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SC rejects Rafale probe demand

No occasion to doubt decision-making process, says court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday provided a major relief to the Modi Government by dismissing the demand for a court-monitored CBI probe into the Government-to-Government deal with France for the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter jets, saying there is no occasion to "really doubt the decision-making process" warranting setting aside of the contract.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi went into "three broad areas of concern" raised in the petitions — the decision-making process, pricing and the choice of Indian offset partners — and said there was no reason for intervention by the apex court on the "sensitive issue" of purchase of 36 fighter jets.

The apex court said the Indian Air Force (IAF) needs advanced fighter jets as the country cannot afford to be "unprepared" or "under prepared" in a situation where adversaries have acquired fourth and fifth generation fighter aircraft, "of which, we have none".

"In view of our findings on all three aspects, and having heard the matter in detail, we find no reason for any intervention by this court on the sensitive issue of purchase of 36 defence aircraft by the Indian Government," the Bench, also comprising Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph, said in its 29-page judgment.

Attorney General KK Venugopal welcomed the verdict terming it as an "excellent" and "very good" judgment, which in his opinion has given "clean chit" to the Government by accepting all its arguments. "I think a clean chit has been given to the Government on Rafale deal," he told reporters on the sidelines of a function to give farewell to Justice Madan B Lokur, who is set to retire on December 30.

The court said perception of individuals cannot be the basis of a "fishing and roving enquiry" by the court in such matters and it cannot "sit in judgment" over the wisdom of Government's decision to go in for purchase of 36 aircraft in

place of 126.

"We are satisfied that there is no occasion to really doubt the process, and even if minor deviations have occurred, that would not result in either setting aside the contract or requiring a detailed scrutiny by the court," the Bench said.

It noted that process for procurement of 36 Rafale jets was concluded on September 23, 2016 and no questions were raised at that time and the petitions were later filed after reported statement of former French President Francois Hollande with regard to selection of Indian offset partners.

The Bench said it was "certainly not the job of this court to carry out a comparison of the pricing details in matters like the present" and the material has to be kept in a confidential domain.

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RELIEF FOR GOVT

→ A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi went into "three broad areas of concern" raised in the petitions — the decision making process, pricing and the choice of Indian offset partners (IOP) — and said there was no reason for intervention by the court on the "sensitive issue" of purchase of 36 jets

→ "In view of our findings on all the three aspects, and having heard the matter in detail, we find no reason for any intervention by this court on the sensitive issue of purchase of 36 defence aircraft by the Indian Government," the Bench, also comprising Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph, said in its 29-page judgment



Anil Ambani welcomes judgment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Group Chairman Anil Ambani on Friday welcomed the SC order on the Rafale deal, saying it established the falsity of politically motivated allegations against him.

"I welcome the judgment summarily dismissing all PILs filed on the Rafale contracts, and conclusively establishing the complete falsity of the wild, baseless and politically motivated allegations levelled against Reliance Group and me personally," Ambani said.

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Congress president Rahul Gandhi with Rajasthan Congress president Sachin Pilot and senior party leader Ashok Gehlot at his residence in New Delhi on Friday

Rahul pulls it off: Gehlot Raj CM, Sachin deputy

Decision made for Chhattisgarh, announcement to be made today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday named Ashok Gehlot as Rajasthan Chief Minister and Sachin Pilot as his deputy after party president Rahul Gandhi successfully brokered a peace between the veteran leader and his younger colleague after several rounds of discussion lasting more than two days.

They will take oath of office of December 17.

Congress observer to Rajasthan KC Venugopal made the announcement and said details of the oath-taking ceremony would be decided after a meeting with Governor Kalyan Singh in Jaipur.

Addressing a Press conference, Gehlot thanked Rahul Gandhi for giving him the opportunity to serve the people of the State for a third time

and promised that he and Pilot will give "good governance".

Rahul met Gehlot and Pilot thrice since Thursday. Hectic parleys were held between top party leaders, including Sonia Gandhi. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra too is understood to be involved in the decision-making process. Senior party leaders Venugopal, Avinash Pande and Jitendra Singh were present during the meeting on Friday.

"The united colours of Rajasthan," Rahul tweeted on Friday afternoon along with a photograph in which the three leaders were seen in a jovial mood. Gehlot and Pilot were welcomed with pomp and splendour at the Jaipur airport after the announcement.

Pilot, 41, exuded confidence that Congress' good electoral performance will continue, saying the party will get a big mandate in 2019 polls and form a Government at the Centre also. "Mera aur Ashok Gehlotji ka jaadu puri tarah chal gaya hai (Gehlot and I worked our magic in the State)," Pilot said.

The Congress went from 21 seats against the BJP's 163 in 2013 to get 99 seats (plus one

of the Rashtriya Lok Dal) in the Assembly elections. Pilot said the party's manifesto will be implemented immediately.

However, the name of Chhattisgarh CM has been kept under wraps. The official announcement will be made on Saturday in Raipur. All the four contenders — TS Singh Deo, Bhupesh Baghel, Tamradhwaj Sahu and Charan Das Mahant — were called to Delhi.

They took turns to meet Rahul during the day after the name of Rajasthan CM was finalised. Rahul authorised AICC Central Observer for Chhattisgarh Mallikarjun Kharge to announce in Raipur the CM candidate after the CLP meeting on Saturday.

Gehlot will be the fourth leader to become Chief Minister of Rajasthan for a third time. Mohan Lal Sukhadia was the Chief Minister of the State for four times, while Hari Dev Joshi and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat were three-time Chief Ministers of the State. Both Sukhadia and Joshi were Congress leaders while Bhairon Singh Shekhawat was from the BJP.

Cong manufactured lies on Rafale: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Buoyed by the Supreme Court verdict on the Rafale fighter jet deal issue, the Government and the ruling BJP on Friday charged the Congress with manufacturing lies and compromising with national security and said truth always holds together while "falsehood always fall apart."

Making this assertion here, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley without directly naming Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi said falsehood was manufactured by "one family", but they are not above the apex court.

Along with the Government, the ruling BJP also accused the Congress of making the Rafale deal look a suspect by telling lies. BJP president Amit Shah said here at a separate Press conference that the SC order was a slap on Congress chief Rahul's politics of lies and asked him to apologise to the country and its soldiers for putting national security at risk.



The BJP president said there is no occasion to doubt the decision-making process in the procurement of 36 Rafale jets from France, and the court has upheld that in its order on Friday. It is not the job of the court to deal with the comparative details of the pricing, he said. He also hit out at the Congress president for taking a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi by saying the "chowkidar" is a thief. "All thieves had gathered to call the 'chowkidar' a thief, but the country never believed it," Shah told reporters.

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Govt misled SC on CAG report, Rahul raps Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Government has come under cloud for allegedly misleading the Supreme Court by claiming that it had placed the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the Rafale jet deal before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi along with Yashwant Sinha, Arun Shourie and Prashant Bhusan, the three PIL petitioners in the Supreme court against Rafale deal, on Friday pointed out that no such CAG report was ever placed in Parliament or before the PAC.

At a Press conference, Rahul said the Supreme Court in its verdict cited a report by the CAG on the Rafale deal was submitted to the PAC but asserted that no such report was given to the House panel headed by Congress' leader in

Lok Sabha Mallikarjuna Kharge. Kharge, who was also present at the briefing, said the PAC has not received any such report.

"Where has that report gone? Is it with some other PAC that PM Modi has set up," Rahul asked in a dig at the Government. Both the Government and Anil Ambani's Reliance Group have rejected Rahul Gandhi's allegation of wrongdoings.

Rahul again accused the Modi Government of destroying "all institutions" and asserted that corruption to the tune of ₹30,000 crore has taken place in the Rafale deal.

He reiterated the Congress' demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the fighter jet deal and claimed that if it was conducted, names of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and businessman Anil Ambani will come to the fore.

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CAPSULE

TV ANCHOR FALLS TO DEATH FROM HER FLAT

Noida: A news anchor with a private television channel died allegedly after she fell off the balcony of her fourth-floor apartment here early on Friday, with her family suspecting foul play.

MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA TO RESIGN AS PM TODAY

Colombo: Signalling an end to the nearly two-month power tussle in Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa will resign on Saturday, his son said on Friday.

KEY DHINAKARAN AIDE QUIT AMMK, JOINS DMK

Chennai: In what could be perceived as a setback to AMMK founder TTV Dhinakaran, one of his key aides quit the party and joined the MK Stalin-led DMK on Friday.

PSBs DO NOT HAVE ANY PLAN TO CLOSE ATMS

New Delhi: Public Sector Banks (PSBs) do not have any plans to shut down their ATMs, Minister of State for Finance Shiv Pratap Shukla informed Parliament. The statement assumes significance amidst a report by the Confederation of ATM industry (CATMI) warning that nearly half of the 2.38 lakh machines near the risk of closing down by March next year due to regulatory compliance changes making the business unviable due to rising costs.

50 TIGERS DIED IN INDIA THIS YEAR, MOST IN MP

New Delhi: About 50 tigers have died in India this year with the highest number of deaths recorded in Madhya Pradesh, the Lok Sabha was told on Friday.

11 dead, 75 sick after eating prasad at Karnataka temple

Bengaluru: At least 11 people, including a girl and a woman, died while 75 others took ill on Friday after consuming "prasad" at a temple at Sulavadi village in Chamrajnagar district, officials said.

The condition of eight people being treated in Mysuru is critical. "A child died at the Government hospital at Ramapura, two each at GH hospitals at Kamageri and Kolegal, three at the KP Hospital and one at KRH Hospital," said Suresh Shastry, Joint Director, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare Services.

According to police, the



A woman is being shifted to a hospital following sickness after consuming 'prasad' at Maramma temple in Chamrajnagar district in Mysuru on Friday

foundation laying ceremony of Maramma temple was organised on Friday morning

and prasad was distributed after the function.

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Amitav Ghosh honoured with Jnanpith award

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Noted English writer Amitav Ghosh has been honoured with this year's Jnanpith Award, a literary award given to an author for "outstanding contribution towards literature", Bharatiya Jnanpith announced on Friday.

"Amitav Ghosh is a path-breaking novelist. In his novels, Ghosh treads through historical settings to the modern era and weaves a space where the past connects with the present in relevant ways. "His fiction is endowed with extraordinary depth and substance through his academic training as a his-



torian and a social anthropologist," a statement from Bharatiya Jnanpith reads.

The decision was taken in a meeting of Jnanpith Selection Board chaired by eminent novelist, scholar and Jnanpith laureate Pratibha Ray.

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Nepal bans Indian notes above ₹100

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The Nepal Government has banned the use of Indian currency notes of ₹2,000, ₹500 and ₹200 denominations, a move that could affect Indian tourists visiting the Himalayan nation where Indian currency is widely used.

Indian currency is extensively used by Nepalese people and businesses for their savings and transactions.

The Nepal Government has asked the people to refrain from keeping or carrying Indian bank notes higher than ₹100 denomination as it has not legalised them, Nepal's

Minister for Information and Communications Gokul Prasad Baskota said.

"The Government has decided not to use, carry and keep the Indian bills of 200, 500 and 2000 denominations. The government will soon issue a formal notice in this matter," the Minister said.

The decision will adversely affect Nepalese labourers working in India as well as Indian tourists visiting Nepal.

Nepal Premier KP Sharma Oli said earlier this year that demonetisation hurt the Nepalese people and added that he would raise the matter with Indian leaders.

Delhi to say 'cheers' to freshly brewed beer

DDA finally OK's plan to set up microbreweries in Capital

GAYATHRI MANI ■ NEW DELHI

Now, Delhiites need not travel all the way to Gurugram and Faridabad to sip freshly brewed beer as the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has finally approved to set up the much awaited microbreweries in restaurants and bars situated in the national Capital.

The new policy or provision for the implementation of microbreweries could not be notified earlier due to various reasons but now as per the offi-

cial the DDA approved the same and notified the new policy in the meeting held on Friday morning.

According to sources, "The restaurants, hotel or clubs will be allowed to set up the microbreweries up to 500 litres per day capacity. But at the same time restaurants, bars and hotels have to get the no-objection certificate (NOC) clearance/licences from excise department before setting up the microbreweries."

Microbreweries, also known as organic beers, are



freshly brewed beer with different fruit flavours such as strawberries, apple, grapes which is also considered as a



healthy drinks as per the experts. Experts said microbreweries are healthy for both men and woman as it does not contain alcohol, chemical and preservatives, especially gly-

cerin's that are used in the packaged and beer cans. Also, it will be good drink and safer than the whisky and other hard drinks which will also reduce fatness.

Currently, there is only one microbrewery set up at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA).

"The Delhi Government has approved the proposal to set up the breweries in Delhi three years ago but it could not be implemented as the breweries were listed under the 'prohibited/negative' list of industries in the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) 2021. However, on the request of the Government, Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal in December 2017 approved the Government's plea to remove microbreweries from the 'prohibited' list of the master plan. After which the DDA's technical committee approved the

proposal in January 2018," an official said.

The official further said after fulfilling all the procedures and modalities, the people of Delhi as well as tourists will enjoy freshly manufactured beer.

"Moreover, the freshly brewed beer will also be cheaper than the can and packaged beers as it does not contain the packaging and transporting charges," said an official.

"In Germany, the pregnant women are advised to have a glass of freshly brewed beer daily as it is so nutritious. But in the bottles chemicals are used which is fatty as well as harmful," said a beer expert.

Continued on Page 7

Yogi seeks apology from Rahul for 'Rafale lies'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Hitting out at the Congress president, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that Rahul Gandhi told lies about the Rafale fighter aircraft deal and he should apologise to the people and defence personnel for spreading canards to get political mileage.

"The oldest political party of the country has failed to perform its duty. It has threatened the nation's security and integrity by questioning the Rafale deal which was initiated by their government but was later shelved as they could not find any middleman like (Ottavio) Quattrocchi or (Christian) Michel," the Chief Minister said while speaking to news persons in Lucknow on Friday.

Yogi was reacting to a Supreme Court judgement in which a three-member bench gave a clean chit to the Rafale deal. The judgement came as a shot in the arm for the sagging morale of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which promptly used the verdict as a hammer to beat the Congress.

The Chief Minister also asked the Congress why its government delayed the Rafale deal during its tenure from 2007 to 2014.

"Was the party in power searching for brokers like they did during the previous defence deals?" Yogi asked in an oblique



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressing mediapersons in Lucknow on Friday

reference to the Bofors deal.

Yogi said that Rahul Gandhi should also disclose the source of his information on Rafale deal as it seemed that his statement against the government was an attempt to weaken the country's security.

"The statements made by the Congress chief were more alarming as neighbouring countries are equipped with the latest aircraft and other defence technology," he said.

The Chief Minister also suggested to the judiciary not to entertain frivolous public interest petitions (PILs) which could affect the security and integrity of the country.

"This is a fact that these PILs were filed just to reap political mileage and defame the government. The court should take strict action against such PILs," he said.

Yogi welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court in rejecting all petitions filed against the Rafale aircraft deal and claimed that the judiciary's verdict was a clear indication that nothing was wrong in the deal.

"The Supreme Court judgement has exposed the false propaganda of the Congress. The grand old party defamed the Central government and the BJP merely for political reasons," Yogi said.

Maya for fundamental reforms in country's defence deals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Friday called for fundamental reforms in all defence related procurements in order to address the doubts and common perception over such issues.

She said the Union government may have got relief after the Supreme Court's order on Rafale deal, but said both Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress had been charging each other for irregularities in the fighter aircraft procurement.

Mayawati said to avert controversies, it was essential that fundamental reforms be evolved in all defence related deals in order to address the doubts and perceptions among the common people.

Asserting that allegations of corruption were levelled both against the Congress and the BJP in defence deals raising public doubt, the BSP chief said that both parties were similar as a previous Congress regime had faced charges in Bofors deal and the BJP regime in the Rafale deal.

"In the larger interests of the country, the Union government needs to take main opposition parties into confidence and chalk out a transparent and long-term policy in defence-related procurements and its



honest implementation. This will do away with such allegations and help in keeping the image of the party in power and also the nation, clean," she added.

On Friday, the Supreme Court said there was no occasion to doubt decision-making process in the multi-billion dollar Rafale deal and that there was a necessity of fighter aircraft and the country could not remain without these jets.

Meanwhile, Mayawati removed the BSP's Madhya Pradesh unit chief Pradeep Ahirwar and also state in-charge Ram Achal Rajbhar. The BSP chief also dissolved the BSP state unit in MP.

The move comes in the wake of BSP's not-so-good performance in the neighbouring state in recent assembly polls, as it could win only two seats in MP against the four it had bagged last time.

LS elections: UP all set to take centre stage

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh is set to take centre stage in the run-up to 2019 Lok Sabha elections. As the state sends 80 members to the Lok Sabha, the focus of all political parties — Bharatiya Janata Party, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Congress and other regional and smaller outfits — has now shifted to UP.

Political equations in the state are likely to change as the BSP, SP and Congress are looking for an alliance to take on the BJP in the country's most populated state.

With elections over in five states and Congress emerging as a formidable challenger to the BJP after wresting three Central Indian states, the resurgent grand old party is set to make a big push for regaining ground in UP that it lost three decades ago after the rise of Mandal movement and Dalit resurgence.

Caste-based regional parties like Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party were earlier not interested in accommodating the Congress in the anti-BJP grand alliance for the 2019 general elections but with electoral luck smiling on the grand old party in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, they have grudgingly agreed to join hands with it.

The defeat in three Hindi speaking states has set the alarm bells ringing for the

'The stakes are definitely the highest for the BJP as it had secured 42 per cent votes and won 73 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats along with its allies in UP in 2014. Its victory of 2014 was consolidated in 2017 when the BJP stormed to power in UP with a mammoth mandate.'

ing BJP in UP where it is faced with the uphill task of repeating its 2014 performance in the 2019 elections.

Both SP and BSP were tough on the Congress, demanding a large number of seats in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, but have now fallen in line. Both realise that it will be difficult for them to protect their respective Muslim vote banks if they refuse to align with the Congress. With the Congress on a comeback trail in three states, both parties are under pressure and are forced to revisit their earlier stand.

The BSP extended its unconditional support to the Congress in the three Central Indian states, indicating that it is now ready to accommodate the grand old party in UP. The Congress has reciprocated by saying that like-minded parties would be taken on board, thereby preparing ground for the grand alliance.

So far, there has been no

official word from BSP chief Mayawati about her party's alliance with SP. In March this year, the SP and the BSP were keen on forging an alliance for 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The SP leaders are, however, confident that they have finalised the deal and it will be announced after consulting the Congress.

The grand alliance in UP will also give some space to Ajit Singh-led Rashtriya Lok Dal.

The stakes are definitely the highest for the BJP as it had secured 42 per cent votes and won 73 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats along with its allies in UP in 2014. Its victory of 2014 was consolidated in 2017 when the BJP stormed to power in UP with a mammoth mandate.

However, four back-to-back bypoll defeats in Gorakhpur, Phulpur, and Kairana Lok Sabha and Nurdur Assembly seats not only checked the surge of the saffron brigade but also dampened party workers' morale.

Grand celebrations planned for Atal's birth anniversary

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The state government has planned a grand celebration on the 95th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee with functions to be held across the state and the launch of a 'Paint my city' scheme.

Though Vajpayee's birth anniversary falls on December 25, the celebrations will start on December 24 and will continue till December 26.

A senior official told this reporter on Friday that debates, poetry recital and rangoli competitions will be held in educational institutions across the state from December 24 to 26.

"The high point of the celebrations will be 'Paint my city campaign' under which artists will be invited to draw paintings depicting life and struggle of Vajpayee. This contest will be held at Atal Bihari

Vajpayee Scientific Convention Centre," he said.

As Vajpayee was a four-time Member of Parliament from Lucknow, the focus of the celebration would be the state capital.

On December 25, a drama, 'Ratter Purush Atal', will be staged in Lucknow. The next day, a Kavi Sammelan will be organised in which noted poets like Kumar Vishwas, Hariom Pawar, Kunwar Bechain and Abdul Gaffar will recite their poems.

"On December 25, a CD containing speeches and poems of Vajpayee will be released. An exhibition depicting the struggle of the former Prime Minister will also be organised," the official said.

Incidentally, Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah will be in Lucknow on December 25 and he will participate in various programmes organised by his party.

Power consumers urge UPSERC to reduce tariff

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Power consumers of Uttar Pradesh have demanded reduction in power tariff from power regulator — UP State Electricity Regulatory Commission (UPSERC) — for the 2018-19 fiscal.

The consumers put forward their demand during a public hearing held by UPSERC on Annual Revenue Requirement statement filed by UP Power Corporation Limited

and its three subsidiaries.

Representing consumers, UP Power Consumers' Forum office-bearers said that power tariff be slashed as Energy Minister Shrikant Sharma had announced in the Vidhan Sabha that after cutting down aggregate technical and commercial losses, the UPPCL earned a profit of ₹3,400 crore.

Terming the present tariff as arbitrary, the Power Consumers' Forum office-bearers demanded that a new slab

of ₹1-1.50 per unit be created for people Below Poverty Line (BPL) and reduction in tariff be made for consumers using 400 units per month.

Raising questions over the efficiency of UPPCL, a power consumer asked how its losses, which were ₹77 crore in 2000, mounted to ₹85,000 crore in 2017-18.

During the hearing, consumers pointed out that it was difficult to enforce standards of financial accountability on

power distribution companies as their accounts were never audited.

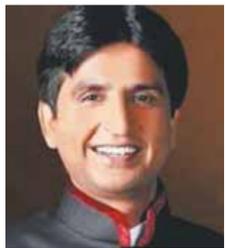
They urged the UPSERC to reject the UPPCL plea for revision of power tariff till its accounts were audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

UPSERC Chairman RP Singh assured the consumers that they would consider and accommodate their concerns and objections while deciding the tariff for 2018-19.

Kumar Vishwas likely to join BJP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Rae Bareilly, the parliamentary constituency of United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi, on December 16 could throw some surprises as there is a possibility that rebel Aam Admi Party (AAP) leader and poet Kumar Vishwas may join the Bharatiya Janata Party in his



presence. Though sources close to the poet denied such a move, and there is a tradition that no politics is involved during the Prime Minister's function, sources in the BJP confirmed in Lucknow on Friday that there is a strong possibility of Kumar Vishwas joining the party.

"There is a surprise for you. Wait till Sunday," a senior BJP leader said.

In 2014, Kumar Vishwas contested the Lok Sabha election from Amethi constituency on AAP ticket and in 2019 he could be the BJP candidate in place of Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani.

But sources in the BJP claimed that Vishwas could be shifted to Rae Bareilly to contest against Sonia Gandhi, while Irani could contest against Rahul Gandhi from Amethi again.

'Cong wins augur well for party's revival in UP'

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

Lucknow (PNS): Senior Congress leader and former member of Rajya Sabha, Pramod Tiwari, said on Friday that the Congress victories in the assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh augured well for the party's revival in Uttar Pradesh.



"We Congressmen thank Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav for supporting our governments in Rajasthan, MP and Chhattisgarh. The victory of the party in the recent assembly polls will revive the party in the state," he said.

In a statement issued in Lucknow on Friday, Tiwari claimed that the people of the country had expressed their resentment against the Bharatiya Janata Party in the assembly polls and in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the voters would dethrone the Narendra Modi government.

"False promises made by the BJP government followed by demonetisation and imposition of Goods and Services Tax created insurmountable problems for the people and now they will teach the Bharatiya Janata Party a befitting lesson in the next Lok Sabha election," the Congress leader said.

Spl court grants bail to Nandi, wife in model code violation case

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

The Special Court (MP and MLA) on Friday granted bail to Cabinet Minister Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi' and his wife Abhilasha Gupta, who is mayor of Allahabad, in connection with a case registered against them in 2012 alleging violation of the model code of conduct.

Special judge Pawan Kumar Tiwari granted bail to Nandi and his wife after they surrendered in the court on Friday in connection with the previous non-bailable warrant issued against them.

As per the facts of the case after winning the mayoral election of Allahabad in 2012, Abhilasha Gupta along with her husband allegedly took out a massive procession.

Subsequently a first information report (FIR) was registered against them at the Allahabad Kotwali under Section 188 of Indian Penal Code and other sections for violation of the model code of conduct. Section 188 deals with

disobeying an order duly promulgated by a public servant was punishable under law.

Later the police investigated the matter and submitted a chargesheet against them. The court at one stage took cognisance of the matter and issued summons to them.

However, with the setting up of the Special Court (MP and MLA), the case was transferred to it. On the previous date when both Nandi and Abhilasha failed to appear before the special court, the special judge issued a non-bailable warrant against them. In pursuance of the NBW, the duo surrendered before the special court which while recording their presence granted bail to them.

The Special Court (MP and MLA) had been set up on the direction of the Supreme Court to try elected public representatives facing criminal cases. The special court will exclusively try elected members of Parliament and state legislators against whom criminal cases are pending.

Envoys coming for Sangam darshan today

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Prior to the world's largest congregation—Kumbh—scheduled to be held in January next year, diplomats from various countries will be coming here for Sangam darshan on Saturday.

They will arrive at the Bamrauli Airport at 9:30 am. Information related to the arrival of ambassadors of 150 countries by a special Air India aircraft at the Bamrauli Airport has been sent to the Director, Airport Safety.

The special aircraft of Air India carrying the special guests will fly back from the airport at 3:30 pm.

It may be pointed out here that for the special branding of the mega event, this time necessary preparations has been made so that the foreign diplomats could have a darshan of the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati here.

Preparation are also in full swing to accord a rousing reception to the special guests at the airport.

ELABORATE SECURITY FOR MODI'S VISIT

Meanwhile, elaborate security arrangements have been made for the proposed visit of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to the Sangam City on December 16.

The police and administrative officials reviewed the security plan and divided the city into six zones and 12 sectors to ensure foolproof security of the Prime Minister. As many as 4,000 policemen, including 20 SPs, 30 DySPs, 350 sub-inspectors and 3,500 constable would be deputed at the venue of the rally. Senior Superintendent of Police KP Singh said the Prime Minister's chopper would land at MNNIT in Andhawa area and he would go to the Sangam area and inaugurate the ICC and then offer prayers to the river Ganga. The Prime Minister would thereafter visit Akshaywat and return to MNNIT and fly to Andhawa and address a public rally.

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS (E-Tender)

Letter No. 4760/E-Tender/18-19 Dated : 10-12-18

1. The Executive Engineer Construction Division-1, U.P.P.W.D. Lucknow on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, class A,B,C,D The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

Sl. No.	DISTRICT	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lakhs)	Cost of Bid Document	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer of the Executing work	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer
1	L.K.O.	Repair of Faridi nagar, Chandan Suggamau, Yadavpurwa road Ch.(0.00 to 1.10)	27.00	2.70	854/-	2 Month	Construction Division-1, P.W.D. Lucknow	Lucknow Circle P.W.D. Lucknow	Chief Engineer Central Zone P.W.D. Lucknow.
2	L.K.O.	Repair of Suggamau to Jarahara (Ch.0.00 to 2.600)	39.00	3.90	854/-	2 Month	Construction Division-1, P.W.D. Lucknow	Lucknow Circle P.W.D. Lucknow	Chief Engineer Central Zone P.W.D. Lucknow.

The Rate adopted in the BOQ all Other taxes but excluding GST Taxes, Bids must be published and can be downloaded online since 9:00 AM on date 17.12.2018 and submitted online on or before 12:00 Noon on dated 24.12.2018. The technical bids will be opened online date 26.12.2018 at 12:30 PM and Financial bids of the qualified bidders will be opened on date & time as notified. According to the provisions of Government Order no. 1/2018/3070/78-2-2018/42/17/2017 (22) Date 03-01-2018 after opening of the technical and financial bids, the bidder has to submit original documents personally in department/office. In the event of non submission of original documents by the bidder, the appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the provisions of G.O.

All terms & conditions can be seen on website <http://etender.up.nic.co.in> (Pawan Verma) Executive Engineer Construction Division-1, PWD, Lucknow

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Travel agency booked for fraud

People protest after their visas and passports were rejected at airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A group of people on Friday morning lodged a strong protest by staging a dharna inside the airport premises in Amausi as their visas and passports were rejected by the staff deployed at the immigration counter charging the documents were fake.

It is said the youths and students approached a travel agency, whose office is situated at MG Bhawan, Habibullah Estate, seeking visas and passports six weeks ago. The staff there had given different dates to collect their documents. Interestingly, they were given receipts after depositing the amount which the agency asked for.

The police said the travel agency SS International Travelling Agency is engaged in providing visas and passports.



Victims protesting against the travel agency at Hazratganj Kotwali on Friday

Pioneer

The agency spokesman used to assure persons applying for the documents that everything thing would be genuine and would be issued after following legal formalities and also scrutinised by the competent officer of the Passport Office leav-

ing no scope of any unscrupulous practice. Those who were to board the flight on Friday morning were disgusted when the immigration officials rejected their visas and passport. Panic gripped them and they resorted to shouting anti-establishment slogans. Business graduate Abhishek Singh, who was to board the flight, said that initially he thought the staff at the immigration counter were misguiding them aiming to harass and as well as to extort money. Singh said he and oth-

ers were confident that their documents were genuine. They staged a dharna there. The staff on duty informed senior officers, who rushed to the spot, thoroughly scrutinised the documents and found them to be fake. In the meantime, the police also arrived there and after listening to both the parties patiently concluded that it was a case of fraud and asked agitators to leave the premises as it would make adverse impact on visitors coming there from other destinations. The police asked them to leave the premises within five minutes otherwise legal action would be taken against them and advised them to lodge a complaint at the Hazratganj police station. When they reached the office of the travel agency, it was found locked. The security guard deployed said the office was locked since December 12 morning. They went to the Hazratganj police to lodge their complaint against the travelling agency. A case of fraud was registered on the complaint of Gorakhpur native Tinku Singh.

Lko awaits its share of Kumbh visitors



Kumbh Mela paintings at Shaheed Path

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow is gearing up for the mega event of Kumbh Mela which will be held in Prayagraj in the month of January next year. The state capital is likely to receive a large number of tourists who will visit Lucknow on their way to attend the event.

Principal Secretary, Information, Awanish Awasthi said that among the activities to be held in Lucknow would be a Yuva Kumbh as a precursor to the event for getting the youths here connected with it. He said that Lucknow University would be the coordinator for the event. It organised a meeting in this regard here on Friday for making the Yuva Kumbh successful. Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University SP Singh said that the Yuva Kumbh would be organised on December 22 and 23 in the city. He said that on December 22 the programme would be organised at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan while the main event on December 23 would be held at Smriti Upvan which will be inaugurated by Governor Ram Naik and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Singh said that it was a great achievement for the Kumbh Mela which had gone through a long journey from establishing its identity in the global scenario to becoming a prestigious event. He said that the Yuva Kumbh would witness the participation of over 5,000 youths from different parts of the country who had contributed to the development of the nation. The meeting witnessed the presence of ADM, trans-Gomti, Anil Kumar. Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia said that since a large number of domestic tourists were expected for the mega event which may go to Prayagraj, Lucknow Municipal Corporation was making arrangements for keeping the city clean. "Paintings related to the Kumbh Mela are already

being made on the Shaheed Path and we will also be drawing them on a few other walls of the city. LMC will be primarily focusing on the cleanliness exercise at the railway stations and bus stands. An anti-encroachment drive is already on. The historical monuments will also be cleaned for the occasion since many tourists are expected to visit the city," she said. She said that the LED lights were already in place on the electric poles for making the city look attractive and beautiful. A senior tourism official said that a sum of Rs 3 crore had been handed over to the Mela Adhikari for carrying out various curtain-raiser events in all parts of the state and a Yuva Kumbh was being organised. Director, Archives, Rubina Beg, said that they were putting an exhibition at the Kalagram at Prayagraj on the history of Kumbh with material from the archives in Lucknow and Allahabad.

CST workshops to detect fake news

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Council of Science and Technology is organising a workshop on "Facts checking and online verification on social media platforms." Joint director (IT), Council of Science and Technology Pooja Yadav said that the workshop would help spread awareness and train students about how to detect fake news on social media.

She disclosed that Nimish Kapoor, head, Science Film Division, Vigyan Prasar is a Google certified trainer on the above subject and would lead the workshop. "This workshop is an initiative of Google News, a subsidiary of Google India. The participants will be provided various software tools by Google India during the workshop to help them in establishing the genuineness of news on social media. Generalists, science students, students and teachers of mass communication are eligible to participate in the workshop. The registration for the workshop is free of cost and the participants will be provided certificate of participation jointly by Council of Science and Technology, Google India and Vigyan Prasar," she said.

She said that five such

workshops would be conducted in Lucknow as a joint venture of Council of Science and Technology, Google India and Vigyan Prasar.

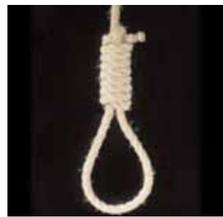
"Each workshop will have a maximum of 25 participants. Workshop will be organised in Lucknow from December 22 to December 29," she added.

On December 22, the workshop will be organised at Sir CV Raman auditorium and on December 29 the workshop will be organised at Science Film and Photography Club, Indira Gandhi Planetarium. On December 22 and 23, three workshops will be organised at other places in Lucknow and the participants will be informed about the venue and timing. She said that the Council of Science and Technology organises various workshops and seminars from time to time. "Today the propagation of news is not only limited to print and electronic media, but also social media. Sometimes fake news is highly circulated and becomes popular on social media so much so that the general public begins to believe that the news is true. This may cause harm to the society and also spread panic and hatred among general public sometimes leading to riots," she added.

Two persons commit suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Shyam Soni, a resident SRudariapur area under Talkatora police station, committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of the room. The motive for taking such a drastic step was the dispute with his wife on domestic issue. They were married two years ago and were living along with his elder brother Arun Soni in the same house. The brother told the police that his brother was emotional in nature and used to feel insulted on petty dispute. The police said the deceased had picked up quarrel several time with his wife on Thursday. The last



encounter between the couple was in the late evening. After this, he went to his room on the first floor and hanged himself with a saree of his wife. They was no response from inside when his brother knocked the door early Friday morning. He peeped inside the room

from the hole on the door and noticed Shyam was hanging. No suicide note was found from his possession. The police claimed the investigation had been initiated to ascertain motive for suicide. He was a goldsmith and working at a shop in Rajajipuram. Warehouse 'chowkidar' Sonu committed a suicide by hanging himself from the hook of a tinshed in Badshah Kheda under the Indira Nagar police station. No suicide note was found from the room. It owner Raghendra Chowdhary informed the police on Friday morning that Sonu was found hanging from the tinshed roof of the room.

Youth killed, friend injured as truck hits motorcycle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A youth was killed while his friend sustained serious injuries when a truck knocked their motorcycle (UP-32/KA-6162) at Sarkauthi crossing under the Malihabad police station in the wee hours of Friday. The deceased was identified as 26-year-old Rajendra Pal, a native of Unnao district, while the injured one as Pankaj, aged 27 and a native Malihabad. Pal succumbed to injuries at the community

health centre while Pankaj was referred to the Trauma Centre. The police said the deceased came to the Malihabad to attend the marriage being solemnised in the house of his family friend. Meanwhile, in another case, 25-year-old Mukesh was killed when he came under the wheels of a truck near Khem Kheda village under the Gosainganj police station in the morning. The police said the deceased was sitting in the trolley of a tractor when the



truck rammed into it. Mukesh fell down due to the impact of the collision and came under the wheels of the truck. The driver and cleaner escaped leaving the vehicle on the spot.

TWO INVOLVED IN DRUG SMUGGLING ARRESTED

Two culprits involved in drug smuggling were arrested on Friday morning. They were identified as Mohammad Nadeem and Ram Narayan alias Ramu. Thirty pouches of smack weighing 50 gm and two country-made pistols and five live cartridges were found from their possession. They were picked up by the police late Thursday night from the Gol Chauraha crossing under the Gosainganj police station with

the help of informers. They were brought to the police station for interrogation. They confessed to their crime after a thorough interrogation. Nadeem said that they were carriers of drugs and delivered the consignment to the person on demand.

Meanwhile, a theft was reported from a shop of Indian Made Foreign Liquor located in Kaiserbagh area. The unidentified culprits managed to enter the shop by cutting the shutter and breaking the locks on the intervening night of Thursday

and Friday. They have taken away Rs 12,000 kept in one of the cash boxes. Manager Raghuvendra Gupta was informed of the theft by the 'safai karmachari' at 7 am when they came for work and noticed the shutter was cut and locks were broken. Gupta rushed to his shop and found the cash missing. He lodged a complaint at the Kaiserbagh police station and a case was registered in the afternoon. Interestingly, the unidentified culprits did not take away liquor bottles.



An anti-encroachment drive being conducted on Park Road in Lucknow on Friday

Pioneer

Forest dept to moot eco-child concept to lure tourists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Forest department will soon moot the concept of eco-child under eco tourism in the state. Chief wildlife warden Pawan Kumar, while talking to *The Pioneer*, said that under this concept, they would ask the students who visit the Dudhwa National Park and other wildlife sanctuaries to fill in forms giving the details of the species (both plants and animals) that they have come across on their visit to these areas. "They will have to give the names of the species which they actually saw so that they know what they have seen," he added. He said that the person

who mentioned the maximum number of species would be called the eco child. Kumar said that since the beginning of the tourist season they had received 500 tourists at the Dudhwa National Park out of which 20 were foreign ones. He said that the tourists had also to be apprised about the fact that they were not coming only to watch the tiger but also the total eco system. "Most of the tourists feel that tourism is only about watching tigers and if they do not see one of them they are upset about this. But they should know that they come here in the forest area where they get fresh air and the many birds and animal species which are

equally good for them," he added. The chief wildlife warden said that they had divided the forest area into zones where in only some portions were left for the tourists to move. "The core areas which are the breeding areas are left free for the animals while the tourist zones have been specifically marked." Kumar also pointed out that with the online bookings they were giving the international tourists a chance to watch the wildlife of the state. "Eco tourism is primarily the methodology in which the tourists have to explore the wildlife in such a manner that the eco system remains undisturbed," he added.

SGPGIMS celebrates Foundation Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) celebrated its Foundation Day on Friday. The chief guest on the occasion was Chief Secretary Anup Chandra Pandey, who appreciated the strides made by this prestigious institute. The keynote speaker and chairman & managing director of Medanta - The Medi City Dr Naresh Trehan gave a presentation on 'Indian Healthcare: Road Ahead'.

Dr Trehan spoke about the contribution of major disease groups to the total deaths in India in 1990 and in 2016. "The percentage of deaths due to non-communicable diseases was 37.9 per cent in 1990 and 61.8 per cent in 2016, the percentage of deaths due to injuries was 8.5 per cent in 1990 and 10.7 per cent in 2018 and the percentage of deaths due to communicable, maternal and nutritional diseases was 53.6 per cent in 1990 and 27.5 per cent in 2016."

Presenting the current Indian healthcare landscape, he said that India offered the highest standards of health care at the lowest cost. "There exists a dual burden of disease with an appreciable increase in the non-communicable diseases," he said. He admitted that there were challenges of accessibility, affordability and accountability and different health systems public, private and NGOs were working in silos. Commenting on the lev-

els of health care and private participation, he pointed out that in the tertiary care the private sector was providing services which could be further enhanced, in the secondary level under the PPP model the private sector was providing the technology, management and capital under the PPP mode and in the primary care the private sector was providing help whenever it was needed. Admitting that like every business medical health care was prone to disruption and there was a need to be more productive, more proactive and of more value. "The ideal pathway for a patient is to go through preventive care, primary care, secondary care and tertiary care. Over 50 per cent of the ailing people have to travel 100 kms to seek medical care and 18 per cent of the rural and 11 per cent of the urban among them remain untreated for which the causes could be lack of medical facility, medical facility available but lack of faith, long waiting and financial problems," he said.

Talking about the challenges in health care, he said that there was limited availability of primary care clinics and health care facilities, low insurance preparation, high cost of care, low availability of affordable care, limited availability of trained manpower in terms of specialist doctors, Ayush doctors and paramedics and there existed technology gaps on offering advance medical care like in the fields of critical care and cardiology.

My focus has always been on independent music: Richa

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Singer Richa Sharma says that her focus has always been on independent music despite the fact that in the current times more importance was being given to Bollywood music. The singer was in the city for the promotion of her show, 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa'. In a chat with *The Pioneer*, Richa said that she was working on three solos which would be released next year.

"People always feel that if you have sung in a Bollywood film then you create a real impact, which is something which I do not believe in. I understand that Bollywood is

important and it has played a role in my success but when I started singing from Delhi I was always known for my songs," she said. Talking about the show, she said, "Sa Re Ga Ma Pa' is the definitive platform for singing talent in the country. I have been a part of Zee TV for over a decade as host of the first-ever non-fiction music show on television, 'Antakshari', and have been a part of the episodes of 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa' as a special guest earlier. I received offers earlier of being a part of the show but could not participate because I was on musical tours. But music is my passion and hence I am happy that finally

I am on the show." When asked that as a mentor how did she groom the children, she pointed out that she tried to take forward whatever she had learnt herself.

"It's a clear-cut instruction for us that we have to pick only those children who are actually musical in their rendition and it has nothing to do with what caste, community and age group they belong. Our tagline also reflects this," she added. She said that as far as the Lucknow talent was concerned they had Tanmay Chaturvedi who would give his best. She admitted that she had a great rapport with her co-judges which included the



Singer Richa Sharma with two of the reality show contestants

Pioneer

famous Wajid Khan and Shekhar Ravjiani both well-known music directors. "They

bring in a lot of energy and cooperation and are very friendly. Wajid Khan, who is

very jovial, creates a fun atmosphere while Shekhar, who is always sombre, has a smile on his face perpetually. As a judge I'll give my best and help my gharana which is called Richa ka gharana scale their fullest potential and groom them into well-rounded music professionals," she added.

On being asked about the secret of her good looks, she said that one should always live for others and not for one's own self. About her visit, Richa added, "It feels great to be in Lucknow today. The people and its culture are so welcoming. I am really looking forward to having a good time whilst in the city."

उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड द्वारा आयोजित विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड, बहराइच के अन्तर्गत पत्र संख्या 1016/वि०पा०ख०/ब०/2018-19 में ई-निविदा खुलने की तिथि 18.12.2018 को अपरिमित रूप से विस्तारित कर दिनांक 28.12.2018 किया जाता है। निविदा की अन्य नियम व शर्तें यथावत लागू रहेंगी। अधिसूची अभियन्ता विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड 132 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र परिसर बहराइच संख्या-1126/वि०पा०ख०/ब०/ई-टेन्डर/2018-19 संख्या: 10/ दिनांक 10.12.2018 राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बचाये, साधारण बल के स्थान पर एल०ई०वी० बल का प्रयोग करें

उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना निम्नलिखित ई-निविदा जिनका संक्षिप्त विवरण नीचे दिया गया है, ई-निविदा की वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड कर दी गई है: ई-निविदा संख्या: टी-105/ विद्युत प्रेषण मण्डल द्वितीय पनकी कानपुर के अन्तर्गत विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड फतेहगढ़ कार्यालय हेतु एक-एक अर्द्ध कम्प्यूटर अपरेटरों को रखने का कार्य। उपरोक्त विषय में विस्तृत विवरण साइट पर उपलब्ध है सभी सक्षम आपूर्ति/कार्यदायी संस्थाएं तदनुसार निविदा में भाग ले सकती हैं। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत प्रेषण मण्डल - द्वितीय, पनकी, कानपुर। पत्रांक - 756, दिनांक 13.12.2018 "राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचाये"

उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड ई-निविदा सूचना इस कार्यालय के द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य/सामग्री की आपूर्ति सम्पादन हेतु अनुभवी, दक्ष एवं जी०एस०टी० में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित ई-निविदा आन्वित की जाती है, जिसका विस्तृत विवरण ई-टेन्डर वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in site पर उपलब्ध है: ई-निविदा संख्या-टी-161/वि०प्रे०म०पा०का०/2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 132 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र दादानगर पर बस कन्ट्रोल बे एवं लाइन व बाना के कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या - टी-162/वि०प्रे०म०पा०का०/2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 220 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र आर०पी०एच० पर टर्मिनल कनेक्टर की आपूर्ति। ई-निविदा संख्या - टी-163/वि०प्रे०म०पा०का०/2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 132 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र सिकन्दरा पर स्काडा सिस्टम के अनुसंधान का कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या-टी-165/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 220 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र रनियां पर स्काडा सिस्टम के अनुसंधान का कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या-टी-166/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 132 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र रसूलनाबाद पर स्काडा सिस्टम के अनुसंधान का कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या-टी-167/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत 220 के०वी० उपसंस्थान खण्ड पनकी पर डी०सी० अर्थिंग ठीक करने का कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या - टी-168/वि०प्रे०म०पा०का०/2018-19 विद्युत 400के०वी० उपसंस्थान खण्ड पनकी पर डी०सी० अर्थिंग ठीक करने का कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या - टी-169/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 220 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र रनियां पर वार्षिक अनुसंधान का कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या - टी-170/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड के अन्तर्गत 220 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र आर०पी०एच० पर विभिन्न प्रकार के टर्मिनल कनेक्टरों की आपूर्ति। ई-निविदा संख्या-टी-171/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 132 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र आजाद नगर लाईटिंग से सम्बन्धित कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या - टी-173/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत 220 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र पनकी पर एयर कम्प्रेसर वाटर लाइन टैंक एवं जैकी पम्प फायर हाईड्रेंट सिस्टम के वार्षिक अनुसंधान का कार्य। ई-निविदा संख्या - टी-174/वि.प्रे.मं.पं.का./2018-19 विद्युत 220 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र पनकी के अन्तर्गत 132 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र जवाहरपुरम पर घास कटाई का कार्य। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत प्रेषण मण्डल प्रथम, पनकी, कानपुर। पत्रांक - 1284, दिनांक - 14.12.2018, राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बचाये" उपभोक्ता सेवा हेतु सम्पर्क करें - www.uppcl.org

Training programme on plant taxonomy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

An eight-day training programme on 'Classical and modern methods in plant taxonomy and biosystematics' commenced at National Botanical Research Institute on Friday. The chief guest at the inaugural function was ecologist and INSA honorary scientist RS Tripathi. The training programme is being coordinated by scientist Priyanka Agnihotri. She said the training programme had been organised by realising the importance of taxonomy in describing, naming and classifying organisms, and it was, therefore, an important tool for



understanding biological diversity and there was a declining trend in taxonomic research as well as the availability of quality taxonomists worldwide, this concern has been expressed globally by eminent biologists. "The training programme is being attended by 34 participants from Kashmir to Coimbatore and from Kolhapur to Arunachal Pradesh. There will be several lectures by eminent scientists and professors covering all the branches of plant taxonomy followed by practical classes. This will help the trainees in their future research work and inculcate taxonomy in their minds," she added.

CITY BRIEFS



Graduation ceremony at Memaura Air Force Station

OUTREACH PROGRAMME

The cadets of College of Nursing, Command Hospital, (Central Command), have been undertaking outreach programmes in nearby villages as a responsibility towards society. This year too, a cleanliness drive was conducted at Dadupur village on December 13 on the theme 'Hum sab ne ye thaana hai, Bharat ko swachh banana hai'. The rally was flagged off by gram pradhan of Dadupur village Surendra Singh. Forty second year students of College of Nursing are having their Rural Health Community Experience (RHCE) under Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC), Sarojini Nagar, at Pahadpur village for two weeks under the supervision of Maj Soniya Saklani and Maj Deepa Simon. As part of their curriculum, the students are conducting surveys and various health education programmes. A demographic survey is being conducted and it is being experienced that more than 50% of the population disposes waste in open area and they have open drains which leads to stagnation of water putting the population at risk of developing various vector borne diseases and other health and environmental problems.

today's citizens on the issue of cleanliness.

GRADUATION CEREMONY

An impressive graduation ceremony was held at Memaura Air Force Station on Friday to mark the culmination of No. 158th Fighter Controllers' Course. The course, comprising seven officers from IAF and six officers from friendly foreign countries, commenced in July last. After completion of course for the foreign officers on September 20, applied training for IAF trainees continued at Air Defence College (ADC). The function held on Friday at ADC marked the culmination of FCC and donning of the coveted controllers' badges on the graduating officers uniforms. The valedictory function was presided over by Air Vice Marshal R Radhish, Defence Commander, Central Air Command HQ. Meritorious trainees were given away trophies and medallions by the reviewing officer.

SOCIAL EVENING

A social evening was organised at the Memaura Air Force Station which was attended by veterans of Air Defence College, including war veterans who have served during 1965 and 1971 and won gallantry awards. Air Marshal SBP Sinha, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Central Air Command, and various other dignitaries also attended the event. Air Defence College of the Indian Air Force, located at Air Force Station in Memaura (Lucknow), received the President's Colours from President Ramnath Kovind on November 29 last. The unit has

also completed 60 years of formation this year. Gp Capt J Poosha, Commanding officer received the award on behalf of the unit from the President.

STINGLESS BEE PROGRAMME

Central Institute of Horticulture is empowering people through an Indo-Australian stingless bee programme as an intervention thought to be most suitable for entrepreneurship. Director Shailendra Rajan said CISH was one of the collaborators in the Indo-Australian stingless bee programme and imparted beekeeping training to the youths. He said that the regional research station in Malda inaugurated a training and production unit on scientific beekeeping with a view to empowering tribal youths for production of quality honey and efficient pollination. "A mass awareness programme was also conducted which saw the participation of a large number of people. Few tribal youths enrolled for training on scientific beekeeping on the inaugural day in the presence of R Spooner Hart from Western Sydney University (Australia). Scientists enriched farmers' knowledge on the importance of scientific beekeeping, different popular ICAR technologies, processing and marketing of honey, optimum utilisation of water, and promotion of stingless honey bees among the tribal farmers. Hart briefed the tribal farmers on the importance of honey bees and stingless bees. He also spoke on the future plan of a programme on stingless bees.

'Water vital in irrigation sector'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The regional office of Central Water Commission organised a one-day workshop on "Improving water use efficiency in irrigation sector in UP" on Friday. Participants spoke on the irrigation sector being the major consumer of water resources and flooding method being largely employed for irrigation in

the state resulting in lower water use efficiency. "For meeting ever increasing water demands in various sectors and ensuring water for ecological needs of the rivers, it is imperative to improve the water use efficiency in irrigation sector and utilise water resources optimally and efficiently in the state," they pointed out. The objectives of the workshop was to deliberate

the state resulting in lower water use efficiency. "For meeting ever increasing water demands in various sectors and ensuring water for ecological needs of the rivers, it is imperative to improve the water use efficiency in irrigation sector and utilise water resources optimally and efficiently in the state," they pointed out. The objectives of the workshop was to deliberate

Always wanted major films to be shot in Lucknow: Nagar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Film director-producer Siddhartha Nagar, who is also the son of writer Achla Nagar, said he had worked extensively in the past for promotion of film shoots in the state capital as it was the place he belongs to. As a director, he always wanted major film shoots in Lucknow and was glad that it was finally happening, he said. Nagar was in the city for promotion of his film titled 'Dhappa'. Interacting with mediapersons at a city hotel, he said the film was shot entirely in UP with a major part in Lucknow and some scenes in Agra. The premier of the film is scheduled for Friday.



ends with a *dhappa*, which is a slap in the back. This is a story about youths misused in the world of crime, which brings a lot of pain for their parents and the families," he added. He said it was his dream to picture the entire film in UP, promoting the local talent and capturing the beauty of Agra, Mathura and Lucknow.

On how he worked to bring the film industry to the state capital, he said that earlier when there were no film shoots in the city, he made efforts to make a TV show and involved local actors. "Many of them have become big names now. One such actor is Jaya Bhattacharya," he pointed out. The film features Ayub Khan, Shreshth Kumar, Brijendra Kala, Yash Sinha, Amit Bahl, Deepraj Rana, Jaya Bhattacharya and Varsha Manikchand. The film also depicts the beautiful locales and traditional culture of Mathura, Agra and Lucknow.

The film is based on the life, ambitions and problems of the youths and the theme is relevant in today's society. "Dhappa" comes from the popular 'I Spy' which we all have played as children. It

Kashi recalls contribution of veteran actor Kanhaiyalal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The holy city of Kashi has recalled one of the great actors who had made his place in Bollywood for decades with his unique style of acting. The cine fans recalled the contributions of the actor, Kanhaiyalal Chaturvedi, on the eve of his 108th birth anniversary here. Born on December 15, 1910, in Varanasi, his father, Pandit Bhairoddutt Choubey, popularly known as Choubeyji, was the proprietor of the Sanatan Dharm Natak Samaj here.



He was fond of plays and came to Mumbai to find a place on the stage. He staged a play, 'Pandrah August', written by him in Mumbai. Later he tried his luck in films. He also had written many plays. In 1939 he got a break in Hindi films with 'Ek hi Raasta' as Banke. In 1940 he got a role of moneylender as Sukhilala in Mehboob Khan's film 'Aurat'. After that he acted in many films as a character artist. When Mehboob Khan directed his film 'Mother India', he again picked Kanhaiyalal to act as Sukhilala, a character which came alive with his natural acting. After that Kanhaiyalal

played the same type of roles in 'Ganga Jamuna', 'Gopi', 'Upkar' and 'Apna Desh'. His other notable movies were 'Dushman', 'Bandhan', 'Bharosa', 'Dharti Kahe Puka Ke', 'Hum Paanch', and 'Bhookh' (1947). He is known for his roles in 'Mother India', 'Ganga Jamuna', 'Upkar' etc. His memorable roles include those of a scheming moneylender in the films, 'Mother India' and 'Upkaar'. The film was 'Jhul Badn', written by KM Munshi (the founder of Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan), directed by Sarvottam Badami and starring Motilal and Sabita Devi.



Representatives of Parvatija Mahaparishad called on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow on Friday and invited him to the annual Uttarayani Kautik Meela. The Chief Minister agreed to grace the occasion

IIT-A conducts colloquium on business informatics

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

IIT-Allahabad conducted a Colloquium on Business Informatics here on Friday. It was organised as a first step towards establishing a Centre of Business Informatics. This Centre of Business Informatics will start a specialised BTech (IT) programme which will have students specialising in Business Informatics.

The colloquium saw participation from eminent people from academia and industry and from India and abroad. Prof Sokrates Katsikas from Norway gave a talk on managing the security of critical infrastructure. He is the Rector of Open University of Cyprus. He explained how a number of non-information based assets like smart cars, refrigerators etc were open to security threats.

SCHOOLSCAN

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CAMP

City Montessori School is hosting the 26th International Children's Camp from December 28 to January 24 under which kids from 14 countries will be staying under one roof for a month to imbibe the qualities of brotherhood, world unity and world peace, cooperation, friendship and global understanding etc. The information

was given to mediapersons by CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi, who is also president of CISV India Chapter, on Friday. Gandhi said that children from Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Mongolia, Sweden, Thailand, Norway and Spain besides India (11-12 years) would be arriving at Lucknow to participate in the camp along with adult leaders. Besides,



junior counsellors (16-17 years) will also participate in the camp to act as intermediaries between the children and adults. Gandhi said that the camp named 'Criss Cross Village' was aimed at enhance the sentiments of mutual understanding, cooperation and friendship among the children of various countries and inspiring them to go ahead on the road of peace, unity and brotherhood.

New rules delayed counting in MP, Raj: EC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Friday explained the reasons that led to a delay which include objection related to voting machines, mandatory tallying of electronic voting machine (EVM) count with voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) slips, issuance of certificate after every round of counting and denying public announcement system.

The increase in the postal ballot votes, slim margins in Madhya Pradesh on many seats and a cautious approach adopted to avoid the embarrassment further, also the reasons for delay in announcement of polls results this year.

MP Assembly election results were declared 24 hours after counting began while Rajasthan results declared 19 hours after counting began.

Unlike the quick counting of votes for the Assembly polls in Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Mizoram, counting in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan went on at a snail's pace, keeping people in general and the political parties in particular on tenterhooks throughout the day on December 11.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) VL Kantharao said "The delay is because every candidate has to be provided a certificate after every round of counting." "Right from the first round of EVM counting at 8.30am, the candidates were very particular about checking and examining every seal, tag and serial number of the EVMs and their cases being brought to the counting tables. In several cases, they raised trivial objections on the seals, serial number/tag number, signatures of polling staff on the tags, which required the intervention, explaining and convincing by the Returning Officer, District



▶ Election Commission explained the reasons that led to a delay which include objection related to voting machines, mandatory tallying of electronic voting machine (EVM) count with voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) slips, issuance of certificate after every round of counting and denying public announcement system

Election Officer and Observer before these EVMs were taken up for counting. Even though no EVM was kept aside or found tampered amongst the 66,000 EVMs taken up for counting, the process of objections slowed down the rounds," the CEO said.

The MP CEO further explained that when a result is noted from an EVM machine at a counting table, it is written down on part two of Form 17C and the counting agents verify and sign on this sheets which is then photocopied and given to them.

"Similarly, when the tabulation of 14 such results from the 14 tables in the counting hall is made into a broad sheet, it is again verified and photocopies are distributed to the candidates. Strict adherence to this procedure has slowed down the counting process," the CEO said.

"The insistence of the candidates to not bring the next round of EVMs on to the counting tables before tabulation, round-wise figures are written on the blackboard/white board in the counting hall and announced in the public

announcement system has denied five-minute time saving that have could done in between rounds. With an average 22 rounds of counting per Assembly constituency, this has led to two hours of delay".

According to Kantharao, in about 250 cases out of 66000 EVMs taken up to counting, the presiding officers had not followed the Close-Result-Clear (CRC) after the mock poll done in the morning of the poll day.

This meant that the result of these particular EVMs had to be obtained through the counting of the VVPAT Slips.

The MP CEO further stated that in the run of up to the Legislative Assembly elections 2018, Madhya Pradesh added about 13,000 (21 per cent) additional polling stations as compared to the previous elections. Rajasthan's Chief Electoral Officer Anand Kumar said the reason of delay is because of votes in the electronic voting machine (EVM) have to be matched by randomly selecting a VVPAT from a polling centre in each Assembly constituency.

24 MLAs elected to C'garh have criminal cases: ADR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 24 of the 90 MLAs elected to the Chhattisgarh Assembly this week have criminal cases against them. They account for 27 per cent of the strength of the House, up from 17 per cent in the last assembly. As per the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) report, 13 of the 90 (just over 14 per cent) have declared serious criminal cases against themselves - bribery, attempt to murder and death by negligence, among others. The comparative number for the 2013 Assembly was nine per cent.

The Congress has 68 MLAs in the new House, including 19 with criminal records (28 per cent). Of these, 12 MLAs have declared serious criminal cases against themselves. Ajit Jogi's Janta Congress Chhattisgarh (J), meanwhile, has strength of five MLAs, two of whom have records. One of these two is

accused of serious crimes. The BJP, which lost power after 15 years, has three MLAs out of 15 (20 per cent) with a record, but none of them are accused of serious crimes. ADR's analysis revealed that 68 (76 per cent) of the incoming MLAs are croropatis, which is almost the same as the outgoing Assembly's figure of 67.

Forty-eight Congress MLAs (71 per cent), 14 from the BJP (93 per cent), all five MLAs of Jogi's party and one of the BSP's two MLAs fall in this bracket.

"The average of assets per MLA in the Chhattisgarh 2018 Assembly elections is Rs 11.63 crore. In 2013, the average assets of 90 MLAs analysed was Rs 8.88 crore," said the ADR report. The average assets are Rs 11.83 crore for the Congress, Rs 6.32 crore for the BJP, 28.68 crore for the Janta Congress Chhattisgarh (J) and Rs 2.04 crore for the BSP.

RAFALE DEAL Cost comparison not job of court, says SC

Says closely examined jet prices of 2007 & 2016

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday said despite having "examined closely" the pricing details of the basic Rafale fighter jet under the original Request for Proposal (RFP) of 2007 and the one under the Inter-Government Agreement (IGA) in 2016 to "satisfy its conscience", it cannot go into cost comparison as it's not the job of court.

The top court said despite its initial disinclination to even go into the issue of pricing, the Centre was directed to place the cost details of the aircraft in sealed cover, just to satisfy the conscience of the court.

It said the Government has not disclosed the pricing details except for the basic cost of the aircraft even to Parliament on the ground of sensitivity of pricing details and national security, apart from the issues of breach of the agreement between the two countries — India and France.

In relief to the Modi Government, the Supreme Court Friday dismissed the pleas challenging the deal between India and France for procurement of 36 Rafale jets saying there was no occasion to "really doubt the decision making process" warranting setting aside of the contract. The deal is estimated to be Rs 58,000 crore, or about USD 8 billion.

A Bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and KM Joseph said the Central Government despite its reluctance, placed the material regarding costs of the aircrafts before the court to satisfy its conscience.

"We have examined close-

ly the price details and comparison of the prices of the basic aircraft along with escalation costs as under the original RFP (of 2007) as well as under the IGA. We have also gone through the explanatory note on the costing, item wise," the Bench said.

It noted that the pricing details of 36 Rafale fighter jets are stated to be covered by Article 10 of the IGA between India and France, which provides for protection of classified information and material exchanged under the IGA and it would be governed by the provisions of the Security Agreement signed between both the Governments on January 25, 2008.

"It is certainly not the job of this court to carry out a comparison of the pricing details in matters like the present. We say no more as the material has to be kept in a confidential domain," the Bench said.

It added even Chief of the



Air Staff is stated to have communicated his reservation regarding the disclosure of the pricing details, including regarding the weaponry which could adversely affect national security.

The Centre has claimed that there is a commercial advantage in the purchase of 36 Rafale aircraft and that there are certain better terms in IGA qua the maintenance and weapon package, it noted.

The pricing details were however shared with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and the report of CAG was examined by the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament and only a redacted portion of the CAG report was placed before the Parliament which is in public domain, the court said. PTI

Def procurement processes broadly followed: Top court

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday said it cannot seek clause-by-clause compliances of the Defence Procurement Procedures. "Broadly, the processes have been followed."

The Bench, also comprising Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph, said, "We have studied the material carefully. We have also had the benefit of interacting with senior Air Force Officers who answered court queries in respect of different aspects, including that of the acquisition process and pricing."

"We are satisfied that there is no occasion to really doubt the process, and even if minor deviations have occurred, that would not result in either setting aside the contract or requiring a detailed scrutiny by the court." It added, "We have been informed that joint exercises have taken place, and that there is a financial advantage to our nation. It cannot be lost sight of, that these are contracts of defence procurement which should be subject to a different degree and depth of judicial review." PTI

Curative plea challenging Asthana's appointment as Spl CBI Director dismissed

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has dismissed a curative petition seeking to re-examine its verdict upholding the appointment of Gujarat cadre IPS officer Rakesh Asthana as special director of CBI.

The apex court rejected the curative petition filed by NGO, Common Cause, whose review petition was also earlier held to be devoid of merits.

After an in-chamber hearing, a bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, said, "We have gone through the curative petition and connected papers. In our opinion no case is made out within the parameters indicated in the decision of this court (in the case laying down guidelines to deal with the curative petition)."

The Bench, also comprising Justices MB Lokur, AK Sikri and AM Sapre, passed the order on December 11 and was made public on the apex court's website on Friday.

Curative petition is heard in the chamber of judges in the absence of lawyers.

The decision of the apex court came amidst a bitter feud between Asthana and CBI Director Alok Verma. Both have been divested of powers and sent on leave by the central government on October 23.

The apex court, on November 28, 2017, had dis-



missed the PIL filed by the NGO against the appointment of Asthana to the post of CBI special director, saying it cannot question a "unanimous" decision taken by the selection committee and the decision is not illegal.

Later, the court also dismissed the plea seeking review of the verdict.

The top court had said there cannot be any doubt that if the statute provides for consultation with any person before making a recommendation for appointment to any post, the consultation with that person has to be made.

The NGO in its petition had challenged Asthana's appointment, saying it was illegal as his name had surfaced in a diary recovered during a raid conducted by the Income Tax Department at the offices and other premises of company Sterling Biotech Ltd. PTI

ED launches probe against Usha Martin's MD

With alleged violations of FEMA
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has launched a probe against the Managing Director of Usha Martin, the country's largest steel wire rope maker, in connection with alleged violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA),

agency sources said on Friday. The said agency sleuths questioned Rajeev Jhwar, the MD of the Kolkata-headquartered firm, at their office in the capital of West Bengal on Friday.

The officials recorded Jhwar's statement under FEMA in connection with the purchase and registration of an immovable asset in Singapore in 2013 and a few other overseas transactions.

Jhwar is under the Enforcement Directorate's scanner for alleged irregularities in mobilising funds to create assets abroad.

The agency wants to ascertain the source of funds and compliance of required approvals, the sources said. Jhwar's uncle BK Jhwar and the latter's son Prashant Jhwar are other promoters of the company. The Competition

Commission had recently cleared Tata Sponge Iron's acquisition of steel business of Usha Martin Ltd. (UML) for Rs 4,300-4,700 crore. UML had earlier said the sale of steel business to Tata Steel will help the company in "significant reduction" of its debt.

Usha Martin is amongst the largest wire rope manufacturers in the world and a leading producer of speciality steel in India.

Centre grants extension of service of 6 months to IB chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the general elections next year and the defeat of the ruling BJP in the Hindi heartland States' Assembly polls, the Centre has granted extension of service of six months to Intelligence Bureau (IB) chief Rajiv Jain and external Intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) boss Anil Dhasmana. Both were due to retire later this month end.

While Jain's tenure was to end on December 30, Dhasmana was slated to retire from service on December 29.

The decision to extend the tenure of the two Intelligence chiefs was taken due to the forthcoming general election and the Centre wants the new Government to take a decision on the appoints for the top

posts of the covert agencies, officials said. Jain, a 1980-batch IPS officer of Jharkhand cadre, was appointed IB Director on December 30, 2016, for a fixed tenure of two years.

A recipient of the President's Police Medal, Jain has served in various departments of IB, including the sensitive Kashmir Desk.

He was advisor to the previous NDA Government's interlocutor in Kashmir KC Pant when talks were held with separatist leaders like Shabbir Shah.

Dhasmana, a 1981-batch officer from the Madhya Pradesh cadre, has been with RAW for 23 years, during which he served in important areas, including the Pakistan Desk and is considered an expert on Balochistan.

Planting of wheat increased marginally: Agri Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Agriculture Ministry data shows that planting of wheat has increased marginally to 233.71 lakh hectare so far in the ongoing rabi season from the same period a year ago, but coverage of other crops especially pulses and rice was still lagging behind. Sowing of rabi (winter) crops begins from October and harvesting from March onwards. Wheat is the main rabi crop.

Wheat was sown in 233.59 lakh hectare in the same period of rabi season in the 2017-18 crop year (July-June). As per the ministry's latest data, wheat acreage in Punjab has increased marginally to 34.34 lakh hectare so far this season from 33.92 lakh hectare a year ago.

Similarly, the area sown to wheat in Haryana has improved slightly to 24.11 lakh



hectare from 23.32 lakh hectare in the said period. The sowing operation in these two States is almost completed, while it is underway in States especially Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Farmers in Madhya Pradesh have planted wheat in more area at 44.57 lakh hectare

so far this season when compared with 37.91 lakh hectare in a year ago.

However in Uttar Pradesh, wheat sowing was still lagging behind at 76.70 lakh hectare so far this season as against 81.90 lakh hectare in the same period last season.

In Rajasthan too, the acreage was slightly down at 23.49 lakh hectare as against 25.42 lakh hectare in the said period. As per the Ministry's data, total pulses area was down at 125.40 lakh hectare so far this rabi season as against 138.29 lakh hectare in the year-ago period.

Oilseeds acreage was also slightly down at 70.22 lakh hectare as against 70.58 lakh hectare in the said period. Coarse cereals area remained lagging behind at 37.55 lakh hectare so far this rabi season as against 47.16 lakh hectare in the year-ago.

Rice acreage was also down at 9.24 lakh hectare as against 12.86 lakh hectare in the said period.

Total area sown to all rabi crops remained down at 476.12 lakh hectare so far this rabi season from 502.48 lakh hectare in the year ago period.

Phethai to hit Andhra by Monday, predicts MeT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted that cyclone is brewing over the Bay of Bengal and it is expected to hit Andhra Pradesh's coast on Monday afternoon. The cyclone is named 'Phethai' (contributed by Thailand) in line with the naming protocol for cyclones in the North Indian Ocean.

This would be the seventh cyclone this year, starting with 'Sagar', 'Mekunu' and 'Luban' - all in the Arabian Sea - and 'Daye', 'Titli', and 'Gaja' in the Bay of Bengal and third to hit south India in less than two months.

Gaja, Daye, Luban and Titli caused devastation to standing crops and taking a number of lives in southern parts of the country. The IMD predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall has been forecast for coastal Andhra Pradesh on December 16 and 17. South

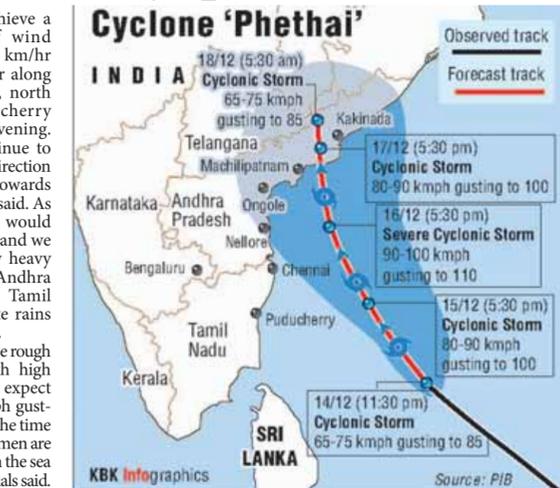
Chhattisgarh and Odisha may also see rainfall on December 17.

"The Bay of Bengal sees approximately five times as many cyclones as the Arabian Sea. In addition, cyclones in the Bay are stronger and deadlier. But this year could be an exception in terms of the numbers. It has also been seen that nearly 58 per cent of cyclones formed in the Bay reach the coast, as compared to only 25 per cent of those in the Arabian Sea," the IMD officials said.

The IMD said as expected, the low pressure area in Bay of Bengal has now intensified into a well-marked low pressure area and is now seen over Central Bay of Bengal. "Conditions continue to be favourable for the system to induce a depression in the next 24 hours. In fact, we expect it to strengthen into deep depression and further into a cyclonic circulation in the subsequent 48 to 72 hours," it said.

The IMD predicted that severe cyclone would achieve a maximum intensity of wind speeds reaching up to 105 km/hr and gusting to 115 km/hr along and off Andhra Pradesh, north Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts from Saturday evening. "The system would continue to move in north northwest direction and would be heading towards Andhra Pradesh Coast," it said. As the system nears, rains would also start picking up pace and we can expect heavy to very heavy rains over South Coastal Andhra Pradesh. North Coastal Tamil Nadu would see moderate rains with some heavy showers.

"Sea conditions would be rough to very rough, along with high velocity winds. We can expect winds of 80 kmph-90 kmph gusting up to 110-120 kmph at the time of landfall. Locals and fishermen are advised not to venture out in the sea for the next three days," officials said.



Govt open to 'outside' agencies taking up accreditation of institutions: Javadekar

New Delhi: The Government is open to the idea of roping in "outside" agencies for accreditation of educational institutions, and IITs and IIMs have also been approached in this regard, Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Friday.

"To improve the quality of education, we are making the accreditation process more scientific and tough. The Government wants to increase the strength of the National Board of Accreditation and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council so that more number of institutions can be accredited," Javadekar said during the national conference on "Positioning India on the Global Education Map".

"The Government is open to other agencies taking the responsibility of accreditation, and IITs and IIMs have been asked about it... So that more and more institutions can be accredited," he added.

The Union Minister said ranking and rating of education institutions increase competitiveness among them for better performance.

"Today, because of the National Institutional Ranking Framework, every institute has constituted an internal committee to improve their ranking. Students also take into account the institution's ranking before taking admission," he said.

"Graded autonomy is another major step by the Government to boost quality education in the country. Universities will remain within the ambit of the UGC but will have the freedom to start new courses, off campus centres, skill development courses, research parks and any other new academic programmes."

"They will also have the freedom to hire foreign faculty, enrol foreign students, give incentive-based elements to the faculty, enter academic collaborations and run open distance learning programmes," he added. PTI

Former Minister leaves 'sinking ship' AIADMK

...and lands on DMK's safe shores

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

With former Minister Senthil Balaji joining the DMK on Friday, the process of disintegration of the AIADMK has reached the full steam. Hundreds of his followers too accompanied Balaji in his journey from Karur to Chennai and then to the DMK headquarters at Mount Road in the metro.



Former Tamil Nadu Minister V Senthil Balaji joins DMK in the presence of party president MK Stalin, at the party headquarters in Chennai on Friday PTI

Balaji and his followers were welcomed into the DMK by party chief MK Stalin. It was a home coming for Senthil Balaji who had left the DMK in 2000 to join the AIADMK and was elected thrice to the Legislative Assembly in the party ticket.

"The AIADMK is a sinking ship and Thalapatthi (Tamil for commander, as Stalin is addressed by his followers) is the only leader who is capable of resuscitating Tamil Nadu from the clutches of the BJP," Balaji told reporters after enrolling himself as a DMK volunteer.

Hereafter he will address Stalin as Thalapatthi and Jayalalithaa as Jayalalitha. Before reaching Chennai on Friday morning, Balaji and his followers had removed the pictures of Jayalalitha and Sasikala from their shirt pockets, cars and SUVs. By the time they left the DMK headquarters, all vehicles in the motorcade accompanying Balaji spotted pictures of Stalin and Karunanidhi.

TTV Dhinakaran, general secretary of Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), the breakaway faction of the

AIADMK launched by VK Sasikala (aide to late J Jayalalitha) wished Senthil Balaji as the best in his new innings in the DMK. "I don't know why he decided to leave us. If he had any genuine problems and had told us about it, we could have sorted it out," said Dhinakaran in Friday. Balaji was a camp follower of Dhinakaran and the AMMK before he cast his lots with the DMK.

G Satyamurthy, political commentator and columnist said the exit of Balaji was not going to make any impact on the fortunes of the AIADMK or the AMMK. "Both are fast disintegrating and I do not know whether the AIADMK would survive the 2021 Assembly election. The ground report is that the AIADMK would be wiped out in the Lok Sabha election," said Satyamurthy who is also sceptical about the strength of Dhinakaran. "AIADMK does not have a

charismatic leader who could match the calibre of Jayalalitha at the troubled times. I am not sure about the capabilities of Dhinakaran," said Satyamurthy. He also said Senthil Balaji joining the DMK is also media hype. "You wait for a couple of weeks and see what happens to him and Dhinakaran. Tamil Nadu politics is getting churned," he said.

Dr V Mythreyan, MP and senior leader of the AIADMK said there is no possibility of his party's merger with the Dhinakaran faction. "O Panneerselvam, our convener, has made it clear that there is no question of aligning with the Sasikala family dominated party and the subject ends there," Mythreyan said.

This puts to rest at least for the time being, reports about the possibilities of merger between the rival factions which were being highlighted by the local media.

Cong planning to go it alone in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal unit of the Congress Party is planning to contest single handedly in the next year's Lok Sabha elections, party insiders say.

The Pradesh Congress leadership has been given a clear mandate by the Central leadership to take a decision on its system of alliances, sources said. The decision is the fallout of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's prior announcement to go it alone in the general elections.

"Our workers are being attacked and killed and their

houses and properties looted every day by the Trinamool Congress people. They are being framed in false cases. So the Congress plans to take on the TMC alone on its own strength," PCC president Somen Mitra said.

Insiders however said its public posturing apart, the PCC still might wait for a "respectable offer" from the Trinamool without which the party will go it alone in the elections.

The PCC is divided in three groups. The first group led by former PCC president Adhir Chowdhury and State Opposition Leader Abdul



Mannan who want an alliance with the Left Front. The second group led by the likes of Subhankar Chakrabarty, AH Khan Chowdhury feel the Congress has no chances of

winning without support from the Trinamool. The third groups led by the likes of MP Pradip Bhattacharya want to go it alone.

Mitra a veteran party leader of 1960s and 70s has asked the lower rung leaders to reach out to the people and strengthen the organisation "where we have a bigger presence." The Congress currently has four MPs in Bengal. While two seats are from Murshidabad the two others are from Malda district.

However the party alleges that its organisational base has been "gobbled up by the

Trinamool Congress which has either by muscle power or by lure of money forced a large number of our local workers to join their side."

Mitra said "we will have to rebuild our organisation in many places. The victories in Rajasthan, MP and Chhattisgarh shows that we still can do it even in Bengal. If we start working from now then we can definitely challenge the TMC."

On whether the party will still go with the Trinamool if they offer a respectable alliance, he said "they have not approached us, neither we will go to them begging for seats."

J&K becomes 1st State to have law banning 'sexortion'

PTI ■ JAMMU

Jammu & Kashmir has become the first State in the country to have a law banning sexual exploitation of women by those in positions of authority, having a fiduciary relationship or a public servant.

The State Administrative Council (SAC) under the chairmanship of Governor Satya Pal Malik on Friday approved the 'Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018' and the 'Jammu & Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018', an official spokesman said.

The Jammu & Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 seeks to amend the Ranbir Penal Code, whereby specific offence under section 354 E is being inserted to provide for the offence of 'sexortion', he said.



Congress party workers celebrate after the party named Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot for Rajasthan Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister's posts respectively, in Ajmer, on Friday PTI

Student dies during tug of war game in Mumbai

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a freak mishap, a 22-year-old college student collapsed and died during a tug of war game at Somaia College at Vidya Vihar in north-east Mumbai late on Thursday evening.

A resident of Thane city, Jibbin Sunny was leading one of the two teams in the tug of war game when the incident took place.

The tournament had been organised as part of the college's annual sports day.

The video footage of the mishap, which went viral on Friday, showed that Sunny collapsed after he put the rope around his neck and pulled it with more power.

Sunny was rushed to the nearby Rajawadi Hospital where he died during treatment.

While the cause of death was not immediately known, Sunny's body has been sent for post-mortem.

This is perhaps the first death that taken place in the metropolis during a tug of war game.

JD(U) not in favour of Ordinance for Ram temple: RCP Singh

PTI ■ PATNA

Key NDA constituent JD(U) on Friday made it clear that it was not in favor of promulgation of an ordinance to facilitate the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, demand for which has been made by the sangh parivar and a section of the BJP.

JD(U) national general secretary Ram Chandra Prasad Singh said the party will stick to its earlier stand it had taken on the issue in its earlier avatar as the Samata Party which was — the issue either be solved by mutual consent between the affected communities or decided by a court of law.

There should be no confusion in the minds of the people with regard to our stand on Ram temple issue at Ayodhya. If an ordinance is promulgated to facilitate construction of the temple, our party will not support it, he said.

"Since the Samata Party days, we have been in favour of a resolution of the dispute by mutual consent or through a court order. We brook no third alternative," Singh, who is also the party's leader in the Rajya Sabha and a confidant of Chief

Minister Nitish Kumar told reporters here.

Even before walking out of the NDA in 2013, the JD(U) had always insisted that abrogating Article 370, Ram temple in Ayodhya and Uniform Civil Code should be kept out of the coalition agenda. JD(U), headed by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, is running a coalition government with the BJP in Bihar.

Hope BJP also waits for SC's Babri Masjid verdict: Mehbooba

Mumbai: On a day the Supreme Court dismissed pleas challenging the Rafale deal, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said the BJP should also wait for the apex court's verdict on the Babri Masjid issue.

In a relief to the Modi Government, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed the pleas challenging the deal between India and France for procurement of 36 Rafale jets saying there was no occasion to "really doubt the decision mak-

BJP-called shutdown derails Kerala

IANS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A dawn-to-dusk shutdown called by the BJP to protest against the death of a man said to be a Sabarimala devotee derailed Kerala on Friday, sparking widespread anger over the disruption to normal life.

The 50-year-old Venugopalan Nair set himself on fire at a BJP protest venue on Thursday and succumbed to his injuries in a hospital here.

But in his dying declaration, he made no mention of the Sabarimala temple.

Before being taken to the public crematorium, his body was brought to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) protest venue where party leaders paid their last respect.

But the rationale for calling the shutdown came under fire from the ruling CPI-M, Congress, business groups as well as the man on the street.

ing process" warranting setting aside of the contract. "Like the Rafale decision was welcomed, I hope they (the BJP) will wait for the decision (of Supreme Court) on Babri Masjid as well and won't start pointing fingers at the SC. We have an institution which is highly respected," Mehbooba said. She was replying to questions at an event held by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF). The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been demanding an ordinance or a law to build a Ram temple in Ayodhya at the earliest. It had also criticised the Supreme Court's decision to defer the hearing in the land dispute case, saying it "hurt" Hindu sentiments. Several Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders have also supported RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's push for the law to enable the construction of Ram temple. PTI

Annual rejuvenation camp for TN temple elephants begins

PTI ■ COIMBATORE

The 11th edition of annual rejuvenation camp for temple elephants in Tamil Nadu began at Thekkampatti on the banks of Bhavani River on Friday.

State Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Minister Sevoor S Ramachandran inaugurated the camp along with forest minister Dindigul Serinivasan and Municipal Administration Minister S P Velumani.

Ramachandran said 27 elephants from various temples and mutts had been brought for participation in the 48-day camp, a pet project of late Chief Minister Jayalalitha.

Adequate medical care will be provided to the elephants at the camp, with special veterinarian teams, he said adding nutritious food with special diet would be given.

Meanwhile, about 40 farmers of surrounding 23 villages attempted to stage a picketing of the road near the venue, opposing the camp at the location, claiming threat to the people and crops by wild elephants which stray into their area in view of the presence of temple jumbos.

DABHOLKAR MURDER CASE CBI fails to file chargesheet

3 accused get bail

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a sad commentary on the functioning of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), a Pune court on Friday granted bail to the three accused in the Narendra Dabholkar murder case, after the CBI failed to file a supplementary charge-sheet in the case within the stipulated 90 days.

Pune's First Class Judicial Magistrate SMA Sayyed granted bail to accused Amol Kale, Rajesh Bangera and Amit Degvekar, after the CBI failed to file the chargesheet against them within the stipulated 90 days after their arrest.

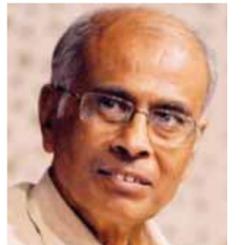
The relief to three accused came a day after they moved the court for bail on the ground that the CBI had not sought additional time from the court to file the supplementary charge-sheet under section 43 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

Kale, Bangera and Degvekar are also accused in the journalist Gauri Lankesh murder case. The CBI had arrested Bangera and Degvekar on September 1, while Kale was arrested on September 3. The CBI had in the first week of September obtained the custody of Kale, Bangera and Degvekar from the Karnataka's Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigate their links with the Dabholkar murder case.

The contention of the three accused was that neither the chargesheet was filed under IPC nor did the CBI seek additional time from the court to file the supplementary charge-sheet under UAPA.

At Friday's hearing, a request was made on behalf of the CBI that the probe agency be given time till December 20 to file the chargesheet on the ground that its officials were pre-occupied with some other work in Delhi, the CBI. However, Magistrate Sayyed rejected the CBI's request on the ground that it should have filed the chargesheet on Wednesday when the 90-day deadline expired.

However, there have been many occasions in the past when



the Bombay High Court had pulled up the CBI for the inordinate delay in completing investigations in the Narendra Dabholkar murder case.

The Supreme Court had said on Tuesday that if there was a "common thread" among the murders of social activists Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, journalist Gauri Lankesh and rationalist M. M. Kalburgi, then one agency could investigate all the four cases.

Sixty nine-year-old anti-suppressionist campaigner Dabholkar was shot dead from a point blank range by two motor-bicycle riding gunmen — aged between 25 and 30 years, while he was taking a morning walk on the Omkareshwar bridge located in the heart of Pune, on August 20, 2013. Gauri Lankesh (55) was shot gunned down outside her Bengaluru residence on September 5, 2017. She was the editor in Lankesh Patrike, a Kannada weekly started by her late father P. Lankesh. After Lankesh's death, Gauri used to her own weekly called Gauri Lankesh Patrike.

With the State police having failed to make any headway in the investigations into the Dabholkar murder case, the Bombay High Court had transferred the case to the CBI on May 9, 2014, after overruling the objections raised by the Maharashtra Government. The CBI had registered a case on June 2, 2014, on the high court's orders.

It was the Karnataka SIT that arrested Kale, Bangera and Degvekar first in connection with the Dabholkar murder case. The CBI, which is helped by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in the investigations, has a strong reason to believe that the same pistol was used by the miscreants in killing both Dabholkar and Gauri Lankesh.

Lingayat politics back to haunt Kumaraswamy

KESTUR VASUKI ■ BENGALURU

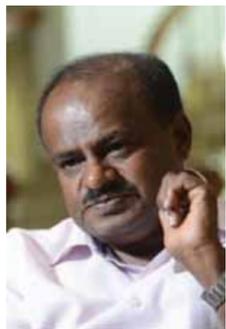
The decision of Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy and coalition partner Congress to appoint Pratap Chandra Shetty, a Congress leader from coastal Karnataka as Chairman of the Legislative Council (upper House) has made both the JD(S) and the Congress leaders fuming against the decision of the Chief Minister.

The decision has upset the former pro tem chairman of the council (of the JD(S)) Basavaraja Horatti and the Congress leader SR Patil (who was Siddaramaiah's candidate) both Lingayat leaders have openly criticised the Congress and the JD(S). Along with it another powerful Lingayat leader from north Karnataka and former water resource Minister MB Patil also directly hit at Kumaraswamy and many say this might help BJP

to consolidate in favour of the party which is playing Lingayat card successfully in many elections. The Lingayat drama unfolded in the ongoing Winter Session of the Assembly where Kumaraswamy is facing the heat both inside and the outside. Sugarcane farmers are protesting and pressuring for the MSP and also to get the dues cleared.

The Lingayats are a powerful community which constitute over 19 per cent of the state population. The BJP has been polarising Lingayat votes keeping its strongman from the same community BS Yeddyurappa and this might help them to work out a strategy in the ensuing 2019 general elections.

Even though the Congress victory in the Hindi heartland has given ammunition to the coalition partners, the century old party has failed to douse the fire. In another political devel-



opment Siddaramaiah who is the chairman of the coordination committee of the coalition Government has cut short his foreign visit and back in Bengaluru to handle the changing political developments.

Many Congress MLAs are waiting for the December 22 for the Cabinet expansion. According to sources after the

victory in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh the party may not expand the Cabinet which might lead to more dissent in the party.

The State Governments acceptance on the floor of the house that only 800 farmers have benefited from the ₹49,000 crore farm loan waiver till now has given ammunition to the BJP and also dissidents within the coalition partners.

A senior Congress leader said "the party which extended support to JDs to form the government has ignored the Lingayat leaders in the party who were involved in the movement for a separate and minority religion tag to the community. The Centre also rejected their demand and the leaders who led the movement are left in a lurch in process."

Soon after stepping down as the pro-tem chairman of the legislative council, Basavaraja Horatti, blamed his leader

Kumaraswamy and asked him not become a rubber stamp.

He said, "I want to tell my leader and Chief Minister Kumaraswamy not to end up as a mere rubber stamp of the Congress. My party asked me to file the nomination but after we realised that the Congress was fielding its candidate, we backed out to save the coalition from embarrassment," he added.

He said, "The Congress drove a hard bargain for the portfolios during the cabinet formation. They had then demanded the speaker's post while agreeing to give the chairman's post to the JD(S). But now, they have unilaterally decided to stake claim to the council top post. Can you run a coalition without rules?"

Former water resources minister MB Patil of the Congress has questioned the Government on North-South disparity when it comes to allocation of prime positions by

TV anchor falls to death from her flat in Noida

PTI ■ NOIDA (UP)

A news anchor with a private television channel died allegedly after she fell off the balcony of her fourth-floor apartment here early on Friday, with her family suspecting foul play.

Radhika Kaushik, who hailed from Rajasthan, was in her house in the Antriksh Forest Apartments in Sector 77 with a colleague when the incident occurred at around 3.30 AM, police said.

A case has been registered under Indian Penal Code section 302 (murder) on a complaint by the family of Kaushik, and the colleague has been



recovered from the house where a party was held Thursday night.

The security guard of the building had alerted the police at Sector 49 police station about the incident. The colleague has told police that he had gone to her house for dinner when she accidentally toppled over from the railing in the balcony of the flat, the official, who did not wish to be named, told PTI.

"The railing in the balcony is of low-height," the official said. "We are probing the cause of death," the SHO said, adding the body has been sent for post-mortem and the report is awaited.

detained for questioning, Sector 49 police station house officer Girija Shankar Tripathi said.

Both Kaushik and her colleague in Zee Rajasthan were reportedly inebriated at the time of the incident, an official said, adding liquor bottles were

Six Indians working for Pakistani online cheating racket held

PTI ■ INDORE

Madhya Pradesh police on Friday claimed to have busted an online cheating racket running from Pakistan with the arrest of six Indian nationals in Madhya Pradesh.

Pushpendra Singh (27), Manish Bhale (23), Nagendra Singh (28), Sujet Singh (22), Kiran Singh (22) and Brijendra Singh (25) were arrested for allegedly cheating people in India while working for a Pakistani gang, said Indore police's Special Task Force chief Jitendra Singh.

Pushpendra Singh, hailing from Satna district and cur-

rently living in Indore, was allegedly the kingpin of the gang in India, he said.

The accused were associated with a Pakistani gang which cheated people through the 'lottery scam', he said.

The accused sent emails to people, saying they had won lottery but would need to pay some money to get the award amount. The victims would be asked to transfer the money through Internet banking.

While the accused arranged opening of bank accounts where the money would be transferred, their handlers in Pakistan withdrew the money.

49 tigers died in India this year, most in MP, LS told

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 50 tigers have died in India this year with the highest number of deaths recorded in Madhya Pradesh, the Lok Sabha was told Friday.

Minister of State for Environment Mahesh Sharma in a written reply said as per figures recorded till December 12, total tiger mortality stood at 49, with 13 and 10 deaths registered in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, respectively.

He also said around 13 elephant casualties in train accidents have been reported in 2018-19 (up to November 15 in 2018).



October, the figure is 66.

Sharma said the Environment Ministry in partnership with the German Development Cooperation (through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)) has approved the Indo-German technical cooperation project on 'Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation in India'.

"The project aims at providing technical support to the government of India at the national level and in selected sites as pilot states like Karnataka, Uttarakhand and West Bengal only," he added.

He said around 35 elephant died by electrocution in 2018-19 (up to November 15 in 2018), while three elephants have died during the same period due to poaching.

Replying to another question, he said the total number of leopard poached during 2015, 2016 and 2017 are 194 and in the current year till

Anil Ambani welcomes judgment

From Page 1
Dassault Aviation, the makers of Rafale, had entered into an agreement with Ambani's Reliance Defence Ltd (RDL) for fulfilling offset obligations.

The Congress has been alleging that the government had put pressure on Dassault Aviation to select RDL as its offset partner.

The government, RDL and Dassault Aviation rejected the charges.

"We remain committed to India's national security and to making our humble contribution towards the Make in India and Skill India policies of the Government in the critical area of defence including our offset partnership agreement with our valued partner, Dassault Aviation of France," said Ambani.

The French firm also clarified that RDL was among many several other companies it has chosen for implementing offset obligations of the deal.

Govt misled SC on CAG report,...

From Page 1
In a joint statement, Sinha, Shourie and Bhusan said the judgment is based on completely false information.

"Shocked that the judgment is based on completely false information about the CAG report, No CAG report on Rafale has been submitted or examined," the trio said adding that this scandal would continue to agitate public mind.

They also pointed out that the judgment also made errors like Mukesh Ambani's Reliance is shown as parent company of Anil Ambani.

"The court mentions in para 25 that 'The pricing details have, however, been shared with the CAG, and the report of the CAG has been examined by the PAC.'

Only a redacted portion of the report was placed before

Parliament, and is in public domain". "All the facts mentioned above are neither on record nor factually correct.

The PAC judgment has not been submitted to the Public Accounts Committee and no portion of the CAG report has been placed before Parliament or placed in the public domain.

Obviously this factually incorrect statement must be based on some communication (not on record and unknown to us) made by the Government to the court. That the court has relied on such communication which is factually incorrect on 3 counts shows how dangerous it is for the court to rely on statements made in a sealed cover (not subject to scrutiny or verification) and give its judgement on that basis," the petitioners said in a detailed statement.

Amitav Ghosh...

From Page 1

Ghosh, one of the most prominent contemporary Indian writers, is known for a series of novels such as "Shadow Lines", "The Glass Palace", "The Hungry Tide", and "Ibis Trilogy" — "Sea of Poppies", "River of Smoke", and "Flood of Fire" — chronicling the Opium trade between India and China run by the East India Company. The writer, in a tweet, said he was "honored and humbled".

In another tweet responding to a fan, he said, "this is an amazing day for me. I never thought I would find myself on this list, with some of the writers I most admire."

Born in Kolkata in 1956 to a Bengali Hindu family, the 62-year-old author currently lives in New York with his wife Deborah Baker. Ghosh, who spent his formative years in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, studied in Delhi, Oxford and Alexandria. His most recent book, "The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, a work of non-fiction", was released in 2016. Ghosh is also recipient of the Padma Shri and Sahitya Akademi Award. Some of the biggest Indian writers have been awarded with this prestigious literary recognition. Major names among the 58 recipients include literary icons Krishna Sobti, Kedarnath Singh, Shrilal Shukla, Nirmal Verma, Girish Karnad, Mahasweta Devi, Amrita Pritam and U R Ananthamurthy.

11 dead, 75...

From Page 1

Expressing grief over the incident, Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy announced a relief of ₹5 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased. Kumaraswamy flew to Chamarajanagar by special plane from Belagavi.

He said he has directed the authorities to make all arrangements for those affected and that Government would bear the medical expenses.

"In view of the shortage of ambulances in Chamarajanagar district, 32 ambulances have been rushed from Mysuru," the CM said. Two people from the temple management have been detained for questioning, said police sources.

District Health Officer Prasad said it was suspected that poison might have got mixed with the prasad, resulting in the tragic incident. "We have collected the food samples and sent it to a laboratory for investigation," he told reporters.

Most of those who attended the event followed the 'Om Shakti' tradition. After consuming the prasad, people started vomiting and began writhing with stomach pain, police said. Commotion prevailed as people hurried to nearby hospitals for treatment. Police, as also district authorities, rushed to the spot to provide medical aid. The affected people said they got the smell of kerosene oil in the prasad, but ignored it.

Will not allow export of animals, Gujarat is non-violent State: CM

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

To stop export of livestock from Tuna port in Kutch district, the Gujarat government issued a notification Friday banning entry of cattle into the drought-affected Kutch region from other parts of the state.

Making the announcement in Gandhinagar, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said his government will not allow export of animals as Gujarat is a "non-violent state".

The state home department has been asked to open a special check-post at Tuna Port to stop export of livestock, he said. Animals are exported from Tuna in Kutch district mainly to West Asian countries for slaughter and consumption.

"The Gujarat government hereby makes an order prohibiting the movement of any cattle into any drought-affected area from outside," the notification issued by the agriculture department said.

"We issued the notification

because the livestock being exported from Tuna is brought from other parts of the state," Rupani told reporters.

"Our government is committed to stop export of livestock. Gujarat is a non-violent state. We will do everything necessary to stop such export, the chief minister added.

Tuna Port, designated by the Centre for livestock export, comes under the jurisdiction of Deendayal Port Trust, Kandla.

In a letter to Customs Commissioner at Kandla, Rupani urged him not to allow any export of animals from Tuna, as it does not have "facilities for Animal Quarantine and Certification" as mandated by the Central authorities.

Rupani sent a similar communication to Union Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu, requesting him to "instruct the concerned authorities to not issue any permit for export of live animals from Tuna until the specified facility for Quarantine and Certification is established".

Book of drawings on social issues to release today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A unique book of original drawings that draws on social and political life in India and abroad is going to be released at Open Air Gallery at Triveni Kala Sangam on Saturday at 4 pm. The book Manus by painter Soumen Bhowmick with 726 drawings is a graphic documentary of the contemporary time.

The unsettling drawings, as described by Art historian Johnny ML, are commentary on social and political issues depicting all human angst and emotions. The painter has drawn from themes like social unrest, Syrian war, global migration, farmer's suicide, rape of women and children, and religious persecution taking place in different parts of the world. According to the painter, who is a Delhi College of Art alumnus, the pages of Manus are full of characters that he observed and visualized while sitting around Triveni Kala Sangam. The book with printed originals in actual size is as good as portfolio of originals.



Sex racket busted in G'gram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

With the arrest of 12 people, including two foreign nationals, Gurugram police on Friday claimed to have busted a high-profile sex racket operating out of a guest house at sector-45 in Gurugram.

According to a senior police official, twelve people were arrested including two women from Uzbekistan, one from Bangladesh, three from West Bengal, two from Uttar Pradesh and four men, including the owner of the guest house, manager and two customers. "They have been booked under different sections of the Immoral Trafficking Act and an First Information Report (FIR) under appropriate sections have been registered against them at the Sector-40 police station," said the senior police official.

"Specific inputs were received about an illegal prostitution racket running in Krishna Residency guest at sector-45. Before raiding the premises a constable was sent as a decoy customer who visited the spot on Thursday evening. The police team that lay in wait raided the guest house after the decoy signaled to them about the deal being struck. Twelve people were arrested from the spot," said the senior police official.

The raid was conducted by a police team led by Inspector Poonam Huda, who reached the spot and nabbed the culprits who were soliciting sex red-handed. The men are aged between 25 and 30 years, while the women are around 26 to 30 years. They used to charge Rs 6,500 per customer for the services. "At the time of the raid, a room in the guest house was occupied where a woman and man were found in an objectionable position," the police said.

Cong manufactured lies on Rafale: BJP

From Page 1

Addressing a joint news conference with Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Jaitley also rejected the Congress demand for Joint Parliament Committee (JPC) probe into the Rafale deal after the verdict. He said JPC probes into defence deals do not serve the purpose due to partisan role of political parties and gave the example of Bofors case. With reference to the Congress demand, he said "deaf will never hear an answer".

When pointed out by the media that BJP members Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie had approached the court alleging wrongdoing in the Rs 59,000-crore deal for 36 aircraft to be bought from France in flyaway condition, Jaitley remarked they have got an

answer." He also said all allegations were rejected by the apex court on all counts. Attacking Rahul without naming him, Jaitley said the falsehood lasted only a "few months" and has "lowered the credibility of its creator" adding "disruptors have lost and on all counts".

He said somebody has to answer the delay in finalising the Rafale jet deal earlier even as the IAF needed a modern aircraft. Elaborating upon it, he said after short-listing Rafale jet why was the negotiations virtually stopped if not abandoned in 2012 thereby compromising national security. He termed the Congress allegations about the deal as imaginary and termed them fiction writing. Asserting that all the necessary procedures were

followed before the inking the deal in 2016, Jaitley said 74 meetings were held and even the Supreme Court said all processes were adhered to. "The entire imaginary thought process, fiction writing that one man made the decision, there was no price negotiation committee, there was no contract negotiation committee, no Defence Acquisition Committee (DAC), no CCS, was fiction writing going on? This was fiction writing which was compromising with national security," Jaitley said. He then went on to say in democratic traditions if a political leader is found making false charges, he has to resign and in case holding public office even presidents are impeached for telling a lie. He demanded the Congress to come out clean in Parliament and said the Government on Friday too said it was ready for a debate on the Rafale deal. Jaitley said his party will keep demanding a discussion on the issue in the coming days during the ongoing Winter Session

of Parliament. Charging the Congress with harming national interest, he said the accusations about the deal brought it under the cloud. Civil servants and defence officials in future will think 10 times before taking decisions and these charges have also hurt larger interests, Jaitley said. Defending the decision to buy 36 jets through a Government to Government deal with France, the Finance Minister said the Government could not have waited. He then quipped, "We would have waited for the cows to come home and the enemy reached our borders." On charges of price of the Rafale jets, Jaitley said his Government negotiated a deal at lower prices for the basic aircraft and the weaponised aircraft. He then hit back at Congress and said people incapable of understanding serious issues rely on slogans. He also said there are precedents of buying 36 jets or two squadrons of jets. The IAF had gone in for such

purchases in 1980s for Mirage jets and Mig series of aircraft. Sitharaman said the apex court gave a decision on three broad issues. The three broad issues are decision making process, pricing and the choice of the Indian Offset partner (IOP). On each one of these the Supreme Court has clearly spoken and gave reasons why the writ petition does not hold anymore. "On the process, I would just like to say that clearly stating that the process has been complied with, the Supreme Court has clearly said that the nation cannot afford to be unprepared in a situation where our adversaries have acquired higher capabilities emphasising on the need for the sense of urgency in the purchase," the Minister said. Notwithstanding the security between India and France which provides for protection of classified information such as pricing details, these details too were made available to the Supreme Court in a sealed envelope, she said.

Pvt medical colleges in TN come under court scanner for lack of facilities

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

A Madras High Court order delivered on Thursday asking the Tamil Nadu Government to shift 150 MBBS students from a private medical college in Kancheepuram to Government run medical colleges exposed the rot that has set in the medical education system, at least in the State.

Justice T Raja, while disposing a series of petitions filed by the students of Ponnaiyah Ramajayam Institute of Medical Sciences (PRIMS) complaining about the lack of infrastructure in the college asked the Tamil Nadu Government to shift the 150 students from the college to the 22 Government-run medical colleges in the State.

This is not the first time the Madras High Court is issuing an order like this. The year 2017 saw the court ordering the shifting of 144 students from Annai Medical College and Hospital to government-run medical colleges. Dr C V Krishnaswamy, highly respected medical doctor in Tamil

Nadu told The Pioneer that the regulatory mechanism in the State need to be beefed up to save the students from fly-by-night operators. "Most of the private colleges have found to be wanting when it comes to infrastructure facilities and qualified teachers," said Dr Krishnaswamy.

Though the PRIMS did not meet the mandatory requirements, the college authorities managed to get the essential certificate from the State government in August 2014 which authorised the institution to admit 150 students every year to the MBBS course. But the Medical Council of India opposed the move by the Tamil Nadu government to issue essential certificate and Letter of Permission pointing out that PRIMS had many short comings. This included shortage of outpatients, low bed occupancy and non-availability of blood bank.

But the College authorities managed to get the permission based on a Supreme Court verdict based on the report submitted by the Oversight Committee

SC rejects Rafale probe demand

From Page 1

On the offset partner, the Bench noted that this issue had "triggered" the litigation as petitioners had alleged that the Government gave a benefit to Reliance Aerostructure Ltd by compelling Dassault Aviation to enter into a contract with them at the cost of public enterprise, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). "We do not find any substantial material on record to show that this is a case of commercial favouritism to any party by the Indian Government, as the option to choose the IOP (Indian offset partners) does not rest with the Indian Government," it said, adding that it is neither appropriate nor within the experience of the court to step into this arena of what is technically feasible or not. It said "mere press interviews or suggestions" cannot form the basis for judicial review by the court, especially when there was categorical denial of the statements made in the press by both the sides.

It said in June 2001, an in-principle approval was granted to procure 126 fighter-jets and on June 29, 2007, the

Defence Acquisition Council granted "acceptance of necessity" for procurement of 126 Medium Multi Role Combat Aircrafts (MMRCA).

The Bench noted that commercial bids for 126 jets were opened in November 2011 and later, negotiations commenced with Dassault Aviation. On April 10, 2015 an Indo-French joint statement for acquisition of 36 Rafale jets in fly-away condition through an IGA was issued and later, in June 2015, the request for proposal (RFP) for 126 MMRCA was finally withdrawn. It said the court was informed that contract negotiations for procuring 126 fighter-jets could not be concluded due to "unresolved issues" for over three years between the OEM and HAL.

"The need for the aircrafts is not in doubt. The quality of the aircraft is not in question. It is also a fact that the long negotiations for procurement of 126 MMRCA have not produced any result, and merely conjecturing that the initial RFP could have resulted in a contract is of no use," it said. It also added, "We cannot

possibly compel the Government to go in for purchase of 126 aircraft" and it would not be correct for the court to sit as an "appellate authority" to scrutinise each aspect of the process of acquisition. Former Union Ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie, along with activist advocate Prashant Bhusan, had moved the apex court with a plea for a direction to the CBI to register an FIR for alleged irregularities in the deal. Before them advocates M L Sharma and Vineet Dhand and AAP leader Sanjay Singh had also filed pleas. The court also said it cannot seek clause-by-clause compliances of Defence Procurement Procedures (DPP) in the Rafale fighter jet deal and opined that the processes have been "broadly" followed. It also expressed satisfaction with the Government's decision-making process which led to the deal between India and France for procurement of 36 Rafale jets, saying there was "no occasion to really doubt" it.

The top court dismissed the key allegation that the Government changed the deal

and decided to procure 36 Rafale fighter jets instead of 126. It said, "The need for the aircraft is not in doubt. The quality of the aircraft is not in question. It is also a fact that the long negotiations for procurement of 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) have not produced any result, and merely conjecturing that the initial RFP could have resulted in a contract is of no use. "The hard fact is that not only was the contract not coming forth but the negotiations had come practically to an end, resulting in a recall of the RFP. We cannot sit in judgment over the wisdom of deciding to go in for purchase of 36 aircrafts in place of 126."

The top court said it cannot "possibly" compel the Government to go in for purchase of 126 aircrafts. "Our country cannot afford to be unprepared/under-prepared in a situation where our adversaries are stated to have acquired not only 4th generation, but even 5th generation aircrafts, of which, we have none. It will not be correct for the court to sit as an appellate authority to scrutinise each aspect of the process

of acquisition," it said.

The Bench also took note of the reasons, including unresolved issues between Dassault Aviation and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, which had led to annulment of earlier deal for procurement of 126 Rafale jets. "Man-hours that would be required to produce the aircraft in India: HAL required 2.7 times higher man-hours compared to the French side for the manufacture of Rafale aircraft in India," it noted, adding "issues related to contractual obligation and responsibility for 108 aircraft manufactured in India could not be resolved."

Indian Negotiating Team (INT) held as many as 74 meetings, including 48 internal and 26 external INT meetings with the French side, it said.

"It is the case of the official respondents that the INT completed its negotiations and arrived at better terms relating to price, delivery and maintenance, as compared to the MMRCA offer of Dassault. This was further processed for inter-ministerial consultations and the approval of the CCS was also obtained, finally, resulting in signing of the agreement. This was in conformity with the process, as per...DPP 2013," it said.

Delhi to say 'cheers'...

From Page 1

The Haryana Government is the first to introduce the microbreweries in its city-Gurugram in 2010. Currently, there are 45 microbreweries in Gurugram and they contribute almost about ₹320 crore to the excise department of Haryana government annually.

"Delhi is five times bigger than Gurugram and one can imagine how much revenue it will generate for the Government.

Once the microbreweries will start set up in the city, the Government will generate around ₹700-800 crore per year. Also, it is great for tourism also as people coming from

abroad is looking for such products. Delhi was lagging this facility but now it will finally get it," said experts.

The dairy farms will also tie with the restaurants/hotels and pubs once the microbreweries starts as the waste produced from this beer is nutritious for the cows especially the pregnant and lactating cows, they said.

Currently, the microbreweries facilities are available in Gurugram, Mumbai, Goa, Bengaluru, Faridabad and Chandigarh. The freshly manufactured beer will cost between ₹50-60 as compared to the packaged beer costs around ₹80-100.

The Rafale soars

The Supreme Court's putting down of the allegations on the jet deal is welcome news for the Modi Government



Before a bench headed by the Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, pronounced their judgement on whether further investigations were necessary on the Rafale case, both sides — the ruling BJP and the rabble-rousers who have been hammering on about this case egged on by Rahul Gandhi himself — were prepared for a very different judgement. Some in the ruling dispensation had steeled themselves for an unfavourable judgement. The expectation of a Court-monitored Special Investigative Team (SIT) kept all of Narendra

Modi's detractors happy. After all, the opposition seems to have pinned down a strategy of painting Modi as corrupt, both financially and morally. So much so that when the judgement was read out, emotions went in completely opposite directions. The BJP deflated after the recent state poll results where there is no doubt that the Rafale deal played a part, got a booster shot when the expected prognosis was worse. The Congress and its army of rabble-rousers were shocked into silence in social media, and this was not even a Chief Justice about whom they could spread insinuations like they did with the recently retired Justice Dipak Misra. All they could do was latch on to the court's observation that the CAG report on Rafale was given to the Parliament's Public Account Committee, which they claimed was not true.

But the happiest people today ought to be the strategists in the Defence Ministry and the officers and men of the Indian Air Force. With the Rafale deal now certified by the Supreme Court, there is no doubt that the first of the planes manufactured in France will land in India in late 2019. It was as if in anticipation of the verdict that Dassault, the manufacturers of the fighter jet, released a picture of the first plane to be delivered to India undergoing flight testing off the French Atlantic coast. However with India's frontline fighter fleet severely depleted and still depending on 30 to 40-year-old jets, the approval of this deal will not change the situation dramatically on the frontlines. India needs to place a follow-up order to these 36 planes as soon as possible, and while the Defence Ministry has issued a Request for Information from global manufacturers for a 110-plane order, one hopes that does not descend into a horrible farce all over again. We are not only at risk for a technically-advanced and burgeoning People's Liberation Army Air Force but also at risk of losing pilots unnecessarily because they fly outdated jets older than themselves. One way to ensure this is that the government does take the opposition at least in confidence about the necessity of the deal and why the winning contender was selected. The need for new fighter jets for the Indian Air Force should trump politics, and so should be the need to develop a private sector military-industrial complex. The government should have been less arrogant and the Opposition should have resorted to less grandstanding on this issue. Now that everything has been resolved, we should bury the body of the Rafale scam and hope that its ghost stays six feet underground.

Generational conflict

Rahul Gandhi has a tough job in keeping both his CMs and his peers harmonised till 2019



Congress chief Rahul Gandhi may scream "united colours of Rajasthan" and claim the diversity of experience and youth, maturity and raw energy as an ideal detente of governance but will it rid the Congress' age-old malaise of infighting and undercutting? That's a question he has to answer as his young Turks are getting increasingly restless for relevance. Otherwise he may run the risk of being labelled an inheritor of dynastic fortunes seeking pliant courtiers rather than as a team-builder of equally aspirant and

capable men and women. Yes, a decisive mandate would have undoubtedly helped him but given the slim margins of victory in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, he had to do some bridge-building in consultation with his mother Sonia Gandhi. Truth be told, though he has handed over the throne to old loyalists, he will have to work out a suitable operable area for both Sachin Pilot and Jyotiraditya Scindia to feel needed and keep them invested enough for all the work they have put in towards resurgence of the party's fortunes. Scindia has even said that he will continue to serve the state as he has age and time on his side but both Gandhi and he know that prospect won't hold infinitely. Satisfying both peers frankly will be a tall order given that their activities should not in any way tread the egos of the senior Chief Ministers. Or else the inter-generational tussle could cost the party heavily before the 2019 polls, both in terms of governance and perception.

The new Congress Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Kamal Nath, has always been assessed in terms of his elitist associations and negotiating strategic worth with the central leadership so far. Having steered the party through difficult troughs before, he did manage to push the baseline voter grid in the state this time too and had bet big on stitching alliances with the BSP even before the verdict became sure. In fact, his younger partner Scindia was more cautious as Nath worked the ground and negotiated a way for himself through swift political management. But as one who has undoubtedly nurtured his home ground of Chhindwara, even touting his model of development there better than Modi's, he is yet to develop a pan-state appeal. In this respect, he falls far short of his predecessor Digvijay Singh, who had a keen eye on statistics of each district and knew people by name, and even BJP's Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who was a crowd favourite for 15 years. Scindia scores slightly better on image. Nath's biggest challenge now will be portfolio allocation, humoring the Scindia group enough and breaking through angry farmers who turned the tide.

For Rajasthan, Gandhi was under pincer attack with Pilot actually moving to the state from Delhi to develop the Congress vote base and Gehlot becoming one of the key floor managers in keeping the RSS and its affiliates at bay. And when all hope was lost, the latter did manage to script the Congress revival story in the Gujarat elections and is now party national general secretary in charge of organisation. Besides, vote share charts show the BJP still remains a force to reckon with both inside the Assembly and outside. Managing legislative business, therefore, remains a task at hand for both governments. Which is why the old guard is needed to keep up the momentum for 2019. Gandhi can still toss the national challenge of rebuilding to these young leaders and can reward them if they do deliver selflessly at the hustings for long-term gains than claim a prize for a one-time job well-done. Can everybody put party first?

Get art out of the box

The Kochi biennale has pushed key frontiers in global dialogue, snapping the exclusionary stiffness of art fairs, where the plight of the dispossessed is merely a motif and not felt anguish



RINKU GHOSH

Young Ahalya from Kollam, who grew up in a pineapple farm, loved the fruit's colours so much that she decided to express herself through them and turned painter. As she filled up her canvas with intricate scenes of plantation life, replicating her hard-working parents' faces on the figures that peopled it, she surrounded them with hills and forests, nature in a flaming surge as it were, pushing the pylons of civilisation in a distant greyness. Her fellow artists have picked up a morbid rubble tossed up by the Kerala floods and strung them to a twisted spinal cord, which is straightening itself in a desperate lunge at survival. There's Pangrok Sulap from Malaysian Borneo, another artist born of the soil, dancing on a canvas spread taut on wood-cut blocks depicting farm life and issues, his happy feet imprinting his memories of them. All of them have stitched together their peasant origins and come together at the Kochi Muziris Biennale, which is unshackling art from the confines of rarefied thought and elitism to listen to the sub-terranean voices and helping them stake a claim in contemporary discourse.

If art biennales are meant to rearticulate the times, then the Kochi edition has clearly pushed key frontiers in global dialogue, snapping the exclusionary stiffness of art fairs and museums, where the plight of the dispossessed is merely the motif and not the felt anguish of those who go through it. As its curator, artist Anita Dube has attempted to explore "possibilities of a non-alienated world" and managed to address the elephant in the room, to create a safe public sphere where we can think freely, exchange ideas, ask questions of ourselves, have conversations and dialogue rather than ideological loud-mouthing and best of all provide a safe pedagogic haven where people do not feel threatened, judged or not qualified enough. In this respect, the Kochi biennale has fully given credence to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's argument for the need to create a social and cultural capital juxtaposed to the economic one. He had defined "cultural capital" as that which determined the "tastes" of society, which, if not wholesome and representative enough, can perpetuate a cycle of privilege instead of breaking it down. Museums and galleries may lend us access to all sorts of artwork that have emerged as an interpretation of history, context and archives but what of sensitive story-telling? Will it be a projection of an idea rather than a humane experience? The Kochi biennale hasn't talked down, it has allowed everyone to come in. Or as Dube described it, enfolded them in the "discursive frame of culture." Be it an attempt at post-colonial redemption by the West, the resolution of anxieties, the fluidity of identities, the retrieval of protest poetry from conflict zones, the reinstatement of women's



dues, like that of the selfless Malayali nurses, the cry for ecological justice, the siege of micro-cultures or the much-revered cow head turning into a fist of agrarian assertion, every voice has been respected and interpreted in concrete, tactile and visually explosive terms. For public engagement of art cannot happen unless it appeals to our sensorium. And till that is done, till art also becomes a source of pleasure, populism will continue to cede space to majoritarian monologues. Should that be easily handed over? Shouldn't populism be a happy prospect that be demised as a takeover tool of everybody's trade?

In that sense, the Kochi biennale has already started the process of culture reclamation as a democratic nurturing of ideas, not a handed down rewriting of scripts. Muziris was an ancient port on the Malabar coast, our first point of globalisation over centuries as merchant ships plied the spice routes and broke down barriers for a confluence and assimilation of cultures. Perhaps this biennale rescued that ancient spirit and applied it to the current context.

For Kerala, a State that was ravaged brutally by the floods barely a hundred days ago — 1.5 million people displaced and 200,000 lives lost — the biennale has been a huge palliative. Many had questioned if the Government should go through with this edition and not divert

the usual funds to the reconstruction process. But Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wanted to send out the message that Kerala is resilient and means business. The spinoff effects on the economy by way of tourism, services and infrastructure are for all to see. The laid-back Fort Kochi area is now a bustle, the waterways have emerged as transport corridors ferrying people from one island to another, the local youth have signed up as volunteers and most residents have opened up homestays and cafes. Warehouse owners, who do booming business in a port town, have let out spaces for three months to make way for installation artists. And abandoned houses are getting a new lease of life. More so, the people of Kochi, who have virtually owned this art event as their badge of pride through the past years, don't want to let go of it. Students and young people are toggling assignments and work to play hosts and coordinators. Thousands of carpenters are at work, helping erect structures and artworks, the caterers have never been busier, feeding visitors on the roadside and the auto *wallahs* have replaced the need for Google maps.

The Chief Minister himself inaugurated the biennale, lending a heft to proceedings and insisting in his speech that the traumatised State indeed needed to heal itself through art. The biennale has done up drab

walls in hospitals and dressed up worn out facades with colourful murals to mask the darkness of pain. Over the years, organisers have reached out to schools and made entry free on certain days for the common people to access and embrace a different form of expression. This is the process by which an auto rickshaw driver like Bapi Das was inspired enough to embroider his thoughts on fabric, now on prominent display. Or a runaway like Vicky Roy, who grew up in a shelter home near the New Delhi Railway station and who was trained in a photography workshop, to reframe the urbanscape through his lens and awaken us to the trickle-down effects of societal status and policy-making. Like Ahalya, they were not empowered by birth, be it in terms of access to language or chance. They evolved on their own, organically and untutored. Kerala clearly isn't shedding a tear for itself.

Of course, what's art without the political subtext? And there were plenty at the biennale posed against the visual epidemic of clichés on other media. At a time when the women artists' collective have articulated their brand of #MeToo in the Malayali film industry and faith debates on Sabarimala continue to hover over a woman's right to enter the shrine, the biennale has had its first woman curator and devoted more than 50 per cent of the

works to women artists. The Guerrilla Girls, who have been talking about sexism in the arts field through provocative slogans and street performances, have plastered the town with placards, asking questions about whether women are only good as models for artists and if gallery staff get respectable pay. Kashmiri artist Veer Munshi has recreated a Sufi shrine with lacquer coffins of the young, arguing for the middle path in dialogues and a return to civilisational contiguity that has been torn asunder by extremism. A young performance artist frisks entrants to peacefully demonstrate his angst of growing up behind the wired quarters. That speaks louder than the gun.

In the end, art anywhere should be about the relational dynamic between the creator and the audience. Only then can it be a vibrant cultural asset and offset hierarchies set by economic and political structures. Or to borrow words from the Guerrilla Girls, "Don't let museums reduce art to a small number of artists who have won a popularity contest among big-time dealers, curators and collectors. If museums don't show art as diverse as the cultures they claim to represent, tell them they're not showing the history of art, they are just preserving the history of wealth and power." The sea winds have brought a whiff of life to Kochi.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

Farmer's loan waiver shouldn't be part of poll promises. It inhibits investment in the farm sector and puts pressure on the fiscal of States which undertake it.



Former RBI Governor —Raghuram Rajan

We have taken significant steps to build on India's status as the US' major defence partner, including elevating the country to strategic trade authorisation, tier one status.



Top US official —Alice Wells

Telling a compelling story is more important for me than winning an award. I do not believe in competition when it comes to art.



Norwegian filmmaker —Iram Haq

Every word you utter, every decision you make, every vote you cast, resonates deeply within the hearts of your people who have expectations from you.



Vice President —Venkaiah Naidu

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Politicising matters

Sir — Retired Lieutenant General DS Hooda, who was the former General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Army's Northern Command in September 2016 when the surgical strikes took place, rightly spoke against the politicising of military operations. Surgical strikes were part of a necessary counter-offensive of the Army in retaliation to the Uri terror attack in which 19 Indian soldiers were killed by Pakistani terrorists.

Hooda said that it was natural to have initial euphoria about the success, but the constant maintenance of hype over military operations was unwarranted. Indeed, a constant political show-casing of a military strike can do a two-fold damage. First, a constant political chest-thumping for an Army operation can have adverse effects on our relations with neighbouring countries. Second, if it turns into political asset for one political party, it will send a wrong impression that the entire country is divided in terms of defence policy.

Sujit De Kolkata

Post-election rout, BJP has its task cut out

This refers to the editorial, "Rahul's day dawns" (December 12). Which way the political winds are currently blowing is not hard to see. Obviously, the election results in the so-called Hindi heartland represent a shot in the arm for the Congress and a setback for the BJP. Evidently, the impoverished masses, including the distressed farmers and the unemployed youth, have turned their back on the BJP for which they voted overwhelmingly in 2014 and demonstrated their strength to redraw the political landscape. It must be sobering for the BJP to realise that a party long on promises but short on performance cannot keep its support base for long.

Voters in the Hindi belt disabused us of the BJP's invincibility and gave the Congress a new lease of life. The 'Modi factor' could not help the party romp home even in its impregnable strongholds. Had the BJP won, it would have been wholly attributed to



Modi's enduring and soaring popularity. With no tangible *vikas* and *acche din*, Modi's case for another term is wearing a little thin. The Prime Minister now has a fight on his hands to contain the ripple effects of the party's defeats on the whole country and outdo a formidable *mahagathbandhan*.

G David Milton Maruthancode

Lessons in loss

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Rahul's day dawns" (December 12). The Assembly elections must prod the BJP to acknowledge the relevance of the much maligned dynasty of the Congress and that it is but a form of orchestrating individual strengths to optimise collective

results. The Indira Gandhi regime of imperious central *diktats* saw the party gradually losing cohesion at grass roots. Tall regional satraps could yet hold the party, but with the loss of Rajasekhara Reddy of Andhra Pradesh, the party plunged into decline. Clearly, the dynasty was effective so long as its president produced results. See what the lack of dynasty has done to the

AIADMK, whose faction fight is a textbook case for the Samajwadi Party.

Congress chief Rahul Gandhi seems to have learnt the lessons well. His persuasive style had the frontline leaders, be it Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh, to put party needs above personal ambitions. His task now is to keep that esprit de corps going and showcase the same for the 2019 LS elections.

Meanwhile, the BJP too must ponder now that its centrally driven one-man party apparatus has proved fallible. Nor can the Prime Minister carry the sole onus of campaigning. The party needs many more shoulders and given its poor bench strength today, it is left with little time to promote fresh talent.

R Narayanan Navi Mumbai

Get ready for 2019

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Rahul's day dawns" (December 12). The BJP was, perhaps, too over-confident of winning the Hindi-speaking belt. But they lost because of empty promises. The results should be an eye-opener for the party. Rising problems, like farm and rural distress as also urban angst played a crucial role in the erosion of the BJP's support base. Understanding the problems faced by people will remain crucial to fight the next General election.

Jubel D'Cruz Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Quest for a future on our terms

Investing in children's growth will help advance their health and overall development. Doing so must be a priority so as to secure their future



POONAM KHETRAPAL SINGH

Childhood is arguably the most crucial stage of life. During this phase, brains develop, bodies grow, social skills are learnt and character is built. So important are the early stages of life that they can define a person's future, from the likelihood of a lifelong health to outcomes in cognitive and physical ability. This in turn affects the prospect of living a productive life and making a positive contribution to society. Accelerating region-wide health and development is, therefore, incumbent on investing in early childhood and ensuring each and every child gets the best start possible.

The potential to do so is clear. In recent years, WHO South-East Asia's member states have made dramatic progress in reducing child mortality. Between 1990 and 2017, for example, under-five mortality was slashed by 70 per cent. Neo-natal mortality declined by 60 per cent. Last year alone, 3.5 million more children under-five — including 1.3 million newborns — survived as compared to 1990, with almost all member states achieving the Millennium Development Goal on reducing child mortality. Commendably, four member states have already met the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target on under-five mortality. These outcomes are in keeping with the region's flagship priority of ending preventable maternal, new-born and child deaths.

As member states sustain this progress, the need to invest additional resources in early childhood development (ECD) must be grasped. At the same time as enhancing health equity, research shows that for every dollar spent on ECD, the return can be as high as 13 times, due in large part to ECD's capacity to help overcome the effects of stunting (which 37 per cent of children in the Region suffer), and other early childhood adversities that can cause poor development, mental health problems, obesity and heart disease among other conditions. Though enhancing ECD requires action across multiple areas of Government, including the education and nutrition sectors, the health sector has a crucial role to play, especially from conception to the age of three, which is the critical period for brain development. As outlined in the recently developed global framework on "Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development" in addition to the region's own strategic framework, there are several steps countries can take to advance ECD's game-changing potential and provide the responsive care needed.

First, high-level political leadership and buy-in must be secured. It is fundamental to ensure that impactful policies to advance ECD are devised and implemented at the grassroots, including at primary healthcare centres. It is also fundamental to ensure that the underprivileged or at-risk populations are prioritised. Importantly, adequate funding must be allocated to programmes aimed at enhancing ECD on a long-term basis. "Equity from the start" must be more than a mantra. Second, concerted efforts should be made to fortify and scale up interventions, starting from the antenatal period, as part of a broader focus on frontline care. Community health and nutrition workers are crucial to promoting ECD for providing ongoing health services for newborns and children, including necessary vaccines, monitoring weight and growth and providing appropriate care. As part of this, promotion of breastfeeding is vital. Breastfeeding is, after all, proven to provide the strongest foundation for lifelong health and optimal nutrition.

Third, families should be supported to boost ECD themselves. In the early years of life, parents and close family members are the best providers of nurturing care — through love, bonding and attachment, and stimulating their children through age-appropriate activities. Making families aware that communication for at least one hour a day has the power to shape a child's destiny should be a priority among policy-makers. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is working to promote these outcomes.

In addition to working with countries to implement the region's strategic framework, a WHO-organised meeting was held with parliamentarians from across the region in July to chart the path forward. That was followed by the Partners' Forum 2018 in New Delhi, which brought together 1,200 partners dedicated to implementing the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, including ECD, which is integral to the "thrive" objective outlined therein.

Region-wide, the quest to accelerate progress in ECD is growing stronger. It must be scaled up. ECD's capacity to revolutionise health and development in the space of just one birth cohort must be fully comprehended and leveraged by both high-level political leaders and citizens alike. Should this happen, the future will not only be ours, it will be every generation's to come.

(The writer is Regional Director, WHO South East Asia)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE (CONGRESS) AGAIN CHALLENGE THE PRIME MINISTER FOR A JPC PROBE TO UNVEIL EVERY LAYER OF CORRUPTION IN THE RAFALE DEAL.
 —CONGRESS CHIEF SPOKESPERSON
RANDEEP SURJEWALA



THE TRUTH HAS ONLY ONE VERSION AND FALSEHOOD HAS MANY. THE SUPREME COURT VERDICT IS CONCLUSIVE AND LEAVES NO SCOPE OF ANY DOUBT.
 —UNION MINISTER
ARUN JAITLEY

State results: BJP downing BJP

The recent Assembly polls have given the party time to learn crucial lessons. Voters have sent a strong message that they know how to halt the juggernaut if leaders do not listen to them



VK BAHUGUNA

The results of the Assembly elections held in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Telangana and Mizoram must have sent jitters down the spine of the BJP leadership. The seniors had never expected this kind of a drubbing, thinking their schemes were indeed people-friendly when their implementation was skewed. In contrast, the outcome has also done a lot to rejuvenate the Congress and Opposition leaders, who are all now rallying behind the leadership of Congress president Rahul Gandhi. The BJP, however, has not been totally routed. It retains a fair share of the vote pie in spite of anti-incumbency in the three heartland States — Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. But for sure, the oft-repeated slogan of 'a Congress-mukt Bharat' was blown away like a hot balloon. With these results, the Opposition is going for the jugular now and smelling power for the 2019 parliamentary elections, notwithstanding the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity remains intact.

The results have further proved that the Indian electorate does not bother about performance or rhetorical slogans and knows how to halt the juggernaut. They have also thrown a few lessons for both the ruling and Opposition parties. Let us examine the matter from the point of view of both the BJP and the Opposition. As an informed citizen, this writer has been observing the functioning of the Government in different fields in different States, has been writing on issues germane to the people, hailing good decisions and providing suggestions for improvements on several others.

Governance is not a cakewalk for any ruler, nor is feeling the pulse of the Indian mind in elections an easy task, as voters have time and again been pooh-poohing expert psychologists with disdain. Any hasty policy decision on well-intentioned goals and programmes has always backfired on the ruling regimes. People have a poor memory both for good deeds as well as bad. They tend to forget the good deeds fast enough and forgive quickly on bad experiences. Because of this, for quite some time, the Indian polity has become a sort of circus. Short-term perceptions rule the people's minds and those who exploit them are victorious.

Taking a particular group or section of people for granted is wishful thinking. The ruling NDA had a lot of positives to offer to the country after it came to power, both internally (in several fields) as well as on external affairs. India's prestige and position grew to a new height and esteem, globally. The Prime Minister's demonetisation drive had yielded a few positives in due course, like busting black marketers in real estate, ghost business houses *et al*. This writer vividly remembers the poor people happily standing in long queues before the banks during demonetisation as they believed it was going to end black money and cause difficulty to the corrupt and the rich.

There has been a sustained increase in the number of Income Tax Returns (ITRs) filed in the last four financial years. As compared to 3.79 crore ITRs filed in 2013-14, the number of ITRs filed during 2017-18 was 6.84 crore, which is an

“GOVERNANCE IS NOT A CAKEWALK FOR ANY RULER. NOR IS FEELING THE PULSE OF THE INDIAN MIND IN ELECTIONS AN EASY TASK, AS VOTERS HAVE TIME AND AGAIN BEEN POOH-POOHING EXPERT PSYCHOLOGISTS WITH DISDAIN. ANY HASTY POLICY DECISIONS ON WELL-INTENTIONED GOALS AND PROGRAMMES HAVE ALWAYS BACKFIRED ON THE RULING REGIMES”



increase of 80.5 per cent. The number of e-filings increased to 6.75 crore during the last fiscal. During 2017-18, the gross collections before refunds rose by 13 per cent to ₹11.44 lakh crore. The quantum jump in tax base to a large extent was the result of demonetisation. The Government machinery, however, could not counter the allegations against it.

But the biggest voter loss (loss of vote base) for the BJP was the business community (the traditional BJP supporters for long) due to initial hiccups in the implementation of the Goods and Service Tax (GST). The introduction of GST was a revolutionary attempt but those who implemented it will never agree that they failed to read the people's mind on this. The problem is that promises made before the reform got under way were never implemented. And later, when the Government tried to correct the mistakes, it was too late.

The mishandling of the agitation of the upper castes against reservation for promotions in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan had really made a difference to the BJP as the community voted for NOTA. In Madhya Pradesh, NOTA votes were exercised by 542,295 (6,43,144 voters) constituting about 1.4 per cent of the total votes. In Rajasthan, NOTA votes were to the tune of 467,781, constituting about 1.3 per cent of the total votes polled. Most people, who exercised NOTA, were anti-reservation supporters and former BJP supporters. The BJP got 41 per cent votes in Madhya Pradesh while the Congress got 40.9 per cent. The 1.4 per cent

NOTA may have taken the BJP's tally to well past 120 seats. Similarly, as against the Congress getting 39.3 per cent of votes compared to the BJP's 38.8 per cent in Rajasthan, the NOTA vote would have crossed to 40 per cent for the BJP and the party could have scraped through. In Chhattisgarh though, the Congress really trounced the BJP by a margin of 10 per cent.

Yet another cause of the Congress' win was the way the party got the support of farmers, who were facing several constraints notwithstanding the fact that Shivraj Singh Chouhan, during his chief ministerial tenure, increased the irrigated land from 7.5 lakh to 36 lakh hectares over the last 10 years. It was the disconnect in the programme with regard to production, marketing and incomes of farmers (including lopsided implementation of the Bhavantar scheme) that stoked the farmers' anger.

Though the Union Government had taken a lot of steps for the farmers' welfare, it had either not been marketed or executed well. Besides, the farmers' income was still not commensurate with production costs. In Rajasthan, the State had done very good work in water harvesting but the programmes did not catch the imagination of the farmers. The outreach by the bureaucracy was also not visible on the ground.

Another cause of the BJP's defeat is the mobilisation of opposition parties and the saffron party's lack of containment of negative vibes in politics. The "Sampark for Samadhan" was a damp

scumb as those who were contacted were mainly urbanites. Genuine opinion makers' attempts for course correction were ignored. For example, though Telugu Desam Party supremo Chandrababu Naidu's own political situation is not so good in Andhra Pradesh, his alienation did fuel a movement against the BJP. Similarly, the party alienated several of its opinion-makers who during the last 15 years were in its favour. This writer knows one senior journalist and many more supporters who relentlessly attempted to take the BJP to a high pedestal as an acceptable national party with pan-Indian appeal among the intelligentsia but they were either ignored or sidelined.

Now, the Congress and the Opposition front must adopt a charter which is nationalistic and filled with a positive vision for a future India and away from confrontationist polity as the BJP is still a favourite for 2019. The Congress has to modernise its functioning and embrace a collective leadership, keep the Delhi crowd of bureaucrats at a distance and engage with experts to serve the nation. The people are fed up with poor governance and unnecessary logjams in Parliament. To make democracy work, we must be a nation of participants, not simply observers and squabbling political leaders. The mandate of people is supreme. It should be seen as a lesson for all politicians, particularly in view of the coming Lok Sabha election in 2019.

(The writer is a Retired Civil Servant)

When democracy is not enough

If we do not stand up and reclaim the space we have conceded to criminals and other low-life who now sit in judgment over us, it will be our children who will pay the price in the coming years



DEEPAK SINHA

The Preamble to the Constitution of India clearly states that India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. But as the ongoing public discourse of our political masters clearly shows, we are more a democracy and less a republic. We may not truly be aware of the subtle difference between the two or even be bothered to give this aspect much thought. But make no mistake, if we are to progress and develop as a nation, we cannot do without either. History tells us that the term 'democracy' originated from the Greek words 'demos', the common people, and 'kratos' or strength. The first democracy was the city of Athens in 508-507 BC

where Cleisthenes, known as the father of Athenian democracy, introduced the concept of rule by the common people. However, representational democracy, as we know it today, is very different from what was practised then and is today defined by its one major characteristic "rule of the majority", which can easily devolve into mob rule or tyranny of the majority, or even worse, anarchy.

Benjamin Franklin once said: "Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch." The only thing that keeps the lamb off the lunch menu is the fact that we are a republic — not a perfect one but still one nonetheless. What that basically implies is that the country is not a private concern of the rulers but is considered a "public matter" and belongs to each one of us regardless of caste, creed, gender or ethnicity. While this obviously demands that our rulers are elected and not inherited, as quite a few tend to be, more importantly, it requires them to rule

for the common good, an aspect of governance on which philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, wrote volumes. This is, of course, only possible when there are a set of laws and those elected as leaders follow them both in letter and spirit.

Unfortunately over the past few decades, common good seems to be ignored in the face of parochial and self-serving interests of our leaders, as the rule of law is often ignored or rendered irrelevant. It is no wonder then that our legislatures at the Centre and States have a surfeit of members facing criminal charges — 1,765 MPs and MLAs at last count, or 36 per cent facing over 3,500 cases as per the Government; though some contend the numbers are vastly understated.

While the Supreme Court may well view the entry of criminals into legislative bodies as akin to "termites to the citadel of democracy," it cannot make laws to keep them out. That, the court said, is the domain of Parliament, an institution that is yet to show a firmness of resolve to

stem the rot. Ironically, it is the actions of the apex court itself which gave a fillip to criminals joining politics with its farcical ruling in the infamous JMM bribery case, involving the bribing of MPs to defeat a no-confidence motion brought against the then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's Government way back in 1993. These allegedly corrupt MPs were unashamed and blatant enough to openly deposit the bribe money in a public sector bank. They were subsequently prosecuted under the Prevention of Corruption Act but were absolved by the Supreme Court's interpretation of Article 105 of the Constitution. This Article states that (1) MPs shall enjoy freedom of speech in Parliament and (2) shall not be held liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given in Parliament.

The court held that the alleged bribe-takers, who had voted in the House, were "entitled to the immunity conferred by Article 105(2)." It

also went on to direct that the bribe-givers must be prosecuted, as also the bribe-takers who did not vote. Certainly, a unique legal justification for the concept of honour among thieves.

The apex court has now attempted to correct the existing state of affairs by directing the Government to set up 12 fast-track special courts to try cases against the legislators.

In addition, it has also directed all political parties, which give tickets to persons with criminal cases pending against them, to publicise the information on the party websites, apart from issuing a declaration in "widely circulated" newspapers and on electronic media after the nomination is filed.

However, there is little doubt left that the "centre of gravity" seems to have shifted in favour of the criminal legislators and they seem to have become indispensable to parties for grabbing power. The sad truth is that actions taken by the Supreme Court now are of little

consequence, nothing more than closing the barn door after the horse has bolted.

While regular and reasonably fair elections have ensured that we continue to enjoy the fruits of a vibrant democracy, the same cannot be said for the state of our Republic. The gradual decline of values and the rule of law have ensured that the common good is of little concern to our political class who are quite happy with the *status quo*. Neither the judiciary nor the bureaucrats can bring about change for the better that is required. It is, therefore, left to the common citizen to act. If we do not stand up and reclaim the space, we have conceded to criminals and other low-life who now sit in judgment over us. It will be our children who will pay the price in the coming years.

(The writer is a military veteran, a Consultant with the Observer Research Foundation and Visiting Senior Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai)



RAHUL'S RETURN

Till a few days back Rahul Gandhi had a nickname that no poll victory could erase off. It's 'Pappu' which means 'loser'. However everything has changed overnight. The Congress' spectacular victory in the Assembly polls in Hindu hinterland of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh has made people see the young Congress President in a new light. There is a metamorphosis of a new leader. (DailyMirror Editorial)

WPI inflation falls to 4.64% on easing food, petro prices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's wholesale inflation fell to a three-month low of 4.64% in November, driven down by decline in prices of food articles, especially vegetables, and some easing in rates of petro products.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was 5.28% in October and 4.02% in November last year.

Food articles witnessed softening of prices with deflation at 3.31% in November, against 1.49% in October, government data released on Friday showed. Vegetables, too, became cheaper with deflation at 26.98% in November, compared to 18.65% in the previous month.

Inflation in the 'fuel and power' basket in November continued to rule high at 16.28%, but was lower than

18.44% in October. This was on account of lowering of prices of petrol and diesel, following a decline in global crude oil prices.

Separately in petrol and diesel, inflation was 12.06% and 20.16%, respectively, and for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), it was 23.22% during October. ICRA principal economist Aditi Nayar said the easing of the WPI inflation was led by a deeper disinflation in prices of primary food articles, easing of inflation related to crude petroleum and mineral oils following the correction in retail fuel prices, and some impact of the appreciation in the rupee on the landed prices of imports.

"The recent trend of a year-on-year correction in food prices does not augur well for the strength of rural demand in the immediate term. However, factors such as weak post-monsoon rainfall and a delay in rabi sowing pose some uncertainty regarding how long food prices would remain in the disinflation zone," Nayar said. He said with the recent stability in the crude oil prices and the rupee, ICRA expects the WPI inflation to range between 3.7-4.4 per cent in the remainder of second half for current fiscal.

Among food articles, potato prices continued to rule high with 86.45% inflation in November. While onion witnessed deflation of 47.60%, the same for pulses stood at 5.42%. The October inflation at 4.64% is the lowest in three months, and a lower inflation than that which was last seen in August at 4.62%.

CARE Ratings, in its analysis, said it expects WPI inflation to remain in the range of 4.5-5% for the rest of the year, and above the CPI rates.

The WPI inflation for September, however, has been revised upwards to 5.22% from the provisional estimate of 5.13%. Data released earlier this week showed that the retail or consumer price index-based inflation for November also fell to a 17-month low at 2.33%.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mainly takes into account retail inflation data while formulating monetary policy.

In its fifth monetary policy review for the fiscal, released last week, the Reserve Bank kept interest rates unchanged, but held out a promise to cut them if the upside risks to inflation do not materialise.

The central bank lowered retail inflation projection to 2.7-3.2% for the second half of the current fiscal, citing normal monsoon and moderate food prices.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Italian superbike maker Ducati on Friday announced its foray into pre-owned market in India through its Ducati Approved programme.

Under the programme, only bikes less than 5 years old with certified mileage lower than 50,000 km are allowed to be sold after undergoing 35 technical checks, the company said in a statement.

"Our entry in the pre-owned segment in India will make Ducati more accessible to passionate bikers who aspire for the luxurious and premium experience offered by Ducati motorcycles," Ducati India managing director Sergi Canovas said.

Ducati Approved is a certified pre-owned motorcycle programme wherein company's qualified service technicians select and inspect every bike, certifying its history, the company said.

The programme also includes extended warranty and roadside assistance, it added.

"With this program, our aim is to sell bikes with the same level of sophistication and authenticity as offered with a new Ducati," the Ducati India managing director said.

Ducati enters pre-owned bike market in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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Infosys forms JV with Hitachi, Panasonic, Pasona in Japan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Infosys on Friday said it had formed a joint venture (JV) with Hitachi, Panasonic Corporation and Pasona to strengthen its presence in the Japanese market.

As part of the agreement, Infosys will acquire 81 per cent of the shareholding in Hitachi Procurement Service Co, Hitachi's fully owned subsidiary, Infosys said in a statement.

Hitachi, Panasonic and Pasona will be minority shareholders of the entity, it added. The consideration for the 81 per cent stake, subject to closing adjustments, is JPY 2,762 million (approx ₹174.58 crore).

"As part of the transaction, Infosys Consulting Pte. Ltd. will acquire an 81 per cent stake in HIPUS from Hitachi by way of an acquisition of existing shares," Infosys said in a regulatory filing. Hitachi will transfer 2 per cent each to Panasonic and Pasona, and will hold the remaining 15 per cent, it added.

The transaction is expected to close by April 1, 2019, subject to customary closing conditions, Infosys said.

"The transaction is in alignment with Infosys' strategy to strengthen its presence in Japan and invest in local capabilities to serve the local and global needs

of Japanese corporations," it said.

Hitachi Procurement, currently, handles indirect materials purchasing functions for the Hitachi Group. "...iconic companies coming together, will accelerate business process transformation leveraging digital procurement platforms for the local and global needs of Japanese corporations," the statement said.

Infosys will bring its expertise in procurement processes, consulting, analytics and digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to the venture.

Combined with Hitachi and Panasonic's knowledge of their procurement functions and local teams, and Pasona's human capital and BPM networks in Japan, the entity will provide differentiated, end-to-end, efficient and high value procurement capabilities to corporations, the statement said.

"This JV will help Japanese corporations transform their procurement processes using next-generation digital platforms, as we bring together the combined power of deep procurement expertise, technology, global expertise and local skills," Infosys president Ravi Kumar said.

Indospace raises USD 1.2 bn to develop, buy logistic parks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Everstone-backed IndoSpace on Friday said it had raised USD 1.2 billion from investors through its new fund to develop and acquire industrial and logistics parks.

IndoSpace is one of the largest provider of modern industrial and logistics real estate in India and has taken total commitment to India to above USD 3.2 billion. It is promoted by Everstone Group, GLP and Realterm.

IndoSpace said in a statement that it held the final close on IndoSpace Logistic Parks III (ILP III) and the offering was significantly oversubscribed on the back of strong investor demand.

"USD 580 million of total equity has been committed to ILP III which, post leverage will create a corpus of more than USD 1.2 billion to develop and acquire industrial and logistics-related real estate investments in India," it added.

IndoSpace would utilise the fund to further strengthen its market leadership position. Leading global institutional investors have invested in ILP III. Currently, IndoSpace has a portfolio of around 30 million square feet across developed and under-construction projects.

Alembic Pharma raises ₹350 cr

New Delhi (PTI): Drug firm Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Friday said it had raised ₹350 crore through allotment of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) on private placement basis. "The NCD committee of Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd... has allotted 1,500, 9 per cent rated unsecured listed

redeemable non-convertible debentures (NCDs)... aggregating to ₹150 crore under tranche 1." Alembic Pharmaceuticals said in a regulatory filing. The company said it had also allotted 2,000, 9 per cent rated unsecured listed redeemable NCDs... aggregating to ₹200 crore.

National electronics policy almost finalised: Prasad

New Delhi (PTI): The government has almost finalised the National Policy on Electronics to boost electronics manufacturing in India on a big scale, Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Friday. He said the Narendra Modi government was pushing India's case for USD 1 trillion digital economy. Speaking at an event organised by industry body CII, the minister also asked the electronics industry to focus on producing medical devices, defence and automobile items.

NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
BHARTIARTL	305.2	333.4	305.2	319	15.9
BPCL	334.65	349.4	330.75	344.95	10.05
YESBANK	172.7	181.6	168.25	179.7	5
IOC	141.15	142.5	140.1	141.3	3.9
COALINDIA	244.55	250.4	242	240.05	5.5
ONGC	143	150.4	140.6	146.25	2.95
NTPC	141	144.15	139.6	143.8	2.75
GRASIM	850	852.75	835.5	844.9	15.5
IBULHSGFIN	772.65	798.05	760.05	789.9	13.2
EICHERMOT	233500	238000	231570	237000	394.6
ASIANPAINT	1332.80	1351.00	1320.00	1339.00	18.8
POWERGRID	181.5	186.25	180.5	185.1	2.55
GAIL	346.95	353.2	341.5	351.3	4.85
ULTRACEMCO	403900	404380	3975.00	3998.50	49.4
INFRAEEL	249	252.9	247.25	252.3	3.1
INFY	697.45	713.7	694.4	706.15	8.4
HINDPETRO	224	229.5	221.1	226.95	8.8
VEDL	199	203.2	198.15	201.9	1.25
ICICIBANK	349.2	354.05	349.15	351.15	1.45
TCS	1983.00	1998.95	1975.25	1989.00	6.4
RELIANCE	1103.10	1114.90	1091.80	1110.00	2.95
HINDUNILVR	1837.00	1865.85	1832.75	1860.55	17
TECHM	709.15	716.8	705.1	711.1	1.7
TATASTEEL	511	517.8	506.5	513.5	1.25
ITC	274.35	277.25	273.9	275.85	0.55
AXISBANK	619.1	623.1	613.3	620.3	1.2
HINDALCO	219.5	222.85	217.3	220.6	0.7
TATAMOTORS	166	168.4	164.85	167	0.15
MARUTI	7684.00	7690.00	7545.95	7676.00	5.5
SBIN	288.5	290.8	287.05	288.7	0.3
BAJAJFINSV	6179.90	6208.20	6101.30	6153.10	-6.3
HEROMOTOCO	3302.00	3350.80	3266.65	3315.00	-3.25
INDUSINDBK	1610.00	1613.50	1590.05	1608.00	-2.1
BAFINANCE	2488.25	2532.00	2464.25	2485.35	-3.75
M&M	753.1	764	751.6	757	-2.2
DREDDY	2595.00	2609.60	2568.00	2589.20	-7.65
HDFCBANK	2104.90	2118.00	2088.05	2095.10	-6.2
SUNPHARMA	421.95	426	417.1	420.45	-1.65
ADANIAPORTS	370	371.15	367	368.9	-2.15
ROTKRANK	1264.40	1271.70	1247.10	1256.60	-7.8
CIPLA	528.35	533.8	516.65	522.05	-4.95
BAJAJ-AUTO	2836.00	2837.35	2785.20	2808.50	-27.6
UPL	770	777	758.85	765.9	-7.55
WIPRO	339	343	332.3	335	-3.65
LT	1423.45	1428.55	1405.05	1410.65	-15.8
ZEE	491	494.95	482	485.5	-8.15
TITAN	943.65	951.7	928.45	936.8	-15.55
HDFC	1945.00	1955.00	1898.05	1909.60	-32.45
JSWSTEEL	297	300.85	291.15	292.9	-5.15
HCLTECH	966	968.8	950	960.1	-17.95

BSE 500

Script	Last Price	Abs Change	Change %
3MINDIA	23027.85	-400.35	-1.71
8KMILES	165.15	-5	-2.94
AARTIIND	1438.05	2.45	0.17
ABB	1431.35	-6.1	-0.42
ABBOTINDIA	7534.55	30.2	0.4
ABCPITAL	99.05	0.6	0.61
ABFRL	199.1	0.8	0.4
ACC	1498.5	-1.75	-0.12
ADANIAPORTS	368.95	-2.4	-0.65
ADANIPOWER	52.15	0.35	0.68
ADANITRANS	219.75	-0.05	-0.02
ADVENZYMES	178.5	1.55	0.88
AEGLISLOG	196.2	-6.4	-3.16
ALIAENG	1611.05	-22.95	-1.4
AJANTPHARM	1096.25	16.25	1.5
AKZOINDIA	1574.25	11.25	0.72
ALBK	46.35	-0.05	-0.11
ALKEM	1882.1	11.5	0.61
ALLCARGO	107.35	1.05	0.99
AMARAJABAT	735.35	5.35	0.73
AMBUJACEM	219.25	0.5	0.23
ANDHRABANK	28.6	0.1	0.35
APRINDS	608	-9.15	-1.48
APLAPOLLO	1290.5	-14.6	-1.12
CANBK	266.45	6.75	2.6
CANFINHOME	278.35	12.25	4.6
CAFP	536.85	-7.55	-1.39
CAPPL	393.75	-4.65	-1.17
CARBORUNIV	351.6	-3.1	-0.87
CARERATING	997.6	-2.4	-0.24
CASTROLIND	149.25	2.1	1.43
CEATLTD	279.7	-0.1	-0.04
CEL	1309.4	194.6	14.9
CENTRALBK	30.5	0.35	1.16
CENTRUM	36.8	-0.7	-1.87
CENTURYPLY	185.9	1.8	0.98
CENTURYTEX	925.55	12.8	1.4
CERA	2357.3	-9.45	-0.4
CGPOWER	40.5	1.55	3.98
CHAMBLFERT	144.2	-2.45	-1.67
CHENNPETRO	278.25	4.1	1.5
CHOLAFIN	1230.7	-7.7	-0.62
CIPLA	521.4	-6.35	-1.2
COALINDIA	246.75	1.95	0.8
COACHINSHIP	381.15	-0.4	-0.1
COFFEEEDA	264.7	-1.8	-0.68
COLPAL	1311.85	8.7	0.67
CONCOR	651.55	2.5	0.39
COROMANDEL	438.85	9.6	2.24
CORPBANK	28.4	0.2	0.71
FSL	51.95	1.55	3.08
GAIL	350.95	4.6	1.33
GDL	137.7	0.05	0.04
GEPIL	837.6	16.35	1.99
GESHIP	346.7	5.6	1.64
GET&D	255.6	-5	-1.92
GHCL	238.2	2.35	1
GICHSGFIN	241.65	-1.2	-0.49
GICRE	273.25	1.1	0.4
GILLETTE	6499.75	-19.35	-0.3
GLAXO	1383.05	-10.8	-0.77
GLENMARK	666.4	-10.65	-1.57
GMDCLTD	86.7	-1.2	-1.37
GMRINFRA	15.75	0.3	1.94
GNFC	337	-4.3	-1.26
GODFREYPHLP	925.55	8.9	0.97
GODREJAGRO	506.65	-4.45	-0.87
GODREJCP	824.55	18.85	2.34
GODREJIND	543.6	-3.7	-0.68
GODREJPROP	664.85	-4.45	-0.66
GPPL	102.65	0.55	0.54
GRANULES	87.65	0.75	0.86
GRAPHITE	863.4	-11.7	-1.34
GRASIM	845.5	14.8	1.78
GREAVESCOT	123.8	-0.3	-0.24
GREENPLY	131.1	-0.2	-0.15
GRINDWELL	505	-4.95	-0.97
GRUH	300.35	4.65	1.57
GSFC	110.05	-0.5	-0.45
GSKCONS	7777.65	26.75	0.35
GSPJ	176.95	-1.85	-1.03
GUJALKALI	535.3	-2.85	-0.53
GUJFUORO	915.9	16.8	1.87
GUJGAS	682.8	35.55	5.49
GULFOILLUB	800.05	-24.8	-3.01
HAL	768.95	-2.6	-0.34
HATSUN	619.2	-6.35	-1.02
HAVELLS	710.5	6.3	0.89
HCC	11.52	0.45	4.07
HCLTECH	960.35	-18.15	-1.85
HDFC	1904.15	-37.8	-1.95
HDFCBANK	2093.75	-7.3	-0.35
HDFCLIFE	393.5	6.1	1.57
HDL	23.7	0.05	0.21
HEG	4027.65	-18.5	-0.46
HEIDELBERG	158.4	5.25	3.43
HERITFOOD	527.3	2.6	0.5
HEROMOTOCO	3313.5	0.3	0.01
HEXAWARE	328.25	-2.3	-0.7
HFLCL	19.25	0.05	0.26
HIMATSEIDE	207.45	-1.65	-0.79
HINDALCO	220.35	0	0
HINDCOPPER	48.15	0.05	0.1
HINDPETRO	227.4	2.7	1.2
HINDUNILVR	1856.8	3.8	0.21
HINDZINC	270.1	-5.25	-1.91
HONAUT	23165.9	114.35	0.5
HSCL	136.1	3.7	2.79
HSIL	199.15	-0.8	-0.4
HUDCO	41.9	-0.65	-1.53
IBREALEST	83.05	2.85	3.55
IBULHSGFIN	792.8	18.55	2.4
IBVENTURES	397.95	-3.65	-0.91
ICICIBANK	352.1	2.8	

British PM returns to face EU leaders ... after Brexit deal rebuff

AFP ■ BRUSSELS

British Prime Minister Theresa May returned to face EU leaders Friday after they rebuffed her pleas for help to sell her Brexit plan back home and warned of the growing threat of a "no deal." May had sought to persuade her 27 colleagues she could overcome huge opposition to the divorce deal among British MPs if they gave her some assurances over the thorny problem of the Irish border.

But they were not convinced, and European diplomats said May had been unable to explain what she wanted or how she could deliver a British parliamentary majority to endorse the deal. "The signals we heard yesterday were not particularly reassuring on Britain's capacity to honour the commitments that were made," Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said. "So we will make sure to prepare for all scenarios and prepare also for a no deal scenario," he added, as he arrived for the second and final day of the EU summit.

On Thursday, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker repeated statements made all week by European leaders that "there is no room whatsoever for renegotiation" of the deal. May postponed a vote in the House of Commons this week on the Brexit deal to avoid a crushing defeat, but has promised it will take place next month, by January 21 at the latest.

This is uncomfortably close to Britain's scheduled exit day on March 29, 2019 - and Juncker said he was stepping up preparations in case it leaves with no

deal in place. Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz added on Friday: "There is a withdrawal deal, and there is an urgent necessity to take decisions. We should avoid a no deal scenario."

May did not speak as she arrived for the summit, where she met with French President Emmanuel Macron before EU-wide discussions on migration, Russia and climate change. She came to Brussels wounded by a confidence vote on Wednesday night, which she won but in which 117 MPs - more than one-third of her Conservative party - voted to ouster her.

Opposition to the Brexit deal in Britain is focused on a so-called "backstop" arrangement designed to keep open the border with Ireland if and until a new UK-EU trade deal is signed. May is seeking "legal and political assurances" that this will not keep Britain trapped indefinitely in an EU customs union. Several EU leaders have talked of offering "clarifications" and "explanations," and a statement issued after they talked without May late Thursday emphasised they will try to ensure the backstop is never triggered.

But, while an early draft of the conclusions said the EU "stands ready to examine whether any further assurances can be provided" on the backstop, this was removed from the final version. "Colleagues were so exasperated that she left with less than she could have got," a European source said. May told EU leaders they must help her "change the perception that the backstop could be a trap from which the UK cannot escape", according to a British

official. "With the right assurances, this deal can be passed. Indeed it is the only deal that is capable of getting through my parliament," she told them. But European sources said the room was tense, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other leaders repeatedly interrupting May to ask her what she wanted and how she could deliver it.

Another source who had been in the room told AFP on Friday that May had contradicted herself and failed to say how any assurances on the backstop might work, to the consternation of fellow leaders.

On Friday, however, Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel on defended May, saying she "did a good job, she got the best possible deal" despite being able to deliver her own party's lawmakers. "The problem is the MPs in London," he said. "The fact is for internal political reasons in the UK some people try to gamble the relation between the EU and the UK for the future. And it's bad." May has faced constant criticism to her Brexit strategy from hardline anti-Europeans in her party, while the Northern Irish party which props up her government also opposes her deal.

They want the backstop out of the agreement entirely - but Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar once again emphasised the need to have legal guarantees on keeping open the Irish border.

"By resolving it in the withdrawal agreement we can make sure no side uses the threat of a border in Ireland as part of leverage in the future relationship talks," he said.



British Prime Minister Theresa May arrives for an EU summit in Brussels on Friday.

Nepal govt bans use of Indian currency notes above ₹100

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The Nepal government has banned the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations, a move that could affect Indian tourists visiting the Himalayan nation where Indian currency is widely used.

Indian currency is extensively used by Nepalese people and businesses for their savings and transactions.

The government has asked the people to refrain from keeping or carrying Indian bank notes higher than Rs 100 denomination as it has not legalised them, Nepal's Minister for Information and Communications Gokul Prasad Baskota said.

"The government has decided not to use, carry and keep the Indian bills of 200, 500 and 2000 denominations. The government will soon issue a formal notice in this matter," he



said. The decision will adversely affect Nepalese labourers working in India as well as Indian tourists visiting Nepal.

India is Nepal's largest trade partner and supplies the majority of its consumer goods.

The Indian government introduced new banknotes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations after the demonetisation of old notes worth Rs 500 and 1,000 in

2016. However, the move hit countries such as Nepal and Bhutan where Indian currency is widely used.

Nepal Premier K P Sharma Oli said earlier this year that demonetisation hurt the Nepalese people and added that he would raise the matter with Indian leaders. People have been using the new Indian currency in Nepal for nearly two years now.

China lodges 'stern' protest with US over Senate bill on Tibet

PTI ■ BEIJING

China has lodged a "stern" diplomatic protest with the US over the Senate passing a bipartisan legislation that seeks to impose a visa ban on Chinese officials who deny American citizens, officials and journalists access to Tibet, even as Beijing asked Washington not to make it a law.

Reacting to the US move, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said here that the American action disregarded facts and amounted to interfering in China's internal affairs and

was a violation of international rules. "China is firmly opposed to it and lodged stern representations to the US. I have to point out that Tibet affairs come under China's internal affairs and it allows no foreign interference," he said.

"The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act", seeking unhindered access to Tibetan areas for Americans, something which is routinely denied by the Chinese government, was passed by the US House of Representatives in September.

The US Senate on Tuesday passed the crucial bipartisan legislation that

also calls for a visa ban on Chinese officials who deny American citizens, government officials and journalists access to Tibet, the remote Himalayan homeland of exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

The legislation, passed unanimously, comes amid the Trump administration imposing massive trade import duties on China that has started impacting the Chinese economy.

The bill now heads to the White House for President Donald Trump to sign into law.

Lu said foreigners entering Tibet can apply

through normal channels and every year a lot of foreigners and local tourists visit Tibet.

He said since 2015, about 40,000 Americans visited Tibet and this included US Senators, Congressmen and businessmen.

"This shows the US accusations do not hold water at all and Chinese government and people cannot accept that."

We urge the US to immediately take effective measures to stop signing the act into law and thus avoid harming US-China relations and our cooperation in key areas," he said.

Chinese FM to visit India next week

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit India next week to attend the first high-level meeting of Sino-India 'people-to-people mechanism' agreed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in June, officials announced here on Friday.

During the visit from December 21-24, Wang will co-chair the meeting along with



External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a media briefing. The two countries decided to set up "people to people mechanism" during Prime Minister Modi's meeting with President Xi at Qingdao in June this year on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. The people-to-people mechanism is aimed at building on the momentum of the informal summit between Modi and Xi at Wuhan in April this year. Prime Minister Modi met President Xi in April in an unprecedented two-day "heart-to-heart" summit in the central Chinese city of Wuhan to "solidify" the India-China relationship after the Doklam standoff last year.

Pak receives 2nd \$1 bn bailout package from Saudi Arabia

Islamabad (PTI): Cash-strapped Pakistan on Friday received USD 1 billion from its close ally Saudi Arabia as part of a second bailout package to boost the country's dwindling dollar reserves, according to media reports.

The latest package has shored up the central bank's foreign reserves, hitting the USD 9.4 billion mark, said State Bank of Pakistan Spokesman Abid Qamar. He said another Saudi financial package was expected in January next year, Dawn newspaper reported. In October, Saudi Arabia agreed to provide Pakistan USD 3 billion in foreign currency support for a year to address its balance-of-payments crisis.

During Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Saudi Arabia on October 23, it was announced that the oil-rich country will provide a USD 6 billion package to Pakistan to support its ailing economy. The package included USD 3 billion balance of payments support and USD 3 billion in deferred payments on oil import. Pakistan received the first tranche of USD 1 billion from Saudi Arabia on November 9.

According to figures shared by Prime Minister Khan in October, the country's total foreign debt has surged to Rs 30,000 billion within the last decade, while circular debt has reached Rs 1,200 billion, the report said.

China to suspend extra tariffs on US cars, parts

AFP ■ BEIJING

China pressed on with its trade war truce with the United States on Friday, announcing it will suspend extra tariffs added to US-made cars and auto parts for three months from January 1. The move is another sign that the ceasefire has not been derailed by the recent arrest in Canada of a top Chinese telecom executive at the behest of the United States.

Beijing raised tariffs on American-made cars and auto parts this summer by 25 percent in retaliation for US tariffs on \$50 billion of Chinese goods. "Suspension of the tariffs is a concrete measure to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state," said the announcement by the State Council's Tariff Commission Office, noting it applied to 211 product codes.



Polish teenagers stage a protest in the U.N. climate conference venue on the last days of talks to urge negotiators from almost 200 countries to reach an agreement on ways of keeping global warming in check in Katowice, Poland.

US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Buenos Aires on December 1 to a 90-day truce

while they tried to find a solution to the escalating trade dispute. While China and the US initially provided differing accounts of the scope of their agreement,

Beijing has recently begun to act on claims put forth by White House officials as to what steps China would take. "We hope that both sides will, in accordance

with the consensus reached by the two heads of state, on the premise of mutual respect, equality, faithfulness, words and actions, and intensify consultations in the direction of cancelling all of the extra tariff increases," the State Council's statement said. Confusion and unease over what agreement the two sides reached in Argentina has roiled stock markets.

The arrest of Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, in Vancouver on December 1 has also angered China, raising concerns that her case could affect the trade negotiations.

Meng, who faces US fraud charges related to Iran sanctions violations, was granted Can\$10 million (US\$ 7.5 million) on Tuesday. Two Canadians were detained in China on Monday in what many experts say was retaliation for Canada's arrest of

Meng.

But the tangible move by China to suspend tariffs on cars and auto parts, as announced by Trump on Twitter shortly after the meeting, is a sign that trade negotiations remain on track. China on Thursday said that it would welcome US negotiators to visit the country for talks as both sides focus on a solution to thorny trade issues.

Maintaining and resolving the trade truce could help stabilise sentiment in China, where confidence in the economy has been hurt by the trade frictions with key trade partner the US.

Earlier on Friday economic data showed Chinese consumer spending grew at its slowest pace in 15 years and factories eased up in November, raising the prospect that Beijing could turn to fresh stimulus measures to help the sputtering economy.

UN climate talks: Experts slam draft 'weak' text on implementing Paris agreement

Katowice (Poland) (PTI): Hours ahead of the UN climate talks are set to end here, diplomats from across the world Friday came up with a "weak" draft text on a rulebook for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement post-2020, even as key issues like finance remain unresolved.

Developing nations, which rely on fossil fuels, say they cannot make their economies greener without transparent funding from the developed nations. With the UN Climate Change Conference (COP24)

about to conclude, civil society organisations criticised the current draft text released by the host, Poland, saying it is "weak" and it carries "the US imprint everywhere".

They claimed that the basic principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) such as equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDRRC) and matters agreed in the Paris accord, including on finance, have not been reflected in the

draft text. "On the whole, the analysis is that the current draft text is weak in terms of finance and raising ambition. It is still a long way to go to determine the finer details of the elements," Indian climate expert Chandra Bhushan said.

Bhushan, who is also the deputy director general of New Delhi-based advocacy group Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), alleged that developing countries have lost the fight for "flexibility to all" while providing information on their climate action. He

said it is a clear victory for the US, the EU and China.

According to the analysis prepared by the CSE, there is no mention of raising ambition in action and support post-2020 and integrating it with science. For pre-2020, the developed countries are merely encouraged to step up their pre-2020 ambitions, it said.

"Loss and damage is the weakest and clearly implies that developed countries have turned a blind eye to the most existential impacts of climate change on poor and vulnerable

Organic food worse for climate, says study

PTI ■ LONDON

Organic food has a bigger climate impact than conventionally farmed food, due to the greater areas of land required, according to a study. Researchers from the Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden developed a new method for assessing the climate impact from land-use, and used this, along with other methods, to compare organic and conventional food production.

The results, published in the journal Nature, show that organic food can result in much greater emissions. "Our study shows that organic peas, farmed



in Sweden, have around a 50 per cent bigger climate impact than conventionally farmed peas," said Stefan Wirsenius, an associate professor at Chalmers. "For some foodstuffs, there is an even bigger difference - for

example, with organic Swedish winter wheat the difference is closer to 70 per cent," Wirsenius said.

The reason why organic food is so much worse for the climate is that the yields per

hectare are much lower, primarily because fertilisers are not used. To produce the same amount of organic food, you therefore need a much bigger area of land, researchers said.

"The greater land-use in organic farming leads indirectly to higher carbon dioxide emissions, thanks to deforestation," said Wirsenius. "If we use more land for the same amount of food, we contribute indirectly to bigger deforestation elsewhere in the world," he said. Even organic meat and dairy products are - from a climate point of view - worse than their conventionally produced equivalents, researchers

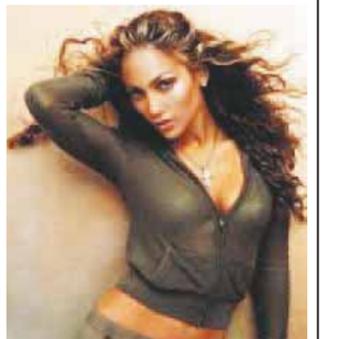
said. Since organic meat and milk production uses organic feed-stock, it also requires more land than conventional production, they said.

"This means that the findings on organic wheat and peas in principle also apply to meat and milk products," Wirsenius said. "We have not done any specific calculations on meat and milk, however, and have no concrete examples of this in the article," he said. The researchers used a new metric, which they call "Carbon Opportunity Cost", to evaluate the effect of greater land-use contributing to higher carbon dioxide emissions from deforestation.

GLOBE TROTTER

J'Lo wants to direct film and television

Los Angeles: Pop star Jennifer Lopez has revealed she wants to direct content for television and films. The singer recently directed her first music video "Limitless", which features on her new rom-com "Second Act". When asked if she wants to direct more in television and film, Lopez told Variety, "Absolutely, absolutely." The singer said "it was a lot of fun" to direct the music video in which her daughter appears. "This is a song that Sia wrote for the movie. It's the anthem for 'Second Act'. I asked her watch the movie and tell me what you think - if you're inspired, write something, and she wrote 'Limitless', which is: I thought I had to be somebody else, but look at me now, I'm limitless," Lopez told reporters at the New York City premiere of "Second Act". "I love that sentiment. That's exactly what the movie is about. It's that perfect holiday movie with this perfect song. My daughter is in the video. It's a dream project for me, so I'm excited for everybody to see it," she added. The film hits the theatres on December 21.



I definitely want to be a father: Nick Jonas

Los Angeles: Actor-singer Nick Jonas, who recently married Priyanka Chopra, says he "definitely" wants to have kids in the future. Priyanka, 36, and Nick, 26, exchanged wedding vows on December 1 at Jodhpur's majestic Umaid Bhawan Palace in a Catholic ceremony officiated by the groom's father Kevin Jonas Sr. The wedding was followed by an equally grand ceremony as per Hindu traditions on December 2. Talking to Spotify's The Rewind, Jonas shared his plans to start a family with Priyanka, saying, "I definitely want to be a father someday." He also opened up about his own childhood and said he grew up "pretty quick". "I think that's a real dream, and I think I have had to grow up pretty quick. With that, you could look at it two ways, you could say that was unfair, or you could say it has given me some real perspective at an early age," Jonas said. "And I have seen a lot of life at an early age and I hope to be able to share that with a kid of my own someday," he added.



'Trump calls India a true friend'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump calls India a "true friend", a top American diplomat has said as she highlighted the steps taken by the US over the last two years to strengthen its ties with India for the benefit of a broader Indo Pacific region. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Alice Wells' remarks came at a farewell reception hosted by the State Department in honour of the outgoing Indian Ambassador to the US, Navtej Singh Sarna.



Sarna. Sarna said that the successful visit of Prime Minister Modi in June 2017 was the high point of his term here in Washington DC.

"The fact that the outcomes were so strong from the visit, the personal chemistry between Prime Minister Modi and President Trump was so, so evident... and the joint statement that we came out with really set the chart for the months to follow," the Indian ambassador said.

Listing some of the major highlights of his posting in US, Sarna said "today we can look back on and say that, well, yes, we are truly strategic global partners".

"We have found a huge amount of understanding for our political space, for our strategic autonomy, for the needs of our economy, for our role, for our taking into account our art history and our regional position vis a vis several other countries," he said.

"I think this entire process of building the bilateral relationship has been to work with each other to find while each country fulfils its national objectives - the US as well as India - at the same time, we find ways and means of growing together," he said.

trious career of 38 years, has been extraordinary, Wells told the select audience. Sarna took charge as India's ambassador to the US on November 5, 2016.

"Over the last two years, we have been able to host Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi here in Washington for a successful summit with President Trump," Wells said.

During Sarna's tenure, the two countries have inaugurated a new 2+2 Dialogue to elevate their cooperation on security and strategic priorities for the benefit of their people and for the benefit of a broader Indo Pacific region where the leadership of the two nations matters so much.

"Under your leadership in our countries have negoti-

ated and finalised a landmark communications compatibility and security agreement, which makes our military cooperation more profound and advanced.

We have also taken significant steps to build on India's status as a US major defense partner, including elevating India to strategic trade authorization, tier one status," Wells said.

"In your engagements with Americans across the country and also with the more than three million Indian Americans and this incredibly vibrant business leaders, the students, the technologist, the artist, you really helped bring our people in other countries together," she said as she praised

France dismisses ISIS claim for Strasbourg Christmas bloodshed

AFP ■ STRASBOURG

France's interior minister on Friday dismissed a claim by the Islamic State group that it was responsible for a shooting spree at a Christmas market in Strasbourg after the gunman was shot dead by police, ending a 48-hour manhunt. The city reopened the market on Friday, with officials praising the massive public help and quick police reaction that led to the death of suspected shooter Cherif Chekatt late on Thursday.

He was tracked down at around 9:00 pm (local time) when a police patrol spotted him on a street in a district where he was last seen after Tuesday night's attack. Around 800 people had called in tips to a hotline after the authorities released his name and photo Wednesday night, including two which France's anti-terror prosecutor Remy Heitz called "decisive" in finding Chekatt.

The information allowed police to home in on an area in the Neudorf neighbourhood, where he tried to escape into a building after being spotted by a patrol. Unable to get in the door, he turned and shot at the

three officers with a handgun when they tried to approach, two of whom returned fire and killed him, Heitz said at a press conference in Strasbourg. Two more people were detained for questioning overnight, bringing to seven the number in custody, including Chekatt's parents and two brothers, Heitz said.

Police are now focusing their investigation on whether Chekatt had any help in carrying out his attack or while on the run, he added.

The lights on the market's towering Christmas tree were illuminated Friday for the first time since the attack, as Interior Minister Christophe Castaner visited with stall owners and the hundreds of security forces members on site. He dismissed as "completely opportunistic" a Twitter post by the IS propaganda wing which claimed Chekatt, a career criminal with 27 convictions in four countries, was one of its "soldiers."

"We're dealing with a man who was consumed by evil," Castaner said. Questions remain over how Chekatt was able to evade the tight security perimeter set up around the Strasbourg Christmas market

which has long been a prime target for jihadist groups.

Around 500 police, security agents and soldiers control access at checkpoints on the bridges leading to the river island, a UN World Heritage site, that houses the market. The goal is to "create a bubble with searches at the entry points," Mayor Roland Ries said after the attack, while regional government representative Jean-Luc Marx said he had not determined "any flaws in the security measures".

Many residents, however, were not convinced after Chekatt managed to slip through the controls with a handgun and a knife which he used to kill three people and injure 13. "It doesn't surprise me," said Emeline, 38, who works in the city centre. "You wear a heavy coat, put something in the bottom of your bag. You can bring in what you want."

France has been on high alert since the start of a wave of jihadist attacks in 2015, which prompted a threefold surge in the security budget for the market, to one million euros. Chekatt, a 29-year-old Strasbourg native who lived in

a rundown apartment block a short drive from the city centre, was flagged by French security forces in 2015 as a possible Islamic extremist. But Defence Minister Florence Parly rejected criticism that Chekatt's presence on the country's so-called "S file" of extremists should have prompted a more proactive reaction from the authorities. "You can't... arrest someone just because you think he might do something," Parly told Radio Classique on Friday.

Strasbourg's deputy mayor Alain Fontanel admitted that despite patrols, plainclothes police, profilers and video surveillance, "the risks can be reduced, but not eliminated".

"We can't pat down and search everyone, only carry out random checks," he said, adding that huge lines at checkpoints would only create a new potential target for terrorists. "Someone who wants to get in an area this big with a weapon can do it," he said. Such reasoning was little comfort to the residents and tourists who flock to the Strasbourg market.

"We thought this would happen only in Nice or at the Bataclan, but here it is at home,"

With no relief from SC, Rajapaksa likely to quit today

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Signalling an end to the nearly two-month power tussle in Sri Lanka, disputed Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa will resign on Saturday, his son said Friday, soon after the Supreme Court refused to stay a court order that restrained the embattled former strongman from acting as the premier until it fully heard the case next month.

Rajapaksa, 73, was appointed as the prime minister on October 26 by President Maithripala Sirisena in a controversial move after sacking Ranil Wickremesinghe, which plunged the island nation into a constitutional crisis.

"To ensure stability of the nation, Former President @PresRajapaksa has decided to resign from the Premiership tomorrow after an address to the nation," Rajapaksa's son Namal tweeted. The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) with former president, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and others will "now work to form a broader political coalition with President Sirisena", Namal Rajapaksa, a lawmaker, added.

Wickremesinghe's camp was hopeful that Sirisena would now reinstate him over the weekend after Rajapaksa resigns, effectively ending the political stalemate that plagued the nation for the past seven weeks. There was no

immediate reaction from President Sirisena, the architect of the current crisis.

Parliamentarian Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena said Rajapaksa, who ruled Sri Lanka for nearly a decade, decided to step down in the best interest of the country.

He claimed Rajapaksa can hold office without resigning but that will only further drag the political turmoil in the country. So the former president decided to step down after the court ruling given on Friday and on Thursday.

His Cabinet will also stand dissolved. Abeywardena was quoted as saying by the Colombo Gazette. The apex court's latest

ruling came a day after it unannouncedly declared that the dissolution of Parliament by President Maithripala Sirisena was "illegal", in a body blow to the embattled leader, whose controversial decisions plunged the island nation into an unprecedented political turmoil.

The Supreme Court decided that a Court of Appeal order issued against the appointment of Rajapaksa as Prime Minister and against his Cabinet from holding office will stand.

The appeal filed by Rajapaksa will be taken up for hearing on January 16, 17 and 18. The apex court asked all parties to provide written submissions within three weeks.

The Appeal Court on December 3 issued notice and an interim order against Rajapaksa and his Government, preventing them from acting as Prime Minister, Cabinet and Deputy Ministers. The order was issued in a case filed by 122 lawmakers against Rajapaksa and his new government.

Rajapaksa and the members of the purported government filed the appeal against the Court of Appeals interim injunction that restrained them from functioning in their respective posts.

The United National Front (UNF) said the order means Rajapaksa cannot be Prime Minister and so the former Cabinet must be reinstated.



Supporters of ousted Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe celebrate outside the supreme court complex in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Thursday. AP

Koreas to meet IOC in Feb on joint Olympic bid

AFP ■ SEOUL

The two Koreas on Friday agreed to hold talks with the International Olympic Committee on their joint bid for the 2032 Summer Games in February, Seoul said, as a rapid diplomatic thaw takes hold on the peninsula. North and South Korean officials will meet with the IOC in Lausanne, Switzerland on February 15 to discuss the prospects of co-hosting the 2032 Olympics, according to a joint statement following a cross-border meeting on Friday. Making a joint bid for the 2032 Games was part of a broader agreement made between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and the South's President Moon Jae-in during their third summit in Pyongyang in September. If it materialises, it will mark the first time for the Olympics, summer or winter, to be shared by two countries.

The two sides also agreed to form unified teams at the Tokyo Summer Paralympics in 2020, in addition to their earlier deal to jointly compete at the Olympics in the same year. They have yet to determine which Olympic sport will have North and South Koreans on the same team, but the South's chief delegate said a decision will be reached in the next few weeks. "We agreed to narrow down the sports to those that will see a synergy effect under cooperation between the South and North," vice sports minister Roh Tae-kang said after the meeting, according to pool reports.

The two Koreas technically remain at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice instead of a peace treaty with military clashes often erupting along the frontier. But ties improved markedly after Pyongyang sent athletes and top delegates — including leader Kim's younger sister — to the 2018 Winter Games held in the South in February, for which the two rivals also formed a joint women's ice hockey team. Kim has made a series of reconciliatory gestures since then, including a landmark summit with US President Donald Trump in Singapore in June and three summits with Moon — a dove who advocates dialogue with the North.

US-backed forces retake IS hub in Syria

AFP ■ BEIRUT

Kurdish-dominated forces backed by air strikes by a US-led coalition retook full control of a key jihadist hub in eastern Syria on Friday, a war monitor said.

The Syrian Democratic Forces secured Hajin, the largest settlement in what is the last pocket of territory controlled by the Islamic State group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. "After a week of heavy fighting and

air strikes, the SDF were able to kick IS out of Hajin," Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based monitoring organisation, said.

The operation was completed at dawn, he said, a day after SDF forces fanned out across the large village in the Euphrates valley.

The last IS fighters on Thursday were confined to a network of tunnels and the edges of Hajin, which lies in the eastern province of Deir

Ezzor, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the border with Iraq.

The area held by IS is sometimes referred to as the "Hajin pocket", the last lump of a once-sprawling "caliphate" the group proclaimed in 2014 over swathes of Syria and Iraq.

According to Abdel Rahman, a total of 17,000 fighters from the Kurdish-Arab SDF alliance are involved in the operation to flush IS out of its last bastion.

Irish Parl votes to legalise abortion

PTI ■ LONDON

Ireland's parliament has passed landmark legislation to make abortion legal for the first time in the Catholic-majority country, a "historic moment" which came after an Indian dentist died from blood poisoning in 2012 when the doctors refused her repeated requests to abort the foetus.

Ireland voted decisively to change the Constitution to repeal the Eighth Amendment in May, with 66.4 per cent voting in favour of new legislation to allow for the termination of pregnancies. "The bill that allows for the introduction of abortion services in Ireland has passed all stages of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) and will now go to President Michael D Higgins to be signed into law," Irish Broadcaster RTE reported on Thursday.

"Historic moment for Irish women. Thanks to all who supported and well done to (Health Minister) Simon Harris for steering this through both Houses," Ireland's Indian-origin President Leo Varadkar said. The new development has



come following a rising number of distressing stories about women unable to get an abortion in Ireland. One of the high-profile cases was that of 31-year-old Indian dentist Savita Halappanavar, who died in agony from blood poisoning after doctors refused her repeated requests for an abortion while she was having a miscarriage at a Galway hospital in 2012. Her death helped "personalise" the debate around abortion, said a legal scholar at Trinity College Dublin. "This is a genuinely historic moment. It paves the way for the implementation of the service for ter-

mination of pregnancy in January 2019," said Minister Harris. The Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Bill allows for abortion services to be provided "on demand" up to the 12th week of a pregnancy, in the case of a fatal foetal abnormality or where the physical or mental health of the mother is in danger.

Since the bill's introduction at first stage in October, there have been some minor changes, including a decision to review the legislation after three years, rather than five years as was originally planned. Two different doctors will be

allowed to assess a woman in early pregnancy and the offences section has been moved from the front of the bill, the BBC reported. "I want to thank the campaigners who fought for 35 years to change a nation, to change hearts and minds.

I want to thank the minority who fought the battle in here when it was convenient for the majority to ignore. "But today, I think mostly of the thousands of women who were forced to make the journey to access care that should have been available in their own country," Harris said.

Ireland is a Catholic-majority country with about 80 per cent of Irish people describing themselves as Catholic in the last census in 2016 even as the influence of the Church has waned in recent years. Varadkar, a 39-year-old Indian-origin doctor, scripted history in June last year by becoming Ireland's youngest and the first openly gay prime minister of the Catholic-majority country, as he promised to build "a republic of opportunity".

German Parliament approves third gender identity for records

AFP ■ BERLIN

The German parliament has approved a third gender option for official records that will allow people to be registered as "diverse". Lawmakers approved the change late Thursday.

The government had to act after Germany's highest court ruled last year that people must be allowed to register

as neither male nor female, ordering authorities to create a third identity or scrap gender entries altogether.

That followed a case in which a plaintiff had sought unsuccessfully to

have their entry in the birth register changed from "female" to "inter/diverse" or "diverse". Until now, the only other option was to leave the gender blank. Advocacy groups and some opposition politicians argue the resulting legislation doesn't go far enough. In most cases, it requires people to produce a doctor's certificate to change their status.

Indian techie sentenced to 9 years in prison for sexual assault inside plane

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

An Indian IT professional was sentenced to nine years of imprisonment on Thursday on charges of a "brazen sexual assault" against a fellow female passenger inside a commercial airplane early this year. Prabhu Ramamoorthy, 35, who came to the US on a H-1B visa in 2015, will be deported after he serves his sentence, a federal court in Detroit said as it sentenced the Indian national to nine years of imprisonment. Judge Terrence Berge hoped it would be grave enough to deter others from committing similar crimes. Federal prosecutors had sought 11 years of imprisonment for Ramamoorthy.

"Everyone has the right to be secure and safe when they travel on airplanes. We will not tolerate the behaviour of anyone, who takes advantage of victims who are in a vulnerable position. We appreciate the victim in this case for her



courage to speak out," US Attorney Matthew Schneider said after the sentencing was announced.

Ramamoorthy was convicted in August after a five-day trial that was conducted before United States District Judge Terrence Berg. The jury deliberated approximately three-and-a-half hours before returning the guilty verdict. According to the evidence presented at the trial, on January 3,

Ramamoorthy had engaged in a sexual act with a female, while she was sleeping on a flight from Las Vegas to Detroit. Ramamoorthy was seated along with his wife, when he sexually assaulted his co-passenger.

During the trial, the government admitted evidence demonstrating that Ramamoorthy had digitally penetrated the woman sleeping next to him during the overnight flight. The sexual assault woke her up, she found her pants unbuttoned and unzipped, and sought help from the flight attendants.

The sentence was proof that the safety and security of all aircraft passengers was a priority for the FBI, said Timothy R. Slater, Special Agent in Charge, Detroit Division of the FBI.

In recent years, a number of Indian nationals have been arrested or charged with sexual assaults inside a plane. The

FBI says airplane sexual assault is a serious offence that is on the rise. FBI statistics indicate that investigations of mid-air sexual assaults increased by 66 per cent from 2014 to 2017.

That was in part due to increasingly "cramped, confined spaces; alcohol and drugs; fewer flight attendants; and dark cabins on night flights" — factors that "likely embolden offenders" — the FBI said in a recent report.

The cramped style of airplane seating can exacerbate trauma for victims. According to mental health professionals, victims who are violated in confined spaces feel even more helpless, vulnerable and powerless.

Victims may also feel intimidated by the person sitting next to them since the seating arrangement means that the perpetrator is effectively blocking the victim from getting up, according to the FBI.

Cinema, museum visits may ward off depression in elderly: Study

PTI ■ LONDON

Regular visits to the cinema, theatre or to museums could dramatically reduce the chances of becoming depressed in old age, a study claims. Researchers at University College London in the UK found a clear link between the frequency of 'cultural engagement' and the chances of someone over 50 developing depression.

The study is the first to show that cultural activities not only help people manage and recover from depression but can actually help to prevent it. The study, published in the British Journal of Psychiatry, found people who attended films, plays or exhibitions every few months had a 32 per cent lower risk of developing depression, with those attending once a month or more having a 48 per cent lower risk. "Generally speaking, people know the ben-



efits of eating their five-a-day and of exercise for their physical and mental health, but there is very little awareness that cultural activities also have similar benefits," said Daisy Fancourt, lead author of the study.

"People engage with culture for the pure enjoyment of doing so, but we need to be raising awareness of their wider benefits too," Fancourt said. The study looked at data on more than 2,000 people over the age of 50, who took part in the long-running English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). The

researchers were able to look at data collected from people's answers to questionnaires and in one-to-one interviews over the course of ten years.

This included information about how often they visited the theatre, concerts or the opera, the cinema, art galleries, exhibitions or museums. Even when the results were adjusted to take account of differences in people's age, gender, health and their levels of wealth, education and exercise, the benefits of cultural activities remained clear.

Those benefits were also independent of whether or not people had contact with friends and family or took part in social activities like clubs and societies. The researchers believe the power of these cultural activities lies in the combination of social interaction, creativity, mental stimulation and gentle physical activity they encourage.

SHORT CIRCUITS

DEEPIKA PADUKONE
It feels nice to be one of the top actresses of Bollywood. It's not something that has fallen in my lap. My message to kids is that work hard, believe in your dreams and have fun while you are at it. Life is not only about being at the top, but more about enjoying the process.



KAILASH KHER
Even if we touch the sky, we cannot uproot ourselves. *Koi kitna bhi bada ho, apne bado se bada nahi hota. Ye mere bado ki dharti hai.* (No matter how much one achieves, s/he is not bigger than her/his elders. This is the land of my elders). It's nostalgic and emotional to sing for my people on my homeground.



RANVEER SINGH
Marriage is like the best thing that has ever happened to me. I feel some kind of magic. It's like I'm invincible. You know in those superhero movies, you know that moment when the suit comes on. I feel like marriage has done that to me. I would highly recommend it to the entire young population.



MATTHEW HEALY
I don't think it is particularly brave to be talking about my drug addiction in my song. Telling the truth is the only option. That's why I represent it in my art and the way I speak and the way I am with people. It is important for me to be upfront. People can deal with anything if it's true.

JENNIFER LOPEZ
Limitless is a song that Sia wrote for the movie, *Second Act*. It's the anthem for the film. I asked her watch the movie and tell me what you think — if you're inspired, write something, and she wrote that song which is I thought I had to be somebody else, but look at me now, I'm limitless.



EVENT 30 MINUTES

ENCOUNTER 20 MINUTES

NOT JUST FOOD

Founders RUCHI SIBAL and ADITI KAPOOR tell CHAHAK MITTAL how the Palate Fest goes beyond conventional culinary habits to promote healthier initiatives among the public



What were called the *melas*, popularly known as amusement fairs, have now got a suave new avatar as theme-based festivals and extravaganzas, especially ones that are centred food. In fact, the turn of the season seems to signal the start of a host of events centred around gourmet eating. This trend has not only acquired a must-do status among the denizens of the capital but also shapes the face for various cuisines and food cultures in the year to come.

Ruchi Sibal, co-founder and director of the Palate Fest, says that the festival was the first-of-its-kind when it was launched five years ago. "We conceptualised the show keeping in mind a space where there is something for everyone including kids and adults. If it provides a section to particular cuisines to showcase, there is also a special section for kids as well as one for presenting food products for adults," she says.

There will be gaming zones for kids and sections that promote healthy eating habits. It also gives a platform for various chefs and cooks to share and learn new recipes. With about 80 stalls, the festival offers piquant food options like freshly-skewed fish, barbecued chicken, noodles, and various cuisines including Mexican and pan-Asian. "Food is something that can bring everybody together. People used to go for picnics in the parks earlier. Now that concept is vanishing. However, such festivals, in a way, are trying to replicate the experience minus the preparation and time that these entailed. These aim to bring in delicacies at big venues," believes Ruchi.

So what is the biggest element that the festival offers? Founder Aditi Kapoor says that by bringing in chefs from many segments, they are trying to promote healthier food eating habits. She says, "We have chef Sabyasachi who promotes 'healthy bingeing' of fruits and dry fruits including dehydrated mangoes without any added sugar. He also brings fresh eating habits by avoiding trans-fat and including a tomato and cucumber salad."

Ruchi lists some of the elements that have been added for the first time in the fest. "So we have a country pavilion for Mexico in a corner. It will present their local cuisine and culture. We have also expanded our entertainment factor where we'll have the kids' zone. Earlier everything was in one area, now there are separate sections for everyone. We also have little food alleys where there will be young and significant food brands. There is also more participation from even the general public."

She mentions the B2B programme where new businesses for food can be thought about and set up. She says, "Anyone, people from the government, commercial heads from embassies, wedding planners or gifting businesses, who want to team up with like-minded individuals and create something related to food. The fest offers the space to incubate new ideas."

Aditi believes that street food in India was always more popular but today the Indian audience is open to more cuisines and food cultures. She says, "It's not just about having *chowmein*, *butter chicken* or *chole bhature* anymore, or going out to have one

food item. Such a festival gives a roof to all kinds of cuisines together." She says that this scenario has evolved among the current population as they are travelling a lot more. "When they like something in a foreign land, they also wish for it to be present and accessible in their own country. Now with growing awareness, the availability has also increased. Today there's a plethora of things to explore," she says. While talking about the challenges, she agrees that there are always hurdles while creating something so massive. "But," she says, "the biggest one is to not become stagnant and do the same thing year after year. There should always be certain additions that give a new vibe. This time there are food sessions and talks on healthy food, sections for food art and organic products, entertainment and more." She recalls that when they implemented their idea for the first time, half a decade ago, "there was one challenge — understanding. We wanted people to comprehend that it is not just a frivolous food festival that has some drinks and music but also amusement related to food as well as an



opportunity to gain some knowledge around various cuisines." So what have been the patterns that she has observed during the course of five years? "The demographic of the country is so wide that there are no particular lines that hit the highest graph. If some follow more international dishes, some still stick to Indian food. Those who have tried things before and have liked them want to stick to them. There are variations so there can't be just one statistic. But, the Indian audience is indeed increasingly heading towards global food movements," says Aditi.

The three-day extravaganza will also see Bollywood actress Taapsee Pannu greeting audience. There will be performances by singers like Daler Mehendi on December 16, while Jasmine Sandlas and Tulsi Kumar will be performing today. A few names from the culinary space are Big Wong, Jom Jom Malay, Bombay Brasserie, The Great Kabab Factory, Orient Heritage, Wok to Walk, Olives of Spain, Kiaras Soul Kitchen, among others. (The festival at Nehru Park ends on Sunday.)

'ART IS NEVER A COMPETITION'

Filmmaker IRAM HAQ's *What Will People Say* has been selected as Norwegian entry for the best foreign language film at the 91st Academy Awards

Norwegian-Pakistani actress filmmaker Iram Haq, whose film *What Will People Say* has been selected as Norwegian entry for the best foreign language film at the 91st Academy Awards, says telling a compelling story is more important for her than winning an award because she does not believe in competition when it comes to art.

How did she first react on her film being chosen to represent Norway at the Oscars.

Haq, whose film stars Indian actors Adil Hussain, Ekavali Khanna and Rohit Sarafi said, "When I started making the film, the most important thing for me was to tell a story in an utmost honest manner. And as an individual, I strongly believe that art is never a competition."

"Of course, it is a big honour for me that my film has been chosen but I want to say that it is not possible to compete in art. Reaching out to people with a story is important," added Haq, whose earlier film 'I am Yours' was also selected as the official Norwegian Oscar entry for Best Foreign Language Film.

This year, Rima Das's *Village Rockstar* has been selected as India's official entry to Oscar.

The story of Haq's film deals with the journey of a young girl who is dealing with socio-cultural difference and a disturbed relationship with her parents.

According to her, understanding the generational gap and expressing a critical view on the matter through the film was very important.

Talking about projecting a balanced view with the story, Haq said, "It was important for me to put out both sides of the story. You see, the film is basically a love story between a father and his daughter and that does not really work because they are coming from two different generation, gender and mindset."

"While the daughter understands the cultural values of her father and how he is struggling to accept the cultural difference of a world that is very different from a regular south Asian society, the girl is a Pakistani born and brought up in Norway. It is almost impossible for her to live her entire life to please her family."

The film not just features Indian actors, but is also shot in various parts of India, mostly in Rajasthan. In fact, Adil won the Best Actor award at the Amanda Award or the Norwegian National Awards.

On casting Indian talent, especially Adil, Haq said, "He is a wonderful actor and he was the perfect choice for playing the father. How wonderfully he transformed the character from script to screen through his performance."

Being a Pakistani girl who is born and brought up in Norway herself, just like the pro-



tagonist Nisha — played by Maria Mozhdah — the film is quite autobiographical for the director. Reflecting upon that, she said, "When our parents went abroad and were not well-integrated, they feared to embrace the new culture. That is how they ended up taking wrong decisions for their children."

"I had to live life like a well-mannered South Asian girl in my home because according to my parents, 'log kya kahenge (what will people say)' otherwise, we will lose out on our tradition and culture. They think the new generation will lose themselves in the western culture."

"I wanted the young generation to break free of that constant thought of *log kya kahenge* and assert that we are not here to live up to the expectation of 'log (people)'... we are here to live our *zindagi* (life). This is how I always stand by my child as a mother," added Haq.

She was kidnapped and taken to Pakistan and lived there for a year. She had lost connection with her parents.

"I want to say that the story of the film is told with a lot of love but at the same time, it is a critical voice on how you shut down a young voice, or the voice of a girl, because she is a girl or because the individual is young. I am a strong believer of respecting young voice."

Before making her directorial debut in 2010 with the short film *Little Miss Eyeflap*, Haq worked as an actress, writer and theatre artiste for many years.

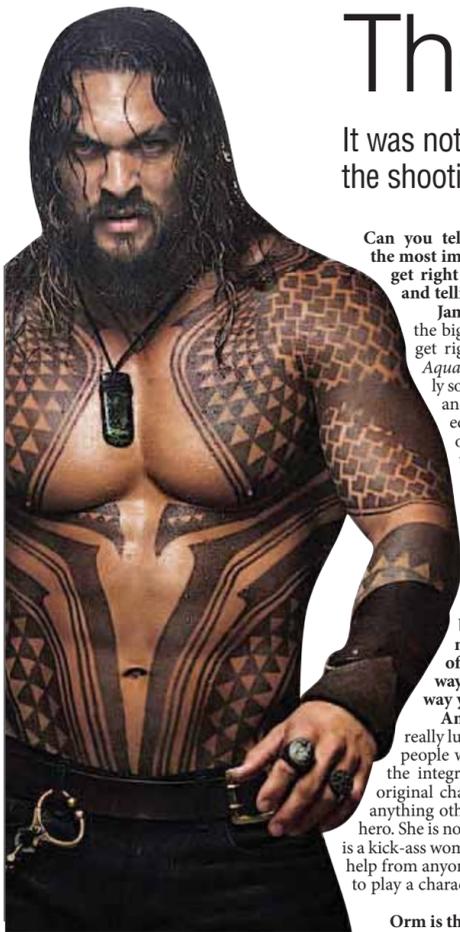
Is she interested in collaborating more with Indian actors? She said, "I have already worked with Indian artistes and producers over here in India and of course I love India. I speak the language and it feels like they are my people. So, I am open to the idea of collaborating with Indian artistes in the near future."

—IANS

DIALOGUE 40 MINUTES

The water game

It was not just the storyline but also the effort and passion that went into the shooting of *Aquaman* that makes it a much-awaited film, says its cast



Can you tell us James, what was the most important part for you to get right in creating this world and telling this story visually?

James Wan: Probably one of the biggest visuals I wanted to get right was the costume of *Aquaman*. That was definitely something we worked hard and long on. I really wanted to capture the vibrancy of Atlantis and all the underwater kingdoms and do justice to the comic book while obviously, filtering it through my own sensibility.

Mera is fierce. She goes toe-to-toe with the bad guy. What are you most proud of in terms of this character — the way she was written and the way you portrayed her?

Amber Heard: Well, I feel really lucky to have worked with people who wanted to maintain the integrity and strength of the original character. Mera never was anything other than a bad-ass super hero. She is no damsel in distress. Mera is a kick-ass woman and doesn't need any help from anyone. It was amazing to get to play a character like her.

Orm is the villain of the film but

he also has a point about humankind destroying the oceans. What was it like playing the many sides of this complex character?

Patrick Wilson: Well, his fight is perfectly understandable. There's a long history of Aquaman protecting oceans, fighting whaling, saving fishermen, all throughout comic history. I like that they left the pollution up to Orm because it enables you to have a really violent response. And I think there's something cathartic for an audience watching that. I think you'd be hard-pressed to find someone who didn't think we were destroying the oceans; of course we are. And, of course, it's something we all need to take heed of — not that, that's the main theme of the story, but certainly that's Orm's track when he sets out to combine his armies and take on the surface. Everybody says, 'Yeah, I get it. So, it's a fun way in, because then you've got conflict. You sort of wonder, so he's the little brother of an older brother he never had?' He knows deep down he is the firstborn, so there are all those very Shakespearean complex emotions that he's dealing with. But you start him from a very organic place, then you can go as big as you want, which we do.

James, what was your biggest challenge, and why Jason?

James Wan: Ultimately, it is just bringing his personality to this character — not bringing him to *Aquaman*, but bringing *Aquaman* to him. And what I

love most about it is I get to be the one to showcase the other side of Jason Momoa that not many people have seen, which is the funny side of him. And after this movie comes out, people are going to see what a great potential romantic lead he is as well.

Jason Momoa: I just want to speak English. I don't want to fight anymore.

James Wan: But that's what I love about Jason — he comes in and just makes a statement with this character, and that's what this first movie really needs.

When you first learned that you were going to play Aquaman, how did it make you feel to know you'd be taking on one of the most iconic heroes known in comic books?

Jason Momoa: When Zack (Snyder, the director) first told me I'd be the cast... I wish I had a picture of my face because, I am the last person he should be hiring. I thought I'd be playing a villain. It was an honour. Zack's perspective is so radical, and what it offered to the team in Justice League was something we hadn't seen. And it's not until the end of this movie that we get to him being a king.

With so many water effects in this movie, what were some of the challenges you ran into?

James Wan: You hear it all the time from filmmakers that making movies with water is not the most pleasant thing. It's uncomfortable and slows down the speed of the film. The irony is all the sequences



that are actually fully submerged in this underwater world — that was actually shot dry for wet. And that's literally what it sounds like, in these rigs that simulate swimming, floating, and how your body moves underwater. But we did play with a lot of water as well. I don't think you can make an *Aquaman* movie and actually not have anyone get wet. And, again, the irony is that when we're actually above the water — when we're dry — that's when I have to trench the actors nonstop. When they're actually out of water, that's when they're dripping wet. But when you're underwater, people actually look dry, so that's why we shot it without water.

The biggest water set that we had in this film was the submarine sequence at the beginning. We built the submarine over a water tank and would just submerge it again and again. As we'd play out the scene, we would submerge it, and then bring it back out of the water tank, blow dry it down, and then do take two, and then take three. It was quite a laborious process. And, a bit of a pain.

Jason, this movie is going to mean something to Aquaman fans, but do you think it has something specific to say for people who are half-Asian or half-native Hawaiian?

Jason Momoa: Coming from the Polynesian islands, there are so many water gods that we have and so much folklore and mythology about how the islands came about — from Kanaloa to Tomaloa and Maui. It's the *Poseidon* story and I get to play that. To be the first mixed-raced Super Hero in 2018 is a huge honour. And also just to play it so close to who I am, with all of Arthur's imperfections. I don't have to be Superman — I'm not. But I got to play it as someone who really is split between those two worlds, and I'm excited for the world to see it.

What is the one thing you really hope people will take away from this film?

James Wan: For the fans out there who have stood by Aquaman all these years while people made fun of him, his comic book and all the characters in his world — I want them to see that this is finally the opportunity to get revenge. This movie is made with a lot of passion. I want people to know that I respected the source material in making this film. And then, on the other side, I want to introduce all these characters to a whole new generation of kids that didn't grow up with Aquaman, and so I want the two separate worlds to come together.

Australia ahead despite India's strikes

Harris, Finch and Head score half centuries to put host in commanding position in 2nd Test



PTI ■ PERTH

India recovered from a patchy start to reduce Australia to 277 for six on the opening day of the second Test but the hosts still walked out with advantage considering the bowler-friendly conditions, here on Friday.

A 112-run opening stand between Marcus Harris (70) and Aaron Finch (50) vindicated their decision to bat on green top before Indian bowlers made a decent recovery by taking three wickets each in the last two sessions.

With the pitch offering better assistance from the post lunch session and the Indian bowlers managing to rectify their line and length, the visitors made inroads into the Australian batting line-up.

Skipper Tim Paine (16 not out) and Pat Cummins (11 not out) were unbeaten at stumps after enduring a testing spell from Jasprit Bumrah.

Pacer Ishant Sharma (2/35) and spinner Hanuma Vihari (2/53) took two wickets apiece while Bumrah (1/41) and Umesh Yadav (1/68) accounted for one batsman each.

Following a good start, Shaun Marsh (45) and Peter Handscomb (7) looked to extend their fourth-wicket partnership but could only manage to add three runs as Sharma broke through early in the final session.

Handscomb looked to cut away too close to his body, and Virat Kohli held a stunning one-handed catch at second



slip to dismiss him in the second over after tea.

Marsh and Travis Head (58) then added 84 runs for the fifth wicket, and in doing so took Australia past 200 in the 69th over. India could have broken through early, but Rishabh Pant put down a regulation catch from Marsh (on 24) off Vihari in the 67th over.

India were looking in bother again when Marsh fell against the run of play, trying to cut Vihari and edging to first slip where Ajinkya Rahane made no mistake.

Head reached his third Test half-century off 70 balls but threw it all away as he square cut a wide delivery off

Sharma six overs later and was caught at wide third man.

Earlier, India struck thrice post lunch as Australia were reduced to 145-3 at tea.

Jasprit Bumrah (1/41) and Umesh Yadav (1/68) struck during a tight spell in the second hour of play after lunch, as Australia lost three wickets for 22 runs.

Post lunch, Marcus Harris had brought up his maiden Test half-century off 90 balls as he took his opening stand with Aaron Finch (50) to 112.

Their 100-stand had come up in the 34th over, with India leaking another 48 runs in the hour's play after the



ASHWIN INJURY COULD UNSETTLE INDIA: HUSSEY

PERTH: Former Australia batsman Michael Hussey believes the loss of star off-spinner R Ashwin to injury could unsettle India and may prove to be a big blow to the visitors' hopes of securing victory in the second Test.

quite a lot I would have thought," Hussey, who played 79 Tests for Australia during his career, was quoted as saying in *cricket.Com.Au*. "You could tell quite clearly in Adelaide they liked to use the spinner — much like Australia really — to bowl a lot of overs from one end and then rotate the faster men from the other end." Ashwin had returned figures of 6 for 149 in Adelaide.

break. Mohammed Shami (0-63) conceded 23 runs in his four-over second spell after lunch.

Finch too reached his second Test half-century off 103 balls as Australia reached a position of strength. But things turned thereafter as Bumrah struck first up in the 36th over, trapping Finch lbw with a fuller delivery.

KL Rahul dropped Harris (on 60) off Shami in the 45th over, with the fielder failing to time his jump at second slip. It didn't cost India too much though as four overs later, he hit a surprise bouncer from Vihari straight at Rahane at slip.

In between, Yadav used the pressure built and etched out Usman Khawaja's (5) wicket, out caught behind in the 46th over as India gained the fruits of their hard work in this second hour of play.

In the morning session, Australia defied a green-top wicket and made

steady progress to reach 66-0 at lunch.

The Perth wicket at the Optus Stadium was talked up as a raging green-top wicket, but the Australian openers defied all that speculation. For their part, Indian pacers chipped in with all possible help and bowled a poor first spell with the new ball.

Shami was India's best bowler of the first session as he bowled with immaculate control from the very beginning. He came on to bowl in the 12th over and immediately troubled the batsmen.

Finch survived an lbw shout on account of height as India wasted a DRS review. They had another loud shout turned down on the very next ball, but this time no review was taken.

India bowled better in the second hour of play and conceded only 19 runs in 13 overs. But the damage had already been done as the duo were set and the new ball had been wasted on a fresh pitch.

WE HAVE TO BE DISCIPLINED ON DAY 2: VIHARI

PTI ■ PERTH

All-rounder Hanuma Vihari says key for Indian batsmen will be to remain disciplined on a pitch which has got better for the fast bowlers after a good contest between ball and bat on the opening day of the second Test.

The pitch was slow in the morning, but it quickened up after lunch. The Indian bowlers adjusted well to take six wickets.

"For us the important thing is to not think about those aspects too much. If it is up and down, you can't do much about it. If we can keep that out of mind, we will be successful. As batsmen, we will try to be as disciplined as possible, just how we did in the second innings of the last Test," Vihari said.

"You have to play ball by ball. That's what matters. If you are thinking about the previous ball, you won't react perfectly to the next ball. Keep that ball out of your mind," he added.

Indian bowlers were "disciplined" after an ordinary start on the opening day of the second Test and the target for day two is to restrict Australia to 320-odd in the first innings.

"The first hour tomorrow (on Saturday) will be very crucial. If we get them out for below 320, we are right back in the game. If we bat well, we have a good chance. The first hour is crucial," said Vihari.



Shreyas, Lad batter Baroda attack

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shreyas Iyer slammed 11 sixes and 17 fours in a blistering knock of 178 and put on a double century stand with skipper Siddhesh Lad, who made a responsible 130, to power Mumbai to an imposing score of 439 for 8 against Baroda here on Friday.

Iyer was in punishing form, sparing no one from the visitors' ranks to compile his 12th first class hundred in his first game of the season as he rescued the hosts from 28 for 2 with a stand of 283 in just over 45 overs with Lad on day one of the elite Group A game.

Hardik Pandya, back in competitive cricket after recovering from a back spasm opened the bowling for Baroda and rocked Mumbai with a two-wicket haul for 21 in his impressive comeback spell of six overs.

Iyer smacked left arm spinner Bhargav Bhatt for three sixes in four balls to race to his century in 86 balls and then singled out veteran Yusuf Pathan for similar punishment by carting the off-break bowler for three successive sixes. A more sedate Lad, who faced 173 balls and struck two sixes and 12 fours, denied Baroda a wicket for more than four hours spread over the first two sessions.

However, Baroda grabbed five more wickets before stumps with Pandya snapping up one more victim, in-form all rounder Shivam Dube, to finish with end of day impressive figures of 3 for 74 in 15 overs.

Bhatt picked up four wickets while Pathan was the other successful

bowler.

Meanwhile, at Surat, despite skipper Priyank Panchal's 94, Gujarat were bowled out for 216 against Karnataka. For the visitors, Vinay Kumar, Prateek Jain, Ronit More, Krishnappa Gowtham and Shreyas Gopal picked two wickets each.

At New Delhi, Vidarbha reached 243 for 6 against Railways with skipper Faiz Fazal top-scoring with 53.

And at Nashik, Saurashtra batsmen hammered a listless Maharashtra attack to end the opening day at 269/3.

ODISHA BUNDLE OUT RAJASTHAN BHUBANESWAR: Odisha bowlers produced a spirited show as they bowled out Rajasthan for a meagre 135 on the opening day of their Elite Group C encounter.

For Odisha, the Mohanty duo — Basant and Rajesh — both right-arm pacers — did the job as they shared nine wickets among them.

Basant returned with exceptional figures of 6-20 and was ably supported by Rajesh (3-63) as Rajasthan batters had a horrid time at the Vikash cricket ground here.

For them, only skipper Mahipal Lomror (85) played a valiant knock to ensure that the side crossed the 100-run mark.

Lomror, who was the last man to be dismissed, struck 14 fours and a six, as he waged a lone battle.

In reply, Odisha lost four wickets and were 78/4 at close of play, still adrift by 57 runs. Debasis Samantray (30 not out) and Abhishek Raut (22 not out) are holding the fort.

Meanwhile, in Agartala Pratyush Singh-led Tripura's fightback as the hosts reached to 247/7 at stumps on day 1. They were 128/6 at one stage.

In Goalpara, Puducherry's Fabid Ahmed hogged the limelight with an all-round show on a day 22 wickets tumbled in their Plate Group match against Arunachal Pradesh.

The Kerala recruit top-scored with an unbeaten 41 before Puducherry were bundled out for 136.

Ahmed then foxed the Arunachal Pradesh batsmen with his off-spin on way to career-best figures of 6/29.

Former India pacer Pankaj Singh (3/20) also chipped in with crucial breakthroughs as Arunachal Pradesh folded for 82 at their adopted home venue.

Under fading lights, Arunachal Pradesh's Upadhya Deendyal dismissed both the openers for a total of 22 wickets on the day.

At stumps on day one, Puducherry were 28/2, leading by 82 runs.

'AUS PACERS CAN LEARN FROM INDIA'S MISTAKE'

PTI ■ PERTH

Former skipper Allan Border feels the Australian pace battery will have the advantage of learning from the mistakes of Indian seamers, who bowled a "little bit short" on the opening day of second Test.

"Given the amount of deliveries that went past the outside edge India will feel they could have had a better day. They bowled well but if I'm being supercritical they were a little bit short," he wrote in a column for *Foxsports*.

"With so many balls passing the outside edge you've got to err on the fuller side. You may occasionally get hit down the ground but any ball that moves off the seam is good chance of catching the edge."

"The good news for Australia is their bowlers will have learned from what worked and what didn't, and when it is their turn to bowl they will be confident. There



were just enough balls bouncing awkwardly or moving off the seam to encourage them."

With R Ashwin injured, India drafted in Umesh Yadav in the playing XI, making it a four-men pace attack — only the third time in their Test history.

Part-time spinner Hanuma

Vihari, who was included in the team in place of the injured Rohit Sharma, took two wickets and Border hinted India might have missed a trick by not opting for a specialist tweaker, looking at the variable bounce.

"Moving forward in this Test we'll see whether or not India has missed a trick by not picking a specialist spinner," he wrote.

"Despite part-time off-spinner Hanuma Vihari's two bonus wickets, I still think this is a seamer's wicket."

The former Australia batsman said the hosts' first-innings runs might prove to be gold on this pitch.

"Both teams went hard on Friday but Australia finished it with their noses in front. On a surface like this runs on the board, particularly in the first innings, are like gold."

"At the same time, we won't have a true sense of where this game stands until India has also had the chance to bat on it."

Lyon will enjoy bowling at Perth: Finch

PTI ■ PERTH

Australian opener Aaron Finch believes the second Test against India is going to be a "real grind" and off-spinner Nathan Lyon will play an important role considering the amount of bounce on offer at the Perth wicket.

"It's going to be one of those games that'll be a real grind for both sides. The position we're in we would have taken at the start of the day, no doubt, especially winning the toss and batting," Finch told reporters.

"I think Nathan Lyon will enjoy bowling with the amount of bounce on this track, no doubt he will be excited to bowl here," added the opener, who scored 50 in Australia's first innings on Friday.

Asked about making the Indian bowlers work hard, Finch said, "Our plan was to bat on this wicket regardless of what happened in Adelaide, the heat and



getting miles into their legs.

"That was our plan to bat first anyway and take that challenges head on. No doubt it might play a factor later in this game, or third or fourth Test, but it was always our plan to bat (after winning the toss)."

Talking about his partner young Harris, who scored his maiden Test half-century at his home ground, Finch said, "I think what everyone's seen from him so far, not a lot fazes him. He's a pretty chilled out character who just goes with the flow and that's the way he's always been."

Jharkhand fightback after early jolts

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Half-centuries from Ishank Jaggi, Ishan Kishan and Shahbaz Nadeem helped Jharkhand recover after a disastrous start in the Ranji Trophy Group C match against Uttar Pradesh at Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Stadium on Friday.

The visitors lost their first wicket in the 2nd over of the day when Suresh Raina caught Nazim Siddiqui in Yash Dayal's first over. After the early setback, Kumar Deobrat and Utkarsh Singh played sensibly, before Dhruv Pratap Singh caught Utkarsh (13) in front of the wicket while Imtiyaz Ahmed also trapped Deobrat (33) to reduced Jharkhand to 55/3 in 23.4 overs.

But their was no respite in the offing for visitors as Dhruv sent back dangerous Saurabh Tiwary (8). Then skipper Ishan Kishan joined Ishank at the crease and the both added 82 runs, before Dhruv cleaned up Ishan to end his strokeful innings of 54 runs. Dhruv sson claimed his fourth wicket of the day in the form of Anukul Roy (15), leaving Jharkhand in tatters.

After that Ishank Jaggi (76 not out) and all-rounder Shahbaz Nadeem (70 not out) took visitors to a respectable 278/6.

BRIEF SCORES: Jharkhand: 278/6 (Ishank Jaggi 76 not out, Shahbaz Nadeem 70 not out, Dhruv Pratap Singh 4-76).



B'desh cruise to series win

AFP ■ SYLHET

Tamim Iqbal and Soumya Sarkar slammed half-centuries as Bangladesh cruised to an eight-wicket win over the West Indies in the third and final one-day international to take the three-match series 2-1 on Friday.

Tamim hit an unbeaten 81 while Soumya added 80 off 81 balls to guide Bangladesh to 202-2 in 38.3 overs after Mehidy Hasan's career best 4-29 helped the home side restrict the West Indies to 198-8 in 50 overs.

Shai Hope fought a lone battle for the tourists, scoring his second successive hundred of the series but it was in vain as no other batsman provided support.

Fresh from an unbeaten 146 off 144 balls in the previous match, Hope struck another unconquered knock of 108 off 131 to prop up the visitors, taking his tally in the series to 297 runs.

Bangladesh made a steady response, with Tamim and Liton Das hitting 45 runs for



the opening wicket before Liton offered a catch to Rowman Powell at mid-on off Keemo Paul.

Soumya and Tamim denied the West Indies any momentum, putting 131 runs in their second wicket stand, which all but sealed the contest and the series.

Mushfiqur Rahim was unbeaten on 16 at the other end.

Earlier, skipper Mashrafe Mortaza and spinner Shakib Al Hasan claimed two wickets each after man-of-the-match Mehidy rattled the West Indies' top-order.

"It was a good match — Hope played an excellent

innings," Mashrafe said after the match.

"Our bowlers have been very good. Spinners have been tight and pacers also stuck to the plans," he added.

Earlier, Hope defied the spirited Bangladesh attack, hitting Shakib over the long off to bring up his fourth ODI century after the ninth wicket had fallen for 177 runs.

The opener, who was named player of the series, also hit 10 fours in his five innings.

Bangladesh won the first match by five wickets on Sunday before the West Indies levelled the series with four-wicket win in the second match two days later.



Aus face Dutch in last 4 tie

Two-time defending champion play Netherlands while Belgium to take on England in WC semifinal



Knowles and Glenn Turner have retired but the Kookaburras have rebuilt brilliantly under coach Colin Batch since the disappointment of Rio Olympics and have returned to the top of the world rankings.

The Dutch, on the other hand, are unquestionably much tougher under Max Caldas now than they were four years ago.

Australia's Daniel Beale too agreed that it would be a tough, exciting battle on Saturday for a place in Sunday's summit clash.

"We are into the crucial stage of the tournament. We got to watch last night's match between Holland and India. So we have learnt a lot from that. We are expecting a very tough match tomorrow," he said.

"We have very proud history. There is no special formula. We work hard, we train hard. We are fiercely competitive. Every tournament we go to win."

Beale said what happened four years ago will hardly have any impact in Saturday's must-win game.

"In 2014 Australia had great success in the final but that was a long time ago and this group has changed immensely. So we are looking to create a bit of history," Beale said.

"Holland are a very tough team. They have quality players. Billy (Bakker), (Robert) Kemperman, (Valentin) Verga. We will do our homework and try to nullify them."

Meanwhile, Olympic Silver medalist Belgium too would be looking to create history by making their maiden World Cup final appearance when they take on England in the first semi-final earlier in the day.

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

A rare history awaits two-time defending champions Australia as they chase a record hat-trick of titles, taking on Netherlands in the semi-finals at the Kalinga Stadium on Saturday.

World No 1 Australia is second only to four-time champions Pakistan, having won the world title thrice before, which includes back-to-back Gold medals in the last two editions of the tournament in 2010 and 2014.

Come on Saturday, the Kookaburras will be chasing their third consecutive world crown.

But it would be easier said than done as in world No 4 Netherlands a tough contest awaits Australia.

The Dutch, who have won the title thrice before — the last time being in 1998 — too would be desperate to break their 20-year-old jinx.

Netherlands would be high on confidence especially after their hard-fought 2-1 win over home favourites India in the quarterfinals on Thursday.

Going by form and world ranking, it is expected to be an edge of the seat thriller between the two teams, who

prefer to play totally contrasting style of hockey.

While attacking hockey is the backbone of Australia, the Dutch mostly prefer to play waiting game with a compact defence and relying more on counters to surprise their opponents.

There is hardly anything to differentiate between the two sides going by recent head-to-head record.

Since 2013, Australia and Netherlands have played each other 11 times with the Kookaburras winning five and losing four while two ended in draws.

The Australians made a slow start but grew in confidence as the tournament progressed.

After a hard-fought 2-1 win over Ireland in their opener, Australia stepped on the gas and registered convincing wins over England (3-0), China (11-0) and France (3-0).

The Dutch, on the other hand, started with a bang and mauled Malaysia 7-0 before losing 1-4 to Germany.

They defeated Pakistan 5-1 in their last pool match before beating Canada 5-0 in the cross-overs and eking out a close 2-1 win over India in the quar-

AUSTRALIA-HOLLAND IN WORLD CUP

Year	Venue	Result	Score
1971	Barcelona	Holland beat Australia	1-0
1978	Buenos Aires	Holland beat Australia	3-2
1981-82	Mumbai	Australia beat Holland	3-2 (league)
1981-82	Mumbai	Australia beat Holland	4-2 (third place match)
1990	Lahore	Australia beat Holland	1-0
1994	Sydney	Holland beat Australia	3-1
1998	Utrecht	Holland beat Australia	6-2
2002	Kuala Lumpur	Australia beat Holland	4-1
2010	New Delhi	Australia beat Holland	2-1
2014	The Hague	Australia beat Holland	6-1

ENGLAND-BELGIUM IN WORLD CUP

Year	Venue	Result	Score
1973	Amsterdam	England beat Belgium	5-2
1978	Buenos Aires	Belgium beat England	1-0
2014	The Hague	England beat Belgium	3-2

Faisal Features

terfinals.

The Australia-Netherlands match has all the makings of a classic. In 2014 at The Hague, Australia came out on top against Netherlands 6-1 in front of home crowd to lift their second consecutive World Cup.

And Saturday's encounter will provide the Dutch an opportunity to avenge their loss four years ago.

But in the last four years since they met in the final of 2014, much has changed.

The likes of Jamie Dwyer, Mark

LOCAL EVENTS

SUSHMITA BAGS BRONZE

Sushmita Tripathi of SAI Regional Centre, Lucknow won a bronze medal in Taichiquan in Junior National Wushu Championship held at Namakal, Tamilnadu recently. This is first time a girl from Lucknow SAI has won medal in Junior National Championship. She is training under Vijendra Singh.

BADMINTON

The 43rd Yonex-Sunrise Akhilesh Das Gupta Memorial Junior (U-19) National Badminton Championships will begin at UP Badminton Academy from Sunday. The tournament carries a prizemoney of Rs 15 lakhs. UP Badminton Association chairman Viraj Sagar Das informed the mediapersons that the entry for spectators would be free and special arrangements would be made for students.

SEEDS: Junior Boy's: 1. Abhyansh Singh (UP), 2. Kiran Jorge (Kerala), 3. Alap Mishra (MP), 4. Arijit (Assam) & 5. Priyanshu Rajawat (MP); **Junior Girl's:** 1. Amolika Singh (UP), 2. Malvika Bansal (MH), 3. Gayatri Gopichand (Telangana), 4. Purva Burve (Air India), 5. Akarshi Kasyap (Air India).

CHESS TOURNEY

Lucknow District Chess Sports Association is organising the 17th Shivani Cup Sunday Open Chess Tournament at Shivani Public School on Sunday. The tournament will be played in open, women's, U-16, U-14 and U-10 categories. Interested may contact on 7459899385.

SAHARA LAUNCHES CRICKET ACADEMY



Sahara India Pariwar inaugurated the hi-tech cricket academy with state-of-the-art facilities on Lucknow-Bakshi ka Talab road on Friday. 'Sahasra' Subrata Roy Sahara officially launched the academy in the presence of Dy CM Dinesh Sharma, Minister Swati Singh, former cricketers Balwinder Singh Sandhu and RP Singh. The Academy is designed to provide world class training to young boys and girls of 9-12 years, 13-15 years and 16-23 years and will be mentored by legendary Kapil Dev. The academy is equipped with 14 pitches to adapt to different cricketing conditions comprising covered indoor astro-turf with center turf and cemented pitches, bowling machine, speed guns, video technical analysis etc.

PTI ■ GUANGZHOU

Olympic Silver medallist P V Sindhu continued her unbeaten run while debutant Sameer Verma also qualified for the knockout stage with a straight-game win in his last group B match at the BWF World Tour Finals, here on Friday.

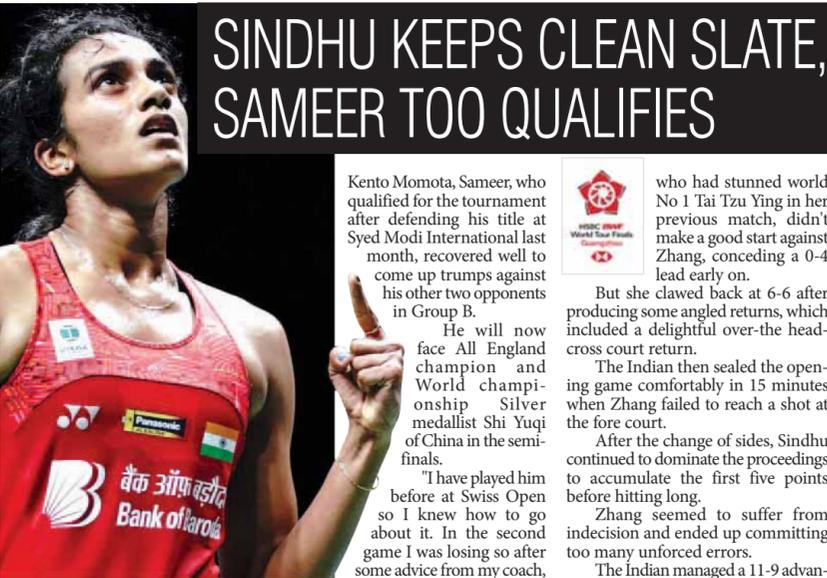
Playing her third successive year-ending finale, Sindhu dished out some deceptive strokes and showed precision during the 35-minute contest to prevail over world No 12 Beiwen Zhang 21-9, 21-15 in a one-sided women's singles contest to top Group A.

"I was down 2-6 initially but I picked up the lead, so after that I was fine," Sindhu, the last edition's runner-up, said after the match.

"I have played a few matches against her after the Indian Open final, so I took it as a fresh match," said the 23-year-old referring to her Indian Open final loss to Zhang at New Delhi early this year.

"I am happy with the three wins, it is a positive thing. I hope to move forward with the same positivity and do well in the semifinals," added Sindhu, who won all the three matches of her group and will now take on world No 8 and 2013 world champion Ratchanok Intanahon of Thailand in the semifinals.

On the adjacent court, 24-year-old Sameer showed great athleticism and produced a masterful performance to



SINDHU KEEPS CLEAN SLATE, SAMEER TOO QUALIFIES

Kento Momota, Sameer, who qualified for the tournament after defending his title at Syed Modi International last month, recovered well to come up trumps against his other two opponents in Group B.

He will now face All England champion and World championship Silver medallist Shi Yuqi of China in the semifinals.

"I have played him before at Swiss Open so I knew how to go about it. In the second game I was losing so after some advice from my coach, I kept my patience and now I am ready to play the semifinals," said Sameer.

"It has been a great experience playing my first world tour finals." In the women's singles, Sindhu,



who had stunned world No 1 Tai Tzu Ying in her previous match, didn't make a good start against Zhang, conceding a 0-4 lead early on.

But she clawed back at 6-6 after producing some angled returns, which included a delightful over-the-head-cross court return.

The Indian then sealed the opening game comfortably in 15 minutes when Zhang failed to reach a shot at the fore court.

After the change of sides, Sindhu continued to dominate the proceedings to accumulate the first five points before hitting long.

Zhang seemed to suffer from indecision and ended up committing too many unforced errors.

The Indian managed a 11-9 advantage at the interval after Zhang went long again.

The Indian committed three unforced errors before sealing the contest, following her opponent's mis-cued shot which went long.



AC Milan crash out of Europe

AFP ■ PARIS

Olympiakos dumped AC Milan out of the Europa League on Thursday after beating the seven-time European champions 3-1 in a pulsating clash in Greece, while Eintracht Frankfurt fans ran riot during the German side's win at Lazio and Celtic made the knockout stages despite losing to Salzburg at Celtic Park.

Captain Kostas Fortounis' penalty nine minutes from time saw the Greeks move into second place in Group F ahead of Gennaro Gattuso's Milan, who thought they had squeaked through when Cristian Zapata had pulled a goal back less than two minutes after putting the hosts 2-0 up with a comical own goal.

Olympiakos finished level on 10 points with Milan but qualified ahead of the Italians thanks to their superior goal difference following Milan's 3-1 win over the Greeks in October, and they end the group stage two points behind group winners Real Betis, who drew 0-0 at Dudelange.

Eintracht had already comfortably taken top spot in the group thanks to winning all five of their previous games, while Lazio were also in the last 32 regardless of the result of the match, won 2-1 by the away side as they came back from a goal down thanks to second-half strikes from Mijat Gacinovic and Sebastian Haller.

Last year's runners-up Marseille finished bottom of that group after losing 3-1 at home to Apollon Limassol and ending the group stage with just a single point.

CELTIC GET ONE OVER ON RANGERS

Celtic looked to be following Old Firm rivals Rangers out of the competition after Steven Gerrard's

side fell 1-0 at Rapid Vienna earlier on Thursday, but Tore Reginiussen's equaliser four minutes from time for Rosenborg at RB Leipzig allowed Brendan Rodgers' side to qualify second from Group B, two points ahead of the Bundesliga outfit.

Second-half goals from Munas Dabbur and Fredrik Gulbrandsen meant that Salzburg topped the group with a 100 per cent record after a 2-1 win, while Olivier Ntcham's stoppage-time penalty meant nothing for the result nor the final standings.

Chelsea, who had already won Group L, looked to be on their way to a perfect sixth win from six, but could only scrape a point at eliminated Vidi thanks to substitute Olivier Giroud's late free-kick, after an Ethan Ampadu own goal and Loic Nego's sumptuous volley had put the hosts a goal ahead.

BATE Borisov qualified alongside Chelsea after winning 3-1 at rock-bottom PAOK.

Alexandre Lacazette confirmed Arsenal's dominance of Group E with the only goal of a low-key 1-0 win over bottom side Qarabag, while second-placed Sporting Lisbon cruised past Vorskla Poltava 3-0.

Malmö are in the knockout stages after snatching a 1-0 win at Besiktas that saw the Swedes leapfrog their Turkish hosts in the extremely tight Group I.

All four teams in the group were in contention for qualification on Thursday, but Genk managed to hold on to first place after hammering Sarpsborg 4-0.

Sevilla took top spot in Group J from Krasnodar thanks to a 3-0 win, while Rennes pipped Astana to the knockout rounds with a 2-0 victory.

Bayer Leverkusen ensured first place in Group A with a 5-1 hammering of Larnaca, while Zurich drew 1-1 at Ludogorets.

Saina-Kashyap tie knot

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Star Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Parupalli Kashyap tied the knots in a simple ceremony here on Friday.

"Saina got married as per court rules today at about 11.30 (AM)," her father Harvir Singh said.

The wedding took place at Saina's residence in Orion villas at Raidurgam in Cyberabad.

"It was a small gathering of about 40 guests, including relatives of the Saina and Kashyap's families.

"It was a very simple ceremony and December 16th will be the reception," Singh said.

The guests included Governors

of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, according to Singh.

Saina posted a photograph with Kashyap on Friday, announcing her marriage.

"Best match of my life...#just-married," she wrote in Twitter.

Kashyap said, "We are very happy. Today was a north style wedding and 16th midnight is the muhurtam for the South Indian wedding."

While Saina wore a powder blue lehenga with minimal makeup and jewellery, Kashyap was dressed in a pink kurta and white pyjamas.

Saina and Kashyap, who met at Pullela Gopichand's academy, were in a relationship for quite some

time now. But the couple never came out in the open regarding their relation.

Saina had confirmed the news of their wedding in October but the hectic international badminton schedule kept them busy.

Last month, they started extending their wedding invitation to important personalities, including Telangana MLA KT Rama Rao, film star Chiranjeevi, owner of Hyderabad Hunters (PBL franchise) VRK Rao.

Saina and Kashyap's wedding is the latest among a string of high-profile weddings involving sports-people. Last year, India cricket captain Virat Kohli had married Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma in Italy.



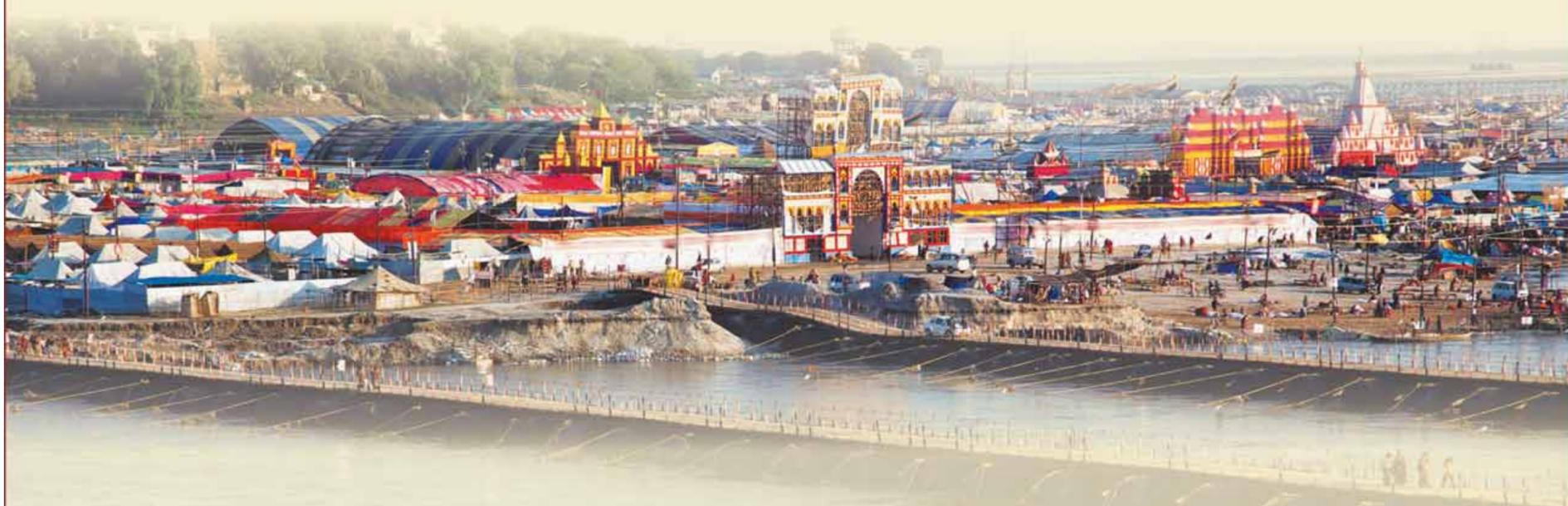
Divya Kumbh-Bhavya Kumbh



Welcome

All Head of Missions of Foreign Countries visiting Prayagraj on the occasion of Kumbh, the Largest human congregation of the world.

Date: 15th December, 2018



India

Uttar Pradesh is proud to have your presence on this occasion.

