

Editorial

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

Quality over quantity

The frenzy activities and frenetic rushes of the state machinery in its preparation to welcome the prime minister is nothing short of a spectacle. The number of inaugurations of projects and schemes being held during the last few days by the state government has not been witnessed before, both in terms of scale and diversity, so much so that some have termed it a 'festival of inaugurations' not without reason. While the objectives of these inaugurations are commendable, many have started questioning the viability and sustainability of such a decision in the long run.

While the new BJP-led state government has promised change with the present chief minister expressing his intent to bring about physical and emotional unity and inclusive development in the state and is clearly making efforts to put his promises into action, past experiences and examples bears a grim testimony to the less than unfortunate end to a huge number of such schemes and projects purportedly devised to bring development and progress for the benefit of the public. The ground reality is that the common man has yet to feel or enjoy the benefits as the bureaucratic hurdles, red-tapeism and corruption in public offices still makes life difficult. While the claim of the present government of improved governance has some degree of credibility, yet the pace and degree of change the people of the state voted the party for is still frustratingly slow and sluggish.

The biggest challenge of the state government is not the initiation of development activities, but the ensuring of continuity and efficacy of such activities for the public. Without a proper mechanism for implementation and regular appraisal of these schemes and projects such undertakings become bad investment and wastage of precious public resources. Taking into consideration the scarcity of resources and funds as well as state income, it is always a prudent exercise to prioritise quality over quantity. Haphazard decisions and whimsical announcements just to make up the numbers will eventually prove to be a burden sooner or later. Feedback from the public must form an important and integral part of the decision process and the chief minister is doing an exemplary job at present. His "Meeyamge Nunit" is a radical move to keep his fingers on the pulse of the public of the state.

While it may seem too early and unfair to draw comparisons with the previous government given that three consecutive terms were entrusted by the public to perform their duties, the past should be used as a lesson by the present government so that it does not repeat the blunder of institutionalizing cronyism and alienating from the public which put it power. Ensuring proper and timely implementation of activities and following up on the functioning to make sure that the intended targets reap the benefits of the schemes and projects will strengthen the faith of the public and earn it the much needed goodwill.

Social media poses a serious challenge to law enforcement agencies: Rajnath

Agency
New Delhi, March 14: Social media has posed a serious challenge to law enforcement agencies and the area of concerns include terrorism, financial frauds and victimisation of women and children, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said today. Inaugurating a two-day Asia-Pacific regional conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) here, Singh said that serious crime develops because the police and citizens do not work together to prevent decay of social norms and social disorder. "The social media has also posed serious challenge to policing. The three main issues are (i) law and order, (ii) cyber crimes like fake and imitating accounts, financial frauds (Nigerian 419 frauds), malware delivery, drug and other illegal article sales, victimisation of women and children and (iii) terrorism," he said. During the riots in Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh in 2013, the government had said that social media was used extensively by anti-social elements to spread hatred and misinformation among communities. Similarly in 2012, the mass exodus of people of the Northeast from south India had taken place allegedly due to a misinformation campaign carried out through Internet and social media. Singh had in the past said social

media has been increasingly used in the country to instigate communal riots and needed strong action to curb them. The growing presence of global terrorist outfits such as the Islamic State on social media only reflected the security establishment's concern. Many violent videos and jihadi messages uploaded by several terrorist organisations enhancing their appeal among vulnerable and disgruntled internet users, officials said. One Al Qaida video showing its leader Ayman al Zawahiri announcing an Indian arm was seen by many Indian youths. Agencies are particularly concerned about ISIS's growing appeal among Internet-savvy youths, given that at least 30 Indian men are said to have been recruited by it for overseas jihad. At today's conference, the home minister also said serious crime develops because the police and citizens do not work together to prevent decay of social norms and social disorder. "The community policing faces a huge trust deficit. Level of trust is particularly very low amongst socially weaker section, economically poor, minority groups, women, elderly and children. Police forces need to be more democratised," he said.

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National & International News

Delhi Metro proposes inviting private partners to run trains in Phase 4

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New Delhi, March 14: With Phase 4 of the Delhi Metro facing delays due to a tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government over funding, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has proposed to the two stakeholders to involve private entities to run its trains, a top official said. In the last week of January, the DMRC wrote to the Delhi government and the Union urban development ministry, each of which has a 50% stake in the corporation, requesting for approval of at least three of six proposed corridors. The letter also brought up trying a public-private partnership (PPP) for the Metro without elaborating how the model would work. Explaining the PPP model, which would potentially reduce the initial investment required, DMRC chief Mangu Singh told HT that, under the plan, the tracks would be laid by the corporation and coaches will be procured by a firm selected through a bidding process. This entity would then run the trains in exchange for payment, he added. "We have given options on

funding and one of the options is 'unbundling.' We can invite bids, and just like the cluster buses operated by DIMTS (Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Ltd), they can come and run the trains. We will pay to them on per km basis with a minimum daily guarantee. We will just collect the fare and pay them. This can be tried on any of the lines to see if it works," Mangu Singh said. The 104-kilometre network proposed in Phase 4 is expected to add 1.5 million passengers to the Metro daily. It will benefit residents of south Delhi, giving them the option of taking the Metro to the airport and other neighbourhoods. The project has been pending approval for nearly three years, with the files seemingly stuck with the Delhi government. Work was to begin in 2016 and be completed by 2021. Delhi transport minister Kailash Gehlot alleged last month that files were not reaching state ministers for clearance, while Union urban development minister Hardeep Puri said earlier this month that the Centre was fed up of the delays and would go ahead with the project on

its own. The Delhi government then responded that some of the proposed lines in Phase IV were not financially feasible. In a bid to reduce the funds required to kick-start the project, the DMRC has also proposed that private parties be involved in running essential services in stations, such as elevators, escalators and AFC (automated fare collection) gates. "Apart from requesting to approve three of the six corridors, we have given other options for funding. For instance, lifts, escalators and AFC gates can be given to private players after a bidding process. We will pay for them on a daily basis — like you hire a taxi on a need basis instead of buying a car," Singh said. The DMRC, which had been seeking approval for six corridors costing ₹48,000 crore, is now seeking approval for two phases — first the Mukundpur-Maujpur, Tughlakabad-Terminal 1 and Janakpuri (west)-RK Ashram sections, and then the Rithala-Narela, Inderlok-Indraprastha and the Lajpat Nagar-Saket G-Block sections. The first three corridors will cost around ₹29,000 crore. If the proposal to privatise a part of metro

station is approved, the cost will come down, Singh said. "It's a great idea but the Delhi metro should also consider the asset recycling model and lease out the existing infrastructure. They can give the existing lines on lease for 20 years just like toll plazas on highways, said Jaajit Bhattacharya, president of the Centre for Digital Economy Policy Research, when asked about the latest proposal. "In allowing the private party to run a fresh line, there are too many complications. In the existing line, you know the number of passengers travelling and can easily calculate the per km cost," he added. Ryan Christopher Sequeira, the deputy manager of transport planning at DIMTS, warned of complications as well. "As a proposal, it is definitely feasible. But there could be problems in the future if the projection of ridership turns out to be incorrect. It all depends how the plan and contract is formulated. The model is good as it does not put onus on the exchequer. But there has to be reliable data for future projections," he said.

Finance Bill to be taken up in Lok Sabha at noon

Agency
New Delhi, March 14: The Lok Sabha will take up the Finance Bill as well as the Appropriation Bills this noon, Speaker Sumitra Mahajan announced today amid noisy protests by members of opposition and some NDA constituents in the House. Speaker Sumitra Mahajan agreed with the views of Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar that the guillotine (end of discussion on various demands for grants), the Finance Bill and the Appropriation Bills be taken up at 12 noon instead

of 5 pm. Kumar said the government has been making efforts to run the House for the past one-and-a-half week and is ready to discuss any issue, but since the proceedings have remained disrupted, the key money bills should be taken up at 12 noon. Voicing unhappiness over stalling of House proceedings, Mahajan said urgent legislative business cannot be further delayed, hence the money bills will be taken up at 12 noon. She said the other issues listed for

the day would be taken up later. She then adjourned the House till 12 noon amid protests by the Congress, TDP, TRS YSR Congress, PMK over several issues, including the PNB scam, special package for Andhra Pradesh, defacement of Periyar statue in Tamil Nadu and enhanced quota for Telangana. The Lok Sabha was yesterday also scheduled to take up the Finance Bill 2018 and the Appropriation Bills. However, due to continued protests, no legislative business could be carried out. The Lok Sabha has failed to transact

substantial business on account of frequent disruptions since March 5 when the second leg of the Budget Session of Parliament commenced.

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Detection of IEDs a challenge for anti-Naxal forces: CM

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Raipur, March 14: Admitting that detection of IEDs was a challenge for the anti-Naxal forces, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh today said that if the problem is overcome, it will take six months to tackle the rebels. He said this was a tougher battle than what was fought on the borders as in the Naxal-hit areas, the war was against "unidentified" people. In several incidents, the Naxals have planted improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in a bid to harm the security personnel. The devices are often hidden underground or in bushes and planted in dart tracks and near police camps, he said. According to the police, the rebels fear that construction of roads will speed up the movement of security forces and development works, which will ultimately uproot them. Singh's remarks came a day after nine Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel killed after Naxals blasted their mine protected vehicle (MPV) in Sukma district. "...Naxals suffer damage in the face-to-face encounters with security forces daily in the area. But improvised explosive device

is a challenge. The detection of an IED is a difficult task," he said. "If we excel in IED detection, this battle (against Maoists) will be finished within six months," the chief minister said. He was speaking to reporters, along with Union Minister of State for Home Hansraj Ahir, at the camp of 4th battalion of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) in the Mana Camp area here, after paying homage to the nine CRPF personnel killed in the Naxal attacked yesterday. One year ago also, on March 11, the Naxals had killed 12 CRPF personnel by triggering a blast in the Bheji area of Sukma, Singh said. It is unfortunate that with the available technology, it is not possible to detect an IED placed one foot beneath the ground. However, some latest technique will be used in this direction, he assured. On yesterday's attack, Singh said the security forces had recently set up a camp in Palodi village (Sukma), which is considered as a stronghold of the ultras. Frustrated with the development, the Naxals targeted the CRPF personnel between Kistaram and Palodi, he said. The chief minister said security

forces have been fighting a tough battle. It is quite difficult to stay there and take action against the Naxals. Security forces have been marching ahead with full courage and valour and thwarting the attempts made by Naxals to stop development works, he said, noting that a network of roads is being laid all over Bastar. These incidents cannot lower the morale of the security forces, he said, asserting that "Naxals will be given a befitting reply and

completely flushed out." He compared the situation in the Naxal-affected areas with that on the borders. "The battle in the insurgency-hit areas is no less than what is being fought on the borders. In fact, the war in Naxal-hit areas is tougher as the fight there is against the unidentified (people)," he said. The state cabinet ministers, senior administrative and police officials, senior CRPF officials were among those present at the wreath laying ceremony.

Along with economy rise, China also focused on military modernisation: Bipin Rawat

Agency
New Delhi, March 14: Army Chief General Bipin Rawat today lauded China's military prowess, saying the neighbouring country, along with its economic rise, also focused on military modernisation. "They have arrived well before the intended time than we had thought they would arrive," Rawat said at an event organised by the Vivekanand India Foundation. Last week, China unveiled its largest defence spending increase in three years, setting an 8.1 per cent growth target this year, fuelling an ambitious military modernisation programme and making its neighbours nervous. Today, China is the second largest economy in the world. "While China ensured that their economy must rise, they did not

forget the rise of their military power. "They ensured that while their economy was developing the military power must rise simultaneously and that is why they are strong today in the international world order challenging the might of the United States of America, which was until now the sole security provider," he said. Rawat said the world looks at India as a country that can balance the rise of China in the region as it was showing its "assertiveness". Rawat also said strong economic growth is only possible with a strong defence. "We cannot become the net security provider if the economy does not keep pace with the changes," Rawat said.

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