



Nuclear crisis: Tehran decries economic embargo as 'bullying'
US slaps more sanctions on Iran

WASHINGTON/DUBAI. REUTERS: The United States announced a new raft of sanctions on Iran on Monday and threatened further action to pressure its old adversary, steps the Islamic Republic condemned as "economic war" and vowed to defy.

The move is part of a wider effort by US President Donald Trump to curb Tehran's missile and nuclear programmes and diminish the Islamic Republic's influence in the Middle East.

It follows Washington's withdrawal from the 2015 international agreement on Iran's nuclear programme.

In a statement, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said: "Treasury's imposition of unprecedented financial pressure on Iran should make clear to the Iranian regime that they will face mounting financial isolation and economic stagnation until they fundamentally change their destabilising behaviour."

The sanctions cover 50 Iranian banks and subsidiaries, more than 200 persons and vessels in its shipping sector, and targets Tehran's national airline, Iran Air, and more than 65 of its aircraft, the statement said. Hours earlier, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the "bullying" restoration of oil and banking curbs was backfiring by making Washington more isolated, a reference to other world powers opposed to the initiative.

European powers which continue to back the nuclear deal said they opposed the re-application of sanctions and major oil buyer China said it regretted the move. The move is part of a wider effort by Trump to force Iran to further limit its nuclear work and halt a missile program, as well as end its support for proxy forces in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East.



SHOW OF STRENGTH: Sayyad 2 missile is fired by the Talash air defence system during drills in an undisclosed location in Iran on Monday. Iran greeted the re-imposition of US sanctions with air defense drills and a statement from President Hassan Rouhani that the nation faces a "war situation." AP/PTI

Trade in humanitarian goods exempted from sanctions

United States sanctions permit trade in humanitarian goods such as food and pharmaceuticals, but measures imposed on banks and trade restrictions could make such items more expensive.

Switzerland said it was holding talks with the United States and Iran about launching a humanitarian payment channel to help food and drugs keep flowing to Tehran.

US sanctions permit trade in humanitarian goods such as food and pharmaceuticals, but measures imposed on banks and trade restrictions could make such items more expensive.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sunday the penalties returning on Monday were "the toughest sanctions ever put in place on the Islamic Republic of Iran."

However, Iran's clerical rulers have dismissed concerns

about the impact of sanctions on the economy.

"Today the enemy (the United States) is targeting our economy...the main target of sanctions is our people," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said.

"Illegal and unfair" "America wanted to cut to zero Iran's oil sales...but we will continue to sell our oil...to break sanctions," Rouhani told economists, adding the sanctions were illegal and unfair.

"This is an economic war against Iran but...America should learn that it cannot use the language of force against Iran...We are prepared to resist any pressure,"



MIKE POMPEO (US SECRETARY OF STATE): The Iranian regime has a choice: it can either do a 180-degree turn from its outlaw course of action and act like a normal country, or it can see its economy crumble.



HASSAN ROUHANI (IRANIAN PRESIDENT): Today the enemy (the United States) is targeting our economy...the main target of sanctions is our people.

Rouhani said, Foreign minister Zarif said Washington had made itself more isolated by pursuing the sanctions. "US bullying is backfiring...The US — and not Iran — is isolated," Zarif said in a tweet.

Trump announced in May his government was withdrawing from what he called the "worst ever" agreement negotiated by the United States. The other parties to the deal - Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia - say they will not leave.

The deal had seen most international financial and economic sanctions on Iran lifted in return for Tehran curbing its disputed nuclear activity under UN surveillance.

India among countries allowed to buy Iranian oil, says Pompeo

WASHINGTON, PTI: India, China and Japan are among eight countries temporarily allowed to continue buying Iranian oil as they showed a significant reduction in oil purchases from the Persian Gulf country after the US reimposed crippling sanctions on Tehran, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Monday.

Pompeo vowed that the US will be "relentless" in pressuring Iran as he announced the list of the countries temporarily exempted from the US sanctions during a press conference broadcast live.

Italy, Greece, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey also figure in the list released by Pompeo, who said over 20 countries have cut their oil imports from Iran, reducing purchases by more than one million barrels per day.

While the US had previously wanted countries including India to completely halt oil purchases from Iran by November 4, it seems to have relented considering the havoc the move to completely take out Iranian supplies from the market would have had on prices.

India, the world's third-biggest oil consumer, meets more than 80% of its oil needs through imports. Iran is its third-largest supplier after Iraq and Saudi Arabia and meets about 10% of total needs. Currently, India pays its third largest oil supplier in euros using European banking channels.

India has resisted Washington's call to reduce purchases to zero, citing the galloping energy needs of its 1.3 billion people. But at the same time, India has taken steps to reduce its oil purchase from Iran, which has already declined substantially.

In May, President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the 2015 landmark Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) terming it as a disaster. Under the Obama-era deal, involving five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany, Iran agreed to stop its nuclear programme in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

SWIFT suspends Iran banks

BRUSSELS, AFP: The SWIFT banking network, the backbone for international monetary transfers, said Monday it has suspended several Iranian banks from its service, after the United States reimposed nuclear sanctions on Tehran.

"In keeping with our mission of supporting the resilience and integrity of the global financial system as a global and neutral service provider, SWIFT is suspending certain Iranian banks' access to the messaging system," it said.

"This step, while regrettable, has been taken in the interest of the stability and integrity of the wider global financial system."

SWIFT, the Belgian-based Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, provides banks with a secure messenger network to allow international transfers.

Without its services, Iranian banks will find it more difficult to do business with any client prepared to brave US sanctions to maintain ties with Tehran.

World at a glance



The newly-built French-made cruise ship "Celebrity Edge" of the US company of tourism cruise, Celebrity Cruise, leaves Saint-Nazaire for Miami on Sunday. AFP

US-China trade war the most stupid thing, says Jack Ma

The US-China trade war is the "most stupid thing in this world," Jack Ma, the chief of Asia's most valuable public company, Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, Reuters reports from Sanghai.



Jack Ma

The two countries have set tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of each other's goods and US President Donald Trump has threatened to slap tariffs on the remainder of China's \$500 billion-plus exports to the United States if the trade dispute

cannot be resolved. Ma made the comments at the China International Import Expo (CIIE) held in the Chinese commercial hub of Shanghai. The US trade deficit with China, which Trump has blamed for a variety of economic ills, has helped create jobs in the US and without it the country would have big problems, Ma added.

Rajapaksa not PM yet: Speaker

Sri Lanka's speaker of parliament said on Monday he would not accept a former president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, as the new prime minister until he proves he commands a majority in parliament, Reuters reports from Colombo.

President Maithripala Sirisena fired the sitting prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, on October 26 and appointed Rajapaksa in his place, sparking a political crisis. Wickremesinghe has denounced his dismissal

as unconstitutional and vowed to remain prime minister until parliament votes him out. "The majority of members are of the view that the changes ... are unconstitutional and against traditions," the speaker of parliament, Karu Jayasuriya, said in a statement. Sirisena suspended parliament after he appointed Rajapaksa, raising concern among political parties at home and among Sri Lanka's traditional allies such as India, the United States and European Union.

Riyadh sent experts to hide Khashoggi murder: Turkey

ISTANBUL, AFP: Saudi Arabia sent two experts to Istanbul with the specific aim of covering up evidence after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at its consulate in Istanbul, a Turkish official said on Monday.



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been under scrutiny over the killing of Khashoggi. AFP

More than a month after the Saudi royal insider-turned critic was killed inside the mission on October 2, Turkey has still yet to recover the remains amid claims that his body was dissolved in acid.

The killing of the 59-year-old has severely dented the kingdom's image in the West and put powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the defensive.

"We believe that the two individuals came to Turkey for the sole purpose of covering up evidence of Jamal Khashoggi's murder before the Turkish police were allowed to search the premises," a senior Turkish official said, asking not to be named.

The official confirmed a report in the Sabah newspaper saying that chemicals expert Ahmad Abdulaziz al-Janobi and toxicology expert Khaled Yahya al-Zahrani were among a team sent from Saudi Arabia purportedly to investigate the murder last month.

The report said they visited the consulate every day from their arrival on October 11 until October 17. Saudi Arabia only allowed Turkish police to

finally search the consulate on October 15.

After weeks of allegations in pro-government media, Turkey's chief prosecutor last week confirmed Khashoggi was strangled as soon as he entered the consulate and the body was dismembered. But despite intensive searches by Turkish police, there is still no trace of his remains.

The sons of Khashoggi, Salah and Abdullah, told CNN they wanted Saudi Arabia to return the body so that he could be buried in Medina with the rest of his family.

Turkey's allegation of the deployment of a "clean-up" team came after Yasin Aktay, an adviser to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, hinted on Friday that the body may even have been destroyed in acid.

Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay told the official Anadolu news agency Monday that "all those reports should be investigated".

First wave of Central American migrants arrive in Mexico City

MEXICO CITY, REUTERS: The first Central American migrants from a caravan travelling through Mexico towards the United States in hopes of seeking asylum arrived in Mexico City on Sunday, taking up temporary shelter at a sports stadium.

More than 1,000 Central Americans were moving in groups in the Gulf state of Veracruz, the central state of Puebla and in the southern state of Chiapas, local media reported. "This is an exodus," Alejandro Solalinde, a Catholic priest and migrant rights activist, told reporters. "It's without precedent."

The US government has pressured Mexico to halt the advance of the migrants and President Enrique Pena Nieto has offered temporary identification papers and jobs if they register for asylum in the southern states of Chiapas and Oaxaca.

duran city of San Pedro Sula.

"Our heads are set at getting to the United States, to fulfill the American dream," said Mauricio Mancilla, who travelled with his six-year-old son from San Pedro Sula. "We have faith in God that we will do this, whatever the circumstances."

Thousands more Central Americans were moving in groups in the Gulf state of Veracruz, the central state of Puebla and in the southern state of Chiapas, local media reported. "This is an exodus," Alejandro Solalinde, a Catholic priest and migrant rights activist, told reporters. "It's without precedent."

The US government has pressured Mexico to halt the advance of the migrants and President Enrique Pena Nieto has offered temporary identification papers and jobs if they register for asylum in the southern states of Chiapas and Oaxaca.

Asia Bibi lawyer flees to Netherlands

AMSTERDAM, REUTERS: The Pakistani lawyer who helped free a Christian woman, sentenced to death in Pakistan for blasphemy, has fled to the Netherlands, a Dutch Christian rights group said on Monday.

Asia Bibi's lawyer, Saiful Mulo, left Pakistan on Saturday, due to fear that he could be attacked after Bibi's conviction was overturned on Wednesday, the Association for Persecuted Christians said.

Bibi was convicted of blasphemy in 2010 for allegedly making derogatory remarks about Islam, and had been sentenced to death. Mulo, who helped overturn the decision, and has been threatened by angry mobs calling for the judges in the case to be killed.

Two Pakistani politicians who tried to help Bibi have been assassinated. Several parties in Dutch parliament have said they support providing temporary shelter to Bibi if she flees there.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel during the latter's visit to Pyongyang on Sunday. REUTERS

80 kidnapped in Cameroon

More than 80 people, mostly children, were kidnapped from a school in the city of Bamenda in western Cameroon early on Monday, Reuters reports from Yaounde.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the abduction in the English-speaking region where separatists are fighting to form a breakaway state. The separatists have imposed curfews

and closed down schools as part of their protest against President Paul Biya's French-speaking government.

"In total 81 people were kidnapped including the principal. They were taken to the bush," a military source told Reuters.

A government spokesman said it was keeping track of an event but that it could not comment further.

One killed in Canada plane crash

OTTAWA, AFP: The pilot of a small passenger plane died after colliding with another aircraft and crashing into a field near the capital Ottawa, officials said.

Police said the exact circumstances of the early Sunday accident in Carp, Ontario, around 30 kilometres west of Ottawa, remained unknown. The pilot of the Cessna aircraft, who was flying alone, was pronounced dead at the scene.

The second plane, a turbo-prop Piper PA-42, was rerouted to Ottawa's international airport, where it landed safely, a Transport Canada spokesperson said, adding that the incident was under investigation.

CBC reported the Piper pilot told air traffic controllers the Cessna struck from below and damaged his landing gear. Neither that pilot nor his one passenger were injured, emergency services said.

US mid-terms

Indian-Americans strong contenders

WASHINGTON, PTI: Nearly a dozen Indian-Americans, some of them part of the so-called 'Samosa Caucus', have emerged as strong contenders for Tuesday's high-profile US mid-term polls taking place at a time when the anti-immigrant sentiment is at its peak in the country.

The emergence of a large number of young Indian-Americans reflects the growing desire of this small ethnic community comprising just 1% of the US population of 32.57 crores.

"It has been incredible to see the rise of Indian-Americans in US politics," Rich Verma, the former US ambassador to India, told PTI.

This election could be transformational - sending a number of new members into the House of Representatives and state legislatures as well, observed Verma, who has campaigned for several of the Indian-Americans running



Raja Krishnamoorthi and AmiBera are among the top contenders to retain their seats during Tuesday's election.



Raja Krishnamoorthi and AmiBera are among the top contenders to retain their seats during Tuesday's election.

for offices. All the four Indian-American lawmakers in the present House of Representatives are expected to easily sail through Tuesday's mid-term polls.

They are three-term Congressman Ami Bera from the seventh Congressional district of California and three first-timers, who are seeking their re-election: Ro Khanna from 17th Congressional District of California, Raja Krishnamoorthi

from eighth Congressional District of Illinois and Congressman Pramila Jayapal from seventh Congressional District of Washington State. The four incumbents are joined by seven other Indian-Americans on the ballot for the House of Representatives.

The mid-term elections will take place in the middle of President Donald Trump's four-year term. All 435 seats in the US House of Repre-

UK opens up armed forces to Indians

LONDON, PTI: The UK government on Monday announced a relaxation of recruitment criteria to allow Commonwealth nationals to apply for jobs in its armed forces to meet a shortage in its ranks, a move that could also benefit Indians.

The decision announced by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) means that people from Commonwealth countries - including India, Australia, Kenya, Fiji and Sri Lanka - will be considered for roles, even if they have never lived in Britain.

The Commonwealth is an association of 53 independent states that are mostly former territories of the British Empire. The MoD laid out the proposals in a written ministerial statement (WMS) before Parliament, which involves a waiver of the current requirement of a minimum of five-year residency in the UK for applying to join the country's Army, Navy or Air Force.

Fierce fighting in Yemen

Battles raged Monday near a Yemeni port crucial for humanitarian aid, but Saudi Arabia and its allies said they were committed to de-escalating hostilities with rebels as calls for a ceasefire mount, AFP reports from Aden.

The United Nations has appealed for urgent peace talks and warned that an assault on the Red Sea port city of Hodeida would threaten millions of

lives. Yemeni government forces, backed by a regional military coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, say they are now positioned around both the north and south of Hodeida, where clashes have left dozens dead. The city and its port have been controlled by the Huthis -- Iran-backed Shia insurgents who hail from northern Yemen -- since 2014 along with the capital Sanaa.



Actor Nicole Kidman accepts the Hollywood Career Achievement Award during the 22nd Hollywood Film Awards in Beverly Hills, California, on Sunday. REUTERS

Editorial

Barricade Centre's idea, Save Bandipur

The Centre's proposal to lift the existing ban on traffic at night through Bandipur National Park by constructing a wide barricaded road, elevated corridors and underpasses deserves outright condemnation. Bandipur, which was notified as a tiger reserve in 1974, forms the largest protected area in South India, along with adjoining Nagarhole, Mudumalai and Wayanad sanctuaries, and needs to be protected at all costs. The forest is also home to several endangered species, besides being the largest elephant habitat in the country. The road widening will lead to the felling of thousands of fully-grown trees while the barricades will fragment the forest, restricting the free movement of animals. A super-highway through this protected area will increase the vehicle density, leading to heavy air and noise pollution round the clock, putting wild animals under extreme stress.

The dusk-to-dawn ban on traffic on this highway connecting Karnataka with Ooty in Tamil Nadu and Wayanad in Kerala was imposed in 2009, following the death of a large number of wild animals in road accidents. While Tamil Nadu, one of the affected parties, has not contested the ban, Kerala has unleashed a sustained campaign demanding restoration of night traffic. However, the state's claim that the economy of its northern districts has been destroyed due to the ban does not hold much water as the highway is open for 15 hours a day while a convoy of eight buses and emergency vehicles are permitted at night. Kerala's insistence that this particular stretch be opened when there are at least two alternative routes has raised suspicion that it is doing so under pressure from timber, sand and other lobbies whose activities have been severely impacted after the ban.

Karnataka's persistent refusal to lift the ban forced the neighbouring state to seek legal recourse, but with little success. Now, with a Supreme Court-appointed committee too favouring continuance of the ban as the number of wildlife deaths have reduced significantly after the restrictions were enforced, it seemed to be the end of the road for Kerala's stance. But, with the Centre mooted the bizarre idea of a barricaded corridor, ostensibly to broker peace between the two states, it has given new life to the controversy. Following strong protests by NGOs, environmentalists and wildlife enthusiasts who have launched the 'Save Bandipur' campaign, Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy has declared that there is no question of the state permitting the road-widening project. But mere statements will not inspire confidence unless backed by credible action. The state should pass a cabinet resolution strongly opposing the proposal and take all legal steps to protect Bandipur, now and in the future. Forests belong not just to us, but to future generations.



K'taka must stand steadfast in protecting tiger reserve

Pollution reports? Foreign conspiracy!

India's central government is not one to be easily impressed and never one to believe a report, in full or in parts, especially if it is prepared outside the country. Everyone says the country is badly polluted. Its air is thick with the talk of pollution and foul smoke that makes people gasp for breath in some cities. We often put on airs of rivalry with China. The country's cities have competed with Chinese cities, and Delhi has for long thought that it would never get to beat Beijing. But, for once, the Indian capital has won the race, groping in the air saturated with particulate matter. Just last week, the air quality in Delhi slipped so low that masks went up many faces, people were advised to stay indoors, schools and industries shut down, coughs and snorts rattled away, and a pall of soot descended on the city and stayed there.

But breathing is not believing. So, don't just believe those foreign reports that our cities are polluted. Our nationalistic and patriotic government has decided to conduct a study of its own in 20 cities to see if the foreign reports are deliberately lying to make India look bad. Many organisations outside the country, including the World Health Organisation (WHO), have tried to paint India, literally in black. The WHO has said that 14 of the world's cities with the worst air quality are in India. If this was not enough, it said last week that one lakh children under the age of five died of air pollution in the country in 2016. Greenpeace suddenly found an opportunity to hit back at the country which has not given it and other NGOs a chance to breathe in peace. It has said the nastiest things. All this must be a foreign conspiracy afoot to malign India. What greater proof do you need than the fact that the revelations have come when the country is heading for elections?

So, we need to do the pollution tests ourselves. It might take three years to get the results. But that is fine, because it gives us so much time to fight pollution, in the unlikely event that the tests confirm that there is indeed air pollution and that it is harmful to children. It's a matter of another three lakh children lying, but what do all those foreign agencies know. India is an ancient civilisation and we have always thought that its air purifies the body and soul. But now, those who do not know anything about the traditional role of air in India say that it has itself to be purified. Politics is in the air!



Centre wants to test if our air is indeed polluted

RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

Double jeopardy

Poor migrants get sucked into the informal sector and exploitation. Back home, their families become vulnerable

G Gurucharan

Rural-urban migration in India covers a significant population and a vast geography. The Economic Survey 2017 had estimated the magnitude of inter-state migration at close to nine million annually between 2011 and 2016. Census 2011 estimated internal migrants at a staggering 139 million.

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the biggest states of origin, followed closely by Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan; and the major destination states are Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Kerala. These humungous flows include permanent and semi-permanent migration. This presents a formidable governance challenge. The absence of precise data on the migration flows and a systematic understanding of the experiences of migrants are major gaps in knowledge. This is compounded by the varying patterns of inequality across states and agrarian distress driving people out of agriculture.

Much of this migration is from places of origin that are endemically backward and facing environmental degradation to large cities, in search of livelihood. Typically, the migrants are poor, uneducated and unskilled. They are compelled to live and work in peri-urban areas of large urban agglomerations already stressed by the weight of numbers and facing resource constraints. The migration process is mediated by an elaborate chain of intermediaries that performs the function of sourcing and aggregating poor migrants from the villages and connecting them with city contractors as cheap labour.

Evidence suggests that most migrant workers work in the informal economy — as construction workers, labourers in brick kilns, drivers, cooks or security guards — rendering them vulnerable to exploitative practices such as manipulation in wage rates, non-payment or withholding of wages, long work hours, abysmal work conditions, verbal and physical abuse and, in the case of women, sexual exploitation. This is placing at risk the quality of life of millions of people at origin and destination alike.

There are few studies that examine the long-term consequences of this pattern of migration and how it impacts the economic and social prospects of the poor and socially disadvantaged house-

holds. An important policy question is whether migration, as a livelihood strategy, causes double jeopardy, resulting in a decline in the quality of life for the individual and the household at both ends of the migration corridor?

Is migration as a pathway to livelihood security unsustainable and constrains our ability to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1: end poverty in all forms everywhere; SDG 10: reduce inequality within countries; and SDG 11: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, over the medium to long-term? Between 2001 and 2011, rural migrants in search of work added over 22% to urban population growth — a staggering 18 million migrants.



The hinterland of the large urban agglomerations in India comprises farming-rural communities driven to migration as the inevitable livelihood-coping strategy, often due to extreme climate events. Semi-permanent migration, where the wage earner goes to the city while the family stays back, is a country-wide phenomenon.

At both ends of the migration corridor, inadequate state capacity, imperfect markets, structural inequities and the exclusion of the poorest and the marginalised communities from the governance process bind the migrant and the household to patterns of inter-generational poverty cycles. This frame is common to large parts of the country and hence needs policy, programme and regulatory attention across states.

There is evidence to suggest that the migrant in the urban agglomeration encounters four fundamental problems — the absence of documentation and identity resulting in her remaining in the informal economy or even the shadow economy; social and political exclusion and the privation of being seen as 'the

other'; little or no rights-based access to public services — water and sanitation, healthcare, and education; lack of housing — migrants tend to live in the interstices of urban agglomerations or in slums; and no access to formal financial services as a result, remaining an unbanked population.

While they eke out a living, there is little surplus that they can remit back to the family or save, to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty. Back home, the absence of the male member renders the family more vulnerable and often results in a perilous social slide. State governments must recognise migration as an opportunity with positive outcomes for the poor, rather than a problem. It is time to mainstream migration management and take two initiatives in this direction: first, working with migrant communities to understand the problems that these 'invisible people' face.

The Social Accountability approach, pioneered by citizen-centric think-tanks like Public Affairs Centre, Bengaluru, and tools like the Citizen Report Card, the Community Score Card, and the Climate Change Score Card, can help prioritise adaptation and mitigation practices keeping migrant communities at the heart of the analysis. Simply put, it gives voice to the millions of vulnerable migrant workers, seldom heard in decision-making in government.

Second, governance attention needs to focus on migrant populations in the peri-urban areas. Typically, poor migrants reside on the periphery — at the intersection of the rural and the urban administrative boundaries — and are not on the governance radar of either governance unit. The migrant workers receive little attention, if at all, from either, and are often deprived of access to civic amenities such as water and sanitation, housing or access to health care and education. They are left at the mercy of unscrupulous middlemen.

Migration, inter and intra-state, will only grow in the future. An efficient migration process and the portability of skills will be central to the structural transformation of the economy — the movement of labour from the farm to non-farm sector. Migration management will need both policy and programme attention.

Equally, concerted capacity building and training at the third-tier of governance will be necessary if migrant workers and their families are not to be left behind in India's development. The state governments must focus on transforming migration into a humane and orderly process.

(The writer is Director, Public Affairs Centre, Bengaluru)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Decluttering for Diwali

'Why don't you begin with your closet...?' my husband gently suggested

Chitra Srikrishna

With Diwali around the corner, my husband and I decide it's time to declutter. I look around the house wondering where to begin. My husband gently suggests, "Why don't you begin with your closet and give away the clothes you don't need?" This was easier said than done.

I reach into my closet for the first saree on the left, a cream georgette. I'm determined to start at one end and work my way to the other. The sari with intricate zari embroidery evokes fond memories of a shopping trip with my favourite cousin. I'd dragged her from work to go shopping for a family wedding. Most people would pass on trudging through a crowded Chennai bazaar on a sultry afternoon.

But my cousin and I aren't most people. Crowds and sultry weather was not going to stop us. We haggled and waggled our way undeterred by bullheaded shopkeepers and other disgruntled shoppers. Standing in front of my closet, I can virtually smell the coffee, that my mom greeted us with, when we returned home that day tired but triumphant.

"How is it going?" The husband's voice yanks me to the present. I can't possibly give this sari away. Maybe it would be better to start with the accessories I think. The elegant cream leather clutch under the sari on the shelf catches my attention. The clutch has played faithful companion to the aforementioned sari for many years and was a gift from a friend at her daughter's wedding. It was no ordinary wedding, but a royal affair set in Rajasthan, featuring horses, dancers and mouth-watering regional cuisine. Even now, my senses are overwhelmed imagining the taste of the ghevar I had at the wedding. I return the cream clutch back to its original place in the wardrobe.

Twenty minutes of handling two items and twenty memories meant the cupboard is no leaner than before. By now the husband is fuming and heads out of the bedroom. I hear the loud clank of vessels on the kitchen counter. I rush in to see what the commotion is about. "You're not using most of these saucers or serving spoons. I've already started binning them, you can do the rest!" Utensils of all shapes and sizes sit on the counter. Most of them were bequeathed by my mom on my frequent visits to Chennai.

"Seeing how keen you are about decluttering for Diwali why don't we start with the sari?" I decide it's time to fight fire with fire. Without waiting for his response, I stride to the study. My husband's incessant acquisition of books, most still waiting to be read, is the reason for my new found fervour for decluttering. "Shall we begin here on the right?" I ask. Recognising the militant look in my face, my husband gazes at his bookshelves and declares, "Maybe we should wait for the New Year to begin decluttering!"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Leaders like Patel belong to the nation, not parties

Sir, Apropos "Statue of divisive politics" (DH, Nov 5), this is a timely reminder that a country is not united by erecting huge statues of bronze or otherwise, but by the exemplary selfless deeds of which Sardar Patel was an epitome. Curiously, no leader from other parties or chief ministers from other states were invited to participate in the inauguration of the "Statue of Unity". There is a needless debate on whether Sardar Patel is a legacy of the Congress or an icon usurped by the BJP. Leaders of the calibre of Sardar Patel, Netaji, Tilak, Sarojini Naidu or Rajaji have rendered yeo-

man services to the country and are beyond party labels. The consolidation of India will remain Sardar Patel's greatest contribution. Jinnah played the communal card to gain personal power, but realised his folly before he died. Nehru and Patel dragged India back from that precipice. They prevented the whole of undivided India from being a part of Jinnah's plan. Like all great men they had their differences but also as true statesmen, they rose above their personal differences for the cause of a united nation. H N RAMAKRISHNA, Bengaluru

Misplaced priorities

Sir, Apropos "Neglect brings down Tipu's armoury" (DH, Nov 5), this should be an eye-opener to the state government. Tipu fight was to protect his kingdom from the British imperialist policy, and not to liberate India from the British yoke. In that sense, he is more the Tiger of Mysore than a patriotic son of India. Yet, it is a paradox to venerate a brilliant statesman just for vote bank when his legacy is facing destruction at the hands of hooligans. If the Karnataka government is serious about celebrating Tipu Jayanti, it must fortify the endangered monument. Perhaps, that would be a great tribute to the valiant son of Mysore. ANNAPOORNA B, Bengaluru

Deep-rooted malice

Sir, Apropos "The war within CBI is of Modi's making" (DH, Nov 5), time and again it has been proved that CBI has been misused by pliable heads under the beckoning of their political masters. The only way out is to make it an independent statutory body like the ECI. It requires grit, political will, determination and an impeccable leadership. It must be brought under an act of Parliament. It was established in 1941 under the Special Police establishment and it is high time it is reformed. It should be totally insulated from political interference and only upright officers must be appointed answerable only to the President. A V AKHILESH, Bengaluru

Sikkim's achievement

Sir, The conferment of the FAO's Future Policy Gold Award to Sikkim for its achievements in agro-ecology and sustainable development has gone almost unnoticed. It is depressing that such a unique distinction has not been applauded by the Centre or the mainstream media. What a shame it is that we have been numbed by trivial news! V PADMANABHAN, Bengaluru

More letters on 'Net Mail' at www.deccanherald.com

Our readers are welcome to post, hand deliver, fax or e-mail letters to our office at 75, M G Road, Bangalore 560001. All letters must carry the sender's postal address. Fax: 25880523. E-mail: letters@deccanherald.com.in.

SPEAK OUT



"At the beginning of five years, promise is for development, jobs, money in every citizen's account. Nothing achieved at the end of five years..."

P CHIDAMBARAM, Senior Congress leader

When men are full of envy they disparage everything, whether it be good or bad. Tacitus

IN PERSPECTIVE

Here lies a city that died of 'pothole rash'

The BBMP needs the court to give it orders, and then it goes and does a shoddy job

Priyan R Nair

Surprisingly, New York City's busiest streets, the Broadway and 3rd Avenue, have something in common with Bengaluru's streets — potholes, that exist due to the heavy vehicle and traffic volumes, and vociferous citizens of pothole-plagued streets loudly complaining all the time. In fact, "stubborn" potholes plague NYC residents and repeated complaints are the norm. Pothole patchwork obviously doesn't hold up forever and most sites have to be repaired over and over again.

But, while winter is the prime season for pothole formation in NYC, when groundwater freezes and thaws beneath the pavement, Bengaluru roads suffer maximum damage during the monsoons. Post-monsoon, the number of roads in Bengaluru with no potholes can be counted on your fingertips. Barring some roads, which have been white-topped newly and some TenderSURE roads, almost every road has potholes.

Bengaluru's roads are mostly uneven due to the slipshod manner in which they were laid in the first place. Beneath the road surface are haphazard water and sewerage connections with clogged or non-existent storm-water drains, which cause water stagnation on the roads.

To top it all, you have OFC (optic fiber cable) operators, BWSSB, Bescom, GAIL, and even private individuals cutting roads all the time to fix leaking sewage and water pipelines, adding electricity lines, or roughly laying OFC. When a road is dug up by one of these entities and repaired, it is immediately dug up by another!

Add to this the 70 lakh vehicles registered in the city traversing limited road space, the sheer density of vehicles is sufficient to damage roads. Any one of these reasons would have been bad enough to ruin the roads, but together, they are the "perfect storm" that leaves us with a messy web of potholes.

Enveloping all of this is brazen corruption. Everywhere, in the material used to build or repair roads, bid-fixing, usage of substandard and adulterated material, the people who call the shots leave a lot to be desired.

Helpless citizens have resorted to bizarre means to draw attention to potholes. In HSR Layout, residents performed "pothole pooja" and conducted the "last rites" of a Main Road, which had "died" due to crater-sized potholes. Officialdom did not lag behind either. During a meeting of the BBMP, it was suggested that a separate department be created with

a 'Chief Engineer - Potholes'. The deputy chief minister, on his part, announced that a citizen only had to report a pothole for it to be fixed "immediately". Citizens reported potholes, and some of them did get fixed!

It was a PIL that triggered a unique response to the pothole problem. The Karnataka High Court rapped the BBMP on the matter. Directions from the court forced BBMP officials to swing into action and the process of filling potholes gained momentum, forcing them to file affidavits detailing the number of potholes filled. Measurement books of the work being executed were to be tracked and submitted to court. The very same officials started working overnight and were being constantly updated with pictures of filled potholes sent in from the sites.

Accusations of slipshod work, however, began pouring in, with the BBMP resorting to cosmetic methods to fill potholes in the rush to meet the high court's deadline. The craters would start reappearing after a mild shower following the BBMP's "micro-milling" method of repair, where a milling machine completely removes the pothole by grinding and then fills the surface with asphalt.

This can only be deemed as patchwork repair and would result in the tar wearing out very soon. Given its limited budget for road maintenance, the BBMP over-relies on using the contractor's defect liability period to repair newly built roads and also on the judicious use of the 'Python', an automated pothole-filling machine.

Judicial intervention seems to be the only recourse in the days to come. It requires the court to ask the BBMP to do its work, to make officials, who do not do their duty, answerable and to question the quality of repair. The BBMP has been asked to make all work contracts for construction and maintenance of roads available on its websites, thereby increasing accountability.

With its already sullied reputation for technical incompetence and for the nexus amongst its corporators, engineers and contractors, the BBMP looks comfortable responding to court directives. Reacting to judicial directives absolves them of being answerable to intra-departmental vigilance and questioning. All decisions can now be attributed to the court.

No way has the overall pothole situation got any better — even the hurried work done to avoid court reprimand only shows why the BBMP makes such poor use of taxpayers' money. Despite the brouhaha, the court appointed military engineer encountered pipelines and protrusions on the road, lower bitumen content, and observed a hurried and haphazard manner of pothole-filling operation. Bengaluru's road users, we have a long haul ahead!

(The writer is a former director on the Board of BEMIL)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 years ago: November 6, 1968

28 hurt as MES morcha ends in lathi-charge

Panaji, Nov 5. Twenty-eight persons were injured in a lathi charge by police on demonstrators demanding merger of the Marathi-speaking areas of

Mysore with Maharashtra. Police resorted to lathi-charge when demonstrators belonging to Ladha Samiti, a breakaway group of the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti, tried to push forward through the police cordon to march to the AICC session venue.

25 years ago: November 6, 1993

9 loyalist MPs urge PVN to dismiss KPCC chief

New Delhi, Nov 5. The intense factional rivalry in the Karnataka Congress party look a new turn today with nine party MPs from the State demanding the removal of KPCC (I) President V Krishna Rao from the post for

having indulged in anti-party activity and identifying himself with the dissidents. In what appeared to be a concerted frontal attack, the MPs supporting CM Veerappa Moily decided to submit a memorandum to Congress president and Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao urging him to sack Krishna Rao.

Trump is hell-bent on decimating WTO

Uttam Gupta

Ever since Donald Trump took charge as US President, he has made systematic efforts to demolish the very foundation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which is at the centre of 'free' and 'fair' trade based on transparent and non-discriminatory rules.

At the 11th WTO ministerial conference held in Buenos Aires in December 2017, the US rejected the demand of developing countries to find a "permanent solution" to stockholding for food security which was agreed to four years ago at the 9th ministerial in Bali. Worse, it has dumped the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), which has been assiduously pursued by all members of WTO since 2001.

Second, in complete defiance of rules under WTO, it has hiked import duty on steel and aluminium to 25% and 10% respectively, which has hit several countries (except for some preferred friends of the US) across the globe. Further, it targeted \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods entering the US and has since expanded the ambit to cover another \$200 billion. Trump has also ques-

tioned the very rationale of allowing China to be a member of the WTO. The US administration has sought to justify the levies on 'national security' considerations. Under WTO rules, this ground can be invoked only under rare circumstances. It can't be done as a matter of routine. Imagine the chaos it will lead to if every member starts hiking duties using this argument.

Third, under his much trumpeted "Buy American, Hire American", Trump in April 2017 signed an executive order directing federal agencies to review the H-1B visa programme, with the aim of ensuring that only "most-skilled and highest-paid applicants" were successfully processed. H-1B visas are issued to foreigners who have expertise in specialised areas to work in America for a temporary period.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which administers these visas, is already implementing measures that severely restrict or delay their grant. These include, among other ways, stopping 'premium' processing of applications, more rigorous interview/procedural requirements and denial of employment to spouses of those working in the US.



Last year, the Intellectual Property and Internet Subcommittee of the House of Representatives voted to pass a law "Protect and Grow American Jobs Act (HR 170)" whose provisions literally prohibit entry of H-1B visa-holders. The bill was passed by the House Judiciary Committee during a mark-up hearing. After passage by the full house and a similar version of the bill by the Senate, Trump will sign it into law.

Fourth, Trump has blocked appointment of members of the appellate authority of the WTO's dispute settlement body (DSB).

Currently, there are only three members against the required strength of seven; that will go down to just one next year when two members. The entire process of adjudicating disputes — arising from non-compliance with the rules — revolves around the appellate authority. If even this is rendered dysfunctional, the WTO will be seriously undermined.

Finally, the US President has put the last nail in the coffin by attacking a fundamental principle underlying the WTO's working. In a recent report — Reinvigorating Trade and Inclusive Growth — by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to which the WTO secretariat is also a party — the US-led IMF/WB has raised a question on the time-tested practice of bundling negotiating issues in "giant all-or-nothing trade rounds".

The report argues that the extant practice had become "extremely difficult to manage" and suggested plurilateral trade pacts involving fewer countries as the way ahead. Put simply, Trump is casting a doubt on the efficacy of trade talks involving all nations and its consensus-based decision-making process, in which all members must agree on issues.

In short, the overarching motive of the US administration under Trump is to drive negotiating activity on matters pertaining to international trade in goods and services out of the WTO. This needs to be nipped in the bud. Else, the very existence of the multilateral body will be in jeopardy.

Following the collapse of 11th WTO ministerial — there was not even a formal communiqué, which is customary on conclusion of every such meeting — Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu convened an informal meeting of WTO members in New Delhi in March. He urged members to "find ways to identify common ground for reinvigorating the WTO".

India needs to go beyond pious declarations and seriously engage with other developing countries as well as developed countries to preserve the sanctity of multilateral rules and ensure that the WTO stays relevant. It should avoid measures of the type implemented in recent months — for instance, hike in import duty on dozens of items, including refrigerators, air-conditioners, telecom equipment, etc., — which could be used by Trump to justify his own unjust actions.

However, a big responsibility lies on the US, which needs to shed its hegemonic stance, show restraint and work in a spirit of mutual accommodation with the rest of the world. It must recognise that in an inter-dependent system, whereby countries realise a sizeable portion of their GDP from trading with others, increasing barriers to trade — both tariff and non-tariff — will only be counterproductive.

There is an urgent need for all member countries to make concerted and coordinated efforts to think through what they can do to resurrect a rule-based international trade and investment regime under the aegis of the WTO. The exercise can yield positive results only when each one of them, especially developed countries and the better-off among developing countries, are guided by a spirit of what they can give, instead of the current obsession with what they can take, to achieve the common good.

The big-wigs can, perhaps, take an initiative at the political level. Prime Minister Narendra Modi must use his clout in the international arena to move this forward. (The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst)

How Mark Zuckerberg became too big to fail

Facebook has had a turbulent two years. But almost no one in tech thinks Zuckerberg, the social network's CEO, should step down from the company he built.

Farhad Manjoo

A few weeks ago, after Facebook revealed that tens of millions of its users' accounts had been exposed in a security breach, I began asking people in and around the tech industry a simple question: Should Mark Zuckerberg still be running Facebook?

I'll spare you the suspense. Just about everyone thought Zuckerberg was still the right man for the job, if not the only man for the job. This included people who work at Facebook, people who used to work at Facebook, financial analysts, venture capitalists, tech-sceptic activists, ardent critics of the company and its giddiest supporters.

The consensus went like this: Even if Zuckerberg — as Facebook's founder, chief executive, chairman and most powerful shareholder — bore most of the responsibility for the company's cataclysmic recent history, he alone possessed the stature to fix it.

More than one of his supporters told me it was bad faith to even broach the subject — that Zuckerberg's indispensability was so plain that the only reason I might have to ask whether he should still run the company was the clicks I would get on this article. But even critics were not that excited about the idea of Zuckerberg's removal. Barry Lynn, executive director of the Open Markets Institute, an organisation that fights monopoly power, argued that Facebook's problems grew out of its business model and the legal and regulatory vacuum in which it has operated — not the man who runs it.

"To be blunt, if we took Mark Zuckerberg out and we replaced him with Mahatma Gandhi, I don't think the corporation would change in any significant way," Lynn said.

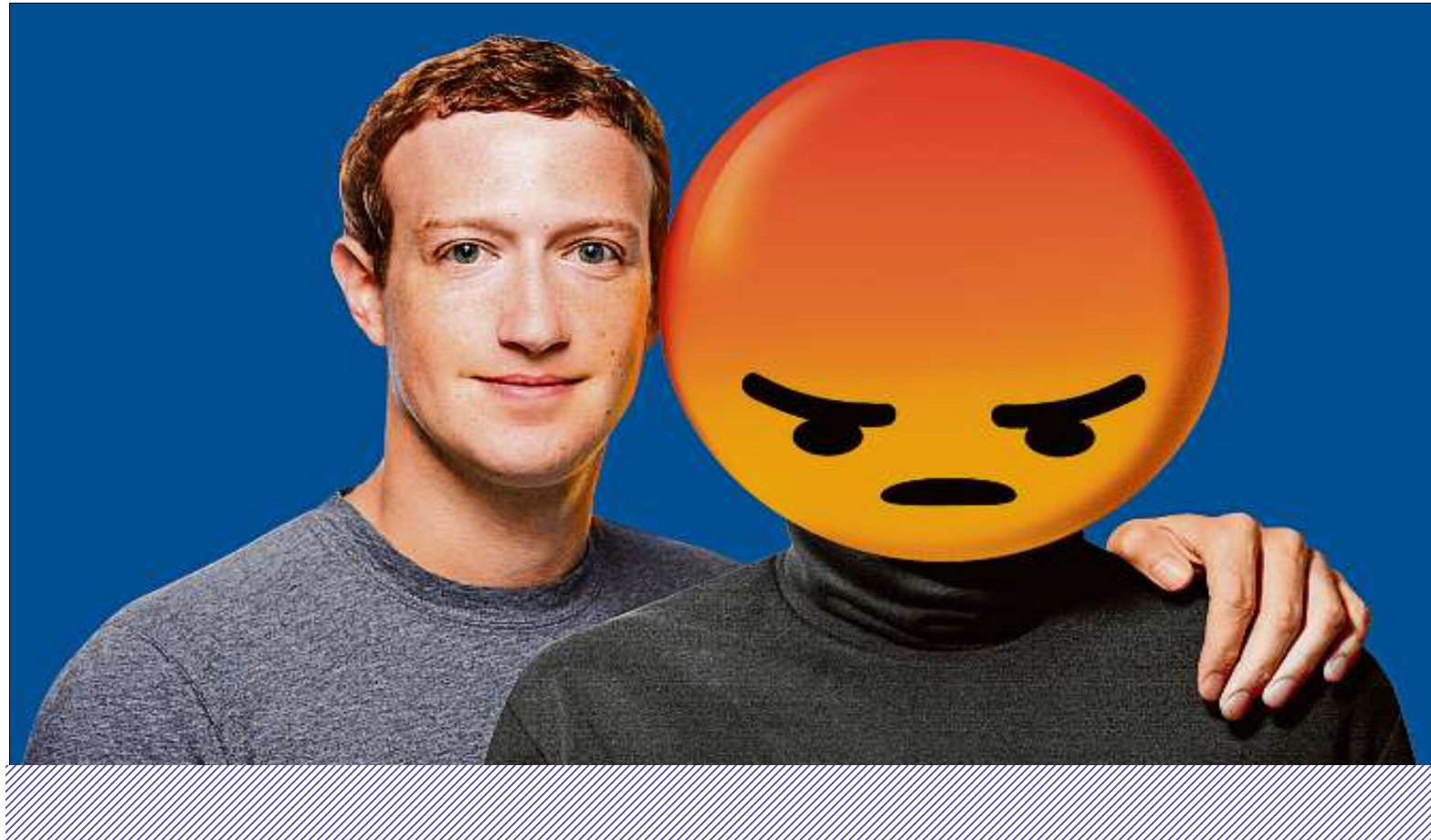
That few can imagine a Facebook without Zuckerberg, 34, underscores how unaccountable our largest tech companies have become. Zuckerberg, thanks to his own drive and brilliance, has become one of the most powerful unelected people in the world. Like an errant oil company or sugar-pumping food company, Facebook makes decisions that create huge consequences for society — and he has profited handsomely from the chaos.

Yet because of Facebook's ownership structure — in which Zuckerberg's shares have 10 times the voting power of ordinary shares — he is omnipotent there, answering basically to no one. This fits a pattern.

Over the past two decades, the largest tech companies have created a system in which executives suffer few personal or financial consequences for their mistakes. Big tech has turned founders into fixtures — when their companies are working well, they get all the credit, and when their companies are doing badly, they are the only heroes who can fix them.

There's another way to put this: for better or worse, Zuckerberg has become too big to fail.

Even in Silicon Valley, where company founders are revered as money-laying rainbow unicorns, there is some limit to corporate patience. In the 1980s, Apple fired Steve Jobs. Last year, Uber ousted Travis Kalanick, who was closely aligned with his company's culture as Zucker-



berg is with his.

Facebook's problems have not reached the level of lawlessness we saw at Uber, but they have been far more consequential. Besides the breach, Facebook has been implicated in a global breakdown of democracy, including its role as a vector for Russian disinformation during the 2016 US presidential election.

Investigators for the United Nations have said Facebook was instrumental to genocide in Myanmar; it has also been tied to violence in India, South Sudan and Sri Lanka. There have been privacy scandals (Cambridge Analytica most recently), advertising scandals (discriminatory ads, fishy metrics), multiple current federal inquiries, and an admission that using Facebook can be detrimental to your mental health.

Even though Zuckerberg has apologised and vowed again and again and again to fix Facebook, the company's fixes often need fixing. In the past week, reporters showed that the company's recent move to clamp down on political ads has not worked — Vice News bought Facebook ads falsely stating that they were "paid for" by Vice President Mike Pence and IS.

So given such failures, another question might be: why haven't any heads rolled at Facebook? Although there have been some high-profile defections — the co-founders of WhatsApp, Instagram and Oculus, all companies bought by Facebook, left in the past few months — Zuckerberg's most loyal executives have been with him through thick and thin, many for more than a decade.

If Facebook admits now that its problems were caused by a too-idealistic, move-fast cul-

ture, and if it is conceding now that its culture must change, how can we be sure that's happening if most of the people who run Facebook remain the same?

When I asked Facebook about this, the company argued that things were changing. It just hired Nick Clegg, a former deputy prime minister of Britain, as head of global affairs — a move that the company said imbued it with a serious outsider's perspective.

Zuckerberg's supporters argued that he has shown a deep capacity to understand and address Facebook's problems. After the company went public in 2012, its stock price languished for months because it had no plan to make money from consumers' shift to mobile devices.

"Mark would tell you that he was too late in understanding the importance of mobile — but when that became apparent, Mark understood its gravity and he understood how to fix it," said Don Graham, a former Facebook board member and former publisher of *The Washington Post*. "He changed the direction of that company incredibly fast, in detail, not by one action but by 20 actions — and if you looked at the quarter-by-quarter numbers of what percentage of Facebook's revenue was coming from mobile, I couldn't believe how fast it changed."

The question at Facebook now is whether Zuckerberg has similarly seen the light on its current problems. He has said fixing Facebook was his personal challenge for 2018. But there are signs that its culture remains the same.

Consider its promise that a new home-hub-

device, Portal, which it unveiled last month, would not collect information on users that could be used in ads. It had to swiftly walk back that promise because Facebook's data-collection system is so pervasive that even some of its employees don't seem to understand it.

"I think he has demonstrably failed over the last two years, and the reason he's failed is because he's unaccountable," said Sandy Parakilas, a former Facebook employee who is now chief strategy officer for the Center of Humane Technology, an activist organisation. "Given a scenario where shareholders and board members had more influence, it's hard to imagine that there would not have been changes faster."

One fix for Facebook might be to give the board greater power over the company. Trillion Asset Management, an investment firm, recently put forward a shareholder resolution supported by several state funds that would require Zuckerberg to step down as Facebook's chairman, though he would still maintain majority voting control of the company.

"I think by taking the step to relinquish the position of the board chair, it's a very important structural change so that he would not have a completely free hand to muscle his way through decisions," said Jonas Kron, a Trillion senior vice president. A Facebook spokesman said the company had not yet taken a position on the resolution. In the past, similar measures have been voted down by Zuckerberg and his allies.

Which leaves us here: Either Zuckerberg fixes Facebook, or no one does. That's the choice we face, like it or not. **International New York Times**

Lost Kurinji: awaiting joy to bloom in Idukki

Sandeep Vellaram

Curtains are finally drawing on the much-awaited Neelakurinji season, a time when the hillsides of Munnar are bathed in a dream-like purple cover that occurs only once every 12 years. But with Kerala still reeling under the trauma of the August flooding, many doubt this season can bring in cheer.

Those who visited the area recently are of the opinion that not much of the magic is lost, despite the widespread devastation. As per the primary calculation by the Munnar Hotel and Restaurant Association (MHRA), Munnar faced losses of over Rs 110 crore during the season. The flood and continuous rain affected the flowering pattern and the flowers had rotten in most parts of the Eravikulam National Park and Kolukkumala, according to forest officials.

"Most of the hotels and resorts in Munnar received only 10% to 15% bookings during the Neelakurinji flowering season. Presently, the local tourists alone visit Munnar and they return the same evening, which is a blow to the hotel industry," said to MHRA president V V George.

"Most of the hotels and resorts had invested millions of rupees in the sector ahead of the Neelakurinji flowering season. But the flood washed away our hopes," he added.

"After the floods, we contacted travel agents of various states to give a leg-up to the tourist flow with the motto 'Kerala is back and Kerala is safe.' But most travel agents cancelled their Kerala trips this year, while some of them are postponed to next year. We requested the government to immediately complete the construction work of the roads and welcome the tourists back to Kerala," George adds.

However, the statistics from Idukki district administration show that over two lakh tourists visited Eravikulam National Park, Kolukkumala and Vattavada to witness the flower fete. During the previous season, in 2006, over 3.5 lakh tourists had visited the spots.

Forest department opened ticket counters in Chatta Munnar and Old Munnar HATC stadium during the season. In three places, the ticket counters remained closed from October 30 leaving open the counter at Rajamala alone, according to forest department sources.

Shattered hopes

The tourism department had expected a whopping eight lakh tourists for the season and had made massive arrangements.

"The flood and landslides affected tourist entry into Munnar and it was a hit below the belt. We expected over 4.5 lakh tourists during this season. The heavy monsoon also caused a delay in the season," said Munnar wildlife warden R Lakshmi.

Serial landslides and floods that happened on August 15 damaged several roads and bridges in and around Munnar and isolated the region for many days. A landslide destroyed the Periyavara bridge then, disrupting the traffic on the Munnar-Marayoor route. The bridge also connects tourists to Eravikulam National Park.

Later, PWD officials constructed a temporary bridge in the region and threw it open to traffic. Traffic remained disrupted for many days on one of the main routes to Munnar: the Kochi-Dhanushkodi National highway. Presently, however, traffic movement has resumed on all major routes.

Earlier, it was expected that the main Neelakurinji flowering season would start in the last week of July and extend for three months. But due to heavy rainfall, the flowering season was delayed by over two months and started only on the first week of September.

Business badly hit

Lack of tourist presence largely affected small scale vendors in Munnar, too.

"We expected heavy tourist rush and better business during the season. Most of the merchants largely stocked their goods before the season. But the flood hit our hopes," said Joseph Saju, a smallscale vendor in Munnar.

In July, the scare of deadly Nipah virus was another blow to the tourism sector in Idukki had to face, despite no cases being reported from the district. That alone allegedly kept over 70% of tourists from visiting the district which has many alluring tourist destinations under the same skies: Munnar, Thekkady and Wagamon.

Right now, the state is reeling under a heatwave due to poor north-east monsoon. However, thankfully, Munnar is still cool with 7 degrees Celsius being recorded. This is expected to pull more tourists to the destination.

The winter seems to be coming a bit early this year, because normally it starts on the first week of November and goes on till the second week of January. So, the industry hopes to reclaim its lost sheen if nature blesses it with a real cool climate.

(The writer is a member of *The NewsCart*, a Bengaluru-based media startup)

Ultralight 'supermaterial' from plastic bottle waste

Scientists have developed a way to convert plastic bottle waste into flexible and durable aerogels.

Globally, the annual consumption of plastic bottles has been rising steadily, and it is expected to exceed half a trillion tons per year by 2021. "Plastic bottle waste is one of the most common type of plastic waste and has detrimental effects on the environment," said Hai Minh Duong, an associate professor at National University of Singapore (NUS).

Plastic bottles are commonly made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET). "Our team has developed a simple, cost-effective



and green method to convert plastic bottle waste into PET aerogels for many exciting uses," said Duong.

"One plastic bottle can be recycled to produce an A4-sized PET aerogel sheet. The fabrication technology is also easily scalable for mass production. In this way, we can help cut down the harmful environmental damage caused by plastic waste."

The PET aerogels developed are soft, flexible, durable, extremely light and easy to handle. They also demonstrate superior thermal insulation and strong absorption capacity. These properties make them attractive for a wide range of applications, such as for heat and sound insulation in buildings, oil spill cleaning, and also as a lightweight lining for firefighter coats and carbon dioxide absorption masks that could be used during fire rescue operations and fire escape.

In their earlier work, the research team had successfully converted paper and fashion waste into cellulose and cotton aerogels respectively.

The research team has filed a patent for its novel PET aerogel technology, and will continue to enhance the performance

of the PET aerogels and explore new applications. The NUS researchers are also keen to work with companies to bring the technology to market. - *PTI*

Nasa's Hubble spots cosmic smiley in colourful galaxies

The Hubble Space telescope has spotted a formation of galaxies that resembles a smiling face in the sky.

The image, taken with the telescope's Wide Field Camera 3 (WFC3), shows a patch of space filled with galaxies of all shapes, colours and sizes, many of which belong to the galaxy cluster SDSS J0952+3434.



Just below centre is a formation of galaxies akin to a smiling face. Two yellow-hued blobs hang atop a sweeping arc of light, Nasa said in a statement. The lower, arc-shaped galaxy has the characteristic shape of a galaxy that has been gravitationally lensed — its light has passed near a massive object en route to us, causing it to become distorted and stretched out of shape.

Hubble captured the image in an effort to understand how new stars spring to life in the cosmos. WFC3 is able to view distant galaxies at an unprecedented resolution — high enough to locate and study regions of star formation within them.

Stars are born within giant clouds of gas. These massive clouds, or stellar nurseries, grow unstable and begin to collapse under gravity, becoming the seeds that will grow into new stars.

By analysing the luminosity, size and formation rate of different stellar nurseries, scientists hope to learn more about the processes that can lead to the formation of a newborn star. Studying nurseries within different galaxies will provide information about star formation at different points in time and space throughout the universe. - *PTI*

**Car theft:
Man arrested
after 17 years**

MANGALURU, DHNS: The Puttur police have arrested a man on the charge of theft of a car, which was hired on rent, after 17 years of the incident.

According to SP Ravikanth Gowda, the arrested is BM Haneef, a native of Sullia was staying in a rented house at Koodige in Kushalnagar. Another accused Sudheer Prabhu is still at large. It is said that Haneef along with Prabhu had taken a car belonging to Jayanth of Mangaluru on March 8, 2001 and travelled to Sakleshpur and Hassan in the guise of timber merchants.

After travelling to different places in Hassan district, the duo asked the driver to park the car in front of a tourist home at Puttur on March 12, 2001. Later, they stole the car when the driver was away.

Following the incident, a case was registered at Puttur town police station.

**Temporary restoration of
Sampaje Gnat Road is complete**

MANGALURU: The National Highway (NH) division of Public Works Department (PWD) has completed the temporary restoration work on a 14-km stretch of Sampaje Ghat Road on NH 275.

Following heavy rain in August, Landslides on multiple locations had caused extensive damage to the road.

As a result, the national highway connecting the coastal district and Kodagu, Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Mandya and Bengaluru was closed for nearly three months. As the stretch had developed cracks in the month of July, the authorities had banned the

movement of heavy vehicles.

The landslides in the second week of August had taken a toll on the highway from Jodupala to Madikeri. Portions of the roads were washed away at Monnangeri, Madenadu, Hattihalli and other areas. The district had banned the movement of vehicles on the stretch. To help the residents, the KSRTC had been allowed to run minibuses from Koinadu to Madikeri.

According to a source in the NH division of the PWD, "The road has been restored at a cost of Rs 10 crore. A report recommending to allow vehicles on the stretch had been submitted to Kodagu deputy

commissioner."

"Several sandbags have been used for constructing retaining walls at the places where massive landslides had occurred on the stretch. Temporary bridges and culverts have been constructed at the places where it was washed away. The road has been asphalted," the source added.

On withdrawal of notification to allow heavy vehicles on Sampaje Ghat, Kodagu DCP I Sreevidya said, "Officials had informed me during final stages of temporary restoration of roadworks. I had directed them to install signboards throughout the stretch and submit a report. Once I get the

report from the officials on allowing heavy vehicles on the stretch, measures will be taken to lift the ban on movement of vehicles."

The motorists need to be cautious while driving on a few stretches where massive landslides had occurred. Precautionary signboards are essential on the stretch to warn the motorists to be careful, she said.

The NH division of the PWD is making arrangements to submit a proposal for relaying 14-km long new road along with a report submitted by the experts to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway to seek funds.

A team, led by IISc Soil Engineering Department retired professor B R Srinivasamurthy, had conducted a study on preventing landslides along the highway. IISc geotechnical engineering department Prof G L Shivakumar Babu too has conducted another study.

PWD NH Division's Superintending Engineer Raghavan said, "The NH had prepared an estimate of Rs 500 crore for relaying the road. Now, the proposal with a report from experts committee will be submitted to the Centre. The estimate amount will be decided after we receive report from the experts."
DH News Service

**Conditional bail to
Rajeshwari Shetty**

UDUPI: Principal District and Sessions Court on Monday granted conditional bail to Rajeshwari Shetty, one of the accused in the murder of businessman Bhaskar Shetty.

As per the directions of the Supreme Court, the district court has completed hearing of 36 witnesses in connection with the murder case.

The Supreme Court on April 23, 2018 had directed the district court to complete the hearing of 36 witnesses within six months. The court has completed the hearing of 40 witnesses, including Forensic Science Laboratory DNA division officer Purushotham and granted conditional bail to Rajeshwari Shetty.

Rajeshwari is lodged at Parappana Agrahara prison in Bengaluru at present. Following the granting of bail, she is likely to be released

from prison within two days, a source said. Senior Advocate Arun Bangera and Narayana Poorya were advocates for accused.

NRI businessman Bhaskar Shetty went missing from his house here on July 28, 2016. His mother Gulabi Shetty lodged a missing person complaint on July 29. The police arrested his wife Rajeshwari, her son Navaneeth and astrologer Niranjan Bhat on the charge of murdering Bhaskar Shetty and destroying the evidence, in Udupi on August 7, 2016.

The conditions laid down by the court are not to scare the witnesses and the court asked Rajeshwari Shetty to appear for all the court hearings. The court has also asked her to furnish a bond for Rs 1 lakh. The hearing on the case has been posted to February 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
DH News Service

**Sauharda
Sangama
programme**

MANGALURU, DHNS: Majlis Edu Park will organise 'Sauharda Sangama' programme as a part of International Milad Conference in Mudipu on November 8, District Muslim Jama-at Council president Hyder Partippadi said.

Addressing media persons here on Monday, he said that a new namaz hall, meant for girl students, will be inaugurated on the occasion. Milad procession and Zahara fest will be held.

Deputy Chief Minister Dr G Parameshwara, Food, Civil Supplies and Wakf Minister Zamir Ahmed, District In-charge Minister U T Khader, MLCs S L Bojogowda, B M Farooq and CM Ibrahim will take part, he added.

Odiyuru Gurudevadatta Samsthana seer Gurudevvananda Swami, St Joseph Church, Mudipu priest Fr Benjamin Pinto, Mangalore University Registrar AM Khan and HI Ibrahim Madani Bajpe will be present.

Muhammed Ashraf Tanjal Aduru, reception committee chairman S K Abdul Khader, secretary M A Bashir, K E Abdul Khader Razvi were present in the press meet.

**4 arrested
for gambling**

MANGALURU, DHNS: The Vittal police arrested four people on charges of gambling with playing cards, at Hemaje, in Netlamudnooru, Bantwal taluk in the early hours of Monday.

According to SP Ravikanth Gowda, acting on a tip-off the police raided the spot where the arrested were engaged in gambling. The arrested are Chandrashekar (26), Ishwar alias Kishore (24), Akshith (27) and Yogish alias Umesh Poorya (28). The police seized Rs 4,200 in cash, 52 cards used for playing, old paper, and a candle.

In brief

Old age home

» The newly-built Karunamaya old age home at Permanki in Ulaiabetu will be inaugurated by Mangaluru Bishop Rev Fr Peter Paul Saldanha on November 7.

Permanki Church priest Fr Louis Cutinha, Kulashakar church priest Fr Victor Machado, Minister U T Khader, MLA Dr Y Bharath Shetty and others will take part in the programme.

The old age home was started four years ago at Marnamikatte. As there are more than 70 inmates, the new ashram building has come up on land donated by Antony D'Souza, at Permanki.

NSS camp held

» The NSS annual special camp 2018-19 of St Aloysius College (Autonomous), Mangaluru, was held recently at Shree Venugopala Aided Higher Primary School at Pakalakunja in Bantwal taluk.

AMUCT president Dr Joseph N M inaugurated the camp. St Aloysius College Principal Rev Dr Praveen Martis presided over the programme.

Lead kindly light



Students light diyas on account of Deepavali celebrations at Karavali College at Kottara in Mangaluru on Monday.

Sky lanterns light up Mangaluru city sky

MANGALURU: The dark sky came to life when 650 sky lanterns were released into the sky at Sky Lantern Fest 2018 organised by Eco Friend Groups, at Sri Ravi Shankar Vidya Mandir on Sunday night.

Scores of curious denizens came together to take part in the fest. The calm breeze made the night more pleasant.

According to Eco Friends Group Rajesh, "It was an attempt to celebrate a pollution-free, noiseless and eco-friendly Deepavali - the festival of lights, which otherwise is associated with air and noise pollution from bursting crackers. The sky lanterns will not cause any sound pollution and have almost zero carbon footprint."

The Eco Friends Group said the toxic substances used in the fire crackers release gases that are

harmful to the health of all living beings. The high level of noise generated by the fire crackers cause immense suffering not only to human beings but also to birds and animals.

By releasing eco sky lanterns, people could enjoy its beauty without any guilt or harming animals and the surrounding environment. Sky lanterns are made of 100% bio degradable fire-retardant paper which results in zero fire hazards. Natural dyes from vegetables and fruits are used in coloured lanterns. The fuel cell is a combination of paper, cloth and wax. All these three elements are biodegradable, Rajesh said.

The sky lantern fest was attended by Dr Padmanabha Kamath from KMC Hospital and Dr Rajeshwari Devi, Wenlock Hospital Superintendent.
DH News Service



People take part in sky lantern fest organised by Eco Friends Group at Sri Ravi Shankar Vidya Mandir, Maryhill, in Mangaluru.

Woman entrepreneur from Bailakere comes up with liquor chocolates

UDUPI: Mention chocolate and children will smack their lips at the thought of a delicious chunk of chocolate melting in the mouth.

Now, here is another variety of chocolates that will make grown-ups with a penchant for alcohol smack their lips.

Shubha Ravindra, an entrepreneur of Bailakere, has launched a unique brand of chocolates with alcohol content.

Shubha is into the home-made chocolate business for many years.

Beer, wine, liquor, brandy, whiskey, rum, vodka, bourbon, stout, scotch, champagne, tequila and gin are used as alcohol filling in the chocolates.

"Rum raisins, vodka vanilla, vodka lemongrass, vodka orange, gin, red wine are a rage among my adult customers," Shubha told DH.

Purely on demand

She said the alcohol chocolates are made purely on demand. However, they also have other varieties of chocolates



Liquor chocolates made by entrepreneur Shubha Ravindra (right).

which do not have alcohol in them. Shubha is also known for chocolates made from dry fruits.

Shubha said two types of liquor chocolates are sold to customers. One is the soft variety and the other one is filled. The soft chocolates are made using liquor essence and dry fruits soaked in alcohol. The liquor content in this variety is less.

The box costs Rs 80 and contains four pieces. The filled liquor chocolate contains 0.5 ml of liquor and costs Rs 40 per

piece, she said.

Blueberry, blackcurrant, lychee and strawberry are some of the flavours.

She said that the alcohol chocolates are not sold to those below 18 years of age.

The most interesting part is that neither Shubha nor her husband have tasted the liquor chocolates they have made so far.

It is the customers who keep coming back for more of the delightful chunks of chocolate, she explained.
DH News Service



Varieties of taste

Shubha Ravindra, an entrepreneur of Bailakere, has launched a unique brand of chocolates with alcohol content.

Beer, wine, liquor, brandy, whiskey, rum, vodka, bourbon, stout, scotch, champagne, tequila and gin are used as alcohol filling in the chocolates.

MAHE Chancellor presented FICCI Lifetime Achievement Award

MANIPAL: Dr Ramdas M Pai, Chairman Emeritus - Manipal Education and Medical Group (MEMG) and President and Chancellor of Manipal Academy of Higher Education was awarded the 'Lifetime Achievement Award 2018' in recognition of his enormous contributions in the fields of education and healthcare by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry in New Delhi.

The award was received by Dr Vinod Bhat, VC, MAHE from Secretary, Ministry of HRD. "Dr Pai, a recipient of Padma Bhushan, is an epitome of dedication and perseverance, has contributed immensely at the national and international level. He has spent his entire life working with all the Group of Institutions and his name has till date been synonymous with perseverance, dedication and attaining a larger purpose in all human endeavor," said the citation.

At a glance



Wide varieties of lanterns (Goodudeepa) lit Kudroli Shree Gokarnanatha Temple as a part of Deepavali Goodudeepa competition at the temple premises on Sunday.
DH PHOTOS



Sharada Vidyalaya students won overall championship at Carmel Ingenium, an interschool competition, at Mount Carmel Central School in Mangaluru.



Mannd Sobhann presented Kalakar Puraskar Award to Konkani theatre artiste Dolla at Kalangann at Shaktinagar in Mangaluru. The award carries Rs 25,000 in cash, a citation, a memento and a shawl.



Members of Coastalwood Artist and Technicians' Cultural Association (CATCA) submitted a memorandum to Dakshina Kannada deputy commissioner demanding greater share of earnings on par with Kannada and Telugu films screened in multiplexes, in Mangaluru.

Sunday pattern of working

» The computerised passenger reservation centres in Palakkad Division of Southern Railway will function on only one shift,

similar to Sunday pattern of working (8 am to 2 pm), on November 6 on account of Deepavali festival, according to a press release.