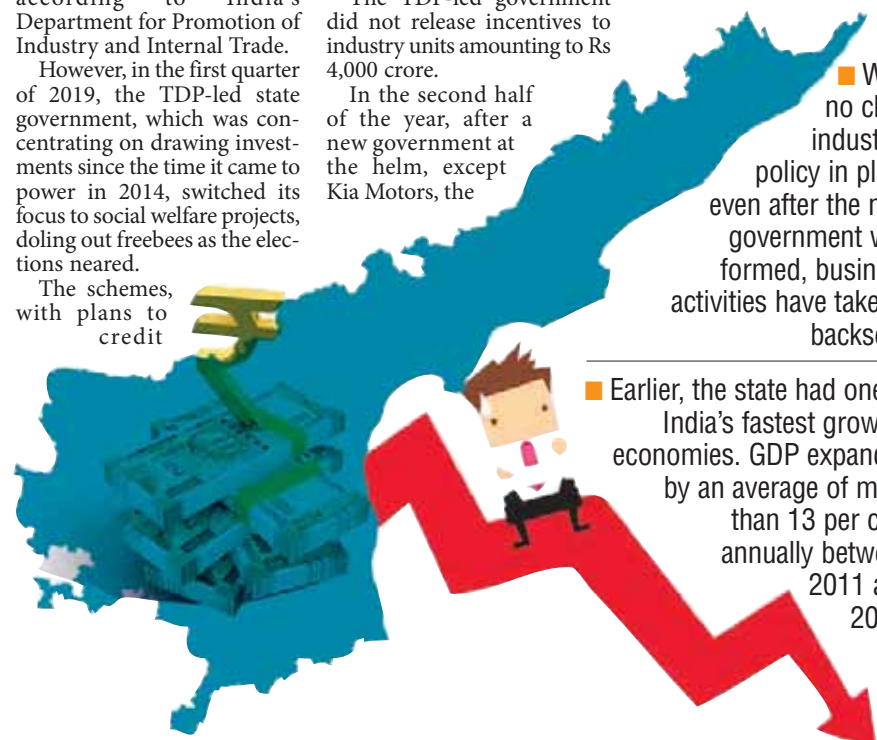
cash to the bank accounts of the farmers and women directly, were some of the doles announced by the state government just before the elections. The government did not show much interest in business activities. Meanwhile, the business community adopted a wait and watch approach in view of elections and some exit polls predicting a close fight between the TDP and YSRCP. The TDP-led government did not release incentives to industry units amounting to Rs 4,000 crore. In the second half of the year, after a new government at the helm, except Kia Motors, the

promised big ticket projects like Adani Data Centre worth Rs 70,000 crore in Vizag and electronics manufacturing hub in Tirupati by Reliance Industries with a promise of investing Rs 15,000 crore did not take shape. There was also buzz that the two industry giants may shelve the projects after the new government sought their detailed investment plan to avail the promised lands and invest-

With no clear industrial policy in place even after the new government was formed, business activities have taken a backseat.

Earlier, the state had one of India's fastest growing economies. GDP expanded by an average of more than 13 per cent annually between 2011 and 2016.

ments. Moreover, the state government held up all the projects with a budget of over Rs 5 crore. Sand scarcity also stopped the construction sector in its tracks. IT Minister M Goutham Reddy maintains that the big projects would take off and the industries are keen in it. According to him, the TDP Government had allocated 136 acres of land near Tirupati to the Reliance group without verifying the plans properly as most of the land parcels were caught up in legal tangle. Hence, the state government had written to the group that alternative lands would be allocated elsewhere for the project in the same area. "Many of the issues we owe to the legacy of the previous government. We assumed charge only months ago and we are sorting things out one by one," he said. On Adani Data project, Goutham Reddy said: "We have asked the group to come up with a clear investment plan so that land parcels could be allocated in a phased manner. The group is very interested to set up its data centre in Vizag." Citing the reason behind thoroughly going into the proposed projects, he said the allocation of lands to industries blindly without verifying their credentials had resulted in land crunch. Consequently, the state government is left with not enough land bank to allocate to genuine players. Former president of AP Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation, G. Sambasiva Rao said the year was not an encouraging one for the industry in AP.



SHORT READS

5 inter-state smugglers arrested with 67 bovines

JAMMU: Five inter-state smugglers were arrested and 67 bovines were seized in two separate incidents here, officials said on Monday. Based on a tip off, police teams intercepted four trucks at Jhajjar Kotli and Nagrota areas, and seized 67 bovines which were being smuggled to Kashmir Valley on Sunday night, they said. Those arrested were identified as Mudissar Ahmed, Sahr and Hamid, residents of Kashmir, Javed, a resident of Jammu, and Nazeer, a native of Uttar Pradesh, the officials said, adding that a case under relevant sections was registered.

AAP leader Guggan Singh joins BJP

NEW DELHI: AAP leader Guggan Singh, who was the party's North West Delhi candidate in the Lok Sabha polls, returned to the BJP on Monday. Singh joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Prakash Javadekar and Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari, ahead of the assembly polls in the national capital. Javadekar is also the BJP's assembly election in-charge in Delhi. Singh had quit the BJP and had joined the AAP in July 2017. The Dalit leader was defeated by BJP's Hans Raj Hans by over 5.9 lakh votes in the Lok Sabha elections for the reserved seat. Previously, he was elected as MLA from Bawana in 2013 on a BJP ticket.

CBI takes over probe in death case of IIT-M student

NEW DELHI: The CBI has taken over the investigation in the case involving the death of Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) student Fathima Lathief, officials said on Monday. The Special Crime Branch of the agency's Chennai unit re-registered the FIR of the local police on December 27 and took over the investigation in the matter. Hailing from Kollam in Kerala, Lathief was a first-year student of the humanities stream (five-year integrated MA programme) in IIT-Madras. Her body was found hanging from a fan in her hostel room on November 9, officials said. The case was earlier being probed by the Kotturpuram police of Chennai and later transferred to the CCB. The investigation was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) when her parents Abdul Lathief and Sajitha, along with a delegation of Kerala MPs, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah here on December 5 and sought justice for their daughter. Fathima's family had found her suicide notes on her mobile phone.

Caste discrimination still a cause for concern: V-P

PNS ■ VARKALA (KER)

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu on Monday said though the country has made significant strides of progress on the economic and technological front, increasing cases of discrimination based on caste, community and gender are still a cause for great concern.

Ending caste discrimination was the need of the hour, he added.

The caste system in the country is a "vicious cycle" and the India of the future must be "caste-less and class-less", he said here inaugurating the 87th Sivagiri Pilgrimage Meet at Sivagiri Mutt, located over 45 km away from the state capital.

He urged religious heads of churches, mosques and temples to work towards eradicating discrimination on the basis of caste.

Naidu said Sree Narayana Guru, founder of the Mutt, was a great saint and revolutionary humanist who had boldly rejected the caste system and all other divisive tendencies that turn people against each other.

"Though India has made



significant strides of progress on the economic and technological front, I fear that there are pockets in the nation where social evils persist," he said.

"We live in times of turbulence. Increasing cases of discrimination based on caste, community and gender are a cause for great concern. It is time for us to retrospect and take pragmatic steps," the Vice President said.

Stating that the country should be a safe space for diversity and dissent to thrive in, he said the notion of the 'other' should be dispelled.

"The nation we aim to build must have a place for everyone to reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives by providing equal opportunities to one and all," he said.

Though the Constitution has already criminalised the abhorrent and inhuman practice of untouchability and the government can make laws in this regard, the implementation of these laws in "letter and spirit" depends a great deal on the mind-set of the society.

"The movement to dispel the caste system must come within the heart and mind of soci-

Sree Narayana Guru was a great saint and revolutionary humanist who had boldly rejected the caste system and all other divisive tendencies

ety. It must be an intellectual revolution, a compassionate revolution, a humanitarian revolution," he said.

Hailing Guru's life and teachings, Naidu said coming to Sivagiri Mutt has been a deeply spiritual experience for him.

"Sree Narayana Guru was a great saint, social reformer, philosopher and revolutionary humanist. His life and teachings have crossed the borders of our country and have touched lives and inspired people all across the world," he said.

The Vice President noted that Guru's teachings are of significant contemporary relevance, especially in the context of our efforts to promote social justice.

Ajit Pawar sworn in Dy CM as Uddhav expands Maha Cabinet

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday expanded his council of ministers by inducting 26 Cabinet and 10 ministers of state, including NCP leader Ajit Pawar who was sworn in as deputy chief minister.

The expansion took place more than a month after the Thackeray-led Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government took charge of the state.

The 36 ministers sworn in on Monday include 10 Cabinet and four ministers of state of the NCP, eight Cabinet and four MoS of Shiv Sena, eight Cabinet and two MoS of the Congress.

With this, NCP leads with 12 Cabinet ministers and four MoS, the Shiv Sena has 10 Cabinet ministers and four MoS while the Congress has 10 Cabinet ministers and two MoS.

The state now has 43 ministers, including the CM. Ajit Pawar was sworn in as deputy chief minister, while former Maharashtra chief minister and senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan and Yuva Sena chief Aaditya Thackeray were among the Cabinet ministers who took oath.

Pawar was sworn in to the post for the second time in just over a month.



Ajit Pawar was sworn in as Deputy CM, while former Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan and Yuva Sena chief Aaditya Thackeray were among those who were sworn in

Earlier, Pawar took oath as deputy CM on November 23 after he rebelled against the NCP and joined hands with the BJP. However, he resigned on November 26, leading to collapse of the three-day Devendra Fadnavis government, out of the new council of ministers. Instead, it included allies Shankarrao Gadakh (of Krantikari Shetkari Paksha) as Cabinet minister, and Rajendra Patil Yedravkar (Independent) and Bachhu Kadu (Prahar Janshakti Party) as ministers of state.

former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan did not find place in Thackeray's ministry.

Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly inducted ministers in the Vidhan Bhavan (state legislature) premises.

The Shiv Sena kept its senior leaders Ramdas Kadam and Divakar Raote, who were ministers in the previous Devendra Fadnavis-led government, out of the new council of ministers.

Instead, it included allies Shankarrao Gadakh (of Krantikari Shetkari Paksha) as Cabinet minister, and Rajendra Patil Yedravkar (Independent) and Bachhu Kadu (Prahar Janshakti Party) as ministers of state.

Novel 'invisible ink' may help detect fake currency

PNS ■ GREATER NOIDA

Scientists at Shiv Nadar University here have developed a low-cost security ink that may help detect counterfeit currency, and could be employed in official documents and medical diagnosis.

The new ink, described in the peer-reviewed Journal of Physical Chemistry C, offers improved security features compared to existing inks that are multi-component and, therefore, more expensive, the researchers said.

These materials can be used in other applications, such as security signs, emergency route signs, traffic signage, in addition to medical diagnosis, and background-independent bio emitting probes, they said.

"Our white security ink is made from cheaper, organic compounds that can be used in daylight as they show white emission with afterglow feature covering visible range of the spectrum (400-700 nanometres) under UV light exposure," Debdas Ray, a professor at Shiv Nadar University, told PTI.

"These single component security inks give better stability, colour reproducibility and simple device fabrication over the multi-component security inks that are costly, toxic and work under different back-



It takes only 45 minutes to develop low-cost security ink that may help detect counterfeit currency, and could be employed in official documents and medical diagnosis

ground," Ray said.

To prepare an ink, these compounds can be mixed with commercially available cheaper transparent polymers in organic solvent or other glue-like materials, according to the researchers.

It takes only 45 minutes to develop this ink which costs around Rs. 1000 per gram, the researchers said.

Any characters of interest, such as symbols, pictures, shapes, bar code, etc. can be written on the document i.e. a

white background to provide additional security, they said.

"We can think about additional security in the bank note, official documents, defence security, etc," Ray noted.

After writing the characters, the document can be stored in daylight as the written characters will be invisible due to their transparent colour.

In order to view the characters by naked eye, the document needs to be simply exposed to UV-light.

IIT-K Prof. to be forcibly retired

PNS ■ KANPUR (UP)

A senior professor in the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT-K), facing charges of sexual harassment of a foreign student, will now be given compulsory retirement.

A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the board of governors over the weekend. This will be the first time in the history of IIT-K that such a decision has been taken.

According to sources, the incident took place in September this year when the foreign student submitted a complaint that the professor in the civil engineering department had been sexually harassing her.

The IIT administration initially tried to suppress the issue and did not take any action for a week. The victim then forwarded her complaint to the women's cell and also to her Embassy.

After the intervention of the Embassy, the IIT official set up a probe. Other foreign students, faculty members and employees were questioned and CCTV footage was also screened.

After a three-month long inquiry held at various levels, the reports indicted the accused professor.

'No to CAA, NRC' rangoli at DMK chief Stalin's residence

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Expressing solidarity with 'ra-ngoli protesters' against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the entrance of DMK chief M K Stalin's house here sported a traditional rangoli saying no to the contentious law.

Alongside the rangoli known as 'kolam' in Tamil, a word was drawn which said "vendam (don't need/no) CAA-NRC."

A similar kolam greeted visitors at the residence of late M Karunanidhi here.

Women who drew rangoli against the CAA, meanwhile, called on Stalin at the party headquarters here to thank him for supporting them.

In a tweet, the DMK chief mocked at the ruling AIADMK saying it was "servile" to the Centre and acted against even those drew rangoli since it did not want the Union government to be "offended" even by "flour" used for drawing kolam.

The young men and women involved in the rangoli protest visited Stalin.



Cong to observe 'hunger strike' on NY in protest against CAA

NEW DELHI: The Congress' Delhi unit on Monday said it will observe a 12-hour "hunger strike" on New Year in protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), economic slowdown and unemployment. The "hunger strike" will be observed at Connaught Place starting 6 pm

on Tuesday. "There is anger among the people over the CAA. The entire country is reeling under slowdown and unemployment. People in unauthorised colonies have been deceived. There's no reason to celebrate the New Year," said Delhi Congress' campaign committee chairman Kirli Azad.

J&K HC opens jobs for candidates from all over India

PNS ■ JAMMU

In a first step of its kind, opening the state employment in the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh for candidates from across the country after nullification of Article 370, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court has invited applications from eligible candidates from all over India to fill 33 vacancies with it.



Following scrapping of Article 370, there had been demands for a domicile certificate or some legal restrictions on the purchase of land by outsiders

The 33 vacant posts of non-gazetted officials include those of senior scale stenographer, junior scale stenographer, steno typist, compositor, electrician and driver.

The advertisement to fill the vacancies was issued by the J&K High Court's Registrar General Sanjay Dhar on December 26 with the last date for submission of applications being January 31, 2020.

Following nullification of the Article 370 on August 5, there had been demands from various quarters, especially in the Jammu region and Union Territory of Ladakh, carved out of the erstwhile state of J&K after its bifurcation into two UTs, for a domicile certificate or some legal restrictions on the purchase of land by outsiders as well as their

appointments in government jobs.

"The application forms shall be received by the concerned principal district judges of the UTs of J&K and Ladakh within whose jurisdiction the applicant resides against the proper receipts duly stamped.

"The applicants who do not belong to the UTs of J&K and Ladakh shall submit their application to the Registrar General, J&K High Court, Jammu," the advertisement read.

Ancient Kerala church opens doors to Muslims for prayers

PNS ■ KOCHI

Opening a new chapter in the history of communal harmony in Kerala, an ancient church in nearby Kothamangalam opened its gates to hundreds of Muslims, who were participating in an anti-CAA protest, to offer prayers.

"I could experience the real spirit of India when authorities of an ancient church in Kothamangalam provided us space to offer Maghrib



Namaz," Sayyid Munavvar Ali Shihab Thangal, an influential spiritual leader of Kerala Muslims, who led the namaz, told PTI.

The call for Maghrib Namaz (prayers offered after sunset)

No one forced to attend Sunburn: Minister on deaths

PNS ■ PANAJI

Even as opposition parties hit out at the Goa government over the death of three tourists after collapsing at the Sunburn Electronic Dance Music (EDM) Festival, state Culture Minister Govind Gawade on Monday said no one forced people to attend the event.

The Congress alleged that drugs were "openly sold" at the venue and demanded that permission for the EDM festival be revoked and an inquiry be conducted.

The Goa Forward Party (GFP) sought a CBI probe in the deaths.

Three tourists died in the last



three days after collapsing at the festival venue at Vagator beach in North Goa district. Asked about criticism of the government for allowing the

event in the state, Gawade said, "The government is not forcing the youth to go and attend the Sunburn festival. They go on their own. No one

On Friday, two tourists from Andhra Pradesh collapsed after feeling uneasy while standing outside the festival venue. They were declared brought dead at a hospital

is forced to go there."

The three-day Sunburn festival concluded on Sunday.

On Friday, two tourists from Andhra Pradesh collapsed after feeling uneasy while standing

outside the festival venue. They were taken to a hospital where doctors declared them dead, police said.

The postmortem was conducted and the opinion on the cause of death was reserved as the viscera was sent for further forensic examination, they said.

On Sunday night, another tourist from Bengaluru complained of easiness at the venue and later died, minutes after being rushed to a hospital, they said.

Gawade said the government was not responsible for such a massive crowd at the festival.

"We are not distributing any passes to anyone. It is the

music enthusiasts who like to go there, they do it out of their own wish," the minister said.

He said the state government has always been promoting local culture and music through different events.

"When we speak of local culture, we also include western culture, which is taught in government-run institutions like the Kala Academy," Gawade said.

State Tourism Minister Manohar Ajaonkar could not be contacted for his comments.

Goa Pradesh Youth Congress Committee president Varad Mardolkar alleged that drugs were "openly sold" at the event.

Sporting success

As the 2010s come to a close, we should celebrate a great decade for Indian sport and look forward to the 2020s



The 2010s began with a bang for Indian sport with its success at the 2011 Cricket World Cup, whose finals were held at the

Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. The 2012 Summer Olympics held in London also saw India's best-ever haul with six medals, albeit we finished without a Gold. Things have been a bit disappointing since then. While the Indian men's cricket team tops the world rankings in Test series, it has faltered at the semi-final stages of the subsequent One-Day International World Cups and has also failed to win a second T20 World Cup to follow up from the 2007 win. However, the seismic impact of the 2007 win was felt in the creation of the Indian Premier League (IPL), which in the past decade has cemented its position as the leading franchise-based T20 tournament in the world. The Indian women's team has also enjoyed great success over the past decade with their appearance in the finals of the International Cricket Council's women's World Cup. But while this decade has cemented the adage that "India is cricket and cricket is India", it has also seen the emergence of new professional leagues that have enjoyed success as well as the rise of new champions in other sports. The premier Kabaddi League is a genuine success story, particularly in a traditionally Indian sport. On the flip side though, India's failure to win both kabaddi Gold medals, particularly in the men's competition at the 2018 Asian Games, can be attributed in part to the arrogance of newly-rich professional players. On the other hand, the emergence of champions like PV Sindhu has been a singularly impressive achievement. Her standing as World Champion must go down as India's greatest sporting success in the past decade. Alongside Sindhu stands boxer Mary Kom, who despite age and motherhood, is still a champion though she ended the decade on a sour note. Dipa Karmakar's heroic feat at the Rio Olympics, too, is noteworthy as was Sushil Kumar's World Championship in 2010, which gave a filip to wrestling that has been taken forward by the Phogat sisters.

However, not everything was a success. The response to the Indian Super League in football and the Hockey India League was tepid at the very least and miserable at worst. India's reputation in certain sports, particularly weightlifting, has been tarnished, thanks to constant reports of serious doping. That said, drugs are an active problem throughout the world of sports. There have been serious issues with the Government's ambition to clean up Indian sports federations from its political patronage. Much still needs to be done on this front if India is to achieve its potential in the world of sports — football being a particular case in point. India enjoyed some success in the previous decade. After climbing inside the top 100 rankings in the sport, it has seemingly frittered away some of those gains in the last 24 months. Can India finally make a mark in football? The 2020s will show the way. It is likely that an Indian-born player may make it big for a major team in Europe, which could finally crack the market. At the same time, special mention should be given to the "Khelo India" programme and the games that have been ushered under the Narendra Modi administration. A focus on sports under capable Ministers has meant that India is looking forward to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics with a glimmer of hope previously unheard of. So much so that a double-digit haul is on the cards with Indian shooters, pugilists, wrestlers, badminton players and possible track and field athletes such as javelin ace Neeraj Chopra, all being in the race for medals. Expectations are that others will join Abhinav Bindra in the list of individual Indian Gold medalists. As for cricket, India has a packed year coming up. Will India finish the year as reigning ICC Test match champions? Can it make it count in the T20 World Cup to be held in Australia early next year? And where will the IPL and franchise cricket go in the coming months? Can other sports replicate the success of kabaddi? There are many questions that will be asked of Indian sports in the coming decade but we hope that whatever happens, it will only climb to heights never previously achieved.

No more welcome

Following internet shutdowns, the tourism sector is the latest victim of the Government's high-handedness



The Government may be consistently playing down the countrywide protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) as a conspiracy of intellectuals to jeopardise its legitimate existence. But with the protests showing no signs of abating — they have now turned into a people's movement over exclusionary and discriminatory policies that breed hatred and disunity — the clampdown on freedom of expression has been severe. So harsh that internet and mobile network shutdowns

have indefinitely become the order of the day. This has elicited strong admonitions and travel advisories against India, impacting our tourism business severely. For example, tour operators in Agra, the home of Taj Mahal, have unofficially reported a loss of about 50 per cent revenue during the holiday season. Nowhere has the clampdown been as draconian as it has been in Uttar Pradesh with over 19 people killed and more than 1,100 arrests. The visitors' count for December has been the most dismal. A paltry 4.5 lakh tourists arrived at Agra's Taj Mahal over the new year weekend, which is down from seven lakh the same month, last year. Tourists from the US, the UK, China, France and Japan are understandably cautious after reports emerged of foreign students being deported for extending moral support to protesters. Internet cafes, a favourite among young travellers to keep folks connected to them back home, are running dry.

As the tourists have been dissuaded from travelling to India — in part because the message from New Delhi has been that it will not buckle down and, instead, has sharpened its attack on anti-CAA protesters and tightened the noose of police action — their numbers fell well before November, when the crucial Ayodhya verdict was to be announced by the Supreme Court. The month, which saw a footfall of 6.7 lakh tourists last year, saw only 5.4 lakh tourists this year. Agra alone attracts over 6.5 million tourists every year, generating nearly \$14 million annually from entrance fees. Similar is the story elsewhere. Overall, the hospitality sector has been hit. Assam has already faced a loss of ₹400 crore. Mysuru saw a 20 per cent dip in tourism. Revenues for many hotels, tour operators and guides have plunged with many tourists, both domestic and foreign, either cancelling their trips or cutting them short. This is understandable. Protests are now dragging on into the second month and have shown little signs of abating even as the Government has issued "clarifications." There are plenty of signs of matters turning more violent as both police and marchers up the ante. The larger question, however, is whether the tourism sector will be able to absorb the damage once normalcy returns. For an industry, which the Government pegged as a growth driver even in a slowing economy, this is a bad sign. In this business, perception matters and the *atithi* is certainly not feeling welcome anymore.

Why we need data

Preparation of a NPR and decennial census is a legitimate activity of the Union Government and the data thrown up by these exercises form the basis for policy-making



A SURYA PRAKASH

The false propaganda unleashed by some political parties against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, has now got extended to the mandated programme to prepare the National Population Register (NPR) and the conduct of the decennial census, which are scheduled for 2020 and 2021. Several opponents of the current establishment in New Delhi have been spreading disinformation about the NPR and the decennial census, both of which are tools essential for governance.

The purpose of the CAA is to provide citizenship to persecuted religious minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who crossed the borders and came into India before December 31, 2014. This has nothing to do with any Indian citizen, whatever be his or her religion. Nor does it open the floodgates for migrants because of the deadline fixed in the Act. The NPR and the decennial census are meant to get demographic information and also inputs on the social and economic status of the population in different regions of the country. Neither of these exercises is aimed at disenfranchising anybody.

The NPR exercise was formulated and introduced by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in 2010, to collect demographic and biometric information about individuals. Here, enumerators go door-to-door and gather particulars about "usual residents" — individuals residing at a given place for the preceding six months. It is, therefore, strange to find that the Congress, the very initiator of this idea, is now opposing it and is doing so with such vehemence that it all looks like a theatrical act.

The census in India is primarily a head count and has been rightly described as the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world. Three million individuals will be deployed to collect the data and for the first time, the enumerators will be using a mobile app and other modern applications to collect and collate data from the field.

The decennial census is being conducted in India since 1892 without a break and this is an important exercise from a national point of view because it tells us about the demographic changes that have taken place at the national and local level in the preceding 10 years. Both these surveys provide policy-makers critical data that enables them to formulate national programmes, especially with regard to basic amenities to the less-advantaged sections of society.

As stated by the Government, the census is the biggest source of primary data at the village, town and ward level, providing micro-level data on various parameters, which includes housing, education, economic activity, literacy, migration, fertility, language, religion, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Preparation of a NPR and decennial census is a legitimate activity of the Union Government and the data thrown up by these exercises form the basis for policy-making not just at the federal level but at the State, district and *taluk* levels as well.



It was, therefore, shocking to see someone like Arundhati Roy exhort citizens to provide fake names and addresses to the enumerators so as to render the entire exercise infructuous. Media reports indicate that she even suggested that the people provide "7, Race Course Road" — the address of the Prime Minister at one time — as their residential address.

Even more preposterous was her suggestion that the Narendra Modi Government, which got a massive mandate from the people in May 2019 to govern till 2024, not be allowed to continue in office.

Her attempt to paralyse the working of the Union Government in regard to collection of population data and to curtail the tenure of a duly-elected Government constitutes subversion of the Constitution. Tolerance of such subversive activities is inimical to national unity and integrity and we should not allow a small minority of dissemblers to disrupt governance and democratic traditions in this manner.

Further, the propaganda that the enumeration undertaken for the NPR must be resisted because it is against the Muslim minority in India, is totally baseless. It appears as if some people are afraid of the truth.

Data is critical for a number of reasons. For example, the

AS STATED BY THE GOVERNMENT, THE CENSUS IS THE BIGGEST SOURCE OF PRIMARY DATA AT THE VILLAGE, TOWN AND WARD LEVEL, PROVIDING MICRO-LEVEL DATA ON VARIOUS PARAMETERS, INCLUDING HOUSING, EDUCATION, ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, LITERACY, MIGRATION, FERTILITY, LANGUAGE, RELIGION, SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

Union Government and many State Governments have formulated policies and welfare schemes especially to ameliorate the conditions of the religious and linguistic minorities. These schemes relate to education, employment, skilling and financial assistance for self employment. The scope and range of these schemes depend on demographics and a decadal head count is an absolute must. The census data is used not just by the Union Government but by Governments and institutions down below at the State, district and *taluk* levels.

Pseudo-secularists seem to believe that the Muslims are the only minority in India. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Hindus in India constitute just around 80 per cent of the population, which means in actual numbers, they would be about one billion of the 1.33 billion population. But the Hindus constitute a minority in six of the 28 States in the country and in a few Union Territories, as do the Christians (except in some States in the North-east), the Sikhs (except in Punjab), the Buddhists, the Jains and the Parsis. The Muslim population in India has risen from 35 million at the time of Independence to around 175 million at this point in time.

Further, we have the linguistic minorities, who are at par with religious minorities as per our Constitution. A reading of

Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution will make it clear that the intention of the founding fathers was to accord the same kind of protection to both religious and linguistic minorities and the State would be the unit to determine who is a minority.

A Kannadiga in Hindi-majority Haryana (as this writer is) gets as much protection as say, Mohammed Iqbal, in Hindu-majority Haryana as per these Constitutional provisions.

Therefore, if pseudo-secularists oppose population data collection and census, which is a legitimate Government activity in all nations across the world, the presumption will be that they are afraid of the numbers that will crop up. The steep rise in the Muslim population in India over the decades and the huge difference between the decadal growth rates of Muslims *vis-a-vis* the Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis, will nail the lie that Muslims are persecuted in India.

Indian citizens, who are adherents of Islam, must, therefore, guard against the false narrative of this minuscule minority of pseudo-secularists and should not allow themselves to be persuaded to oppose the NPR or the census. India will become ungovernable if such tendencies emerge.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

In my opinion, Citizenship Amendment Act is too little compassion, coming too late. This Bill is only focussed on religious persecution.

Spiritual leader
—Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev



I am thrilled with the kind of work that's coming my way. But I feel envious of the young girls, who are getting a chance to play varied parts so early on in their careers.

Actor
—Neena Gupta



The US has shown its support for terrorism by carrying out air strikes on forces in Iraq that have dealt blows against the Islamic State group.

Iranian official
—Abbas Mousavi



In 2015, people believed him (Kejriwal) to be a great revolutionary, as Fidel Castro or Che Guevara. But now they are fed up with (his) lies.

Union Minister
—Prakash Javadekar



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Environment's cause

Sir — Air passengers have their ticket details verified by security personnel at the departure gates of the airport. Upon producing valid identification proof and an e-ticket, passengers can proceed to the check-in counters. Being allowed to produce e-tickets on electronic devices such as smartphones and tablets has helped save paper. Otherwise, tonnes of paper get wasted when people take printouts of tickets. However, owing to a lack of awareness, many passengers still rely on printouts instead of just producing soft copies.

To prevent unnecessary paper usage, airline carriers should provide incentives to passengers who use soft copies of tickets instead of paper-based ones. Organisations such as the Center for Asia Pacific Aviation, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the Airports Council International and the International Air Transport Association should extensively promote the use of paperless tickets for domestic travel. This will go a long way in protecting the environment.

Varun Dambal
Bengaluru

Government must shun authoritarian ways

The Modi Government has shown itself to be arrogant, arbitrary and adamant with its decision to update the National Population Register (NPR) in the teeth of sustained protests against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The tearing hurry with which the Government is pushing ahead with its agenda concerning citizenship casts suspicion on its motives. Nobody is so naive to believe that NPR is not a precursor to NRC. The fact that NPR will serve as the database for NRC is plain to see. The reason for gathering data on date and place of birth of parents and last place of residence from respondents in the proposed house-to-house enumeration is not far to seek or beyond comprehension. The UPA-era NPR, with its emphasis on "residency" and the present modified version of NPR with its emphasis on "citizenship", cannot be bracketed together. Needless to say "additions of three or four columns" can make all the difference.

Fears over the enumeration exercises are not unfounded. NRC or NPR, in conjunction with CAA, will lead to a humanitarian catastrophe of enormous proportions. If the Government is to convince people of its bona fide intentions and bridge the trust deficit, it has to amend

Identity at stake

Sir — Army chief Bipin Rawat's recent comments on anti-CAA protesters have rightly been seen by many military veterans and

security experts as "overtly political." Though such kind of remarks are common in Pakistan, it is almost unheard of in our country.

The political nature of the armed forces is indeed a neces-



CAA to treat Muslim refugees at par with refugees of other religious persuasions. Sad to say, the Government remains unmoved by the distress of a 14-month-old breastfed child separated from his parents jailed for taking part in the anti-CAA protests. The parents of the child exemplify true patriotism. "Civil disobedience with a smile" on Gandhian lines appears to be the only option now left for the people to bring the Government to its senses and persuade it to abandon its policy of divide and rule and pull the country back from the brink.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Press any matter in relation to a political question or on a service subject or containing any service information." The Army must preserve its identity.

Sujit De
Kolkata

Cheap tactics

Sir — It is unfortunate that the Uttar Pradesh police allegedly manhandled Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who was on her way to pay a visit to retired IPS officer SR Darapuri at his residence. As the police tried to stop her vehicle from moving further, Priyanka hoodwinked the police by riding pillion on a two-wheeler and reached her destination. While the police's act is condemnable, the traffic police issued the owner of the two-wheeler a challan of ₹6,000 because the two were riding without a helmet. This appears to be a revenge action by the police and is definitely in cheap taste.

Tharicus S Fernando
Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Handle sensitive issues carefully

The judiciary and the executive cannot be at loggerheads in a welfare State as it would make citizens jittery and lose faith in the system



ABHAY RAJ MISHRA

The kind of storm which the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 has kicked up is, perhaps, unprecedented as it deals with the subject of future citizenship and not the current. The matter is now resting on the opinion of the Supreme Court (SC) for its constitutional validity, which will hear 59 petitions filed in opposition of the law on January 22, 2020. It would be interesting to note whether the views of the judiciary and the executive would converge on an issue as sensitive as this one. In the case of Ayodhya, the apex court's verdict has established well that law cannot be detached from the interests of the people it serves. There was a raging debate whether the Ayodhya verdict was based on credible and admissible evidence or was it influenced by the faith and belief of the majority? Irrespective, the verdict was peacefully accepted by all the factions, not necessarily for its veracity but for bringing to end a painful impasse. What is clearly visible and undebatable is that it brought peace finally.

There would be peace if two conditions are fulfilled. One, the interests of the larger sections of the people must be put above all else. To punish a few guilty, we cannot make the masses suffer along with them. Second, there cannot be a chasm between the views of the executive and the judiciary, which would otherwise make citizens jittery and lose faith in the system altogether. Imagine being brought up by two warring parents.

This ethos of acting in public interest and going along with the views of the executive must now be extended to end pain in other areas as well. Take livelihoods as an example, where the case of Goa has been hanging for far too long. Goa was the only State where mining rights were granted to its citizens by the Portuguese Government in perpetuity, but were eventually revoked by the Indian Government. Ever since the apex court abruptly cancelled 88 mining leases in the State on February 7, 2018, life has come to a grinding, tragic halt for mining dependents in the State. This is now no longer just an economic crisis — which is severely debilitating in its own right — but a grave human crisis as well. Such is the situation that the Goa Government has requested a review of the ban by the SC, which is also pending. Jobs and livelihoods disappearing overnight as a result of judicial intervention is painful, particularly at a time when India is going through the worst employment crisis in the last 40 years. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the country's employment reached the lowest rate in 2017-2018.

Earlier, in 2012, the SC cancelled 122 spectrum licences in response to a PIL filed by a host of activists and to answer the question whether the Government had a right to distribute natural resources in a manner that was not "fair and transparent." This affected 5.3 crore telephone connections. It was alleged that the exchequer lost ₹1.76 lakh crore in revenue and a few private telecom players were the beneficiaries. This case was highlighted as among the top 10 abuses of power by *Time* magazine. The verdict shook the country, changed the contours of a developing telecom industry, made new telecom operators wrap up their business and gave the reins of the sector into the hands of a few business groups.

In a reversal in 2017, a special court in New Delhi acquitted all the accused in the 2G spectrum case citing that the CBI could not find any evidence against the accused in seven years. As per the judgment, "Some people created a scam by artfully arranging a few selected facts and exaggerating things beyond recognition to astronomical levels." The matter now rests with the Delhi High Court on basis of appeals filed by the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate. The key question is as to why the case could not have been tried without cancelling the licences? The court should have allowed business to continue, while the case would have carried on. By invoking closure of business, the court caused collateral damage to the industry, the economy and most importantly to the livelihoods of people employed by the companies that had to close shop.

Studies have established that India's Maoist movement is deeply rooted in socio-economic conditions prevalent in parts of India with large tribal populations. It has mostly affected areas where there is a conflict between the State and the populace on the economic derivation of forest produce and mining such as in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and agriculture in parts of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Such aggressive posturing by citizens has huge direct and indirect costs. The purpose of the law is to create a conducive environment for the citizens of the State. However, sometimes, like in the Goa mining ban and the spectrum case, the law and its interpretation has spelled doom for citizens and businesses. This cannot become a precedent and must be addressed immediately. Situations like these need more complex solutions, just like the CAA. It is simplistic to penalise lakhs of people for the actions of the few with the stroke of a pen, and it is certainly not done.

(The writer is president, not-for-profit organisation PRAHAR)

THOSE DAMAGING PROPERTY HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN VIDEO AND CCTV FOOTAGE. WE WILL TAKE REVENGE FROM THEM BY SEIZING THEIR PROPERTY.

—UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER
 YOGI ADITYANATH

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THIS IS PERHAPS THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY THAT A CHIEF MINISTER HAS STATED THIS. FOLLOW THE DHARMA SYMBOLISED BY YOUR SAFFRON ROBES.

—CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY, EASTERN UP
 PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA

A defining year

In 2019, a reformist Government was brought back to power and that, too, with a huge majority. This shows how electoral preferences are maturing in the country



KARAN BHASIN

Since the early 1990s, there has been a sense of optimism with regards to India's economic progress. The process of liberalisation during 1991 brought with it a sense of hope regarding a dramatic turnaround in the country's economic fortunes. While the nation's growth did accelerate from the 1980s onwards, however, it wasn't comparable to other emerging economies, including China.

The first decade of the 21st century was believed to be India's time as it had a Government that was looking at the next generation of economic reforms. These transformations happened and the country witnessed the first serious privatisation of several public sector enterprises (PSEs) along with a drastic reduction in small savings rates. India's macroeconomic situation was stable and gradually growth started to increase along with its investment rates. This growth continued till 2007, after which it started to lose steam due to lack of economic reforms and then the 2008 crisis hit the country along with the rest of the world.

While many thought the impact of the 2008 crisis wasn't as much on India as elsewhere, the reasons behind this were the policy instruments which were deployed to address the risks that emerged. These instruments, combined with a lack of reforms and an entitlement-based regime brought a fresh macroeconomic challenge in the second decade of the 21st century.

Two decades have elapsed and India is yet to justify the sense of optimism that prevailed at the start of the century. But to be fair, the second decade wasn't that bad considering that India's growth in 2014, 2015 and 2016 was fairly decent even when one ignores the fact that it witnessed two successive droughts in 2014 and 2015. The country's macroeconomic situation has improved significantly since 2014 and the Government has undertaken several reforms that will have long-term growth implications such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA).

Despite these reforms, growth slowed towards the end of 2018 and throughout the first half of 2019. This has led people to question whether the third decade will be any different from the previous two decades. However, there are compelling reasons that point at how this time, it will be different. For starters, the current slowdown is not because of any inherent structural factors but is a direct outcome of the financial sector stress which spread over from banks to Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs). The reasons behind the build-up of this stress are more to do with reckless lending during the first decade of the century as the attempt to fix it started only post the introduction of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act.

As the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest Financial Stability Report suggests, the Public Sector Banks' (PSBs) Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) may increase by September 2020 and this poses fresh concerns regarding the ability of the PSBs to take prudent lending decisions. The recent spike in NPAs could also be because of the high cost of capital compared to the moderation in inflation, which has artificially kept the real

“ A LOT OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS WAS MADE IN 2019 AND SOME OF IT COULD BE BECAUSE OF THE SLOWDOWN. HOWEVER, 2019 WILL MARK A STRUCTURAL BREAK FOR INDIA AS WE ENTER INTO A DECADE WHICH WILL CERTAINLY BELONG TO THE COUNTRY'S ENTREPRENEURS AND ITS ECONOMIC AMBITIONS ”



rates at one of the highest levels in the world.

Clearly, India's got a problem on the monetary side, which needs to be rectified if it is aiming to grow at seven per cent or more. Some progress has been made on this by the RBI, however, it continues to be conservative and the longer it takes for it to recognise the extent of the problem, the more prolonged the bottom of the U.

Irrespective of these short-term challenges, the outlook for economic growth for the country in the medium-term is completely positive as some of the current supply-side issues will get resolved and India will witness a growth of 5.0-5.4 per cent in the third quarter (Q3) of the current Financial Year (FY) followed by a 6.2-6.6 per cent growth in the fourth quarter (Q4) of the current FY. India will end the decade with a modest growth rate; however, the country will begin it with a seven per cent or higher growth rate in the FY 2020-21.

The question is whether this rate will be sustained throughout the decade or not. There is a reasonable belief that India will sustain a seven per cent growth this decade and it may even attain an eight per cent or high growth rate towards the end of the decade as it witnesses a steady revival of investments as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This improvement will be a direct product of some of the painful reforms that were undertaken in the past, which will unleash the nation's productive potential. The recent corporate tax cut would result in steady improvements in corporate sector balance sheets, which will result in fresh investments from 2022 onwards. At the same time, implementation of the Direct Tax Code (DTC) will simplify taxation procedures, which

will further augment productivity.

There's also talk of a GST overhaul which may happen during the next couple of years. This, when combined with land, labour and agricultural reforms, will be critical to unlocking India's productive potential. Demographics, too, favour India as it has the world's largest workforce which will act as a check in wage costs, thereby giving it a competitive edge over other emerging market economies for the next two decades. All of this is essential to experience the kind of transformation that several of the country's peers experienced during the 1980s and 1990s.

Of course, fresh reforms will be required — but they are already on the agenda of the Government as the labour codes are coming into effect. Many of these reforms will be aided by the fact that there's a mandate of 303, which enables the Government to take decisions that would be extremely difficult to push for in a divided Parliament.

Global conditions, too, seem to be conducive for India as Boris Johnson's election in the United Kingdom (UK) will end uncertainty regarding Brexit. He has expressed his willingness to enter into a trade agreement with India and the nation should be closing trade deals with the UK, Europe and the US to further integrate itself into global trade.

Global economic growth is also likely to recover in 2020, which means that external factors will be conducive for India's growth, provided it can address some of its domestic constraints. The year 2019 goes down in Indian economic history for many reasons. For starters, it marks the first time in the history of India where a reformist Government was brought back into power and that, too, with a

huge majority. This shows how electoral preferences are maturing in India.

The outcome of the election made it possible to take three significant economic decisions. First was the merger of 10 PSBs into four. This is likely to consolidate the sector and improve its efficiency over a period. It also opens up interesting possibilities for future privatisation of some of these big four banks as there's no need for having four big PSBs, especially at a time when the nation has already pumped in ₹3 trillion into them without any positive outcome so far.

The second was to do with the corporate tax cut, which was promised in the previous tenure. Indeed, many consider it just a tax cut, however, it is a deep structural reform that will have long-term positive implications for financial stability and financing of investments. More importantly, it illustrates a shift in thinking of taxmen, who now recognise that tax revenues can increase at lower rates due to improvements in tax compliance.

The third decision was of privatisation of several firms, including BPCL. This is a bold move as it signals a staunch commitment to the phrase that "the Government has no business to be in business."

This move has signalled to the world that India is finally opening greater space for private players in its economy, which has hit all the right notes. Indeed, a lot of economic progress was made in 2019 and some of it could be because of the slowdown. However, 2019 will mark a structural break for India as we enter into a decade which will certainly belong to the country's entrepreneurs and its economic ambitions.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy researcher)

2020 must be about implementation

There should be a 20 per cent increase in funding for health by States, the Centre and Urban Local Bodies. Inter-departmental coordination is also needed for stronger implementation linkage between health, water and sanitation and nutrition-related initiatives



CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

Legislations or related deliberations were arguably the highlight for India's health sector in 2019. The Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019; the National Medical Commission (NMC) Act and the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act were passed by the Parliament. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill is being considered by the select committee of the Rajya Sabha and a draft Bill to protect doctors and health care providers from assault is also under consideration.

The health sub-committee of the Fifteenth Finance Commission made recommendations to enact the right to health in India by 2022 and

to shift "health" into the concurrent list.

A few States, namely Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, deliberated about enacting the right to health legislation. During the year, public health experts argued that the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, announced in 2018, had put health higher on the political agenda and nearly six States started a variant of Mohalla Clinics (neighbourhood clinics) to increase the provision of free primary health care services.

There were a few negative developments as well. Violent attacks on doctors, health care providers and facilities were reported from different parts of the country, followed by protests and strikes by the medical fraternity.

In the summer of 2019, encephalitis deaths were reported from Muzaffarpur in Bihar. The experts were once again divided on the cause of this and consequently, the children of the nation are still waiting for scientific and long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies from recurring.

In the last quarter, poor air quality returned to affect the health of the people in many districts of north India and all policymakers did was to question the proven evidence on the impact of air pollution on people. Hence, it is clear that there are many issues that need to be addressed in this crucial sector.

Legislative approach in health works: The Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act, which has hiked the penalties for traffic violations, has the potential to improve health, as nearly one in every 10 preventable deaths occurred due to road accidents. After the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017, mental health services in India received a boost at the implementation level as the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority directed companies to include mental health care services in their insurance package as one in every seven people have one or other mental health care needs.

Though the Bill to protect doctors and health care workers could not develop a consensus, it is also

true that preventing such attacks requires more than just a legislative approach. Improving the quality of health services, preventing commercialisation of health services and changing health-seeking behaviour to get early care is the need of the hour. A realistic expectation from health services needs to be developed and the "market-based belief" that every health condition is treatable, needs to be addressed. In health services, the outcomes are completely unpredictable and even the best of the treatment and advanced care may not save a person, while another person with a similar health condition may quickly recover with basic health interventions.

Kerala averted Nipah virus outbreaks: Learning from the experience of 2018, the Kerala Government acted swiftly when a new case of Nipah was reported in 2019. With effective surveillance, early identification, effective containment/isolation and case management, an epidemic was averted. This highlights the need for a

stronger and effective surveillance system across all Indian States to tackle emerging disease threats.

What to expect in 2020: In the last two years, India has seen a lot of focus on policy formulation, legislation and other broader health issues. However, in 2020, policymakers would do well to rapidly scale-up and allocate more resources for the health and wellness centres, a vital component of the Ayushman Bharat programme.

States must also give additional priority to adopting community clinics for urban settings. The country also needs to follow a focussed approach to integrate preventive and promotive health interventions with overall wellness initiatives and linkage with AYUSH.

The Government must shift focus from making isolated health facilities functional to a group of amenities in entire planning units, i.e. blocks in rural areas and entire corporation planning units, functional.

There should be at least a 20 per cent annual increase in Government

funding for health by States, the Centre as well as by Urban Local Bodies. Inter-departmental coordination is also needed for stronger implementation linkage between health, water and sanitation and nutrition-related initiatives.

Taxation on "demerit goods" such as tobacco products should be further increased to global recommendation of tax being 70 per cent of the product price.

Beverages sweetened with sugar, including fruit juices, must be taxed as demerit goods at higher rates. And last but not the least, healthy behaviour should be encouraged at all levels, especially in schools and colleges, with ban on sale of "junk food" near schools and colleges.

In short, for the health sector, 2020 should be a year of implementing policies, improving provision of a broad range of health services as per the needs of the people, State Governments taking the lead in health provision to make a healthy India.

(The writer is a Delhi-based senior public health specialist.)



FOREIGN EYE



TOO MUCH PATRONAGE

If Boris Johnson wants to break up the elites, he should reform the honours system. The 2004 select committee report contains a blueprint on honours which should be revived. Its ideas include simplification, clearer criteria, scrapping knighthoods and damehoods, no automatic awards and an end to the word "empire" in honours. Such a system would not preclude a knighthood for Iain Duncan Smith. But he would have to take his chances with the rest.

(The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



Prasad launches portal to enable blocking, tracing of missing phones

NEW DELHI: Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Monday launched a web portal that will facilitate blocking and tracing of stolen or lost mobile phones in Delhi. The initiative was launched in September this year in Mumbai on a pilot basis. The roll-out of the portal in Delhi will facilitate requests for blocking of stolen or lost mobile phones by customers, and sharing of traceable data with police authorities, a statement said.



Dr Reddy's launches generic hypotensive injection in US

NEW DELHI: Drug firm Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Monday said it has launched in the US Sodium Nitroprusside injection used for immediate reduction of blood pressure in hypertensive crises. The company has launched generic Sodium Nitroprusside injection, 50 mg/2 ml (25 mg/ml) single-dose vial after getting approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). Dr Reddy's Labs said in a filing to the BSE. The product is a generic version of Hospira Inc's Nitropress injection, 50 mg/2ml, it added. As per IQVIA Health data, Nitropress brand and generics had US sales of around USD 8 million MAT for the twelve months to October 2019, Dr Reddy's said.



Sensex, Nifty end on a mixed note

MUMBAI: Market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty closed mixed after a see-saw trade on Monday amid lack of domestic as well as global cues. After swinging over 260 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 17.14 points, or 0.04 per cent, lower at 41,558. The broader NSE Nifty, however, closed 10.05 points, or 0.08 per cent, higher at 12,255.85. ICICI Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding 0.99 per cent, followed by SBI, TCS, HUL, Asian Paints and Axis Bank. On the other hand, Nestle India, Hero MotoCorp, Mahindra and Mahindra, Bharti Airtel and Tata Steel were among the gainers. Analysts attributed this lacklustre trading pattern to absence of any major trigger points in the market. Globally, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended higher, while those in Tokyo and Seoul settled in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe started on a negative note.

Gold to shine in 2020; may touch Rs 45K per 10 gram

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Always a pricey possession, gold is set to remain more pricey in the New Year too as continuing geopolitical tremors, economic woes and rupee volatility are expected to push the yellow metal even to Rs 45,000 for 10 gram.

Thanks to various government policies and soaring stock market, gold witnessed periodic as well as steep price fluctuations in 2019, with bias towards the higher side in the second half of this year.

Data from the World Gold Council shows that 14 central banks, including the RBI, have reportedly added more than one tonne to their reserve.

"As we look to 2020, we believe investors will face increasing geopolitical concerns, while many pre-existing ones will be pushed back rather than being resolved.

"In addition, the low level of interest rates worldwide will keep stock prices high and valuations at extreme levels, on the verge of peaking out. Therefore, we believe there are reasons for higher levels of safe-haven assets like gold," Commtrendz Research Director Gnanasekar Thiagarajan told PTI.

From US-China trade turmoil to conflicts in the Middle East, geopolitical issues are galore for the global markets which might also await cues from the US presidential polls towards end of 2020.

The potential medium-term target lies at Rs 41,000-41,500 per 10 gram at MCX (USD 1,640-1,650). Further, the level could rise to Rs 44,500-45,000



From US-China trade turmoil to conflicts in the Middle East, geopolitical issues are galore for the global markets which might also await cues from the US presidential polls towards end of 2020

(USD 1,795-1,800) in case there are new developments on the global front that could dent risk appetite, Thiagarajan said.

World Gold Council Managing Director (India) Somasundaram P R said local currency prices in almost all markets, including rupee, breached previous life time highs, leading to muted consumer demand across markets.

"Indian demand also lost significant momentum in Q3, and though Q4 saw a revival with its traditional wedding and festival season, overall demand for the full year is expected to be at the lower end of 700-750 tonne. ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) demand in the US and Europe, and central bank buying across nations, however, continue to be strong," he noted.

According to him, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was

one of the main buyers of gold in 2019, increasing its reserves by over 60 tonne.

China and Russia have been the biggest buyers of gold till now. Besides, countries like India, Turkey, Poland and Kazakhstan have also joined the bandwagon in purchasing the yellow metal.

In the first half of this year, gold was relatively more attractive for consumers as the price ruled at around Rs 31,500-32,000 for every 10 gram.

However, in July demand began to become weak as prices started to climb. Depreciation of Rupee along with the government increasing customs duty by 2.5 percentage points during Budget to 12.5 per cent from 10 per cent made it even more costly in the domestic market.

In 2019, gold peaked at USD 1,557 an ounce and Rs 39,900

per 10 gram.

All India Gem & Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) Chairman Anantha Padmanaban said that from consumer perspective, 2019 was a mixed year as the first half was very good in terms of demand.

However, since July as the gold prices moved up, the demand dwindled as jewellery became a very costly affair after the added burden of customs duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST), he noted.

He also pointed out that untimely rains that damaged crops further attributed to the negative sentiment as around 70 per cent of the demand in India is from rural areas.

India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA) National President Prithviraj Kothari opined that gold price trend is rising and the market would soon reach newer high ideally in the next 2-3 years.

"Also, the global economic slowdown, liquidity crisis in India and depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar which has now reached Rs 71, and is likely to reach Rs 72 soon, will support the gold market. I am positive that in 2020, the gold prices will be in the range of Rs 38,000 on the downside and Rs 42,000 on the upside," he added.

Motilal Oswal Financial Services VP (Commodity Research) Navneet Damani said that in the short term, strong support for gold is placed in the range of Rs 37,100-36,900 levels on MCX. On the higher side gold price is likely to move higher towards Rs 39,900 levels followed by Rs 41,500, he added.

Government may provide tax incentives for startups in Budget

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is expected to provide tax incentives to start-ups in the forthcoming budget to support the growth of budding entrepreneurs, sources said.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has suggested several measures to the finance ministry for start-ups in the budget.

The recommendations include extension of tax incentives to incubators supported under Atal Innovation Mission; reduction in GST (Goods and Services Tax) rates on AIF (alternate investment fund) management fees; and tax benefits on ESOPs, they said.

Start-ups need talented workforce and ESOPs are one of the best options to attract skilled people as giving just high cash payout add to the burden on cash-starved enterprises, industry players said.

Tiger Global-backed tea cafe chain Chaayos founder Nitin Saluja said that there should be



less tax on ESOPs. "It should attract as little tax as possible. ESOPs are one of the best options for startups at their early stages," Saluja said.

Further fees charged by fund manager of AIF domiciled in India is liable to 18 per cent GST as it qualifies as a taxable supply.

Sources said that reduction in GST rates will help India to become an investment hub.

Startup India initiative of the government aims at fostering entrepreneurship and promoting innovation by creating an ecosystem that is conducive to growth of budding entrepreneurs.

There are 19 components under the Startup India action plan spanning across areas such as simplification and hand holding, funding support and incentives, and industry-academia partnership and incubation.

So far the department has recognised 26,619 startups. Of these, maximum were in the IT services space which was followed by healthcare and life-sciences, and education.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to present the Budget for 2020-21 fiscal on February 1, 2020.



GoMechanic raises Rs 105 cr in latest round of funding

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Start-up technology-enabled car service provider GoMechanic on Monday said it has raised Rs 105 crore in Series B funding in a round led by Chirata Ventures and Sequoia Capital.

Orios Venture Partners was the other investor which participated in the 3rd round of institutional funding, GoMechanic said in a statement. The investment will be used to support expansion into 10 more cities by the end of 2020 in its EV thrust, brand promotion and in streamlining spare parts procurement, it added.

Commenting on the fund raised, GoMechanic Co-Founder Kushal Karwa said, "The money raised will allow us to continue our aggressive geographical expansion besides investment in innovation to keep us ahead of the curve." GoMechanic Co-Founder Amit Bhasin said the current fundraise will reinvigorate the company's thrust in providing scalable technology first solutions for the USD 11 billion unorganised automotive repairs and maintenance market.

Icra revises outlook for RE sector to negative amid delays

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ratings agency Icra on Monday revised its outlook for India's renewable energy sector from stable to negative amid delays in payments from discoms and execution of projects.

The sector is facing headwinds because of the long delays in making payments by the state distribution utilities, delays in projects bid out over the past two years, difficulties in acquiring land for projects, securing transmission connectivity and financing in a timely manner, the ratings agency said.

Icra revises year-end outlook from stable to negative for renewable energy sector, it said.

Looking at the challenges, Icra said it expects no growth in capacity addition in FY2020 and will remain at about 8.5-



9.0 GW similar to FY2019.

"The headwinds related to payment delays, uncertainty over resolution of tariff issue for projects in Andhra Pradesh, as well as execution and financing related challenges for under-construction projects have impacted investor sentiments in the sector.

This is reflected from the slowdown in tendering of wind and solar PV projects by 37 per

cent to 10.6 GW in 9 months CY2019 from 16.7 GW in the corresponding period of previous year. Moreover, many of bids called by central nodal agencies remained under-subscribed," said Sabyasachi Majumdar, Group Head & Senior Vice President - Corporate ratings, Icra.

The capacity addition in FY20 will be primarily driven by the solar power segment.

Reliance, BP pay \$36 mn for exit of Niko in KG-D6 block

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries and UK's BP plc paid USD 36 million to get their defaulting Canadian partner Niko Resources to exit from the eastern offshore KG-D6 block. In a statement, Niko said it has exited from the KG-DWN-98/3 block and its 10 per cent stake has been taken over by Reliance and BP.

The firm was paid USD 36 million to settle an arbitration it had initiated against Reliance and BP try-

ing to force it out of the block over default in payment.

"An amendment to the production sharing contract for the D6 Block in India has been executed, reflecting the assignment of the 10 per cent interest previously held by the company's indirect subsidiary, Niko (NECO) Ltd to the remaining interest holders in the block, Reliance Industries Ltd and BP Exploration (Alpha) Ltd," the statement said.

Subsequent to this, Reliance's stake in KG-D6 has gone up to 66.67

per cent from the previous 60 per cent and that of BP to 33.33 per cent from 30 per cent.

"Niko NECO had entered into a settlement agreement with Reliance and BPEAL under which it agreed to withdraw from D6 PSC and settle its arbitration case filed under the rules of the London Court of International Arbitration in December 2017 in exchange for a settlement amount of USD 36 million, subject to adjustment prior to closing," it said.



Oil regulator seeks to rationalise gas pipeline tariff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil regulator PNGRB is seeking to rationalise natural gas pipeline tariff structure so as to increase usage of environment-friendly fuel by aligning charges paid for transporting the fuel with the best global practices.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is seeking bids for the appointment of consultants for the job, saying the government has envisaged ushering into a gas-based economy by increasing the share of the fuel in primary energy mix of the country from current level of about 6 per cent to 15 per cent by 2030.

This is to be done by increasing the availability of natural gas by enhancing domestic gas production, encouraging the



The present tariffs policy provides for lower transportation charges in the area closer to the source of gas and this progressively increases that leads to a scenario where the users in hinterland pay extra than those on the coast.

"PNGRB proposes to hire a consultancy firm to provide assistance in analyzing different options for rationalization of natural gas pipeline tariff structure, reviewing interna-

tional practices adopted on natural gas pipeline tariff design/ determination in USA, Australia, Japan, Russia, UK, and EU nations, and suggest the best-suited tariff mechanism in Indian perspective," the regulator said.

In the tender inviting bids, it said the consultant will also review current regulations and draft of new proposed regulations.

The move by PNGRB follows the government in October seeking a concept paper on rationalization of natural gas pipeline tariff structure and framing new tariff regulations. The consultant will have to review international practices and identify the challenges present tariff regime in India poses to the growth of pipeline infrastructure.

"A matrix will be created to

identify a model best suited for the Indian scenario," it said, adding the tariff structure needs to provide reasonable returns to entities building pipelines and promote the development of the gas infrastructure, while at the same time developing a pan-India gas market.

The public consultation will be done on the tariff structure proposed by the consultant, following which IT-based tools will be developed for implementation of the regulations, it added.

This exercise is in parallel to the mandate PNGRB has given to global consultancy ICF for carrying out an assessment of India's natural gas demand and the infrastructure needed to unleash the country's massive pent-up requirement, its Chairman Dinesh K Sarraf said.

BSNL clears Rs 1,700-cr in dues to vendors; pays November salaries: CMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has cleared Rs 1,700 crore of vendors dues, its CMD P K Purwar said on Monday.

The corporation has also made salary payment to its employees for November, Purwar added.

"Payments worth Rs 1,700 crore have been released to our vendors and contractors of BSNL," he said. Overall, the outstanding to creditors is Rs 10,000 crore, he

added. "Employee salaries for November too have been released," he said adding that monthly wage cost stood at about Rs 800 crore.

In October this year, the government approved a Rs 69,000 crore revival package for BSNL and MTNL that includes merging the two loss-making firms, monetising their assets and giving VRS to employees so that the combined entity turns profitable in two years.



TOP 8 CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED T'wood films of the decade

With some record-breaking and critically acclaimed films, this decade's Telugu cinema gained an international audience and has become a pan-India phenomenon. As 2019 draws to a close, SIDDHESH SUMAN takes you through the list of some critically acclaimed films of the decade.

Mahanati (2018)
Written and directed by Nag Ashwin, the film is a biopic on the life of one of the most popular yesteryear Indian actresses, Savitri. The film received a National Award for Best Feature Film in Telugu, while lead actress Keerthy Suresh received a National Film Award for Best Actress.

Baahubali 1 & 2 (2015/17)
Directed by S.S Rajamouli and written by K. V. Vijayendra Prasad, this film created a huge buzz around the world especially after the cliffhanger at the end of the first part - 'Why did katappa kill Bahubali'. The film also received a standing ovation at its screening at Royal Albert Hall in London.

Pelli Choopulu (2016)
Written and directed by Tharun Bhascker Dhaassayam, the film is an urban rom-com starring Vijay Deverakonda and Ritu Varma. It has received three national awards. Made on a very low budget, the film set a benchmark with its box office collections.

Arjun Reddy (2017)
Written and directed by Sandeep Vanga, the film is a romantic drama starring Vijay Deverakonda and Shalini Pandey. The story is about a young dysfunctional alcoholic surgeon who goes into self-destructive mode after the love of his life leaves him and marries someone else. The film became one of the most popular romantic films and was remade in several other languages despite many controversies.

Mallesham (2019)
Written and directed by Raj Rachakonda, the film stars Priyadarshi. It is about a self-trained inventor who strives to develop a new method to reduce gruelling work in the weaving process and revolutionise the whole industry.

Eega (2012)
Directed by SS Rajamouli and written by K. V. Vijayendra Prasad, this film brought Tollywood into the forefront of world cinema because of its visual effects. The visual effects were something that was new not just in Tollywood, but also to other major cinema industries across India. It also won two National awards for best Telugu feature and best VFX.

Vedam (2010)
Written and directed by Krish, the film stars Allu Arjun, Anushka Shetty, Manoj Bajpayee and Manchu Manoj. The story revolves around five people's struggle with life that gets entangled after a terrorist attack in a hospital. The film grabbed two Nandi awards for best picture and special jury award.

Awe! (2018)
Written and directed by Prashant Varma the film stars Esha Rebba, Kajal Aggarwal, Nani, Nithya Menen, Regina Cassandra and Ravi Teja. The film is a psychological thriller. It received two National awards for best makeup and best special effects.



Amroth Tukaram broke the chains of financial impediments to pursue his dream of scaling all the highest peaks in the world. ANUSHKA PRADEEP speaks to the 21-year-old mountaineer about his journey so far

Undauntedly scaling NEW HEIGHTS

A boy from humble beginnings dared extremely harsh climates to find his destiny in the dangerous slopes and crevices of mountainous terrains.

Amroth Tukaram, 21, whose father is a farmer in Thakkalapally thanda in Ranga Reddy district, has scaled six peaks in various parts of the world, and is on his way to conquer more.

"So far, I have scaled mountains in three continents. I will begin my expedition to climb Mt. Aconcagua on January 5 in 2020. This peak is in South America which will make it the fourth continent on my wishlist. I aspire to become the youngest mountaineer to scale the highest peaks in all seven continents. I believe that with the support from family and my sponsors, I should be able to achieve my dream by 2021," says Tukaram, whose had previously scaled Mt. Norbu (5,226m), Mt. Rudugaria (5,818m), Mt. Stok Kangri (6,152m), Mt. Kilimanjaro (5,895m), Mt. Elbrus (5,642m)



and, the highest in the world, Mt. Everest (8,848m).

"Each summit I scale, I do it for a cause," says Tukaram, in an exclusive with *The Pioneer*. "Be it promoting the use of helmets through the Mt. Kilimanjaro expedition, or spreading awareness about the dangers of drugs through the Mt. Elbrus expedition, each trip has some form of social aspect attached to it. I come from a poor family and had to overcome many challenges to be here. Hence each adventure I take part in is not just for the excitement and the thrills but also for change."

Speaking about his journey so far, Tukaram says, "It was the NCC (National Cadet Corps) that sparked the passion of mountaineering in me. But, I come from a background where financial stability is more or less a dream and hence sponsors are important to pursue such a goal. I knocked the doors of several benefactors only to get rejected. I even approached the state government which initially agreed to fund me but later abruptly rejected my plea. I faced this

problem until I found sponsors in private agencies." Fortunately, the number of people who began to come forward with financial aid steadily grew with each peak I scaled. Now I have sponsors like Tridandi Sri Srimannarayana Ramanuja Chinnna Jeeyar Swamiji, Ramachandru Tejavath, a retired IAS officer and organisations like the NGO, Vikasa Tarangini, backing me on my upcoming expeditions," he adds.

Apart from the rigorous training and planning that he has to undergo before each ascent, Tukaram is also aware of the risks and dangers that lie in his path. "The journey to the top teaches several life lessons. Any amount of grit and determination is futile in front of nature. I faced many challenges while climbing Mt. Everest. During the climb, I faced near-death situations several times, especially when I ran out of oxygen in my tank, and when I ran out of the water to drink. I even saw one of my friends die right before my eyes. That is the harsh reality of mountaineering. For me, it is always a do-or-die situation. I can't return to face my family and my sponsors if I can't succeed. But it's through their blessing that I am able to succeed and return home safely," he says.

"Even after I climbed the Mt Everest I can't afford to underestimate the effort needed for my next expedition. That will only be my downfall. I believe it is important to never underestimate any challenge, and always be prepared for the worst case scenario," he says.



ENDING 2019 on a high note

Mountaineer Malavath Purna has recently scaled Mt Vinson Massif and has become the youngest tribal woman in the world to scale six tallest peaks in six continents, and is just one more mountain (Mt Denali, North America's tallest mountain) away from completing the seven-summit goal

It was a sense of accomplishment beyond words for Malavath Purna when she conquered Mt. Vinson Massif, the Antarctica's highest mountain peak (4,987m). The 18-year-old Purna has become the world's first and youngest woman from her tribal community to set foot on six tallest mountain peaks across six continents. Purna's parents work as agricultural labourers in a remote Pakala tribal hamlet of Nizamabad district in Telangana.

So far, Purna scaled Mt. Everest (Asia, 2014), Mt. Kilimanjaro (Africa, 2016), Mt. Elbrus (Europe, 2017), Mt. Aconcagua (South America, 2019) Mt. Carstensz (Oceania region, 2019) and Mt. Vinson Massif (Antarctica, 2019).

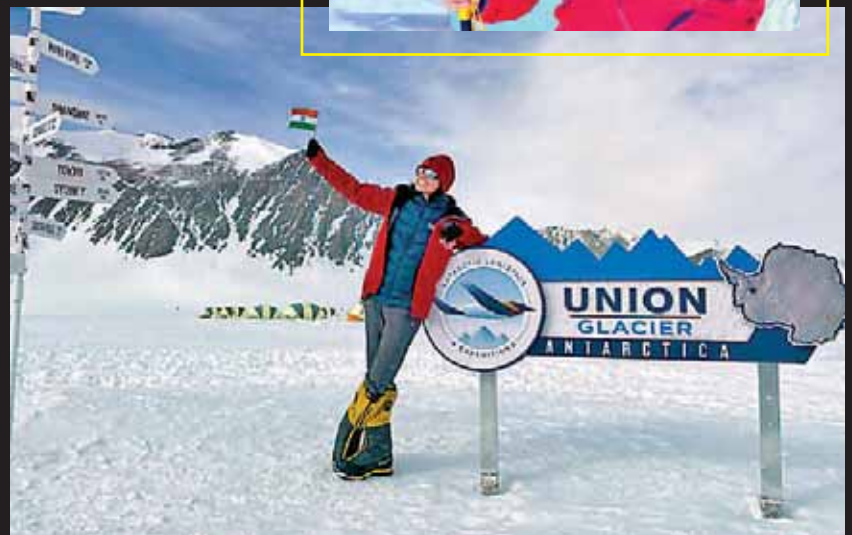
Purna's phenomenal journey, from climbing small hills in her village to the tops of world's tallest peaks, began with the conquest of Mt Everest in 2014. She never looked back since then. She broke all stereotypes and proved that even girls from marginalised communities can conquer peaks. The conquests by Purna left an indelible impression on millions of children, particularly girls, who are

deprived of their full potential, across the world.

Purna is very close to achieving her goal of scaling the tallest peaks in all seven continents. She is currently preparing to scale Mt. Denali (North America's highest mountain peak), the dream of every mountaineer in the world.

"I wouldn't have achieved this feat, if not for the support from Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao," says Purna. She also thanked Secretary,

POORNA IS VERY CLOSE TO ACHIEVING HER GOAL OF SCALING THE TALLEST PEAKS IN ALL 7 CONTINENTS.



TSWREIS, Dr R.S. Praveen Kumar and her coach Sekhar Babu Bachinepally of Transcend Adventures, Hyderabad, for their unwavering support and encouragement.

Dr Praveen said, "Purna's expeditions will remain engraved in golden letters in the annals of the world's mountaineering history. Today, Purna has become an accomplished world-class mountaineer and the pride of Telangana and India. I thank the CM and the Welfare Minister Koppula Eshwar for helping children from marginalised sections under the KG-PG Mission."

The path-breaking curricular and extra-curricular activities, initiated by Dr Praveen to release teaching from the confines of classrooms, played a crucial role in freeing the potential in children from marginalised sections of society. — PNS

Theatre attracting more youngsters

ANUSHKA PRADEEP
HYDERABAD

Theatre in Hyderabad is booming today and several factors are being attributed to this upward trend.

Given the amount of effort put in by several theatre groups such as Samahaara, Udaan, Nishumbita, Sutradhar and several others the state of theatre and performing arts in the city a few years ago, Hyderabad has undergone a huge paradigm shift.

Towards the end of 2019, two annual largescale theatre festivals, the Natotsav and the Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Festival were received enthusiastically. The Natotsav, an annual festival presented by Nishumbita (Ballet & Theatre), included an extensive two-day workshop with Mahesh Dattani this year.

The niche that theatre has now begun to carve for itself has become more welcoming not just by professional adults who used to be the face of theatre for years, but

as well for the more experimental and creatively inclined age-group, youngsters. There has been a significant increase in the number of youngsters participating in theatre over the past few years.

"Several factors influenced the theatre culture in the city. One of those was the inflow of people from other states of the country where the theatre culture is already prevalent, into Hyderabad. These people were key to contributing to the then budding theatre in Hyderabad. Also, when we started the theatre festival in the city, theatre groups got a platform here in Hyderabad to showcase their performances while they could also network with other theatre groups," says Anjali Parvati Koda, founder of Samahaara theatre group.

"Another factor that is also drawing youngsters towards the theatre scene is that the new-age actors like Vijay Deverakonda and Punarnavi also had their beginnings in theatre here

THE NICHE THAT THEATRE HAS BEGUN TO CARVE FOR ITSELF IS WELCOMING FOR PROFESSIONALS AND BEGINNERS ALIKE

in Hyderabad, including Samahaara," she added.

Asked about how colleges and schools contribute towards the increasing participation of youngsters in theatre, Saurabh Gharipurikar says, "It is safe to say that the relatively recent addition of theatre into school and college curriculums has played a decent role in nurturing the interest of students towards theatre as an art form." Gharipurikar is the founder of 'Udaan Academy of Arts and Education'.

In order to understand the interest youth have for participating in theatre and drama, *The Pioneer* spoke to

Akhil Bhaneshwar who was an active member of the Nishumbita theatre group.

"With the rise of several new groups in Hyderabad, youngsters now have access to theatre and cultural arts especially at a time when they understand the importance of theatre as an art form. And more and more theatre workshops are also being conducted across the city, thus giving the audience clarity about theatre as an art form and making it more relatable to youngsters," says Akhil who was an alumnus of the National School of Drama, Bangalore.

"Often times people who practice drama and theatre in their lives find it easier to cope with their daily stress as they get a boost of confidence while being able to witness an overall development in their capabilities. As refreshing as it is to see the youth coming forward to participate in theatre, it would be better if we could have people who could remain committed in the field," he concluded.



Farah, Raveena apologise to Cardinal Oswald Gracias

Filmmaker Farah Khan and actor Raveena Tandon met Indian Cardinal of Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal Oswald Gracias to tender an apology after the duo, along with comic Bharti Singh, were booked for allegedly hurting the religious sentiments of the community in a TV show.

Farah earlier took to Twitter to apologise on behalf of entire team of Flipkart Video Original's quiz show *Backbenchers*, on which she serves as the host. The said episode has also been taken off by Flipkart Video. In a statement, the host-director said she along with Raveena paid a visit to Gracias to tender an unconditional apology.

"His Eminence Cardinal Oswald Gracias met us. We apologised and asked him to forgive our mistake and he very graciously accepted our apology. He also issued a statement on our behalf to end this matter," Farah said.

Dr Abraham Mathai, president of Indian Christian Voice, said the Christian community accepted the apology tendered by Farah, Raveena and Bharti Singh. "We appreciate Flipkart video and Walmart CEO for removing the episode off air. The Christian community expresses appreciation to Flipkart video and Mr Doug McMillon, the global CEO of Walmart for having considered our demands and sentiments."

"This evening Farah Khan and Raveena Tandon went in person to His Eminence Cardinal Oswald Gracias to tender a written and unconditional apology, which the Cardinal graciously accepted. I appeal to the Christian community in this nation who have been enraged by this whole episode to accept their apology in the true spirit of Christ," Mathai said in a statement.

Farah on Monday took to Twitter to express her gratitude to the cardinal. "To err is human to forgive divine. Thank you, Your Eminence Cardinal Oswald Gracias for meeting us and accepting our heartfelt apologies and putting this unfortunate matter to rest," her tweet read. Bharti, who is out of the country, also apologised to the community for 'hurting their sentiments'.



Penn Badgley confirms *You* season 3 by accident

You star Penn Badgley has accidentally revealed that the audiences will be seeing more of his narcissistic murderer Joe Goldberg in future. The first season of the series, developed by Greg Berlanti and Sera Gamble, premiered on Netflix in December 2018, and the second season released last week.

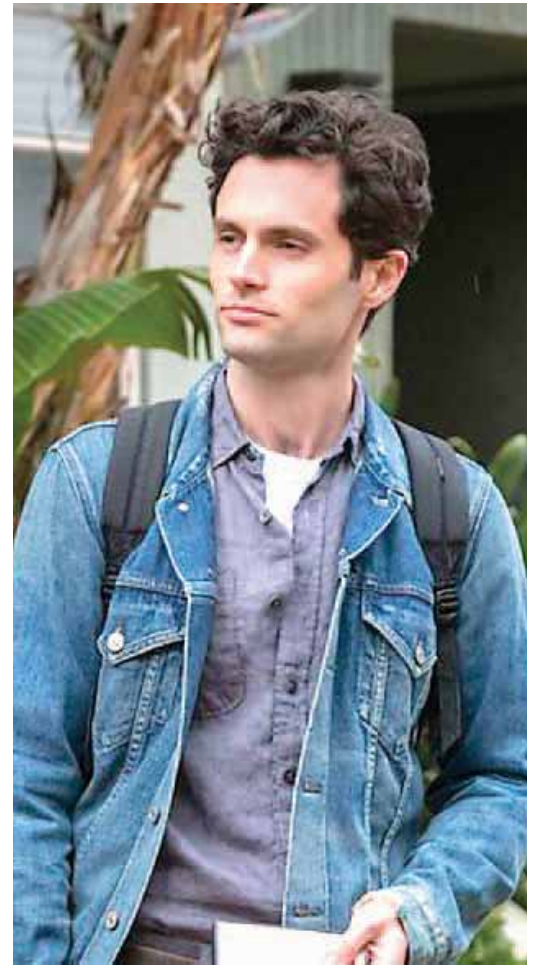
In an interview with *Entertainment Tonight*, Badgley accidentally let it slip that season three was pretty much a done deal, when quizzed on the character development of his most recent love interest, Love Quinn, played by actor Victoria Pedretti.

"She doesn't appear to be the same kind of person. She doesn't appear to be the same kind of predator. She doesn't appear to be the same kind of... you know, dare I say, in the third season — oh, god!" Badgley

said. "I literally know nothing about the third season," he added.

When the host of the show asked him again about the third season, he replied, while nodding his head, "Technically I can't... I mean, like, unofficially?" You also features James Scully, Jenna Ortega and Ambyr Childers.

The first season follows Joe, a bookstore manager in New York, who upon meeting Guinevere Beck (Elizabeth Lail), an aspiring writer, becomes immediately infatuated with her. Obsessed with Guinevere, he uses social media and other technology to track her and get closer to her. The sophomore chapter will see him taking a trip to Los Angeles, where Love Quinn, an aspiring chef, is the next object of his obsession. Haunting of the Hill House star Victoria Pedretti plays Love.



JOHN ABRAHAM: Failure really doesn't affect me

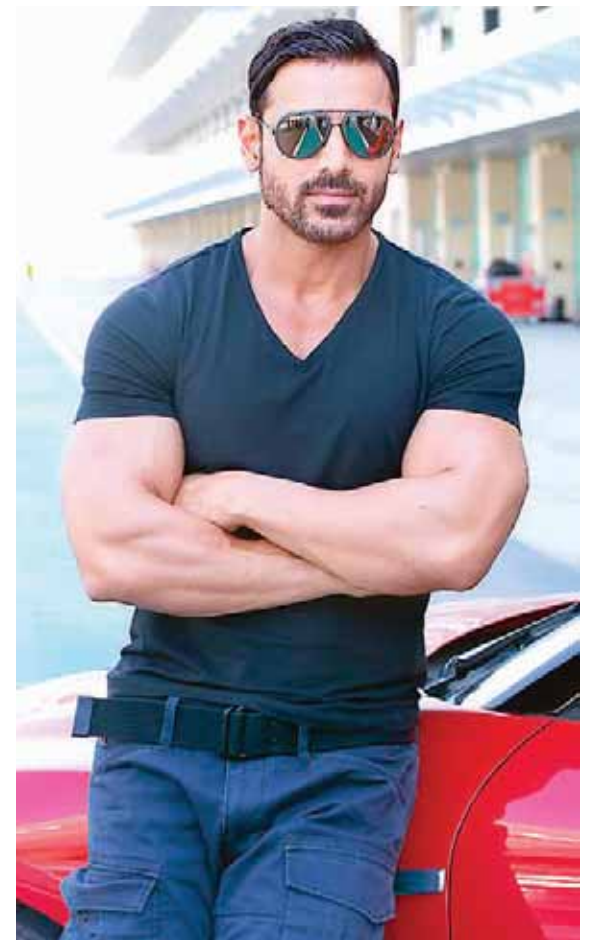
Actor John Abraham says his biggest advantage is that he is not afraid of failure. "I come from a very middle-class background and even today, I hold on to those values very strongly. My biggest advantage is that I'm not afraid of failure. And when you're not afraid of it, you can do whatever you want because you've seen failure and success in the same measure. So, failure really doesn't affect me," John said.

The actor expressed his views when he appeared on chat show *Not Just Supper Stars* along with his personal trainer Vinod Channa. The show is aired in India on Zee Café. Talking about his

friends, John said: "One of my close friends, Suku, is an auto rickshaw driver. He ferries me regularly from my home to the office and back. Once Suku and me went to watch a Tamil film, *Kaakha Kaakha*, and it was on his recommendation that I remade this movie into *Force*."

Being someone who believes in living a simple life, John also confessed that he prefers spending on others. "I don't spend on myself as I don't like it," he said.

When host Gunjan Utreja asked John about his holiday plan, the actor said: "I am a self-confessed workaholic. I have had a holiday for only five days in the last eighteen years."



FUN TIME

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Gigantic
- The organs of sight
- Cardboard box
- Hurt by a bee
- Three times twenty
- Yell
- Gave out a long deep breath to show sadness or happiness
- A sheet-like garment worn in ancient Rome
- Think differently to someone else

DOWN

- Do these to strengthen your muscles and keep fit
- A sung musical drama
- One time
- Make longer by pulling
- A place to see animals
- A frightening dream
- Observed
- A smell
- Counts up
- Unwell





SATYADEV, NITHYA MENEN TO STAR IN PERIOD DRAMA

In 2019, Satyadev managed to add two hit films and a popular web series to his credit. **NAGARAJ GOUD** finds out what's in store for this upcoming actor in 2020



It has been a profitable year for Satyadev on the career front. While he tasted enormous success with films like *Brochevaravara* and *iSmart Shankar* where he was seen in pivotal roles, his Telugu web series, *Gods of Dharmapuri*, managed to emerge as one of the top seven series of this year, attracting viewership from across the country. His turns in *George Reddy* and *Ragala 24 Gantalalo* were equally raved. He recently completed shooting for *Uma Maheswara Ugra Roopasya*, directed by C/o *Kancharapalem* director, Venkatesh Maha. This movie is a joint production venture between *Baahubali* makers Arka Media and

Vijaya Praveena. Now rounding off the year on a high, *The Pioneer* has exclusively learnt that he has green-lit another solo project. This film will mark the directorial debut of Vishwak Rao, who had earlier assisted director Tharun Bhascker. The film will feature Nithya Menen as the female lead and Rahul Ramakrishna will be seen in a key role.

A highly-placed source close to the development tells us, "The film is a concept driven drama infused

THE FILM SET IN THE LATE 1970s WHERE PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO REACT TO AN IMPENDING DANGER

with a lot of humour. It is set in the late 1970s where people are forced to react to an impending danger. Satya gave his nod in the first narration itself, impressed with the script and the way director narrated it. He is gung-ho about the research that Vishwak has undertaken for the project and lauded the director for penning a watertight script. The film will go to floors in January and will be wrapped up in 40-50 days. The director is currently scouting for locations on the outskirts of Hyderabad for an ideal village setting. Prithvi who has distributed films like *Arjun Reddy* and *Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya* is turning producer with this yet-to-be-titled film."

PRAVEEN SATTARU TO DIRECT NAG

Pooja takes off to Europe for **NEW YEAR**

This year has been a successful year for Pooja Hedge, with hits like *Gaddalakonda Ganesh* and *Houseful 4* under her belt. Films like *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo*, Prabhas' next with Radha Krishna and Akhil's next with Bommarillu Bhasker have kept her busy all throughout the year. No wonder, she wants to bid a perfect farewell to the year and welcome 2020. Soon after completing the pending song, *Butta Bomma*, for *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo* in Hyderabad over the weekend, she has taken off to Europe to ring in the New Year. She will be welcoming 2020 in Vienna, Austria along with her friends. She will be back in Hyderabad on January 3 or 4 and dive headlong into the promotions of *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo*. In the film, she will be seen as Allu Arjun's boss who falls in love with him.



Reports about superstar Nagarajuna giving his in-principle nod to spearhead the Telugu remake of Hindi film *Raid* have been doing rounds for more than a couple of months now, but there hasn't been much work initiated into the project. But, we've now reliably learnt that distribution and production house, Asian Cinemas, have zeroed in on director Praveen Sattaru to helm the film. They felt that he is the right man for the task going by the way he showed in skills in directing *PSV: Garudavega*, a spy thriller. And guess what? The director is already on the



ASIAN CINEMAS, HAVE ZEROED IN ON DIRECTOR PRAVEEN SATTARU AS THEY FELT THAT HE IS THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE TASK GOING BY THE WAY HE SHOWED IN SKILLS IN DIRECTING PSV: GARUDAVEGA, A SPY THRILLER

job and has even held a couple of fruitful meetings with Nagarajuna. *Raid*, released in 2018, is a story about an honest senior income tax officer (played by Ajay Devgn) in Lucknow who begins an investigation into claims of money laundering against an influential man. Praveen, according to a well-placed source, has given a complete new spin to the script. "While the basic concept is from the original *Raid*, the director has changed other parts significantly that

will only better the pacing of the film. Plus, the screenplay and mood of the film will be different. It will be an investigative thriller predominantly. While *Raid* was only about one major case, this one tells the story of an upright IT officer dealing with multiple cases. Overall, it will look like a new film altogether. It will commence after Nag wraps up his present film, *Wild Dog*, with writer Ahishor Solomon," added the source. — NG



ILAIYARAJA gives 2 tunes in 10 minutes

With *Ranga Marthanda* team on a break, film's director Krishna Vamsi decided to shift his attention to music. After signing on maestro Ilaiyaraaja to compose the film's tunes last month, the director landed in Chennai on Monday to get his tunes done. All it took for the composer — fondly addressed as the God of Music by scores of his admirers — was 10 minutes to create two tunes. Thrilled by his composer's pace, Krishna Vamsi shared a small video on Twitter. "Two heavenly tunes locked... in just ten minutes... So fast.... Innovative n experimental only he can do ...he appreciated d song situations ... Blessed n charged..(sic)," the director tweeted. This is the second time the famed tunesmith, a Padma Vibhushan recipient, is rendering music for Krishna Vamsi's film. They've earlier created magic with *Anthapuram* in 1998. *Ranga Marthanda* is a joint production venture between Abhishek Jawkar and Madhu Kalipu. It is an official remake of Marathi hit, *Natsamrat* (2016)



which told the story of a veteran Shakespearean actor (played by Nana Patekar) who retires from the stage into the painful tragedy of old age, facing an ungrateful family and his fleeting legacy.

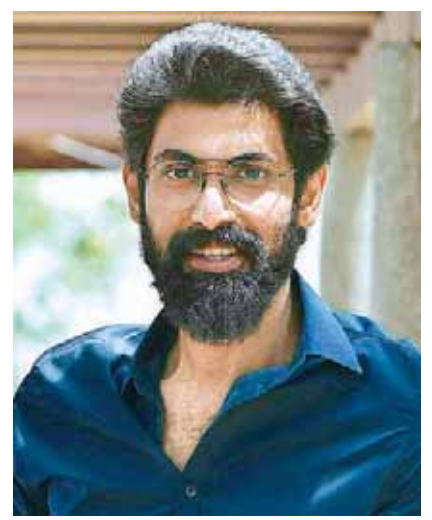
Prakash Raj has stepped into the shoes of Patekar, while Ramya Krishnan plays his wife. The likes of Anasuya, Shivatmika Rajasekar and Rahul Sipligunj are essaying supporting roles.

PRABHAS, RANA go gaga over Mathu Vadalara

Actor Prabhas who watched a special screening of Christmas release *Mathu Vadalara* in Hyderabad on Sunday is in awe of the film. So impressed he is with the crime thriller that he spoke to each primary cast and crew member and shared his observations. He even participated in a promotional video in praise of the film. "Prabhas sir watched the film yesterday. Our team

was very thrilled listening to what all he said. He is surely darling for a reason. A special chat video with the Bahubali regarding #MathuVadalara coming soon...Yayyyyyy (sic)," film's director Ritesh Rana posted on Twitter on Monday. Like *Baahubali*, Bhallaladeva too was bowled over by the film. "I like edgy films and *Mathu Vadalara* is one edgy affair. The great thing about the film is the multiple turns the film

takes each minute while managed to keep the audience glued to the seats with its humour and tense-filled moments. Composer Kaala Bhairava's control over sound and music was impressive. I'm partial to Sri Simha as I have seen him growing up. Now, I feel like he's grown-up and I haven't. To choose a story like this for his debut film means that he knows what today's youth needs. He has done a superb job as an actor," Rana said.





Indian captain Virat Kohli raises his bat after scoring hundred

BCCI/Twitter

Kohli maintains top spot in ICC Test ranking

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian captain Virat Kohli will end the year at the top of the ICC Test ranking chart for batsmen but five-day specialist Cheteshwar Pujara slipped a place to fifth. With 928 points, Kohli is way ahead of second-placed Australian maestro Steve Smith (911) and New Zealand's inspirational skipper Kane Williamson (822), while Australia's Marnus Labuschagne, who has amassed 1,085 runs in 11 Tests this year, improved a place to grab the fourth spot.

Pujara was placed fifth with 791 points, while Ajinkya Rahane was joint seventh with 759 points. With his enterprising 95 against England in the first Test, Quinton de Kock not only set up his team's win, but also shot into the top of the latest rankings release on Monday.

In bowling, India's lead pacer Jasprit Bumrah, returning from an injury layoff, remained static at sixth position with 794 points, while spinner Ravichandran Ashwin

Ponting picks Kohli as captain of his Test team

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting on Monday picked India skipper Virat Kohli to lead his all-star Test team of the decade, which featured four English players. Ponting's Test team of the 2010s doesn't feature any other Indian apart from Kohli, who is currently ranked No.1 in both ICC Test and ODI rankings for batsmen.

The Englishmen in his team include all-rounder Ben Stokes, batsman Alastair Cook, and the pace duo of Stuart Broad and James Anderson. Among the

Australians he has opted for Steve Smith and David Warner along with spinner Nathan Lyon.

"Everyone's picking teams of the decade so I thought I'd join in the fun," Ponting wrote on his twitter handle.

"This would be my Test team of the 2010s: David Warner, Alastair Cook, Kane Williamson, Steve Smith, Virat Kohli (c), Kumar Sangakkara (wk), Ben Stokes, Dale Steyn, Nathan Lyon, Stuart Broad, James Anderson."

Kohli was also named captain of the Test XI of the decade by Cricket Australia's official news website.

(772 points) and seamer Mohammed Shami (771) were ninth and tenth respectively in the order.

Australian pace spearhead

Pat Cummins was at the top of the standings with 902 points ahead of Neil Wagner (859) and South African paceman Kagiso Rabada (832).

Rahane, Shaw to play against Karnataka



Prithvi Shaw plays a shot in Vijay Hazare Domestic tournament

PTI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Test specialist Ajinkya Rahane and young prodigy Prithvi Shaw will turn up for Mumbai in their Ranji Trophy game against heavyweights Karnataka.

The two were named in the 15-member squad announced by the association on its website on Monday. The game will be played at the Bandra Kurla Complex from January 3.

Both Shaw and Rahane played the previous games against Baroda and Railways.

Shaw had hit a blazing double hundred against Baroda in the lung-opener but faltered in both the essays against Railways at Wankhede Stadium.

Rahane also had a horrendous time with the bat against Railways. Mumbai had won the game against Baroda while lost to Railways by 10 wickets.

Rahane, who has played 63 Tests, will be playing consecutive Ranji games after a long time.

Shreyas Iyer and Shivam Dube, who were criticized heavily for not playing the last Ranji games, have been named in the squad as they are away on India duty.

Pacer Shardul Thakur, who is also away on India duty, has not named in the squad either.

Meanwhile, young batsman Sarfaraz Khan has been included in the squad.

This could possibly be the last game Shaw plays for the time being as he then heads to New Zealand with the India A squad.

Mumbai squad: Suryakumar Yadav (Captain) Aditya Tare (Vice Captain) Ajinkya Rahane, Prithvi Shaw, Sarfaraz Khan, Shubham Ranjane, Akash Parkar, Siddhesh Lad, Shams Mulani, Vinayak Bhoir, Shashank Attarde, Royston Dias, Tushar Deshpande, Deepak Shetty and Eknath Karkar.

Kohli, Bumrah in Wisden's T20I team of the decade

PTI ■ LONDON

India skipper Virat Kohli and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah were the only two Indians who found a place in Wisden's T20 International team of the decade, which didn't feature Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Australia's limited overs captain Aaron Finch was named captain of the team, which has two more Australian in Shane Watson and Glenn Maxwell, two England cricketers — Jos Buttler and David Willey, two Afghanistan all-rounders — Mohammad Nabi and Rashid Khan, and New Zealand's Colin Munro and Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga.

On Kohli, Wisden said: "While Kohli's record in domestic T20 cricket is patchy, the same cannot be said of T20Is. Kohli's average of 53 was the best in the decade, and while his consistency compromises his strike-rate slightly, he is still able to score at a good rate, even if not exceptional.

"Strong against pace and spin, and rapid between the wickets, Kohli is an ideal player at No.3, able to fight fires when an early wicket is lost and stabilise the innings, but also



Jasprit Bumrah during practice session

PTI

accelerate when a platform is set. Following a huge first-wicket partnership, Kohli will

slide down the order in this XI," it said on its website. Kohli, who ranks third in

the list of leading run-scorers of all time with 21,444 runs, was also included in Wisden's Test and ODI teams of the decade, besides being named in Wisden's list of five cricketers of the decade which also features Steve Smith, Dale Steyn, AB de Villiers and Ellyse Perry.

While Kohli was picked in Wisden's T20I team of the decade to strengthen the batting order, Bumrah found a place in the bowling unit due to his superb economy rate and reputation for being a reliable death bowler.

"Bumrah's overall economy rate of 6.71 is the second best in the world among quick bowlers, behind Dale Steyn," Wisden said about Bumrah, who has overall taken 216 wickets, including 51 in T20Is, in his international career so far.

"This statistic is more impressive when you consider he did the majority of his bowling in the death overs, where his economy rate of 7.27 was the seventh best in the world, and comfortably the best by a quick bowler. Bumrah is likely bowl three overs at the death for this side."

Short replaces Abbott for ODIs against India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia on Monday called up explosive all-rounder D'Arcy Short in place of injured pacer Sean Abbott in their ODI squad for the upcoming tour of India.

The tour begins on January 14 with the first One-day International in Mumbai.

The second and third ODIs will be held in Rajkot and Bengaluru on January 14 and January 19, respectively.

Short has been included in the squad after a ruled out Abbott for four weeks.

With fast bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Kane Richardson already in Australia's ODI squad, selectors have called in Short, a top-order batter who also bowls wrist spin, to replace pacer Abbott. "It is extremely unfortunate for Sean, who is very much a part of our white-ball squad plans leading into the ICC T20 World Cup and the World Cup," selection convener Trevor Hohns was quoted as saying by Cricket Australia.

"D'Arcy offers the squad another spinning all-rounder option along with Ashton Agar, which, along with the four world-class fast bowlers and Adam Zampa, balances the squad out nicely. His proven record and ability to bat anywhere in the order will also be a great asset to the squad."

Short has played four ODIs for Australia, hitting 83 runs at an average of 26.66. Unless there's an injury, he will likely bat in the middle order given Warner and Finch are going to open. David Warner and Steve Smith will also be touring India for the first time with the Australian team since the ball-tampering scandal, both expectedly figuring in the squad.



Australia all-rounder D'Arcy Short in action

cricket.com.au/Twitter

AUSTRALIA SQUAD

Aaron Finch (capt), D'Arcy Short, Ashton Agar, Alex Carey (wk), Pat Cummins, Peter Handscomb, Josh

Hazlewood, Marnus Labuschagne, Kane Richardson, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Ashton Turner, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

Lyon shoots down Warne call to take a rest for Sydney



Mitch Swepson and Marnus Labuschagne in the MCG nets with Shane Warne

Cricket.com.au/Twitter

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's Nathan Lyon on Monday shot down a suggestion from Shane Warne that he take a rest for the Sydney Test against New Zealand this week so leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson can make his debut.

Tim Paine's team have already won the three-match series against the Black Caps after crushing them by 247 runs in Melbourne on Sunday, follow-

ing their comprehensive win in Perth.

Cricket great Warne has championed Swepson and over the weekend flagged the idea of axing Lyon if selectors opt for one spinner in Sydney.

"Just giving Mitchell Swepson a taste of it, giving him a chance, I reckon it will pay dividends in the long run," Warne said.

But Lyon, who took four wickets on Sunday to wrap up late New Zealand second innings resistance, said there was no way he would be standing aside.

"Did Warne ever want a rest and give Stuart MacGill a go?" he asked, noting the lack of opportunity given to Warne's leg-spin rival at the height of their careers.

"I won't be resting. I haven't met any Australian cricketers that would like to be rested.

"It's that hard playing Test cricket, but it's that rewarding as well so every opportunity you get to play cricket for Australia it means the world to us.

"So I can't imagine Mitch Starc, Pat (Cummins) or Patto (James Pattinson) putting his hand up to say I need a rest." Queensland's Swepson has been added to Australia's squad for Sydney, where conditions often assist slow bowlers, and was taking tips from Warne in Melbourne.

There is a chance that Australia will play two specialist spinners in the third Test, with the call to be made after Paine and selectors look at the pitch.

Swepson, who has taken 12 wickets from six Sheffield Shield games at 26.58, was a member of Australia's Test squad for tours of India and Bangladesh in 2017 but has yet to make his debut.

Lyon said if both of them played, he would be more than happy.

"Mitch has been bowling brilliantly for Queensland," he said. "He's a great fella to start off with, but he gives it a rip and that's what I really love to see.

"I'm a big fan of Mitch, it's great to see him in and around our squad so he gets his chance and fingers crossed we can have a great combination together."

If Australia go down that road, they would almost certainly retain Cummins, Starc and Pattinson, meaning a batsman would be axed with Matthew Wade the likely candidate after Travis Head scored a century in Melbourne.

Du Plessis criticises 'big three' move

AFP ■ CENTURION

South African cricket captain Faf du Plessis believes cricket needs more, not fewer, elite nations.

Speaking after South Africa's 107-run win in the first Test against England on Sunday, Du Plessis was asked his opinion about plans for an annual 'Super Series' of one-day games, involving the so-called 'Big Three' of India, Australia and England, with one other country to be invited on a revolving basis.

"The last year or so you can see what's going on in terms of the big three countries," he said. "There's a lot of movement going towards that, a lot more matches being played against the top three, or big three. It's probably better if you include more teams, the better to grow the game as much as you can."

Du Plessis pointed out that there was inequality of fixtures, especially in Test cricket, with new Test nations such as Ireland and Afghanistan struggling to get fixtures.

"There's a lot of smaller nations not playing a lot of Test cricket, they're actually playing less," he said.



Ailing NZ call up Somerville for third Test

AFP ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand have turned to Will Somerville for his experience of playing in Sydney as they look to avoid a whitewash in the third and final Test against Australia.

Off-spinner Somerville, who was raised in Australia and played Sheffield Shield for New South Wales, will replace injured pace bowler Trent Boult for the Test starting in Sydney on Friday.

Coach Gary Stead said the inclusion of the lanky 1.93 metre (6ft 4in) Somerville was a nod to the expected conditions at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

"There's no secret the SCG pitch is one of the more spin-friendly in Australia," Stead said.

"Will offers something different to our two other spinners in the squad with his right arm off-spin and height. The fact he's played a lot of cricket in Sydney during his career for New South Wales will also be helpful

as we prepare for this final Test."

Somerville, 35, has played three Tests, taking seven wickets on his debut against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi last year and a total of seven in two Tests away to Sri Lanka four months ago.

Boult is returning to New Zealand after suffering a fracture to his right hand in the second Test which Australia won comfortably by 247 runs on Sunday within four days in Melbourne.

Australia won the first Test by 296 runs, again wrapping up the match inside four days.

New Zealand already have Matt Henry and Kyle Jamieson in the squad to provide fast bowling cover while Somerville's height and local knowledge could see him overtake the incumbent spinners Mitchell Santner and Todd Astle.

Somerville was one of the leading bowlers in Australia's Sheffield Shield in 2016-17 season with 35 wickets at an average of 23.14.