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Federal Front staggers

Post tepid response from TMC and BJD, KCR hopes hinge on SP, BSP

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA/
OMER FAROOQ ■ NEW
DELHI/HYDERABAD

After lukewarm response to his proposed Federal Front from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her Odisha counterpart Naveen Patnaik, TRS supremo K Chandrasekhar Rao is in Delhi hoping that his proposed meeting with BSP chief Mayawati and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will help his effort to prop up non-BJP non-Congress alliance for the next year's Lok Sabha polls.

Sources said KCR is expected to meet Mayawati and Akhilesh on Wednesday, but so far the meetings are not confirmed. While Mayawati is in Delhi, SP sources in Lucknow said Akhilesh has not yet planned any visit to Delhi. It is interesting to watch the moves of KCR as his counterpart in Andhra Pradesh and TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu is also meeting Opposition leaders as part of his effort to form an anti-BJP grand alliance that will also include the Congress.

KCR is in the national Capital to also call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Union Ministers to talk about issues related to Telangana where he retained power last week.

The Congress which is spearheading an assortment of Opposition parties, includ-



ing the BSP, SP and TMC, has accused the TRS of being a BJP agent and feels that his proposed front cannot rescue the BJP as the front constituents will State specific anti-BJP alliance.

Criticising the TRS chief's efforts to forge a Federal Front of regional parties, the Congress said it is an attempt to help the BJP return to power after the next general elections. Claiming that the Chief Ministers of different States, whom KCR met would not fall for the idea of a third front, as the leaders of regional parties

would join a broad coalition with the Congress, leaving only TRS in the Federal Front.

"KCR's attempts to rope in regional parties and State Chief Ministers to be part of the Federal Front will only help the BJP," said Congress leader Rajeev Gowda.

Gowda further said the Congress would ensure that a *mahagathbandhan* (grand alliance) was formed with all regional, secular and progressive parties. "This federal front idea... The truth behind it is nothing but an attempt to ensure that BJP and 'Modi

Sarkar' come back to power," he alleged.

Meanwhile, reports from Hyderabad said even as KCR's mission to bring regional parties together to form a Federal Front reached New Delhi after passing through Bhuvaneshwar and Odisha, it was clear that the leaders whom he met so far have not made any direct commitment about their future course of action.

According to the sources in TRS, both Naveen and Mamata remained non-committal about the stand they would take on the formation of a front which

will not involve the Congress. Significantly, Mamata did not make any comment after meeting KCR in Kolkata on Monday. It was only KCR who promised that a concrete result of the deliberations will come out soon.

Sources said while KCR repeatedly asserted the need for all the regional parties to come together and offer an alternative to both the Congress and the BJP, the other regional leaders indicated that they would like to wait and watch till the 2019 polls were over.

"Some of the leaders want to keep their options open till after the elections and take a final decision depending on the election results," sources said.

"At the moment it appears that any third front or Federal Front will have to wait till the elections are over. At best it would be a post-poll arrangement, not any pre-poll alliance," said a TRS leader.

Meanwhile TRS member of Parliament Vinod Kumar said the idea of Federal Front is not new as KCR had thought about it back in 2006.

"Both NDA and UPA are seeking to rule the country on their own while KCR wants that the power should be in the hands of the regional parties to meet the aspirations of the people", he told the media. "If the regional parties had responded positively back in 2006, Telangana State would have become a reality then only," he said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi strolls on the Bogibeel Bridge, the longest rail-cum-road bridge on Brahmaputra river, after it was inaugurated by him in Dibrugarh on Tuesday

PTI

NDA Govt changed latkane bhatkane work culture of past, says PM Modi

PTI ■ KARENG CHAPORI (ASSAM)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said his Government has changed the "dilly-dallying" work culture regarding implementation of development projects.

Addressing a rally here after inaugurating the country's longest rail-cum-road bridge, at Bogibeel in Assam, he said completion of projects within a given time frame is no longer confined to paper but has become a reality. "We have changed the earlier *latkane bhatkane* (dilly-dallying) work culture... Completion of projects within a time frame is no longer confined to paper but

has become a truth in the real sense," he said in an apparent dig at the previous Congress-led UPA Government. If former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had a second term, Bogibeel bridge would have been ready by 2008-09. After his Government, no attention was paid to the project till 2014, the Prime Minister said.

Asserting that the Bogibeel bridge will strengthen the country's defence prowess with movement of vehicles and trains, he said, it is not only a bridge, it is a lifeline for crores of people in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

The bridge will cut down rail distance (between Dibrugarh in Assam to Naharlagun in Arunachal Pradesh) to below 200 km from 700 km now, Modi said.

After inaugurating the bridge, the prime minister flagged off the Tinsukia-Naharlagun Intercity Express, which will run five days a week and use the 4.9-km bridge to cut down the train-travel time between Tinsukia in Assam to Naharlagun town of Arunachal Pradesh by more than 10 hours. Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh is just over 15 km from Naharlagun.

CAPSULE



A cyclist dressed like Santa Claus rides through dense fog on a cold Christmas morning in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

NORTH INDIA REELS UNDER COLD WAVE

New Delhi: There was no respite from cold wave conditions on Christmas in north India with dense fog partially stalling flight operations at Delhi airport, officials said on Tuesday.

1 HELD FOR VANDALISING RAJIV'S STATUE IN C'GARH

Ludhiana/Chandigarh: A Youth Akali Dal leader was arrested for allegedly vandalising the statue of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in Ludhiana on Tuesday.

U'KHAND: MISSING TEEN REUNITED WITH FAMILY

Aligarh: In a fairy tale ending of a real-life story, a 17-year-old, mentally challenged girl, who had gone missing in Kedarnath during 2013 deluge there, has been reunited with her family in Aligarh after five years.

Bank strike today over mergers, 2nd in less than a week

New Delhi: Services of State-owned banks are expected to be impacted on Wednesday due to a nation-wide strike call given by unions to protest against the proposed amalgamation of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda.

This will be the second bank strike in less than a week.

Last Friday (December 21), an officers' union of State-run banks observed a day-long strike to protest against the merger and also demanded immediate settlement of wage negotiations.

Most of the banks have already informed customers about the strike. Private sector banks will continue to function as usual.

The strike is being organised by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella organisation of nine unions, including the All India Bank Officers Confederation (AIBOC), the All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBE), National Confederation of Bank Employees (NCBE) and the

National Organisation of Bank Workers (NOBW). The UFBU claims membership of 10 lakh officers and staffers.

According to AIBEA General Secretary C H Vekatachalam, the conciliation meeting called by Additional Chief Labour Commissioner did not lead to any assurance and so the unions are going ahead with the strike.

During the meeting, neither the Government nor the concerned banks came forward to assure that they will not go ahead with the merger, he added.

The unions claim that the Government wants banks to grow in size by such mergers but even if all public sector banks are bundled into one, the merged entity will not find a place among the top 10 globally.

The Government in September approved the amalgamation of Bank of Baroda (BoB), Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank — the first three-way merger in the public sector banking space.

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Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, UP Governor Ram Naik, Singh and CM Yogi Adityanath after paying tributes to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Lucknow on Tuesday

Rajnath lays base of 576 city projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh laid the foundation stones of 576 projects worth ₹161 crore at a function on the occasion of the 95th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Lucknow on Tuesday.

The Union Home Minister's announcements were greeted with applause and enthusiastic Bharatiya Janata Party workers raised slogans in praise of the late Prime Minister.

BJP Lucknow city unit chief Mukesh Sharma said that Rajnath Singh laid the foundation stones of international infrastructure to give shape to the dreams of Vajpayeeji, who dreamt of development of Lucknow.

He said that Lucknow was slowly but steadily moving towards acquiring the status and stature that the former Prime Minister had thought of.

Rajnath Singh inaugurated projects worth ₹2 crore from CSR (corporate social responsibility) fund of GAIL, worth ₹15 crore from MP

Local Area Development Fund, 158 projects worth ₹17 crore besides inaugurating Vishram Sadan having 210 beds at King George's Medical University from CSR fund of Power Grid Corporation at the medical university.

On this occasion, KGMU Vice-Chancellor ML Bhatt urged the Union Home Minister to fund the construction of a three-storeyed building at Vishram Sadan and a multi-level parking on KGMU premises. The Union Home Minister gave an assurance to the V-C in this regard.

On this occasion, Rajnath Singh also inaugurated 17 projects worth ₹2 crore undertaken by CSR fund of GAIL and 418 projects other projects.

Singh attended a the tihari bhoj organised at Kudia Ghat in Lucknow. The programme was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma, ministers Rita Bahuguna Joshi, Brajesh Pathak, Mahendra Singh, Mohsin Raza, MLA Pankaj Singh, Suresh Srivastava, Neeraj Bora, Union Home Minister's representative Diwakar Tripathi and several others.

Firms to face action if staffers offer namaz in parks, says Noida Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Citing concerns that communal harmony could be disturbed, especially in the run-up to the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in 2019, Uttar Pradesh's Noida Police has issued orders to offices and establishments in Sector-58 to direct their Muslim employees to stop offering Friday prayers in open areas such as parks.

According to a notice issued last week by police in Noida, companies will be held liable if their employees are found violating the directive.

"Notices were sent to many

companies in our area after several complaints regarding a large number of people offering *namaz* in the afternoon especially on Fridays," said Pankaj Rai, Station House Officer (SHO) of the Sector 58 police station, from where the initial round of notices were issued.

"Since most people offering prayers are employees in companies nearby, we have sent notices to those companies to ask their employees to either offer *namaz* in a masjid, Eidgah or within the office compound on the roof etc," Rai added.

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Sadaiv Atal dedicated to nation on 94th anniv

Vajpayee statues to be installed in Patna, Lucknow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Tuesday turned a rallying point for political leaders as 'Sadaiv Atal' (immortal Vajpayee), a memorial of the late leader, was dedicated to the nation here on Tuesday on his 94th birth anniversary. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh Chief Ministers also announced that a statue of Vajpayee would be installed in Patna and Lucknow.

With the whiff of 2019 Lok Sabha polls in the air, Vajpayee returned to the posters outside



LK Advani pays homage to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 94th birth anniversary in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

the BJP headquarters along with other party veteran LK Advani. In the auditorium of party's headquarters, though, Vajpayee and Advani have long

been replaced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president Amit Shah adorning the dais.

President Ram Nath

Kovind, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu and the Prime Minister were among the dignitaries who paid floral tributes to the former statesman at the memorial built near the 'Rashtriya Smriti Sthal', where his mortal remains were consigned to flames on August 17. The memorial is enclosed by nine bas-relief walls having inscriptions of poetries penned by Vajpayee who was known for his rhythmic poems, repartees and one-liners.

Vajpayee passed away in Delhi on August 16 after a prolonged illness and was cremated with full State honours.

"Tributes to Atalji on his Jayanti. We reiterate our commitment towards creating the India he dreamt of," Modi tweeted on Tuesday.

Noted singer Pankaj Udhas recited devotional songs at the memorial while the dignitaries paid tributes. Sadaiv (always) Atal memorial will be managed by a trust headed by Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan.

A vacant piece of land was made available for the memorial at the Rashtriya Smriti Sthal here by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry. Spread over 1.5 acre, the memorial was constructed by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) at a cost of Rs 10.51 crore.

The project was funded by the Atal Smriti Nyas Society.

The founding members of the society include Mahajan, Bihar Governor Lalji Tandon, Gujarat Governor OP Kohli, Karnataka Governor Vajubhai

Rudabhai Vala, BJP leaders Vijay Kumar Malhotra and Ram Lal.

A rush has begun to get closer to Vajpayee's political legacy with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath promising statue of Vajpayee in Lucknow. "A 21-metre tall statue of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee will be installed inside Lok Bhawan in Lucknow," Adityanath said.

"Atalji had strong ties with Uttar Pradesh. He started his public life from Balrampur in the State and represented Lucknow as an MP for five terms," the Chief Minister said, adding that a number of schemes are being launched in the name of the former Prime Minister.

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Make sanitation an integral part of daily life: CM to people

Gives away Swachh Ward Competition awards

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that Swachh Bharat Mission had become a national movement and it could become the basis of fundamental change in the country.

Yogi said that all stakeholders would have to come forward and perform their roles in effective manner for the success of the sanitation programme.

On Tuesday, the Chief Minister distributed awards to urban local bodies that were declared winner in the Swachh Ward Competition organised by Urban Development department from November 15 to December 15.

The awards were distributed to mark the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

In the nagar nigam category, ward number 44 (Katra Fulela) of Agra Nagar Nigam

and ward Gajraula in the nagar palika parishad category were declared the cleanest in the state.

In the nagar panchayat category, Swami Bagh Nagar Panchayat of Agra was also awarded.

District magistrates of Ghaziabad, Prayagraj, Farrukhabad, Jhansi and Shahjahanpur were also awarded for making strenuous efforts for maintaining sanitation in their respective districts.

“The landscape of urban UP will undergo a sea change if problems like sanitation, solid waste management and disposal, clean drinking water, drainage system are fixed. Mayors of cities and chairpersons of municipal bodies should tour their respective towns for an hour every day and monitor public amenities,” the Chief Minister said.

Exhorting the people to



make sanitation an integral part of their daily lives, Yogi said, “Even birds and animal hate poor sanitation and hence human beings too should not ignore sanitation. Insanitation and filth leads to disease taking huge toll on

human lives every year,” Yogi said.

Referring to vector-borne and contagious diseases in Gorakhpur and neighbouring districts of eastern UP, the Chief Minister said, “Sanitation campaign, availability of clean drinking water and immunisation campaign have played an effective role in curbing the menace of epidemics. Efforts of the state government for ensuring sanitation in these districts have resulted in sharp drop in the number of yearly casualties.”

In his address, Urban Development Minister Suresh Khanna said that a sanitation survey would be conducted across the state from January 4 to 31.

He said in Swachh Ward Competition, 44 urban local bodies were awarded, and they included 12 nagar nigams, 18 nagar palika parishads and 14 nagar panchayats.

Climate change hits crops, farmers alike in UP

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Climate change has hit agrarian Uttar Pradesh very hard and experts claim that crop yield in over a dozen districts across the state has been adversely affected and might result in a drop in production and financial losses to farmers.

“Global warming is accelerating severe changes in the agriculture of the state. There are dry spells in monsoon. Small rivers get flooded because of freak rains and winters are either very severe or hot winds blow in December,” pointed out Dr SP Pandey of Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Studies in Rural Development.

Dr Pandey said that the freak weather affected the economy of the farm sector as agriculture was the largest employment provider and provided direct employment to 35.5 million people.

He is not off the mark as a joint study by Arvind Kumar, KK Singh, AN Mishra and Pratigya Tripathi maintains that climate change resulting in increase in temperature could lead to possible low yield of rice in eastern UP by 1.0 to 1.1 per cent per hectare.

Similar fall in production is expected if there is a fall in temperature. The yield of rice may go down by 1.5 to 1.9 per cent per hectare.

The researchers said that similarly, wheat production might go down by 5 per cent in neighbouring Bihar due to increase in maximum temperature.



Eastern Uttar Pradesh comprising 28 districts would be the worst affected. An estimate said that around 10 districts, with a population of around 90 million, would be affected.

“The production of rice, wheat and pulses are likely to go down. This will not only impact crop production but also the economy of villagers,” KK Singh said.

The impact of climate change is being felt in the state as there has been a greater frequency of droughts and floods. Figures available with Meteorological department suggest that the region has experienced double the number of monsoon depressions, causing heavy rainfall and flooding across Uttar Pradesh.

The state has been divided into nine agro-climatic zones. Around 90 per cent of the population of the state is engaged in agriculture and allied activities of which majority are small farmers, who are solely dependent on agriculture.

Area of agriculture has worsened over the years. The prevailing situation of drought

and flood due to its physical formation and natural calamities of last 10 years are indicative of bigger crisis.

Agro-scientist Vishal Saraswat told this reporter that of late, eastern UP has witnessed flash floods which was also because several rivers originating in Nepal flow down to the state causing immense damage. The swirling water washes away crop lands by breaking the embankments.

“In the last few years, the cropping pattern of the area has changed. Pulses, which were once the major crop of the region and major source of protein, are not grown because of longer periods of water. This has disturbed the whole crop cycle. Even Rabi crop has been severely affected,” he said.

The climate change has not only impacted crop but also the health of farmers, who are forced to shell out money for treatment, thus affecting their purchasing power.

Convener of Encephalitis Eradication Campaign, Dr RN Singh, said that climate change was taking a toll on the health of villagers.

“Water drainage is disrupted because of damaged embankments or roads due to flooding. People become victims of water-borne diseases like diarrhoea, cholera, dengue and Japanese Encephalitis as flood waters stagnate. Year 2013 was the worst when over 1,000 children died of encephalitis,” he said.

If floods are creating havoc in eastern UP, the rugged Bundelkhand has faced the wrath of drought. In the region having high levels of poverty, farmers are indebted to private moneylenders and government banks.

“As weather gets hotter, the chances of paying back loans become difficult, leading to stress and, in some extreme cases, suicides,” said Raja Bhaiya, convener of Vidya Dham Samiti, a non-governmental organisation.

“In recent years, the level of water table has gone down significantly thereby posing problems for people and livestock,” he added.

While climate change is affecting everybody, regardless of caste, ethnicity, sex, race or level of income, women in poorer households are the worst victims. They have less access to money because of their unequal position in society and are more dependent on natural resources for subsistence.

“Hence, they are more exposed to climate shocks and have fewer resources to protect their own lives, assets and livelihoods while looking after their families,” Raja Bhaiya said.

Religion above truth, says RSS leader

Seeks early disposal of Ayodhya issue by SC

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Claiming that religion was above truth (dharma satya se upar hai), senior functionary of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Krishna Gopal, asked the apex court to handle all matters equally and dispose of the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute at the earliest.

Dr Gopal made these remarks while speaking on the second day of a seminar organised by All-India Lawyers Council in Lucknow on Tuesday.

At the same function on Monday, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had stressed on setting up of a separate court on the lines of fast track court for hearing the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute on a day-to-day basis.

Dr Gopal pointed out, “The apex court had given prompt judgements in Sabarimala and Jalikattu issues. But the Ram Janmabhoomi issue has been pending before the court for over 70 years now.”

Asking the court to handle every matter equally so that the faith of the common man on the judiciary was not affected, Dr Gopal said that everyone was speaking of equal rights in India and now even a separate commission had been constituted to ensure the rights of

Don't react to inflammatory remarks: BMAC to Muslims

Lucknow (PTI): The Babri Masjid Action Committee on Tuesday appealed to Muslims to refrain from reacting to any inflammatory statement on the Ram temple issue ahead of the resumption of hearing in the case in the Supreme Court next week. BMAC convener Zafaryab Jilani said the appeal was issued at a meeting of the action committee here. The meeting expressed satisfaction over the progress of the matter in the court. The top court had in October rejected an urgent hearing after the UP government argued that it was a 100-year-old dispute that should be taken up on priority.

children.

“It is a big fundamental question before the country as to how many more judges be appointed or how many more courts be opened so that every one could get justice,” he asserted.

Dr Gopal said that in the past, the judicial system was based on certain fundamentals

which was not seen nowadays. “In the Indian judicial system, it is the duty of the government to ensure justice to the aggrieved but after Britishers arrived, they imposed certain court fees in order to ensure justice,” the RSS leader said, while appealing to the lawyers that should now feel their responsibility of ensuring justice to the public so that the traditional, social and cultural fabric of the country could be saved.

“It is also the duty of judges that their conduct sets an example before the common man that law is equal for all, irrespective of the stature of any person. Whether it is a judge or an advocate, everyone should work as per provisions of the Constitution,” Dr Gopal stressed.

Justice Vivek Singh Thakur of Himachal High Court also highlighted examples of justice done during the times of Lord Ram, Shree Krishna, Swami Vivekananda and others and said that justice should be equal for all, because only then the axiom of equality amongst all would come true.

Deputy Director of Gujarat Forensic Science University, RN Guna, highlighted the importance of scientific evidence for facilitating prompt justice in criminal cases, particularly in which high profile persons are accused.

Akhilesh: BJP govt in UP has failed to create jobs for youths



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said that the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Uttar Pradesh had failed to create jobs for the youths and ensure remunerative prices of crops to the farmers.

Akhilesh claimed that people belonging to all sections were facing problems.

“Debt-ridden farmers are committing suicide. The future of the youths is in the dark. The BJP is out to crush the dreams of the younger generation,” the SP chief said at a programme in Lucknow on Tuesday.

Referring to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Akhilesh said, “The CM does not like opposition. Students who raise pressing issues are sent jail and even girl students are subjected to police action.”

Last year, a group of students, including two girls, associated with SP's student wing blocked Yogi's convoy in Lucknow and waved black flags. They were detained and sent to jail. A court granted them bail after 20 days.

Lokayukta bungalow row takes new twist

Govt may challenge HC order in the apex court

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Within 24 hours of the Lokayukta office bringing out facts related to a Allahabad High Court decision in connection with the ongoing bungalow dispute, the state government claimed to have taken cognisance of Lokayukta's office making “objectionable” remarks. The state government is also planning to challenge the High Court order in the apex court.

“After the hearing in High Court in connection with cancellation of Type-VI bungalow at Gautampalli, Additional Advocate General suggested that the order should be cancelled. So we issued necessary order on December 12 and also apprised the ombudsman and High Court about it. Even then, the High Court in its order on December 21 passed certain strictures against us,” disclosed Rajya Sampatti

Adhikari (RSA) Yogesh Shukla to media persons in Lucknow on Tuesday.

Shukla also informed the media that the state government had sought legal opinion to proceed to Supreme Court against the High Court order. “The government is likely to file a Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the apex court challenging the High Court's certain remarks when the government had apprised it about withdrawing the earlier order of cancellation of a Type-VI bungalow to the Lokayukta,” he said.

Shukla further said that the government was also seeking legal opinion about disciplinary action against secretary of Lokayukta office, Pawan Kumar Upadhyaya, and chief investigating officer Rakesh Kumar Singh. The duo had held a press conference and even passed certain comments against the government.

“The Secretary or CIO did not have the authority to hold a press conference and make comment against the government,” Shukla claimed.

When asked whether the Lokayukta was within limits to hold a press conference or speak against the government, Shukla refused to comment, saying that he was referring to the press conference at Lokayukta office on Monday. The RSA further denied that any enquiry was being carried out by Lokayukta against the Estate department or any of its officers as disclosed in the Monday's press conference.

“To my knowledge, no enquiry by Lokayukta is being carried out against any officer of my department,” he claimed.

Shukla also clarified that the decision for cancellation of the bungalow was not made with any bad intention but was taken as per the new law passed in August, 2016, which

has provision of Type-V bungalow for chairman of any commission etc.

“However, later on the advice of Additional Advocate General, the department withdrew the cancellation order much before the High Court passed an order in the matter,” he said.

On Monday, officers at Lokayukta office confirmed that they were conducting enquiry against the Estate department but did not disclose further. Similarly, they also did not rule out the possibility that the cancellation of allotment of bungalow to the Lokayukta could be a ploy to put pressure but claimed that they were not going to bow to any pressure.

The officers even disclosed how their long-pending demand for posting of staff in the Lokayukta office went unheard despite several reminders.

Cleric flays Noida police curb on offering prayers in parks

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Muslim leaders regretted the curbing of Noida (Gautam Buddha Nagar district) police imposing restrictions on offering of Friday prayers at parks by locals. Maulana Khalid Rashid Firangi Mahali, the Imam of Aishbagh Eidgah, said that they regretted the move of Noida police and urged it to reconsider the decision.

Senior lawyer and Secretary of All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, Zafaryab Jilani said, “I am not commenting on the issue as an office-bearer of AIM-PLB but as per Shariat, Muslims cannot offer prayers on land owned by some other persons without his permission.” Jilani added that a park was a public place and Muslims should approach the authorities and if they allowed their demand then there was nothing wrong in offering prayers there.

Chairman of UP Shia Central Waqf Board, Wasim Rizvi, said, “It is an important issue but at the same time, prayers cannot be offered on land not owned by Muslims. Prayers can be offered only after getting permission

from the land owner.”

Meanwhile, Shia cleric Maulana Saif Abbas and Muslim League leader Matin Khan condemned the decision of Noida police. Last week, Noida police issued notices to several multinational companies with offices in Sector 58 of Noida, to direct employees to not offer prayers at community parks. The notice said the Noida authority does not permit offering of prayers or religious activities at community parks and their employees gathered in the park for Friday prayers. The police said prior permission should be sought from the district administration for offering prayers in parks.

Sources said the Noida police action followed complaint by some Hindu groups to the local district police chief. The complainants said that offering prayers in the open ‘disrupted’ harmony in the area. Subsequently, Sector 58 police station was instructed to notify the companies. Last week, at least 12 multinational companies, including software major HCL, got the notice that specifically said that ‘nobody was allowed to offer Friday prayers in the park’.

QUICK TAKES

WOMAN DIVORCED FOR FAILING TO GIVE DOWRY

Deoria: A Muslim man divorced his wife by uttering ‘talaq’ thrice on the mobile phone for not getting dowry, police said on Tuesday. Naseem Ahmed, who got married in July last year, allegedly beat up his wife and drove her out of his house in Salempur village on December 8 as she could not meet his dowry demand. The woman then went to the police station to lodge a complaint. SP PN Kolanchi ordered the police station concerned to register an FIR. In her complaint, the woman alleged that soon after her marriage, her in-laws started demanding ₹2 lakh as dowry and later started misbehaving with her and even beat her up before driving her out of the house. A case has been registered in this connection.

2 COPS AMONG 10 INJURED IN CLASH IN BAGHPAT

Baghpat: Ten people, including two policemen, suffered injuries in a clash that took place between members of two factions over a trivial issue in Ketipura locality here, police said on Tuesday. The clash took place on Monday and the injured were undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital, Superintendent of Police Shailesh Kumar Pandey said. The SP said that the mob indulged in brick batting and attacked each other with sticks, resulting in the injuries. Police personnel who rushed to the spot came under

attack as well and constables Manoj and Rahul were injured, Baghpat Kotwali in-charge Rakesh Kumar said, adding that one of the factions also used firearms. A heavy police force was deployed in the area and the situation was now under control, the SP said, adding that an FIR was filed against 18 named and 71 unnamed people and two of them had been arrested. According to one of the injured, Rampal, a youth of the area, identified as Imran, had taken a cigarette from his shop on Sunday without paying for it and attacked him when he asked for the same on Monday morning. Rampal alleged that three members of his family, who rushed to save him, were also beaten up by Imran and his family members who damaged his shop and also indulged in brick batting and firing.

WOMAN FOUND DEAD

Muzaffarnagar: A 45-year-old woman, who was missing since last week, was found dead near the Ganga Canal at Khatoli town here, police said on Tuesday. According to circle officer Rajive Kumar Singh, police have arrested three persons in this connection. The accused strangled the woman to death and later dumped the body in a bag, the police said.

4 KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP

Bareilly: At least four persons, including a two-year-old child and his mother, were killed and as many others

were injured when a vehicle in which they were travelling rammed into a stationary lorry on the national highway bypass here on Tuesday. The vehicle was going from Amethi to Chandigarh when the mishap took place at Ghansoli village under Bithiri Chainpur police station, SP (City) Abhinandan Singh said, adding that eight persons were in the vehicle when the accident took place. Asharfi Lal, 45, Rajrani 35, her daughter Sanjana, 12, and 2-year-old son were killed on the spot.

WOMAN SHOT DEAD BY SON

Budaun: A 55-year-old woman was shot dead by her son after a heated argument in the Nai Basti locality under the Islamnagar police station. The incident occurred on Monday night following an argument between accused Iqbal and his parents after he found out that his sister had been married off without informing him or his three siblings, Superintendent of Police (Rural) Surendra Pratap Singh said. The accused lives in Delhi and was visiting his family, he said. As heated exchanges continued, Iqbal told his sister to divorce her husband and beat her up when she refused, the SP said. In a fit of rage, the accused took out a country-made pistol and fired at his sister but it hit Noorjahan, his mother, who had rushed to intervene, Singh said. The victim died on the spot, the SP (Rural) said, adding that police were searching for Iqbal.

North Eastern Railway Notification No. 122/2018

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR RAIL PASSENGERS

It is notified for information of general public that in view of operational difficulties due to dense foggy conditions, the additional cancellation and reduction in frequency between 25.12.2018 to 15.02.2019 will be as under :-

(A) Fully Cancellation

S. No.	Train No.	From Station to Station	Dates of cancellation from originating station	
			From	To
1	22453	Lucknow - Meerut City	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
2	22454	Meerut City - Lucknow	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
3	15019	Gorakhpur - Nautanwa	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
4	15020	Nautanwa - Gorakhpur	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
5	05106	Basti - Gorakhpur	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
6	05105	Gorakhpur - Basti	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
7	15707	Katihar - Amritsar	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
8	15708	Amritsar - Katihar	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
9	15715	Kisanganj - Ajmer	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
10	15716	Ajmer - Kisanganj	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
11	19270	Muzzafarpur - Porbandar	25.12.2018	15.02.2019
12	19269	Porbandar - Muzzafarpur	25.12.2018	15.02.2019

(B) Reduction of Frequency

S. No.	Train No.	From Station to Station	Day of cancellation	Dates of cancellation from originating station
1	15203	Barauni - Lucknow	Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday	25, 27 & 29 December 2018 01, 03, 05, 08, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 29, 31/January/2019 02, 05, 07, 09, 12, 14/February/2019
2	15204	Lucknow Jn. - Barauni	Wednesday, Friday & Sunday	26, 28 & 30 December 2018 02, 04, 06, 09, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 27 & 30 January/2019 01, 03, 06, 08, 10, 13 & 15 February/2019

CPRO/T-91 **Chief Pass. Trans. Manager, Gorakhpur**

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Never travel on roof and foot boards

Dense fog hits train traffic hard

Two dozen trains cancelled or short-terminated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Owning to dense fog, the train traffic was crippled, forcing the Railways to cancel/terminate/short-terminate as many as two dozen trains, including the Gomti Express and Rajyarani Express. The Gomti and Rajyarani Express trains have been cancelled till February. On the other hand, the Railways has lessened the frequency (number of train run) of some of the trains as the fog has slowed down the speed of trains.

As per reports, Lucknow-New Delhi Gomti Express train will remain cancelled between 25 December 15 and February 2019, New Delhi-Lucknow Gomti Express between December 26 and February 15, Rajyarani Express (Lucknow-Meerut) between December 25 and February 15, Garib Nawaz Express train till 15 February, Muzaffarpur-Porbandar

Min temp dips to 4.8 deg C

Lucknow (PNS): Most parts of Uttar Pradesh remained in the grip of cold wave conditions and isolated areas witnessed shallow to moderate fog even as weather in the state capital continued to vacillate between a warm sunny afternoon followed by a chilly evening. It was bright sunshine and clear skies for the state capital on Tuesday with a maximum temperature of 22.7 degree Celsius. The minimum temperature dipped to 4.8 degrees Celsius, which was four notches below normal.

Muzaffarnagar experiencing the lowest minimum temperature in the state at 1.6 degrees Celsius. According to the Met department, night temperatures remained appreciably below normal in

Express till February 15, Katihar-Amritsar Express (Amrapali Express) between December 25 and February 15, Amritsar Katihar Express between December 28 and February 18.

On the other hand, due to



Allahabad, Meerut, Faizabad, Lucknow and Bareilly divisions and below normal in Varanasi, Agra divisions. The weatherman has forecast dense fog with ground frost in western Uttar Pradesh will remain dry with moderate

fog at some places for the next two days. The forecast for Lucknow is clear sky. Mist and shallow fog is likely in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be around 22 degree Celsius and 4 degree Celsius respectively.

operational reasons, some of the trains are declared as cancelled/short terminated/short originated. The trains announced as cancelled for journey commencing on December 24 are 13009 Howrah-Dehradun Doon

Express train, 22408 Anand Vihar Terminal-Varanasi Garib Rath Express train. Similarly, 13010 Dehradun- Howrah Doon Express train, 18477 Puri-Haridwar Utkal Express train are announced as cancelled for journey commencing

on December 26. Train number 14681 New Delhi-Jalandhar City Express, journey commencing on December 24 will short terminate at Ludhiana. Consequently, the 14682 Jalandhar City-New Delhi Express journey commencing on December 25 will short originate from Ludhiana.

Meanwhile, the Railways also has to lessen the frequency of more than a dozen trains due to delayed run. The railway officials said the speed of trains had suffered heavily due to dense fog which had enveloped the UP and neighbouring states. "The visibility is very low during fog and the trains cannot be run at standard speed and so it takes time in covering the journey. This had adversely affected the frequency of the train run as a result of it," officials said.

The officials said the trains going for destinations in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, New Delhi via Lucknow or which originate from Lucknow were among those which were worst affected by the foggy weather. "The inclement weather had also caused some of the passenger trains to run slow or get cancelled," they said.

Taunted by family, woman kills 4-month-old daughter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Taunted by her family for giving birth to a girl child, the wife of an engineer killed her four-month-old daughter on Monday night at her flat at Ravindra Apartment in Indira Nagar police station area. Her husband woke up to the rude shock when he went to wake her up on Tuesday morning and the woman told him she had freed him and had killed their daughter. Police said the woman took the step in depression and she was taken into police custody.

As per reports, Brijnandan Tiwari of Gorakhpur lives with his wife Shubhra Tiwari and mother Sonmati at a flat number 107 of the apartment in Ravindra Vihar in Faridi Nagar locality. Tiwari had a love marriage with Shubhra of Viram Khand in Gomti Nagar in 2009. Four months back, the couple was blessed with a girl child who they named as Adwika. Tiwari told police that he and his mother were resting in one of the rooms at the flat while Shubhra, along with Adwika, was resting in another room. "Around 6 am, I woke up and found that Shubhra had closed the doors of the room in which she was resting. When I knocked the doors, she said in a deep voice that she had 'freed' me and had killed



The woman accused of killing her daughter, at Mahila Police Station

Pioneer

Adwika," Tiwari told police. He said he went inside instantly and saw Adwika whose body was cold and unresponsive. "We rushed her to a local hospital where she was declared brought dead on examination," he said.

"Tiwari called police informing them about the incident and a team reached the place for investigation into the case. The police detained Shubhra and she was being interrogated by a team of doctors and cops," the police

spokesman said. He said a case of murder was registered against Shubhra on the complaint of her husband Brijnandan Tiwari.

The police were yet to find out the motive for the murder. "It seems that she was in depression and probably was being taunted by her family for giving birth to a girl child. The police are reading her statement 'I have freed you and had killed Adwika' to find out if she had some psychological disorder," a police officer said.

Festive spirit marks Xmas celebrations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Christmas was celebrated with enthusiasm in the city on Tuesday. The morning witnessed Christmas mass at various churches which attracted large crowds. Spokesperson of St Joseph Cathedral Donald D'Souza said that on Wednesday, they would have a programme which would witness the participation of Governor Ram Naik and Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma besides other government functionaries and officials. People came out in large numbers to enjoy the festival at malls and parks even as restaurants and hotels remained choc-a-block. A majority of the hotels had themes based on Christmas in terms of decoration and menus.

Fatima Abbas, communication manager at a hotel, said their theme for Christmas decorations was white. "In the lobby, we placed a white snow house and a 3-feet-high ginger-bread house on the first floor at the restaurant section. We also had a Santa House with Santarina who cut a cake shaped like a Santa Claus. There was a wide variety of wines, including the exotic ones, apart from a huge variety of cakes and biscuits," she said. At Lucknow zoo, over 20,000 people gathered on the occasion of Christmas. Zoo director RK Singh said several programmes were organised for Christmas. "A Santa Claus moved around distributing sweets among the children. A number of other characters such as Mickie Mouse, Tiger and Chhota Bheem moved around entertaining people while also spreading the message of environment protection. "With a nice weather, the visitors enjoyed themselves at the food court while children took a lot of selfies with the models of giraffe, zebra and lion," he said.



Rush of people at St Joseph Cathedral Church; people lighting candles at a church; and Santa distributing sweets among visitors at zoo; and a cake

Pioneer

Cleanliness: LMC ranks 3rd among 17 municipal corporations of state

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

With Lucknow Municipal Corporation achieving the third rank among the 17 municipal corporations in the state on Tuesday, mayor Sanyukta Bhatia said she would not rest until she took Lucknow to the numero uno position.

The mayor said that the main challenge which they faced as far as the city was concerned in terms of all the categories of Swachhata campaign was the huge number of people coming to the state capital every day. "There is a large number of people who come to the city for various reasons

such as attending programmes and for getting medical care. These people defecate in the open and have to be told that there are facilities available which they can use. This is one problem that we have to work out in the coming days for helping the city get the number one rank," she said. Municipal Commissioner Indramani Tripathi also it was like a runner-up exercise to the Swachh Survekshan of the year 2019 and getting the third rank was a good effort. "We consistently worked over the past six months to be able to achieve this rank. We have achieved the third rank in overall cleanliness

and Rajiv Gandhi Ward has also received the third prize amongst all the wards of the state," he pointed out. On being asked how they intended to improve the ranking, he said they would spread more awareness and also track the progress in all programmes.

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LMRC to begin load testing tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Metro Rail Corporation (LMRC) will begin its load testing on December 27. A senior LMRC official said that this load testing would be carried out on the special span of the Lucknow Metro project at Nishatganj and the one on Gomti river.

“There are in all 11 spans in the Metro corridor and we have carried out load testing on nine of them with the help of gunny bags because they were smaller ones. However, the Nishatganj and Gomti river spans are bigger in length and hence they have to be tested by stationing the train over them and filling it with bags which equal the maximum strength of the passengers on the train,” he added. He further said that LMRC had to take a clearance from the Telecom Department and Electric Inspection of the Government of India before beginning with the train trials on the entire corridor. A senior LMRC official said that the trials would be held in the first week of January. He said that

the approval of the Telecom Department was important in the light of the fact that its services were not impacted by the overhead wires of the Lucknow Metro project. “The officials of the Telecom department were supposed to come on December 24 but they will come on December 26,” he added.

He admitted that the electrical inspections were carried out on Monday by the officials concerned. “We cannot begin the trials until we complete the overhead electrification which we have done till IT College. The electrical installations were checked on December 24 and whatever the problems were we would get them solved. The men were at the site on Tuesday itself. He said that once the overhead electrification was completed uptill Munshipulia the load testing would be carried out and after that they would be able to carry out the trials in the first week of January. He said that the civil construction had been completed along with the track work.

CISH: Several events mark ‘Swachhata Pakhwara’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

CISH organised a number of events during the past 10 days as a part of the Swachhata Pakhwara on cleanliness, utilisation of farm waste and waste water utilisation for the kitchen garden at the Institute, at the village level and in public places.

Workshops were arranged for farmers on cleanliness, utilisation of farm organic waste, nutri gardens, compost and vermicompost. Farm women and stakeholders were involved in these activities. Thirty farmers from four villages of Malihabad were invited for the workshop on cleanliness and utilisation of farm wastes. Narrating the importance of rural cleanliness, CISH director Shailendra Rajan urged the farmers to become ambassadors for the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. He said that converting farm wastes into manure was being encouraged under the Farmer FIRST Project-adopted villages.

This had led to around 40 per cent of farmers shunning chemical fertilisers in their nutri garden. Farmers shared their views on production and use of biofertilisers and biopesticides in their fields. Scientists also explained the quick

method of compost making using farm waste to the farmers. The institute honoured seven farmers for their outstanding contribution in the Swachhata Mission in their respective villages. These farmers belong to Kasmandi Kalan, Mohammad Nagar Taluqedari and Nabi Panah.

A workshop of farmers was organised by CISH and deliberations on cleanliness and utilisation of farm organic wastes by its conversion into valuable compost were made. Several models in different parts of the country being used by the farmers were discussed so that they could be emulated in the villages of Malihabad. Later the farmers from the adopted villages under the Farmers' First Project shared the cleanliness initiatives taken in their respective villages. A scientist of ICAR-CISH, SK Shukla, and VK Singh stressed on the importance of nutri-gardens, compost and vermi-compost. Six farmers were felicitated for their contribution in making the cleanliness drive in the villages successful and guiding other farmers in adapting different technologies. The certificates were distributed among the farmers who were selected to act as the ambassadors of cleanliness in the adopted vil-

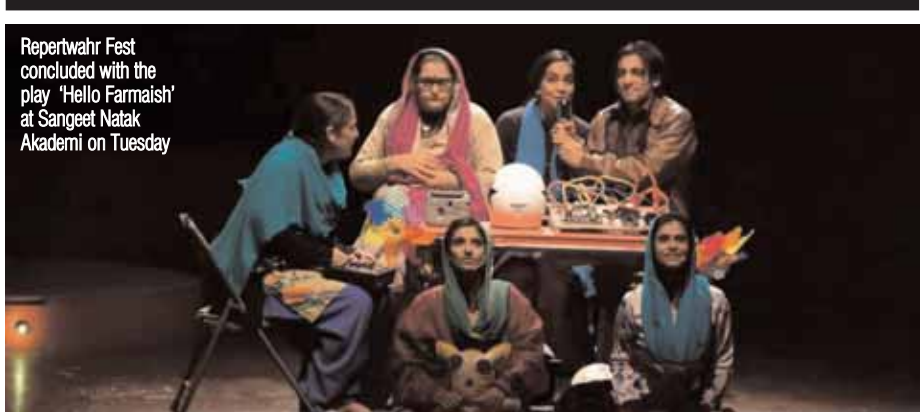
lages. Anju Bajpai shared different programmes and initiatives taken from the Institute as a part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Maneesh Mishra moderated the programme.

Many farmers from the four villages of Farmers' FIRST project are now converting farm waste into compost. The farmers have understood the usefulness of this conversion in the nutri-gardens as occasionally due to lack of farm animals they can't apply farmyard manure. Organic cultivation activities are also supported by the torch-bearers of Farmers FIRST programme as they are now capable of controlling many of the insects and pests in vegetables by using home-made biopesticides.

“These biopesticides are made easily using available constituents like cow urine, garlic and many other botanicals fermented in a prescribed manner for spraying to control mite in chilli. Many a times it is difficult to control these pests in vegetables by using chemicals. However, the biopesticides are being used by farmers successfully for saving their crops. Examples of recycling of waste water for irrigating kitchen gardens were demonstrated in different villages,” said Rajan.

CITY BRIEFS

Repertwahr Fest concluded with the play 'Hello Farmaish' at Sangeet Natak Akademi on Tuesday



RAIN BASERA

Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday dedicated a newly-constructed 4-storey 'rain basera' at the Shatabdi Hospital (Phase 1) of King George's Medical University. He also inspected the 210-bed rain basera constructed with the financial aid of Power Grid Corporation. KGMU Vice-Chancellor Dr MLB Bhatt requested the Home Minister to increase the capacity to ten floors and ensure provision of a parking area.

AWARDED

Kaushal Kishor Agrawal of KGMU's department of Prosthodontics has been awarded a trophy and certificate of excellence for being the most proactive academican for the year 2017-18 for his clinical performance, contribution to research work and scientific publications in prosthodontics.

He was honoured at the 5th Dental Academic Excellence Awards on in New Delhi on December 24. Meanwhile, head of KGMU's Respiratory Medicine department Dr Surya Kant was felicitated with the highest award of Indian Chest Society, 'Prof SN Tripathi Presidential Oration Award'. He was awarded at 'NAPCON 2018', which was held in Ahmedabad from November 22 to December 2.

MEETING

Senior officials of Lucknow City Transport Services Limited met on Tuesday to ensure improvement in the condition of buses. Managing director Arif Saqlain said officials had been directed to submit a report in this regard by January 2 next year. He said buses had to be checked on several points. “Checkings must be done to see whether or the

emergency doors of buses are opening and have they been painted red or whether 'emergency' is written on the doors. It has to be checked whether wipers are working and the windows have glass panes intact. Directions have been issued to check whether the buses have fire extinguishers, hammers, proper wiring and whether the battery has been placed in a box,” he said.

NOISE POLLUTION

District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma said all hotels, restaurants and bars would be checked in nights for noise pollution levels. “There should not be any noise coming outside the premises of hotels, bars or restaurants and the decibel level be maintained properly,” he said. The DM added that there was no order to ban music after 10 pm or close bars after 10 pm on December 31.

Police, excise officials check liquor shops



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow police and Excise department officials conducted a joint drive to check model shops and desi liquor shops across the state capital on Tuesday. The drive was aimed to keep a check on the revellers on the occasion of X-mas and also to check irregularities at the shops.

In Hazratganj, a joint team, consisting of Hazratganj CO and excise officials checked different shops selling beers and Indian Made Foreign Liquor. The shop-owners were asked to ensure that people/revellers should not hang outside the shops. The shop-owners were also asked to ensure that the vehicles be parked in an orderly way. A



team consisting of CO Santosh Kumar Singh and excise officials checked shops in Mahanagar localities. A similar instruction was given to shop-owners in Mahanagar too.

Excise officials said the drive was also carried out in

Chinhat, Gudamba, Mohanlalganj, Gosainganj, Kakori, Alambagh, Krishna Nagar and other parts of the city. “The drive was conducted in view of Christmas and it will continue till celebrations for New Year end on December 31,” excise officials said.

Awas Vikas acquires 95 acres of land in Mohanlalganj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Awas Vikas Parishad has acquired 95 acres of land in Mohanlalganj under the land pooling scheme and also deposited Rs 60 crore in the state exchequer for paying compensation to farmers. The authorities have planned to develop a residential colony at an estimated cost of Rs 120 crore. Besides compensation, each farmer will be given a residential plot under the land pooling scheme. Housing commissioner AK Chauhan said the land pooling scheme would help acquire land without any delay or any confrontation with farmers. He said the farmers were happy about getting residential plots apart from compensation.

The scheme was introduced recently to avoid any confrontation with farmers during land acquisition. In the past, there had been several incidents of violence between the farmers and state agencies

over land acquisition and several projects failed to take off as scheduled.

Chauhan said 45 per cent of the land would be utilised in developing green belts, parks, roads, service lanes, street lighting and drainage system which would be connected with the master sewer system. He added that 47 per cent of the land would be reserved for residential and commercial purposes and three per cent for farmers.

Chauhan said determined effort would be made to plan the project which would be environment-friendly. He added that environment engineers would be consulted to set up a colony par excellence.

The housing project is expected to be launched by the middle of next year. The procedure of land acquisition was so prompt that land was handed to the competent officer within two months. Though all types of the shelters will come up, the main focus will be on construction low-cost houses.

SCHOOLSCAN

GOLD MEDAL

Vani Bhandaiya, a class VI student of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus II, grabbed the gold medal in state-level inter-school 'Brainobrain Wonderkids'. Vani showcased her talent in various subjects and walked away with the gold medal. Organisers showered praises on Vani for her talent and



awarded her a gold medal, certificate and other gifts.

Police yet to nab rapist

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Police have failed to arrest the man, who was accused of raping a minor girl after posing himself as her 'saviour' in Jankipuram on Sunday night.

“Teams have been formed and raiding possible hide-outs of accused Monu Kashyap of Jankipuram. We are yet to get any clue of him,” the police said. The minor girl had told police that she was talking with her friend at some distance away from her house on Sunday night when her acquaintance Monu Kashyap of Jankipuram happened to pass by. “Monu scolded my

friend for meeting me secretly at night and shooed him away from the place threatening a police action. Later, Monu asked me to ride the pillion of the scooter and he would drop me at my home,” the girl had accused. She alleged that Monu took her to a secluded place where he had forced himself on her.

SUICIDE

A 30-year-old woman ended her life at her house in Jankipuram in connection with a family discord on Tuesday. No suicide note was recovered during the investigation. Police sent the body for autopsy.

Air pollution: Organisation sends recommendations to CPCB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Climate Agenda, an organisation working in the area of air pollution, has sent its recommendations to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in connection with the increasing levels of air pollution in Uttar Pradesh.

Ekta Shekhar from the organisation said the main problems specific to pollution in Lucknow were construction activities, unscientific management of waste and burning of garbage. She said that among the recommendations, they had stated that there was a need to increase air quality testing centres within two years. “The statement made by the Ministry of Environment in March, which included 35 per cent reduction



in three years and 59 per cent reduction in air pollution in 5 years, should be included in the National Clean Air Action Programme. There is requirement of action plan for non-attainment cities based on city-based workplan as well as on regional basis,” she said.

“In NCAP, brick kilns are the sources that contribute to increasing air pollution, therefore they should also be included in it and along with this, it is important to plan time to intermittently follow the emission standards,” she added.

In rural areas, she said they had recommended expansion of air quality testing centres and also the basis for their selection. “We have also stated in our recommendations that in what way NCAP will try to reduce pollution by interacting with other ministries or departments and explain the role as there is need of elucidation for accountability of these departments at district and state level. Along with this, there is a need to clarify what are the things included in urban planning,” she added.

Property dealer gunned down

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In a sensational incident a 35-year-old property dealer was shot dead by some unidentified miscreants in the posh Civil Lines area here on Monday evening. A panic-like situation prevailed after the incident and the locals started running helter-skelter. On receipt of information, the IG, Range, and SSP, along with a heavy police force, rushed to the spot and reviewed the situation. However, all the shooters had managed to flee from the spot before the top brass reached there. The Crime Branch had been pressed into service which

was making efforts to identify the shooters through close-circuit television (CCTV) camera footage.

Rainath Yadav, a resident of Sherdih area under the Jhansi police station, has five sons. Among them Vidya Sagar was the third one and used to deal in property. He accompanied by his driver, Amarjeet, had gone to the Civil Lines in his Scorpio. They parked it outside Bihari Bhawan and went inside a shop situated there. He also got the glass panes of his vehicle changed there. In the meantime two shooters on a motorcycle closed in on him and fired at him indiscrimi-

nately. Two bullets pierced Vidya Sagar's stomach while two others hit a scooter parked nearby. The driver, Amarjeet, took the injured Vidya Sagar to the SRN Hospital in a critical condition but he was pronounced dead on his arrival by the doctors on duty there.

On being informed about the incident, the IG, Mohit Agarwal, and the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Nitin Tiwari, along with a heavy posse of police reached the spot. They also inquired from the family members of the deceased about the incident but they could not tell the exact reason behind his killing.

CWC seeks clarification after girl escapes from shelter home

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Two members of Child Welfare Committee visited the children's protection home in Motinagar on Tuesday and sought clarification about the escape of a 15-year-old girl from there on Sunday. The inmate had stepped on a wash-basin to scale the wall as she escaped from the protection home. Sangeeta Sharma from Child Welfare Committee, while talking to *The Pioneer*, said that there were lapses on

the part of the protection home staff. “The girl escaped at a time when it was not so early in the morning that it could not have been monitored,” she said, adding that the authorities informed her that temporary staff, and not the permanent staff, were on duty.

A senior official from the Women and Child Welfare department said the report had already been submitted and action would be taken soon. “Those found lax are the outsourced staff. We have been

making a demand for permanent posts in the past. A meeting in this case will be held soon,” he said.

He added that on their part, they had issued instructions for removal of the wash-basin from that point and also other things which could have facilitated the escape of the girl. “The girl has only her siblings and earlier, she had run away from a home in Basti six to seven times,” he said, adding that the girl was still untraceable.

BJP must clear stand over remarks on Hanuman by its leaders: Seer

Mathura (PTI): Swami Adhokshajananand Deo Tirth on Tuesday said Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and other leaders have vitiated the atmosphere in the country by linking Lord Hanuman to various castes and communities. He demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top leaders of the BJP should clear the party's stand and bar party functionaries

from disrespectful remarks about gods and goddesses.

The seer's reaction came after Uttar Pradesh Religious Affairs Minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary dubbed Lord Hanuman as a Jat, saying like Jats, the deity never tolerated injustice towards anybody, anywhere. The minister made the remark Friday after a BJP MLC from the state, Bukkal Nawab, dubbed Lord Hanuman a

Muslim on the ground that his name rhymed with Islamic names like Rahman, Arman, Qurban etc. During an election rally in Rajasthan, Adityanath had termed the deity a Dalit. “On one side the BJP, from time to time, has been bringing up the Ram temple issue and on the other, its leaders are making absurd remarks on Hindu gods and goddesses, hurting religious sentiments,”

Shankaracharya Adhokshajananand Deo Tirth said here. “The Ram temple in Ayodhya will be incomplete without Lord Hanuman as Ram had himself praised Hanumanji calling him like his brother Bharat,” he said.

If the remark made by Nawab has the BJP high-command's approval, “then the party will have to get a mosque constructed for Lord

Hanuman”, the seer said. The chief minister had hurt religious sentiments by terming Lord Hanuman a Dalit, even as his office later issued a clarification, claiming that Adityanath was misquoted, the shankaracharya said.

“Adityanath and other leaders' remarks on Hanuman have vitiated the atmosphere in the country”, the seer said. Lord Hanuman has been termed a

Jat, Thakur, a sportsman and even a Muslim, even though gods and goddesses are above caste and religion, he stated. Uttar Pradesh Sports Minister and former cricketer Chetan Chauhan had said on Sunday that Hanuman was a sportsman. However, he had dismissed his party colleagues' attempts at identifying the deity's caste and said gods don't have castes.

Installation of smart electricity meters on in full swing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Electricity Supply Administration is installing smart meters and the exercise is going on in full swing. The project is a joint collaboration of Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation and Energy Efficiency Services Limited.

Superintending engineer, LESA (trans-Gomti) Ajay Mishra told *The Pioneer* that smart meter installation work was underway in five divisions. He said the work started towards the end of October and the bill generation would take place after all the smart meters were installed and entire data is fed in the system. Till December 13, as many as 3,194 smart meters had been installed in Chinhat division, 626 in Chowk, 1,130 in Kanpur Road division, 1,464 Rahimnagar, 6,279 in Thakurganj and 9,114 in Upton division. He said no cost had to be produced by the consumer for these installations and it would



benefit both the consumers and the department. “We will not have to send any person for meter readings as we will get the same at our system. We will get the readings every 15 minutes and we can generate the bill on the first of the month accordingly,” he said. He added that they had started the installation work with divisions with high loss areas, where bills were not generated in time and where there was power theft. “The bills will be generated on the first of the month and an SMS will reach the consumer,” Mishra said. He admitted that the response to the smart meters was mixed and there had been protests too.

High attrition hits CRPF hard

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In an alarming trend in attrition, as many as 25,288 officers and jawans of the CRPF have resorted to voluntary retirement and resignations since 2011 besides 10,362 personnel who left the force due to superannuation, invalidation, dismissal and termination.

Hard and harsh working conditions including 12 to 14 hours of job daily without proper leave is one of the reasons for the attrition. Deployment of the Force's personnel in far-flung areas and contentious deployment away from home, home sickness and the pitfalls of nuclear family besides personal problems and family disputes are other reasons for the attrition. Better job opportunities and less harsh working conditions outside the Force also contribute the personnel resorting to voluntary retirement, according to inputs with the Union Home Ministry.

Against a housing satisfaction fixed at 25 per cent of the personnel (88,168) out of the sanctioned strength of 3,24,093 at the static locations



like group centres, training institutions and battalions raised on unattached patterns like Combat Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), Rapid Action Force (RAF), Mahila Battalions is only 11.83 per cent.

Out of the authorised 88,168 houses, 37,801 have been constructed and 12,014 are

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Grand Total
Dismissal from service:	672	570	516	361	208	182	103	2612
Invalidation	55	33	34	41	49	57	34	303
Resignation	940	793	740	562	593	453	523	4604
Superannuation	857	744	734	674	934	1181	1157	6281
Termination	3	119	246	281	264	135	118	1166
Voluntary Retirement	2757	5160	3757	2195	780	3346	2689	20684
Grand Total	7295	9431	8040	6128	4843	7370	6641	35650

Par panel: Big religious institutions serving free meal out of GST, why?

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel has questioned the Government's motive to waive off the GST under its six-month-old 'Sewa Bhoj Yojna' for the big religious institutions serving free meal to more than 5,000 people per month while depriving the smaller ones from similar financial benefits even though "they are more likely in need of it."

The Committee headed by Rajya Sabha MP, Derek O'Brien, has recommended that the eligibility criteria of serving free food to above 5,000 people should be reconsidered by the Union Culture Ministry.

The Modi Government had launched the Sewa Bhoj Yojana on June 1, 2018, exempting charitable organisations that provide free food from paying Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST)/Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) on the raw materials used. The scheme followed demand from the BJP ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), in Punjab which had sought exemption of langar from GST.

While appreciating the scheme which reimburses the CGST/IGST for only those religious institutions that serve



food to at least 5,000 people in a calendar month, the panel, which has submitted its report in Parliament recently said it fails to understand the reason for this eligibility criterion since smaller religious institutions are more likely to be in need of this Scheme.

Moreover, ascertaining the number of people to whom food is served by a religious institution in a month is difficult and could lead to religious institutions in actual need of the support being left out.

The Committee also felt that instead of carrying out inspection every year at least 5% of the cases as decided under the scheme, the Government should scrutinise at least 10% of the cases.

The Committee feels that the proper utilization of funds is very important in the implementation of all schemes and this scheme could be maliciously exploited for getting reimbursement of taxes by commercial food outlets.

under construction and the net deficiency is 38,353.

A Parliamentary panel has noted that such a poor level of housing satisfaction level could be one of the major reasons for high attrition in the paramilitary. While directing the government to expedite the under construction 12,014 houses without time and cost overruns, the panel also advised the Centre to chalk out an action plan to achieve the objective of constructing the remaining 38,353 quarters within the stipulated timeframe.

The Force personnel suffer casualties not only due to counter the insurgents in the Naxal areas, Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir but also while operating in hostile terrain and inhospitable working

conditions which generate "extreme stress and strain on their physical and mental health. During the last eight years since 2010, more personnel have been killed due to diseases than in action. As many as 798 personnel have been killed due to heart attack but the casualties during operation stood at 391 during the period between 2010 and 2017. Likewise, cancer took a toll of 334 personnel followed by 94 deaths due to cerebral malaria and six casualties due to snake bite.

Central Reserve Police Force is the world's largest paramilitary force and the designated agency for anti-Naxal operations, countering terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir and insurgents in the Northeast.

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RaGa attacks Modi for ignoring BJP worker's question

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for reportedly ignoring a BJP worker's question on the middle class' struggle with the taxation policy, saying forget a Press meet, he cannot even hold a poll booth workers' conference.

Rahul Gandhi was apparently referring to an incident that took place last week during Modi's interaction with "booth workers" from northern districts of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. He also said "BJP-vetted" questions is a superb idea, but the party should also "consider vetted answers".

The Congress chief cited a media report that claimed Modi faced embarrassing moments during his interaction with BJP workers from Tamil Nadu when a worker sought to know why his administration was busy collecting taxes from the middle class but not interested in taking care of them.

The report claimed that the prime minister during his video interaction chose not to answer the question raised by

HUMAN ELEPHANT CONFLICT IN ASSAM, BENGAL TEA GARDENS

ITA holds meet to resolve crisis

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned at the increasing human-elephant conflicts (HEC) in Assam — nearly 800 lives have been trampled by wild jumbos between 2006 and 2016 — tea estate firms have come together under the umbrella of Indian Tea Association (ITA) to explore ways to mitigate the crisis in the Northeastern State and West Bengal.

In this regard, said Dr Dipankar Ghose, Director, Species and Landscapes programme, WWF-India, a first-of its kind meet was organised by the ITA in Kolkata to plan an industry-wide collaboration to address HEC faced by the tea gardens of Assam and West Bengal.

The WWF-India is implementing 'The Sonitpur Model' in two districts of Assam in collaboration with the State Forest Department where locals are trained and equipped to form 'Anti Depredation Squads' that can drive the wild elephants back using searchlights, fire-



crackers and kunki elephants. Kunkis are trained elephants that can help the Anti Depredation Squad members in driving back wild elephants..

In fact, Apeejay Tea, a tea firm and WWF-India have partnered (2015-18) to implement HEC management measures in its tea plantations in Sonitpur.

Dr Ghose said, "Through intensive conflict management strategy in the conflict prone plantations, a range of initiatives have been implemented which were found to be successful in reducing losses related to HEC in four of Apeejay Tea estates namely Borjuli, Ghoirallie,

Dhulapadung and Sessa Tea Estates.

Under the project, low cost solar power fences were installed across the tea estates, a scalable bio fence, using thorny bamboo was also introduced to prevent the entry of wild elephants into vulnerable areas of the tea garden when ready. Regular village level meetings and interaction were held to create awareness on elephants and HEC management.

"We believe that we will be able to scale up these initiatives in Assam with the ITA's participation in effectively managing HEC along with other stake-

holders," he added.

Karan Paul, Chairman of Apeejay Tea and member of ITA who had initiated the meeting said that they were perhaps the first tea company to fund an intensive conflict management strategy in Sonitpur because four of our gardens were in the hot zone.

Vivek Goenka, ITA Chairman added, "The ITA has studied the Project Outcomes of Apeejay Tea - WWF collaboration and is sensitive to the issue. I believe that a multi-stakeholder collaboration including the Government will aid implementation of large scale interventions across the tea sector. This was our first meeting involving tea companies and we are hopeful of a collaborative approach emerging to take this forward."

According to Government data, Assam with an elephant area (15,050 square km) is the country's prime elephant range State, having 5,719 jumbos, the highest population of wild elephants after Karnataka.

GUJARAT-PAK BORDER

Only 616 border fencing light poles out of 2,061 functional

New Delhi: Out of the 2,061 Border Fencing Light poles along the international border in Gujarat's Bhuj and Gandhinagar Sector, only 616 are "functional", the BSF has told the CPWD, according to the minutes of an inter-departmental co-ordination meeting held in November.

Border Security Force officers also informed the CPWD that out of 82 diesel gensets, only 38 are "functional", "affecting operational duties" by the troops on the sensitive international border, the minutes stated.

The meeting was held at BSF Headquarters in New Delhi, during which senior officers of BSF and CPWD, the government's largest construction agency, discussed several projects.

BSF Director General Rajni Kant Mishra and Central Public Works Department DG Prabhakar Singh also attended the November 16 meeting.

India's border with Pakistan runs through four states, Jammu and Kashmir (1,225 km, which includes 740 km of Line of Control), Rajasthan (1,037 km), Punjab (553 km) and Gujarat (508 km).

"Out of 2,061 BFL poles, only 616 BFL poles are func-



tional (along the international border in Bhuj and Gandhinagar Sector). Out of 82 DG sets, only 38 DG sets are functional.

"CPWD (was) requested to carry out necessary repair at the earliest as it is affecting operational duties performed by the troops deployed on the sensitive international border," stated the meeting's minutes prepared by the BSF and sent to the CPWD director general on December 12.

There have been several attempts of infiltration by terrorists who cut the border fences to enter India from the Pakistani side.

BFLs are maintained by CPWD in Bhuj and Gandhi Nagar Sector.

According to the minutes of meeting, the CPWD intimated that work of repairing of BFLs and DG sets in Bhuj and Gandhi Nagar Sector are in progress and will be handed over to BSF after proper rectifications.

It also stated that in Jammu, out of the 28 command posts in non-composite Border Output Posts, so far only three command posts have been completed and 17 are under construction with "very slow progress" while work on eight have not yet started.

It added that out of the 43 High Mast Lights in river-line gaps, so far work on 25 HML has been completed while three are under construction with "very slow progress" and 15 HML work has not started yet. **PTI**

India's largest cancer institute in Haryana's Jhajjar to open in Jan

New Delhi: Touted as the largest cancer hospital in India, the National Cancer Institute in Haryana's Jhajjar district would be opened to public by the third week of January, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said on Tuesday.

The institute, being considered as a landmark in the field of cancer research in the country, shall lessen the deficit of tertiary cancer care in the northern region.

"The National Cancer Institute in Jhajjar would be dedicated by the third week of January," Nadda said at an event in AIIMS hospital in Delhi.

The institute will have 710 beds, out of which 200 beds will be dedicated for translational research on India-specific cancers.

Out patient department or OPD services were partially started last week.

Different facilities such as surgical oncology, radiation oncology, medical oncology, anaesthesia and palliative care and nuclear medicine will be available at the institute. It will also have the first-of-its-kind tissue repository in India.

The institute, which will operate under the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi, was approved by the Manmohan Singh government in 2013 and has been built at a cost of Rs 2,035 crore.

There will be 372 units of flats and 1,080 hostel rooms for staff members. A night shelter



with a capacity of 800 units meant for patient attendants have also been planned.

There are more than 80 lakh cancer patients in the world. Nearly 29 lakh of them are in India. About 11 lakh cancer cases are detected every year.

With a view to prevent and cure cancer, the government decided to set up the new institute of advance research activities.

The institute, coming up in Badhsa village, will operate on the lines of National Cancer Institute in the US and German Cancer Research Centre (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum) DKFZ as a nodal centre for indigenous research, promotive, preventive and curative aspects of care and human resource development.

The institute is aimed to plan, conduct and coordinate research on cancers which are more specific to India — like tobacco-related cancers, cancer of the uterine cervix, gall bladder cancer and liver cancers. The focus will be on understanding and analysing the cause and genesis of these type of cancers, the Government has said. **PTI**

CBI books Delhi-based kidswear retailer for cheating Union Bank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked the chief managing director of Delhi-based kids-wear retailer, Catmoss Retail Pvt Ltd Ashwini Kumar Chawla, for allegedly cheating Union Bank of India of ₹20 crore. The company and its officials allegedly fabricated balance sheets to avail a loan which was not repaid to the bank, CBI officials said.

Following a complaint by the bank, the CBI has registered a case of criminal conspiracy and cheating against the company Catmoss Retail Pvt Ltd, Chawla, his wife and guarantor Asha Rani Chawla and the firm's directors Reena Chawla

and Asha Rani Chawla, they said.

In its complaint to the CBI, Union Bank of India alleged that the company furnished "forged and fabricated" balance sheets with an intention to cheat and cause wrongful loss to it.

"CMD of Catmoss Retail Pvt Ltd Ashwini Chawla, in pursuance of a well knitted criminal conspiracy to fraudulently avail loan facility from the complainant bank by furnishing forged and fabricated balance sheets, has committed offences like cheating, forgery, forgery for purpose of cheating and using as genuine a forged document," it said.

It is alleged that Chawla had

approached the bank in 2011 seeking a sanctioned credit limit of ₹10 crore.

The company furnished balance sheets for the financial years 2009-10 and 2010-11 to the bank which were audited by a chartered accountant.

The account was declared a non performing asset on March 31, 2013, having an outstanding of ₹10.92 crore.

The bank extracted a portion of its loan amount by auctioning some properties which it had held as guarantee.

During the inquiry, the chartered accountant, who had purportedly signed the balance sheets, told the bank that it was not the case.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh after paying tributes to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 94th birth anniversary in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

BJP under pressure as its allies deserting coalition: Pilot

Jaipur: Exuding confidence that the Congress will form the Government at the Centre in 2019, Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot claimed that the BJP is under pressure as its allies are deserting the coalition.

He alleged that the BJP's allies were quitting the NDA due to the arrogance of saffron party leaders and it was now under pressure which recently reflected in the seat-sharing in Bihar.

"Upendra Kushwaha has quit the NDA, the TDP has already left and the Shiv Sena is also not with them. Now the BJP is under pressure and therefore they gave 17 seats in Bihar to the JD(U) which has



only two MPs. What can be a fine example of insecurity than this," Pilot said.

He said the BJP leaders used to point fingers towards the Congress by saying that the party was struggling for its survival but results of the recent-

ly held Assembly polls in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have sent out a strong message.

"This full majority Government at the Centre has become so weak that it has given nearly half of Bihar (Lok Sabha seats) to a party having just two MPs just because of the fear that people are not voting for the BJP and also its allies are daring them. This happens when the government is weak," he told PTI here.

Pilot said the BJP should accept the fact that it has faced a severe blow in three states and should take responsibility of the defeat.

"(BJP's) Nitin Gadkari has

already spoken that the party leadership should take the responsibility for the defeat. When the Congress had suffered defeat, the party president Rahul Gandhi had humbly accepted that but the BJP leadership is so arrogant that despite facing defeat in three states, it is unwilling to take the responsibility," he said.

Pilot said there was a swing of 12.5 per cent votes in Rajasthan and the Congress gained 99 seats in 2018 from 21 Assembly seats in 2013.

"We won 21 (Assembly) seats in 2013 and the number of seats has increased five times in 2018. Swing of votes is 12.5 per cent. BJP's vote share has decreased by 6.6 per

cent and ours increased by six per cent. It's a rare swing," he said.

Pilot, who is also the party's Rajasthan unit chief, said the victory of the Congress has boosted the morale of party workers and they have started preparing for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

"We have formed the government and along with delivering on our promises, we are focusing on the upcoming elections. Meetings in the party have already started. The party will register a thumping victory in the Lok Sabha polls and the Congress will form the Government at the Centre," he said.

Rajasthan has 25 Lok

Sabha seats and at present, 22 are with the BJP, one with the Congress and two are vacant.

The BJP had won all the 25 seats in the 2014 general elections but it lost two seats to the Congress in bypolls held earlier this year.

Two sitting MPs — Raghu Sharma (Congress) and Harish Meena (BJP) — won the recently held Assembly polls and they have resigned as the MP thus making their seats vacant.

BJP's Harish Meena, who was director general of the Rajasthan Police, had defected to the Congress before the assembly polls and contested on Congress ticket from Deoli-Uniara Assembly constituency and got elected. **PTI**

Bus falls in pit; cleaner dies; 24 children hurt

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

One person was killed and 24 school students were injured when an overcrowded bus returning from a picnic in Madhya Pradesh met with an accident Tuesday morning in Gujarat's Panchmahal district, said police.

The private luxury bus, hired by an Ahmedabad-based school for picnic, fell into a roadside pit after the driver lost control over the vehicle at Parvadi village near Godhra, around 130km from here, said Police Sub-Inspector MV Jotana.

According to an FIR lodged at the Godhra taluka police station, the bus was hired by the Vivekanand Hindi Higher Secondary School, situated in the Narol area of Ahmedabad.

The mishap took place when the bus, packed with 107

passengers, including school-children and teachers, was returning to Ahmedabad from Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, where they had gone for a picnic.

While the cleaner of the bus, Balram Bhadoria, died in the accident, its driver fled the spot, said Panchmahal District Superintendent of Police Leena Patil.

"The bus slipped into a roadside pit after the driver lost control over the vehicle. While 24 students received minor injuries, the cleaner died as he jumped from the moving bus to save his life," said Patil.

The injured students were shifted to the Godhra Civil Hospital for treatment, she said.

Primary investigations by the police revealed negligence on part of the school management as the bus was carrying 107 passengers, way beyond its capacity, said Patil.

"The bus driver fled from the spot after the accident. The bus was indeed overcrowded. Apart from students, there were teachers and their family members in the bus. We have lodged a case against the driver and others," said the SP.

Based on a complaint filed by one of the parents, Radheshyam Prajapati, the Godhra taluka police lodged the FIR against the unidentified driver, bus operator Sitaram Sharma and the school owner, Panjabilal, said the police.

They were booked under various sections of the IPC, including 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 279 (rash driving) and 337 (causing injury by rash act). According to PSI Jotana, the capacity of the bus was just 58, against which 107 people, including 70 students, were in the vehicle at the time of accident.

Man booked for raping minor daughter in Raj

Kota: A 40-year-old man has been booked for allegedly raping his 13-year-old daughter twice in two days in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district, police said on Tuesday. Based on a complaint by the girl, a case was filed against her father at women police station in Jhalawar on Monday under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act for allegedly raping her, sub inspector (SI) and police station in-charge Ramesh Chand Meroth said. According to the minor's complaint, she was first raped by her father on Saturday when they were headed to her aunt's home in Samrai village, he said. The girl alleged that her father took her to a mustard village and raped her. When she started crying and shouting, he threatened her with dire consequences, the SI said. The accused allegedly raped his daughter again on Sunday on the way to her maternal grandmother's place in Chotaraipur village, Meroth said.

PTI



People visit the replica of Taj Mahal at Echo Park, Rajarhut-New Town city near Kolkata on Tuesday

PTI

Bigger allies should respect small parties: NDA ally Apna Dal(S)

PTI ■ MIRZAPUR

Small parties should be respected and given due importance by their bigger allies, Ashish Patel, national president of Apna Dal(S) party, a constituent of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), said on Tuesday.

He also cautioned the saffron party that a tie-up between the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) in Uttar Pradesh would pose a challenge to it in 2019 Lok Sabha election.

"We small parties, like the Apna Dal(S), want some respect to be shown to us. We, our leaders and workers feel hurt if due importance is not given to us," Ashish Patel told mediapersons here.

He added that his party was not happy with the behaviour of the BJP-led state government with Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel, also his wife.

The Apna Dal(S) chief claimed that she was not given adequate importance and not even invited for inaugurations of medical colleges.

Ashish Patel's remarks come days after Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RSLP) Chief Upendra Kushwaha walked out of the NDA. He was upset with the BJP after it asserted that the RLSP would not be given more than two seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Earlier in March, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) ended its four-year-old alliance with the NDA over the Centre's refusal to grant Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh.

Asked how many seats his party would like to contest in in Uttar Pradesh in 2019 Lok Sabha election, Ashish Patel said it would be revealed when the time comes.

He asserted that the Apna Dal(S) had widened its base during the last five years.

The party's candidates Anupriya Patel and Harivansh Singh won from Mirzapur and Pratapgarh respectively.

Responding to a question, Ashish Patel denied that the BJP's defeats in the recently concluded assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh had weakened the party.

Nitish pays moving tribute to Vajpayee

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday paid a moving tribute to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary and said the late leader would always be remembered for art of successfully running a coalition government.

Kmar said he relished memories of having worked with Vajpayee as a minister holding important portfolios like Railway, Agriculture and Surface Transport and fondly recalled the love he always showered on me, something I would never be able to forget.

Atal ji shall always be remembered for the role he played in national politics and the manner in which he upheld social harmony. I have personal regard for him. I have worked under his leadership as a ministerreceived his ashirwad (love and blessings), he told reporters on the sidelines of a function organised here on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Vajpayee who passed away in August this year.

The positive manner in which he dealt with his alliance partners is a memory to be cherished. Even the dignity with which he treated those in



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar pays tribute former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary at Sri Krishan Memorial hall in Patna on Tuesday

PTI

the opposition used to be a sight to behold, Kumar who heads the Janata Dal (United) said.

He earned respect from all segments of society. No other politician has been able to match his popularity in the recent past. We have decided to

hold a state function every year in his memory. A statue of his will also be erected in Patna for which a proper spot will be identified, the Chief Minister added.

The function, held at the Sri Krishna Memorial Hall, was attended among others by

Governor Lalji Tandon, Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi, Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, ministers Nand Kishore Yadav, Mangal Pandey and Vinod Narain Jha and a number of other members of the states bicameral legislature.

The wiper of many tears

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bell would perhaps never have jingled for these little "Christis" had this unpretentious Sadhu not made a timely intervention in their carcinogenic existence. True, there is hardly a better way to celebrate the birth of the Lord on the Christmas Day than providing these little ones, afflicted by cancer, with winter hardware to fend off a biting cold.

Sevapeeth Matri Mandir the Ashram run under the aegis of Swami Bedananda this Christmas Day provided cancer afflicted children with rags, mosquito nets et al even as the septuagenarian monk said "life blooms into a true Christmas only when you serve the distressed," even as he advocated thievery of virtue and shedding

“Life blooms into a true Christmas only when you serve the distressed”

of vise.

Behind the veneer of his nonchalance, reside deep philosophical thoughts. "If you really have to steal something then steal not conceit but compassion that transmits from the ascetic eyes of Lord Buddha. If you have to thief a thing then thieve the mystical smile from Ramakrishna Paramhansa's lips. Convey kindness by your words and deeds and avoid disgruntlement. Be content with whatever you have. Then only you will have peace. And in a

peace of mind resides a peaceful world," said Bedanada who shares his 9x9 nondescript enclosure, with Mother Goddess Kali.

"I lost my mother when I was too young. She left me binning all my humble desires to cuddle up her lap. So I decided to quit my house and withdraw into this commonplace room to live with the Mother of the Universe. I sleep and rouse, eat and pray, laugh and chat --

-- all in this small room under the benevolent sponsorship of my Mother," the Sadhu preaches in a common man's idiom even as a bevy of who's who from the City of Joy --- king and the king-maker, ruler and the ruled, officer and the gentleman, doctor and professor, teacher and the student --- make a beeline for his sermons.

Pilot hints at Cabinet expansion to accommodate miffed leaders

Jaipur: A day after Cabinet formation, Rajasthan Congress chief Sachin Pilot Tuesday hinted at its expansion in near future, saying several leaders will be given a chance to work.

The statement comes amidst growing resentment among some senior Congress leaders who were apparently left fuming after being denied ministerial berths in the new government.

"Every division of the state has been given representation in the Council of Ministers. It was the first expansion. Another expansion may happen in sometime. Several people would be given a chance to work on various posts," Pilot told reporters.

On Monday, 23 ministers, including 13 cabinet and 10

state ministers took oath in the presence of Governor Kalyan Singh, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot.

A total of 18 fresh faces were inducted in the state cabinet even as senior leaders like C P Joshi and Deependra Singh abstained from attending the ceremony held at Raj Bhawan.

Various other senior leaders including Brijendra Ola, Parasram Mordiya, Rajendra Pareek, Mahesh Joshi were not inducted in the state cabinet.

Hours later, supporters of Congress legislator from Kaman, Zahida Khan and legislator from Guda Malani, Hema Ram Chaudhary took to the streets and raised anti-government slogans for not giving their leaders a ministerial berth.

PTI

17-yr-old girl, gone missing in Kedarnath, restored to family

PTI ■ ALIGARH

In a fairy tale ending of a real-life story, a 17-year-old, mentally challenged girl, who had gone missing in Kedarnath during 2013 deluge there, has been reunited with her family in Aligarh after five years.

Elated over the return of their long-lost grand-daughter Chanchal, her grandparents parents Harish Chand and Shakuntla Devi, residents of Bannadevi locality here, said, "This reunion is nothing short of a miracle."

Chanchal had gone to Kedarnath on a pilgrimage with her parents when the tragedy struck, sweeping away her father, while her mother

Chanchal, then 12, was feared dead but some good samaritans handed her over to an orphanage in Jammu, said director Gyanendra Mishra of NGO Childline Aligarh which helped in bringing the girl home

returned home after some-time, Harish Chand told media persons here Monday.

Chanchal, then 12, was feared dead but some good samaritans handed her over to an orphanage in Jammu, said director Gyanendra Mishra of

NGO Childline Aligarh which helped in bringing the girl home.

For the last few months, the orphanage management had been observing that the girl often tried to communicate something about Aligarh city through her limited verbal skills, Mishra said.

They somehow got in touch with Aligarh city legislator Sanjiv Raja who then took Mishra's assistance. Mishra, in turn, managed to identify the family of the lost girl with the help of police, and restored her to it.

Chachal still misses her long-lost father Rajesh and keeps remembering him, Harish Chand said.



Artistes dressed up as cartoon characters, perform during Christmas celebrations in Jaipur on Tuesday

PTI

BJP must clear stand over remarks on Hanuman: Seer

PTI ■ MATHURA

Swami Adhokshjanand Deo Tirth Tuesday said Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and other leaders have vitiated the atmosphere in the country by linking Lord Hanuman to various castes and communities.

He demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top leaders of the BJP should clear the party's stand and bar party functionaries from disrespectful remarks about gods and goddesses.

The seer's reaction came after Uttar Pradesh Religious Affair Minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary dubbed Lord Hanuman as a Jat, saying like Jats, the deity never tolerated injustice towards anybody, anywhere.

The minister made the remark Friday after a Bharatiya

Janata Party Memeber of Legislative Council (MLA) from the state, Bukkal Nawab, dubbed Lord Hanuman a Muslim on the ground that his name rhymed with Islamic names like Rahman, Arman, Qurban etc.

During an election rally in Rajasthan, Adityanath had termed the deity a Dalit.

"On one side the BJP, from time to time, has been bringing up the Ram temple issue and on the other, its leaders are making absurd remarks on Hindu gods and goddesses, hurting religious sentiments," Sh a n k a r a c h a r y a Adhokshajanand Deo Tirth said here.

"The Ram temple in Ayodhya will be incomplete without Lord Hanuman as Ram had himself praised Hanumanji calling him like his brother Bharat," he said.

If the remark made by Nawab has the BJP high-command's approval, "then the party will have to get a mosque constructed for Lord Hanuman", the seer said.

The chief minister had hurt religious sentiments by terming Lord Hanuman a Dalit, even as his office later issued a clarification, claiming that Adityanath was misquoted, the shankaracharya said.

"Adityanath and other leaders' remarks on Hanuman have vitiated the atmosphere in the country," the seer said.

Lord Hanuman has been termed a Jat, Thakur, a sportsman and even a Muslim, even though gods and goddesses are above caste and religion, he stated.

Uttar Pradesh Sports Minister and former cricketer Chetan Chauhan had said on

Sunday that Hanuman was a sportsperson.

However, he had dismissed his party colleagues' attempts at identifying the deity's caste and said gods don't have castes.

The seer asked the BJP to clear its stand on the remarks and claimed no clarification was issued by the party on the statements on Lord Hanuman.

"The silence by BJP higher ups and RSS functionaries (on the remarks on Lord Hanuman) indicates that for the BJP, the Ram temple is a tool to garner votes," he said, adding that the temple in Ayodhya will be constructed by seers and dharmacharyas.

At a meeting held in Vrindavan, the coordinator of the Mathura Nagar Nigam Tara Chandra Goshwami also condemned the remarks of BJP leaders on Hindu gods and goddesses.

Vandals attack church in Kolhapur; 12 hurt

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a shocking incident that took place two days ahead of Christmas, at least 12 worshippers were injured, when a group of vandals attacked them during a Sunday mass with beer bottles, hockey sticks and choppers at a Church at Kowad in Chandwad taluka of Kolhapur district in western Maharashtra.

Reports reaching the State headquarters said on Tuesday some “15 to 20” unidentified attackers, who arrived at the New Life Fellowship Church at Chandwad in motor-bikes when the mass was on there on Sunday, first hurled stones and beer bottles at the church for 20 to 30 minutes and later barged inside the place of worship.

There were in all 40 worshippers inside the church when the incident took place at around 11.30 – nearly half an hour after the start of Sunday service.

The attackers, who had covered their faces to avoid being identified, smashed the heads of the worshippers with empty beer bottles and also hit them with hockey sticks, injuring at least a dozen of them. Most of the injured were mostly those who had formed a protection ring around a majority of worshippers soon after the vandals barged inside the church.

The Kolhapur police said that the injured were admitted to a private hospital at Belagavi in the neighbouring Karnataka, where eight were treated and discharged and the commission of the remaining four was

reported to be “serious”. The seriously injured are undergoing treatment in Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Till Tuesday evening, the Kolhapur police had not made any arrests in connection with the attack on the church and worshippers. The investigations have revealed that the attackers might have fled to neighbouring Belagavi city in Karnataka. “Our investigations have revealed that after the church incident, the same group of goons attacked people in Talguli and Dindalkop villages on their way to Belagavi,” a senior police officer said on Tuesday.

The police have launched a manhunt for the vandals by forming four teams. “We have not arrested any one so far,” the police officer said.

Meanwhile, the police have registered offences against the unknown persons under sections 143 (punishment for unlawful assembly), 146, 147 (rioting) 148 (Rioting, armed with deadly weapons, 295 (injuring or defiling place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 427 (Mischievous) and 452 (House trespass after preparation for hurt, assault or wrongful confinement).

Though the motive behind the attack has not been established, the investigators suspect that right-wing activists might have been the attack.

“All the same, we are not ruling out anything, including the involvement of right-wing activists. We are looking at all angles,” a senior police

officer investigating the case said.

In a related development, President of Indian Christian Voice and former Vice Chairman-Minorities Commission Dr Abraham Mathai described the incident as “very unfortunate” that the church and worshippers were attacked in a village in Kolhapur district.

Talking to “The Pioneer”, Mathai said: “I had warned the Supreme Court about the possibility of attacks on churches in the run-up to and during Christmas festivities. In fact, I had written a letter to the Chief Justice of India nearly a fortnight back, seeking withdrawal of the privilege of burning crackers till 12.30 am and rather ensure protection and safety of Churches for Christmas. I had told him clearly that Christian Community needs protection and safety more than permissions to burn crackers on Christmas Eve”

“While we respect the ruling of the Supreme Court, the ruling will encourage the use of firecrackers which has not been part of the Christmas Celebration in the past and will set a precedent which is adverse to the environment. Anarchic elements can also take advantage of the situation to discredit the peace loving community,” Mathai said.

“Adequate security and elaborate protection measures need to be put in place to protect Christian community during this festive season and to deter communal goons from attacking them and ultimately disrupting their prayer meetings,” Mathai said.

Deve Gowda disappointed at being left out of Bogibeel bridge Inaugural

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Former Prime Minister and JD(S) supremo HD Deve Gowda Tuesday expressed disappointment at not being invited for the inauguration of the country's longest rail road bridge in Assam though he had laid the foundation stone of it.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday inaugurated the 4.9 km long bridge at Bogibeel across Brahmaputra river, built at a cost of Rs 5,900 crore. The foundation stone for the project was laid by Gowda when he was the prime minister in 1997.

“Aiyo Rama! Who will remember me? Some newspapers might have mentioned about it”

“Railway line to Kashmir, Delhi Metro and Bogibeel rail road bridge were among the projects I had sanctioned (as prime minister). I had sanctioned the budget of Rs 100 crore for each of these projects and laid their foundation stones. People have forgotten today,” Gowda said.

Replying to a question from reporters on the sidelines of a function here as to how he felt about the inauguration of the project started by him, the former prime minister said he had given the nod for many projects.

To a question whether he received an invitation, Gowda quipped, “Aiyo Rama! Who will remember me? Some newspapers might have mentioned about it.”

On the enormous delay in completing the project, he said, “That is where I differ. I completed the Hassan-Mysuru project in 13 months. I completed two bridges on time. Anagwadi bridge (across Ghataprabha). Go and see the bridge on Krishna river.

“Some people from Bombay Karnataka region say that Deve Gowda did not do anything (for the north Karnataka region), go and see it, he added.

Naval hospital ship Sandhani inducted



A plaque being unveiled marking the Commissioning of Indian Naval Hospital Ship, INHS Sandhani was on Monday commissioned at Naval Station Karanja at Uran in Raigad district at the hands of Vice Admiral Girish Luthra, Flag-Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Indian Naval Hospital Ship, INHS Sandhani was on Monday commissioned at Naval Station Karanja at Uran in Raigad district at the hands of Vice Admiral Girish Luthra, Flag-Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command.

Surgeon Vice Admiral Anup Banerji, DGMS (Navy) delivered the welcome address and Mrs. Preeti Luthra,

President NWWA, Western Region, unveiled the commissioning plaque of the hospital. The Commissioning Warrant was read by the first Commanding Officer of the hospital, Surgeon Captain HBS Chaudhry.

With the steady expansion of Naval Station Karanja, over the last few decades, a need for a dedicated multi-specialty hospital was felt, in order to provide quality healthcare to more than 8,000 naval personnel and

their dependents, who reside at the Karanja naval station.

The commissioning of this 30-bedded hospital, with a team of specialists in the fields of Medicine, Surgery, Gynecology, Pediatrics, Anesthesia and Dental Sciences; will not only improve the quality and speed of healthcare delivery, but also obviate the need for patients, including those with critical ailments and emergency cases, to travel by sea to Mumbai.

Ayyappa Jyothi to lead Kerala to world of light

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI/CHENNAI

Wednesday evening will see people in the three southern States of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu lighting millions of lamps (Ayyappa Jyothi) as a mark of solidarity with the devotees of Lord Ayyappa who are engaged in a battle of nerves with the Government of Kerala over the entry of women in the child bearing age to the holy shrine of Sabarimala.

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had ruled on September 28 that women of all ages should be allowed to worship at the Lord Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala atop the Western Ghats in Kerala. The devotees of Lord Ayyappa are upset over the verdict and had requested women devotees in the 10 to 50 age group not to make it to the temple.

But the CPI-M led Kerala Government, in its anxiety to implement the court order has

made elaborate security arrangements for facilitating the entry of women to the temple, where women had been denied entry as per age old tradition.

“This Ayyappa Jyothi is an effort to lead Kerala to a world of light. There is an attempt to destroy the plurality and diversity of the temples in Kerala and the Ayyappa Jyothi is an attempt to expose this mission as well as an offering to the God with a prayer to inculcate good thoughts in the mind of the powers that be,” said Swamy Chidanandapuri, head, Advaita Ashram and the chief patron of the Sabarimala Karma Samithi.

He pointed out that it was for the Acharya Dharma Sabha, Thanthric, Vedic and Astrological scholars to study the need to make changes in the Agama Saasthras and take a final decision. “Why only one religion has been singled out by the authorities in the name of reformation while they are

BUT THE CPI-M LED KERALA GOVERNMENT, IN ITS ANXIETY TO IMPLEMENT THE COURT ORDER HAS MADE ELABORATE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR FACILITATING THE ENTRY OF WOMEN TO THE TEMPLE, WHERE WOMEN HAD BEEN DENIED ENTRY AS PER AGE OLD TRADITION

reluctant to make any comment on the goings on in other religions? That is not fair and it is against secularism,” said the Swamiji, described as spiritual leader of the Hindus in the State.

Govind Bharathan, senior lawyer, Kerala High Court and one of the prominent faces of

Sabarimala Karma Samithi described the Ayyappa Jyothi as a unique event. “Besides the 795 km stretch from Mangalore in Karnataka to Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu, many districts in these three States will light up Ayyappa Jyothi. We will recite “Swamy Saranam” while doing so and there will be no speeches or slogans,” said Bharathan.

He said that not a single woman devotee had come to Sabarimala on their own till Tuesday evening. “Those women who came to Sabarimala were all activists who had declared that they were undertaking the trip only to shatter the convention and tradition. They were all self-proclaimed atheists and non-believers,” said Bharathan. Wednesday will see the 41st day of this year's festival and the Ayyappa Jyothi is expected to add splendour to it.

Swamy Chidanandapuri lambasted the efforts by a section of the society to portray

the denial of rights to women for worshipping at Sabarimala as part of casteism. “According to custom and tradition in vogue in Sabarimala, women are not allowed here. Please understand that this is the only holy shrine situated deep inside a forest and there are scientific reasons behind this custom,” said Swamiji.

“There are many Supreme Court verdicts which were delivered earlier to the Sabarimala case. But the Kerala Government's anxiety to implement this particular verdict is dubious,” said Prayar Gopalakrishnan, Congress leader and former president of Travancore Devaswam Board.

Meanwhile, the CPI-M led Government is working overtime to make the proposed Women's Wall on January 1 a major success. Hectic activities are on to light up Ayyappa Jyothi in temples across Chennai, according to K Asokan and Pravin Pillai, devotees and activists.



Devotees offer prayers during the Christmas mass at All Saint Cathedral church in Allahabad on Tuesday

PTI

‘Let’s Go To Villages’ is DMK’s new Song of Solomon

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Song of Solomon (7:11) with slight change is going to be the theme of the campaign of the DMK for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The song “Come, my beloved, let us go the countryside...” has been slightly altered to suit the changed situation. “Let us go to the people. Let us speak to the people. Let us win the hearts of the people” would be party chief Stalin's theme song of the campaign for DMK's 2019 Lok Sabha election. DMK leaders will tour all the villages in the State and will leave no stones un-turned in the run up to the 2019 election. This was announced by M K Stalin, party president, after a day-long meeting with the district level office bearers and constituencies-in-charge of the DMK on Monday. Though the election Commission has not announced the schedule of the

Lok Sabha polls, the DMK would launch the massive outreach programme on January 3, 2019 from Thiruvallur, the home constituency of late M Karunanidhi, the party's former president who breathed his last in August his year.

The assembly election 2016 has seen Stalin, who was the then working president of the party leading “We For Ourselves” campaign in which he interacted with people in all the 234 assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu. Though the DMK could not unseat the ruling AIADMK from power, the party put up a spirited fight and won 89 seats. Stalin plans to relaunch the outreach programme from where he left it in 2016. But this time, party leaders too would chip in because it is difficult for the party leader himself to attend the Grama Sabha like meetings planned in all the 12,617 panchayaths in the State.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

SADAIV ATAL...

“Atalji was the foundation of sushasan (good governance). He learnt the nuances of politics from Deendayal Upadhyay and Syama Prasad Mukherjee and became a symbol of trust in politics,” Adityanath said. Close on the heels, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar who had served under Vajpayee as Railway Minister, announced that his Government will install a statue of the former Prime Minister in Patna. Though he did not offer details on what the

height and cost of the statue are going to be, Nitish said a decision on its location will be taken soon. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and family members of Vajpayee also offered flowers at the lotus-shaped memorial. The BJP stalwart had a wide political acceptance not only in the Hindi-heartland but across southern States too and considered a moderate secular BJP leader by Opposition parties. Though born in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, from where

he contested for the Lok Sabha, he played a bigger political inning in Uttar Pradesh.

BANK STRIKE...

The move follows top lender State Bank of India last year merging five of its subsidiary banks with itself and taking over Bharatiya Mahila Bank, catapulting it to among the top 50 global lenders. On wage revision, NOBW Vice President Ashwani Rana it is due since November 2017. So far, Indian Banks' Association

(IBA) has offered 8 per cent wage hike which is not acceptable to UFBU, he said.

FIRMS TO FACE...

Meanwhile, companies in the area have sought a meeting with senior Noida police officers for clarification on the matter, particularly on the clause that threatens to hold them liable for violations of the order by employees. “A few people had asked for permission for religious prayers in a park in Sector 58.

In spite of no permission granted from the city magistrate, the office people congregated. The companies in the area were informed about it. The information is not specific to any particular religion,” said Noida's Senior Superintendent of Police, Ajay Pal Sharma. District Magistrate BN Singh also seconded the views of the SSP and said the orders have been issued in accordance of the wish of the state administration.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT CHANDIGARH ADMINISTRATION U.T., CHANDIGARH

E-TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Engineer C.P. Division No.6, U.T. Chandigarh Re-invites online the percentage rate tenders on behalf of the President of India from eligible reputed contractors/ agencies fulfilling the eligibility criteria mentioned below which shall be updated and received on <http://etenders.chdnic.in/tncvgep>.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Tender Amount	Earnest Money	Time Limit	Last date of submission of Bid	Date of Opening of Bid
1	Restoration, Preservation, Conservation and Management of Capital Complex (World Heritage), Chandigarh: Punjab and Haryana Civil Secretariat Building (Composite Work).	(a) Civil Component: Rs. 19,85,15,500/- (b) PH Services: Rs. 2,80,00,000/- (c) Electrical Installation: Rs. 3,05,63,114/- Total: 25,51,78,614/-	Rs. 35,52,000/-	12 Months	07-01-2019 11:00 AM	07-01-2019 12:00 PM
2	Restoration, Preservation, Conservation and Management of Capital Complex (World Heritage), Chandigarh: Punjab and Haryana Legislative Assembly (Composite Work).	(a) Civil Component: Rs. 4,83,80,130/- (b) PH Services: Rs. 90,58,000/- (c) Electrical Installation: Rs. 58,73,414/- Total: 6,33,11,544/-	Rs. 13,26,231/-	09 Months	07-01-2019 11:00 AM	07-01-2019 12:00 PM

DA/-

Executive Engineer,
C.P. Division No.6,
2nd Floor, Additional Deluxe Building,
Sector 9-D, U.T. Chandigarh. Ph. No. 0172-2740094
E-mail: xencp6@gmail.com

Memo No.9714-21 Dt. 24-12-2018

DHFL DEWAN HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED

National Office: DHFL House, 4th Floor, 19, Sahar Road, Off Western Express Highway, Vile Parle (East), Mumbai- 400099
Branch office: DHFL, Dreams Mall, first Floor, L.B.S Marg, Bhandup (West), Mumbai – 400078

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.(DHFL) under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the “said Borrower(s)”), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to DHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to DHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA date	Description of secured asset (Immovable property)
(LC No. 00005375 of Lucknow Branch) Shobhit Gupta (Borrower) Smita Gupta (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 586946/- (Five lakh Eighty Six Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Six) NPA (01-10-2018)	Flat No 103 On Plot No 280/18 Blunt Square, Lucknow, Lucknow- 226020
(LC No. 00000769 of Meerut Branch) Deepak Chhabra (Borrower) Harish Pal (Co Borrower 1)	28-11-2018/ ₹ 1743631/- (Seventeen lakh Forty Three Thousand Six Hundred Thirty One) NPA (01-05-2018)	S.Floor Flat On Plot No. F- 29 Part Of Kh. No. 313mi & 313B Saraswati Lok Extension Colony Near Era Gardania Estat, Noor Nagar Road Meerut- 250001
(LC No. 00001314 of Delhi Branch) Lal Babu Sahu (Borrower) Rita Sahu (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 2114726/- (Twenty One lakh Fourteen Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty Six) NPA (01-10-2018)	Flat No. 20, Second Floor, Block C-6, Sector 71 Noida, Gautambudh Nagar, Noida, Gautambudh Nagar- 201301
(LC No. 00000465 of Delhi Branch) Parimal Pankaj (Borrower) Rashmi (Co Borrower 1) Ravi Shekhar (Gaurantor 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 1818745/- (Eighteen lakh Eighteen Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Five) NPA (01-10-2018)	Flat No- S.F. 01 Front Lhs Block- A Plot No. A- 84 SIF Ved Vihar Ghaziabad, Up, Loni, Ghaziabad, Ghaziabad-201102
(LC No. 00001687 of Agra Branch) Ram Kishor (Borrower) Achal Singh (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 2261391/- (Twenty Two lakh Sixty One Thousand Three Hundred Ninety One) NPA (01-10-2018)	House No.7 Khasra No. 196 Part Takshila Royal Homes Near Brauli Aheer Maruti City Road, Agra- 282002
(LC No. 00006025 of Lucknow Branch) Harikesh Gupta (Borrower) Toshi Gupta (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 6578642/- (Sixty Five lakh Seventy Eight Thousand Six Hundred Forty Two) NPA (01-10-2018)	House Constructed On Plot No S-25 Part Of Kh No 165, Vill- Barkhurdarpur Pargana Mohana, Bkt, Lucknow, Lucknow-226020
(LC No. 00001331 of Gorakhpur Branch) Sunil Kumar (Borrower) Shivapoojan (Co Borrower 1) Mohd Nadir (Gaurantor 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 2728158/- (Twenty Seven lakh Twenty Eight Thousand One Hundred Fifty Eight) NPA (01-10-2018)	Plot Situated At Khasara No 263 Mi, Takrohi, Ward- Sahid Bhagat Singh Dist Lucknow, Lucknow-226001
(LC No. 00001830 of Agra Branch) Ram Kishor (Borrower) Achal Singh (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 469906/- (Four lakh Sixty Nine Thousand Nine Hundred Six) NPA (01-10-2018)	House No.7 Khasra No. 196 Part Takshila Royal Homes Maruti City Road, Agra- 282001
(LC No. 00002110 of Kanpur Branch) Jai Karan Singh (Borrower) Kiran Singh (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 1394005/- (Thirteen lakh Ninety Four Thousand Five) NPA (01-10-2018)	Pvt Of Pvt Plot 32 At Arazi No. 870 Min, Vill Daheli Sujjanpur, Kanpur, Kanpur Rural-208013
(LC No. 00002136 of Agra Branch) Manish Kumar Savita (Borrower) Pankaj Kumar (Co Borrower 1) Hitesh Kumar (Gaurantor 1) Radha Devi (Gaurantor 2)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 1300232/- (Thirteen lakh Two Hundred Thirty Two) NPA (01-09-2018)	House On Amal. Khasra No. 231 & 232 Banke Vidhya Nagar Nagla Padi Hari Parwat Ward, Agra, Agra-282005
(LC No. 00000146 of Bareilly Branch) Javed Ali (Borrower) Gausiya (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 2843471/- (Twenty Eight lakh Forty Three Thousand Four Hundred Seventy One) NPA (01-10-2018)	House On Part Of Kh. No. 628- 635 Biharman Nagla, Munshi Nagar ,Bareilly, Bareilly- 243001
(LC No. 00000417 of Allahabad Branch) Jai Hind Bajaj (Borrower) Leena Bajaj (Co Borrower 1) Visva Kumar Bajaj (Gaurantor 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 1943812/- (Nineteen lakh Forty Three Thousand Eight Hundred Twelve) NPA (01-10-2018)	Plot On Gata No. 122 Mi Village Bheekhpur Pargana & Tehsil Raebareli, Near Bus Stand, Raebareli, Raebareli- 229001
(LC No. 00000497 of Yamunanagar Branch) Abdul Azeem (Borrower) Najma W/o Abdul Azeem (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 2315418/- (Twenty Three lakh Fifteen Thousand Four Hundred Eighteen) NPA (01-10-2018)	Part Of Plot No- 51, khasra No- 80, 81, Royal Infill Showroom Gaudista Colony Saharanpur, Saharanpur-247001
(LC No. 00000771 of Yamunanagar Branch) Gufran Ahmed (Borrower) Farida W/o Gufran (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 1813419/- (Eighteen lakh Thirteen Thousand Four Hundred Nineteen) NPA (01-10-2018)	Plot No 7 & Part Of Plot No- 6khasra No-235 Near Hanuman Mandir Near Defence Colony Saharanpur, Saharanpur-247001
(LC No. 00001202 of Delhi Branch) Adesh Kumar Tomer (Borrower) Savita S (Co Borrower 1)	26-11-2018/ ₹ 1928924/- (Nineteen lakh Twenty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty Four) NPA (01-10-2018)	Front Lhs 3bhk Flat Second Floor Khasra Number-293A & 293B Pt No. G12 & G14 Saraswati Vatika, Meerut-250002

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to DHFL as aforesaid, DHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of DHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Date : 26-Dec-2018
Place: UTTAR PRADESH

Sd/-
(Authorised Officer)
Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited

‘Pappu Pass Ho Gaya’

If 2019 will be the year that defines Rahul Gandhi as a politician, 2018 will be remembered as the year he became comfortable in his skin



Let us get one thing straight, it is not easy being Rahul Gandhi. To have lost your grandmother and your father to highly publicised assassinations is not something that anyone can even empathise with. But to then enter the political picture in India and immediately be portrayed as a ‘Clown Prince’ and a *pappu* (idiot) by the Opposition and doing yourself no favours by slips of the tongue (far too many) and being painted as an arrogant capo of the Lutyens mafia, must have taken a personal toll. It says a lot about Rahul Gandhi that he brushed aside the insults and innuendoes and even embraced his image as a *pappu*, with Congressmen themselves spreading ‘*Pappu Pass Ho Gaya*’ stickers on WhatsApp after the State election results a few weeks back. Of course, there is no doubt that a rejuvenated Congress is good for Indian democracy, but it should be noted that a series of missteps by the Bharatiya Janata Party and severe anti-incumbency had their roles to play in the Congress’ recent electoral success. But 2019 will be a different dilemma altogether for Rahul Gandhi and a very different challenge from the one that Prime Minister Narendra Modi faces. Rahul Gandhi has to play the unifying force of a disparate group of political characters from Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee to Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati, many of whom harbour their own ambitions of becoming the Prime Minister. One thing is certain: It is becoming increasingly difficult to predict who will occupy 7, Lok Nayak Marg come end-May 2019.

Frankly, this was not predictable this time last year as Rahul Gandhi ascended to the top post of the Congress. He was back then still *pappu* and portrayed as someone born with a big, fat silver spoon in his mouth. But he has managed to dispel that notion through a combination of diligent work, smart electoral strategy and allowing the Congress to swallow some pride when it comes to allies. There is no doubt that some of the allegations that he has made might not stick to Narendra Modi, notably questions on the Rafale deal, but to his credit, he single-handedly made it an issue which caught the Government off-guard. Rahul Gandhi has realised that Modi and Amit Shah are politicians who can fight on the offensive but fail miserably on defensive strategy, again the Rafale deal being a case in point. The Congress and, indeed, Rahul Gandhi’s strategy of painting Modi as financially, morally and ethically corrupt is working, but it might not work fast enough to defeat the BJP at the hustings. However, some of the mud is certainly sticking. With Modi disavowing intellectual talent in his Cabinet and elsewhere in the Government along with avoiding any critical media, more and more mud is sticking. This, coupled with a denial of obvious disasters like Demonetisation, makes the BJP vulnerable in 2019, not something that anyone predicted between 2014-17. Indeed, some even believed that India’s version of a thousand-year Reich was upon it. But much like that Reich, this one might also be hoisted by its own petard. It remains to be seen if Rahul Gandhi will be the fourth generation of his storied family to govern India. Some of the disparate alliances he might have to form are with people who either dislike him or out and out hate him. Will the recent defeats mellow down the BJP when it comes to its allies and potential partners, and will Modi realise that his first term might become his only term if he doesn’t use his last 10 weeks in office before the elections are announced to do something significant that doesn’t involve a temple? But 2018 has certainly seen the coming of age of *pappu*. Pappupedia, a pejorative website run by BJP surrogates, might indeed need an update or two, come 2019.

Out in the cold

People sleeping on Indian streets is the shameful reality we may have to live with unless we act soon



Though a tad late, winters have finally arrived and a cold wave is sweeping much parts of the country, affecting all and sundry, but discriminately. For the well off, these conditions may just be a matter of inconvenience. Some can win the war against cold by using room heaters, not minding the heavy electricity bills, or by adding more layers of woollens to keep themselves warm. For the poor though, extreme weather conditions always spell trouble — be it harsh winters or scorching summers. There is far little comfort for the poor, who spend most nights sleeping on rough Indian streets, pavements, abandoned drainpipes, temple staircases and what not. Not to forget, there are others, too, with unseen and untold miseries. This time round, though no cold wave deaths have been reported as yet, the sheer number of people taking refuge in shelter homes speaks volumes about homelessness. Consequences far outweigh the poor being just under the grip of cold. It’s the profound effect of poverty, joblessness and declining physical and mental health that act as a potent mix for cold wave deaths. It’s not as if the situation is inevitable. In fact, it is totally avoidable but for the lack of a comprehensive strategy to tackle homelessness. Despite the sheer number of welfare schemes, only a few sections benefit actually on the ground level. Compared to other States, though Delhi has fared much better in providing *rainbaseras* to the homeless, it is a travesty that there are few takers, the reason being that the shelter homes with inhuman conditions have become a place for endless indignities. Besides having to do with the filthy conditions, the homeless also run the risk of falling prey to pick-pockets or becoming victims of theft from their very own peers. Worse, those among the homeless like migrant labourers, earning their bread and butter doing menial jobs like working at construction sites, also have to share the space with drug addicts and hardened criminals. The only saving grace then is that there are a few civil society groups and other people who have been doing their bit by providing them with food and woollens that thankfully reach the intended beneficiaries. While this may be the case in Delhi, the same may not be true in other States which lack in providing a roof for the homeless, even at the expense of flouting Supreme Court orders. As the cold wave now takes a toll on the toxic air we breathe, with a thicker layer of smog engulfing the atmosphere, there is little hope that we can save ourselves from the worsening situation. Until, of course, the Government, as well as the people wake up to the shameful reality and do their bit by acting responsibly.

Clutching at straws

While the Government may wish to dream away its problems or throw insults at the Opposition to run away from uncomfortable questions, it will be exposed at some point of time



AJOY KUMAR

The Supreme Court last week delivered its judgement on the issue of whether a probe to look into the Rafale controversy needs to be constituted or not. In its decision, the court stated that it does not think that the matter, as argued before it, requires any intervention. While I cannot speak for the petitioners in the case that was filed before the Supreme Court in this matter, the Congress has consistently maintained its stand that the appropriate forum for an examination of the issues raised against the Rafale deal is not the Supreme Court but a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). In this week’s article, I will briefly speak about how the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) attempts to claim the decision of the top court as “clean chit” is unfounded and ill-advised.

At the outset, it is imperative to state that the apex court, while passing its order, stated clearly that its decision is from the standpoint of the exercise of jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 32 of the Constitution of India. This examination by the apex court, as I am sure the Government fully knows, is limited to the extent that the court, under its Article 32 jurisdiction, cannot summon/examine all the relevant file notings, examine witnesses on oath and have the Prime Minister and Defence Minister answer questions on propriety. As stated by the Supreme Court itself, there are broadly three issues that the Supreme Court was required to examine, (1) the process of procurement of the Rafale jets from Dassault Aviation; (2) the issue of pricing of the jets; and (3) the selection of Anil Ambani as the offset partner for Dassault Aviation.

All of these issues and the allegations against the Government warrant and require a thorough examination. Only a detailed examination of the deal, as is being demanded by the Congress and increasingly by the people of the country, can help actually determine whether there was any instance of wrongdoing. Therefore, the claim of the BJP that the decision of the Supreme Court on the basis of the limited information placed before the court constitutes a clean chit from it is a little far-fetched. Separately, the essential question before the BJP is whether a limited examination and an absolute clean chit can go hand in hand?

One would think it couldn’t because a limited examination and an unequivocal clean chit are a contradiction in terms. The Finance Minister and industrialist Anil Ambani of course believe otherwise, judging by the statements that we have seen in the few days since the pronouncement of the decision of the court. It was fairly poetic that within a few hours of the judgement, the BJP was forced to curb its enthusiasm and answer some uncomfortable questions because of an especially troubling paragraph in the judgement of the apex court, which stated that as per the Centre, the pricing details, with respect to the Rafale jets, were shared with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and that the report was examined by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). This was a shock to the Congress as the PAC Chairman Mallikarjun Kharge received no such copy of the report.



In a situation, frankly approaching the absurd, the Government of India then moved an application before the Supreme Court saying that the statement of the Centre had been “misunderstood” because of a grammatical error, and stated that in fact the PAC had never actually examined this report. The convenience of the explanation aside, the relevant question that must be asked is: How much of this obfuscation the Government engaged in while presenting its arguments before the Supreme Court?

At the end of the day, the Supreme Court only examined the questions posed by it from a limited perspective and placed reliance on the statements of the Government on face value to some extent. But now this recent ‘gaffe’, which appears to be a slender ‘fig leaf’, clearly raises questions about

“WHEN THE BJP WAS IN THE OPPOSITION, IT INSISTED ON JPCs ON THE 2G AND BOFORS ISSUES. SO, WHAT ACCORDING TO THE FINANCE MINISTER MAKES THE RAFALE DEAL ANY DIFFERENT?”

the authenticity and honesty with which this Government has approached the court and placed facts before it. The Government could argue that the public should trust it to place authentic facts before the court and that its statements should be taken at face value. However, the Government’s tactics of obfuscation as evidenced through its entire term do not inspire any trust.

So, in light of the limited examination of the Supreme Court and the manner in which it has been misled by the Government, the question that arises is what is the best way forward to deal with this entire episode? While this may come as a surprise to the readers, I would actually like to offer the Government a word of advice to help them get out of this mess: Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

At the end of the day, the Government has been posed with some uncomfortable questions and, therefore, the BJP must come forward and answer these three questions and expose the present Rafale controversy to the required disinfectant of proper scrutiny:

i) If there is nothing to hide, why not constitute a JPC?

ii) If the new Rafale jets are indeed cheaper, why did the Government only purchase 36 as opposed to the original requirement of 126?

iii) Why doesn’t the Prime Minister hold a press conference and answer questions on the deal from journalists?

Of these questions, the question as to why a JPC should not be constituted, is perhaps the most pertinent. The Finance Minister’s response to this question was that Parliament cannot question the judgment of the highest court of the land. This seems like a convenient excuse.

For starters, the Supreme Court itself has stated that this is only a limited examination and, therefore, there appears to be prohibition on a JPC to look into the matter in greater detail. Further, when the BJP was in the Opposition, it insisted on a JPC on the 2G case and the Bofors matter as well. Then what according to the Finance Minister makes the Rafale deal so special?

It is, therefore, apparent that if the BJP wants to get this Rafale-shaped monkey off its back, it will have to ultimately relent and allow for a thorough examination of the deal. While the Government may wish to dream away its problems or throw insults at the Opposition to discourage and dissuade these uncomfortable questions, it must be aware that at some point it will be exposed to sunlight.

(The writer is Jharkhand PCC president, former MP and IPS officer. Views are personal)

SOUNDBITE

The solution for air pollution is a holistic plan where individuals have to take part — start using public transport — less use of cars.

Delhi Chief Minister
—Arvind Kejriwal



US pulling out troops from Afghanistan will embolden terrorist outfits. India should deal strongly with Pakistan as far as training camps and terrorist launchpads are concerned.

Former J&K DGP
—K Rajendra Kumar



What I do or how I think, I am not going to take a banner and explain that this is who I am and you need to like me or stuff like that.

Indian skipper
—Virat Kohli



Content of a film decides its budget. If your content is strong and if your audience is able to connect with it then, it will do well.

Actor
—Rajkumar Rao



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Electoral politics

Sir — This refers to the editorial, “Genuinely Silly Tax” (December 18). It is a fact that the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is posing problems both to the people and businesses. A uniform lower rate for all products, including fuel, under GST will be a better option. The Congress has been asking for a cut in GST rates for a long time. It is obvious that with the general election just around the corner, the BJP is resorting to politics of compulsion.

Najmul Huda
Mumbai

Hold banks accountable

Sir — This refers to the article, “Business plan for the banking sector” (December 22) by Sudhansu R Das. If banks continue to get capital (easy money) from the Government, without much fuss to carry on their operations, why would they change their daily operating procedures, strengthen their working capital and improve their project finance credit appraisal system? Until the Government makes the banks

accountable for every single penny they lend, the exchequer’s money will keep going down the drain.

Bal Govind
Noida

Half-hearted reform

Sir — This refers to the editorial, “Genuinely Silly Tax” (December 18). The

A case against surveillance

This refers to the editorial, “Snooping silently” (December 24). The Centre’s blanket surveillance order was in contravention of the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling, holding the right to privacy as a fundamental right. The Ministry of Home Affairs order vesting 10 Central agencies with the power to snoop on computers and phones of citizens will institutionalise surveillance. It is evident from the wording of the order — “to intercept, monitor and decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer” — that it is amenable to be used indiscriminately.

As ordinary people, we cherish our privacy and find the retrieval of our personal data from our computers dehumanising. Moves like this cumulatively nudge the country to slide into a surveillance state. We cannot allow the Government to trample on rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution in its



bid to create the facade of a strong state. Since the right to privacy is inalienable, inviolable and paramount, the Government should rescind its snooping order forthwith.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Government’s decision to slash GST rates for 23 items is welcome; though it has an eye on the 2019 Lok Sabha poll. While there is some amount of relief for the consumers, a lot more needs to be done. Most important of all, fuels must be brought under the ambit of GST. The loss of revenue to this effect can be compensated by better compliance and higher turnovers that will come

as an outcome of this step that will also boost the economy.

Mahesh Kumar
Via email

Wait for the right time

Sir — This refers to the editorial, “Federal Express” (December 25). Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and TRS pres-

ident K Chandrasekhar Rao, the doyens of politics, have something in common. This is why they have joined hands to fight the two mainstream parties — the Congress and the BJP.

The federal front, as proposed by the leaders, is soon to become a reality. Rumours are doing the rounds that other political parties, albeit minnows, too would be roped into the federal front. But how far will the regional parties succeed in their efforts would be anybody’s guess. Banerjee is a local leader with a national stature. She has all the requisite charismatic leadership qualities. KCR, though a political figure who is not so alluring as Banerjee, is a man with shrewd ideas.

What is intriguing is Banerjee’s hasty attempt to cobble a coalition from scratch to somehow defeat the prospects of the two national parties. So, what has kept up their sleeve will only be unfolded at the right time. Let us all keep our fingers crossed.

TK Nandan
Chennai

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The Kurds betrayed again

For the Syrian Kurds, the question is: Would you rather be conquered by the Turks or by Assad? There is no third option. Dream of independence is long dead



GWYNNE DYER

The Kurds are like Kleenex. You use them, and then you throw them away. The Kurds of Syria are now frantically digging trenches around their cities and towns just south of the Turkish border, because Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said this week that US President Donald Trump gave a “positive response” to his plan for an invasion of Kurdish-controlled territory in Syria. On Wednesday, Trump confirmed it by announcing that he will pull all US troops out of Syria within 30 days. Erdogan would have invaded long ago if the US Army and Air Force were not protecting the Syrian Kurds, but at that time the US depended heavily on the Kurds in its campaign to eliminate the Islamic State. IS controlled the eastern third of Syria, and from 2015 on it was the Kurdish ‘People’s Protection Units’ (YPG) who provided most of the ground troops for that campaign. There were some 2,000 US troops in eastern Syria too, but it was the Kurds who bore the brunt of the fighting and the casualties. Indeed, a principal role of the US forces was to deter Turkey from attacking the Kurds, because Turkey, at war with its own big Kurdish minority, strongly opposed the Syrian Kurds’ ambition for independence.

But now Islamic State has been destroyed (or at least so Donald Trump believes), and the US has no further need of the Kurds. Time to throw them away. Deprived of US air support, the Syrian Kurds have little hope of resisting a Turkish invasion. As Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said: “They can dig tunnels or ditches if they want. They can go underground if they want. When the time and place come, they will be buried in their ditches.” So where can the Kurds turn? Only to Damascus, where Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has sworn to recover “every inch” of Syrian territory from the various rebel militia forces that controlled different parts of the country. All that remains to fulfill that ambition is the recovery of Idlib province in the northwest, still held by Turkish-backed Islamist extremists — and of the Kurdish-controlled north-east of the country.

For the Syrian Kurds, reeling from the American betrayal, the urgent, unavoidable question has become: Would you rather be conquered by the Turks or by Assad? There is no third option: The dream of independence is dead. When Turkey conquered the much smaller Kurdish-majority enclave of Afrin in north-western Syria last February, almost every Kurd in the territory was driven into exile. Assad’s rule is unattractive, but the Syrian Kurds have carefully avoided fighting his forces (they only fought IS), and they might be able to cut a deal that left them some local autonomy. After all, Assad doesn’t want the Turks taking control of eastern Syria either. The Kurds aren’t fools, and as the likelihood of an American defection grew in the course of this year they sent several delegations to Damascus to see what Assad would offer. They came back disappointed, because Assad did not want to do anything that would open the door to a federal state in Syria, and he quite rightly thought that he had the upper hand. But now that the US pull-out from eastern Syria and the Turkish invasion of the same region have both become imminent realities, he may want to think again.

This is a part of Syria rich in oil, water and wheat. Assad needs its resources to rebuild the country, and a Turkish occupation could be a long-lasting affair. It’s therefore possible that he will make a deal with the Syrian Kurds to keep the region in Syrian hands. The return of the Syrian Army would be tricky to manage, since it would have to arrive in each part of the region after the Americans left (to avoid clashes) but before the Turks arrived. Moreover, the Syrian army is seriously short of manpower, and this operation would require a lot of it. All the more reason to give the YPG a continuing role in the region’s security, the Kurds might argue, and it’s not impossible that Assad might buy that argument provided that the Kurdish militia became (at least in theory) a part of the Syrian army. So the Russians may be right. When Trump revealed via Twitter that he was going to pull all American forces out of Syria, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova responded that the US decision could result in “genuine, real prospects for a political settlement” in Syria. And it’s true.

Turkey could be convinced (by the Russians) that letting Assad take control of Kurdish-majority parts of Syria is enough to end the alleged Kurdish ‘threat’ to Turkish security. Then only the single province of Idlib would remain beyond Assad’s reach, and that’s not really a critical issue. In fact, the fix could be in already. We’ll know shortly. But no matter what, the Kurds lose again. Of course.

(The writer is an independent journalist)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I FAVOUR TAKING CARE OF COMMON PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL FOLLOW ITS DUTY TO DO SO AS WELL. **CHALIYE PUDUCHERRY KO VANAKAM.**

—PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI



VANAKAM PUDUCHERRY, THAT’S MODI’S ANSWER TO THE STRUGGLING MIDDLE CLASS. BJP-VETTED QUESTIONS IS A SUPERB IDEA.

—CONGRESS PRESIDENT
RAHUL GANDHI

Terror drones: A matter of time

Following the criminal use of drone attack which created widespread disruption at the Gatwick Airport, it has now become a question of when, not if, UAVs will be used by terrorists



RICHARD WALTON

MATTHEW SPARKES

As head of Scotland Yard’s Counter Terrorism Command between 2011 and 2016, I looked in some depth at the threat posed by drones during the London 2012 Olympic Games. It was clear to us then that it was one of the potential scenarios we faced — for instance a Fathers 4 Justice drone coming into the stadium.

A comprehensive report by the Combating Terrorism Center in the United States set out in 2016 how drones have been used in the terrorist context for a number of years, including by the Hizbullah and the Islamic State.

At the time when the report was published, I had said that this has to be one of the biggest concerns for the West, because sooner or later, terrorists will use it here. It was always a question of when, not if. But drones are a very difficult threat in a civilian context, and there is sadly no foolproof solution.

In relation to this, many people are asking this question: Why the drone can’t just be shot down? Unfortunately, it’s not that straightforward. If a marksman were to shoot a drone down and its debris were to kill someone, potentially the officer could then face a manslaughter charge.

Over a runway, of course, the chances of it landing on anybody are remote but you’ve still got the challenge of a marksman hitting such a fast-moving object, which is not easy. Jamming electronic signals works in some cases but that’s not always the case. It would also jam everything else in the vicinity.

There are also net systems that can catch and immobilise drones, which, however, depends on being in proximity to them.

These difficulties aside, the Government should have been much more vigilant to this threat. Clearly, for example, there needs to be more effective deterrents. A five-year prison sentence for endangering aircraft or breaching the restrictions on operating drones is not enough. It should be a 20-year sentence. Those who use drones for malicious purposes need to know that they are going to be hit hard with lengthy jail sentences.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) itself admitted that rules and regulations around drone use are ‘evolving’ but this is the state of play at the moment: Drones are classified as “unmanned aircraft.” The CAA was keen to point out that they are most certainly a type of aircraft and “not toys.” This, because lands man-



aged for public enjoyment and biodiversity are not appropriate places for their use. There are concerns, too, that the legal 50m distance and full control cannot be guaranteed. If your drone weighs over 20kg then it’s only legal to use it in certified “danger areas” such as Parc Aberporth aerodrome in West Wales.

Those using a drone weighing less than 20kg for commercial use — receiving payment of any sort — are required to seek permission from the CAA. To get permission, you will have to show that you are “sufficiently competent”. This is less clear-cut than for manned aircraft, where there is a well-established licensing procedure. If your drone is under 20kg and you’re not using it for commercial reasons, you still have some rules to follow.

i) Anyone filming with a drone for their own purposes must avoid flying it within 150 metres of a congested area and 50 metres of a person, vessel, vehicle or structure not under the control of the pilot.

ii) You will also need to fly the aircraft within sight. This means you can’t go above 400ft in altitude or further than 500 metres horizontally. If you want to exceed that limit, you’ll again need to seek explicit permission from the CAA.

I also know that pilots have been asking for a five kilometre exclusion zone for drones around airports. They should have been given that.

It was too long before the drone flying above Gatwick was seen as a national major incident and treated accordingly, and it was too long before the Whitehall machine got involved. If a drone is near any critical national infrastructure, it should

IT WAS TOO LONG BEFORE THE DRONE FLYING ABOVE GATWICK WAS SEEN AS A MAJOR NATIONAL INCIDENT AND TREATED ACCORDINGLY, AND IT WAS TOO LONG BEFORE THE WHITEHALL MACHINE GOT INVOLVED. IF A DRONE IS NEAR ANY CRITICAL NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE, IT SHOULD BE TREATED AS A MAJOR INCIDENT

be treated as a major incident. I’m surprised there wasn’t a ministerial Cobra meeting within six hours. From the outset, it was clear that it would cause chaos.

Two people have been arrested in connection with the criminal use of drones which has caused widespread disruption to flights at the Gatwick Airport. Sussex Police said the people were arrested just after 10pm on the night of December 21.

Superintendent James Collis of Sussex Police said: “Our investigations are still ongoing, and our activities at the airport continue to build resilience to detect and mitigate further incursions from drones by deploying a range of tactics.”

“We continue to urge the public, passengers and the wider community around Gatwick to be vigilant and support us by contacting us immediately if they believe they have any information that can help us in bringing those responsible to justice.”

“The arrests we have made this evening are a result of our determination to keep the public safe from harm, every line of inquiry will remain open to us until we are confident that we have mitigated further threats to the safety of passengers.”

No more details about the suspects were released. Anyone with any information was asked to call and cooperate with the police.

Unfortunately, we are now likely to see ‘copycat’ incidents. And the ease with which a major UK aviation hub was brought to a standstill will not have escaped the attention of terrorist groups who will be wondering, Why they have not tried using drones before? Ministers who are scrambling to protect Britain against

potential “copy-cats” drone attacks fear that the chaos at Gatwick could be replicated at other transport hubs across the country.

Whitehall sources said the authorities were “very concerned” about attempts to repeat the paralysis at Britain’s second busiest airport, which saw around 140,000 passengers delayed, and were taking urgent steps to safeguard others against the threat.

Gavin Williamson, the UK Defence Secretary, who is among ministers liaising with authorities and airport chiefs, told *The Sunday Telegraph*: “The Armed Forces stand ready to assist the civilian authorities whenever they are required.”

This is not just an airport issue, it is a threat issue which needs to be seen in the broadest context. There is little in place to stop these drones from being flown over Downing Street or Buckingham Palace or other highly sensitive areas. Also, they can be used to drop anything from great heights, including explosives. We saw a chaotic response to this incident because drones are a relatively new threat and no single organisation believes that it is their responsibility to respond to the threat they pose.

When something like this happens, where hundreds of thousands of people are affected, there is a lot of serious economic damage. No one has died as a result but there is a huge amount of impact on the nation. It’s a serious major incident, which was unfortunately not treated as such.

(Richard Walton is Director of Counter Terrorism Global Ltd. Matthew Sparkes is Deputy Head of Technology.)

(Courtesy: The Telegraph)

The year of a few hits and misses

The year 2018 was the most crucial for political parties as they learnt a few hard lessons. Next year, however, will see them battle for the top office. Parties need to move from the existing machinery and build a new narrative to woo voters



FOREIGN EYE



REMEMBERING THE POWERLESS

Today new ‘Slaughter of the Innocents’ is looming, ominously in the land from which one of the Three Wise Men are said to have travelled: The nation of Yemen. Thousands of children there are threatened with death by starvation and bombing inflicted by the neighboring Saudi Arabia. Bringing urgent news of this kind to the world requires efforts of many brave and devoted, souls. (Washington Post editorial)

KALYANI SHANKAR

As 2018 comes to a close, it will be pertinent to look back and see how the year fared, politically. The year was especially important because it taught a few lessons to political parties of all shades. Until a few months back, no one expressed doubts about Prime Minister Narendra Modi coming back to power in 2019. But now, it looks like the next general election will no more be a cake-walk for the Prime Minister. More importantly, the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) juggernaut was halted during the year, at least temporarily, giving a jolt to the Modi Government and the BJP in particular.

The saffron party’s defeat began with it losing the battle in Karnataka. Its defeat in the just concluded

Assembly polls in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, that for long remained the ruling party’s bastion, dealt a further blow, making it clear that the Prime Minister was no longer invincible. Besides, results to these three Hindi heartland States also showed that the BJP could not escape anti-incumbency even in its bastions.

Second, post the Congress’ victory in these States, its electoral fortunes are said to be looking up. Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and his party received a major boost after registering impressive wins in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Rahul Gandhi emerged as a leader in his own right. The Grand Old Party has now become the biggest party in relatively five large States — Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. So, the idea of a ‘Congress-mukt’ Bharat is no longer a reality. The Congress has also shown that it has strong regional leaders in these States.

The tide began to turn from December 2017, when the BJP won by a narrow majority in Gujarat. Then in

May 2018, the Congress, in its bid to stop the Saffron Party’s surge, surprisingly backed the Janata Dal (Secular) JD(S) to form the Government in Karnataka. The efforts of the Congress proved that coalition could well be the best bet for the Opposition.

The picture of senior Opposition leaders, which included UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, former Prime Minister Deve Gowda, Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and Rashtriya Lok Dal president Ajit Singh among others, joining hands during JDS leader HD Kumaraswamy’s swearing-in ceremony, flaunting a ‘show of unity’, was telling. Since then, Rahul Gandhi and the once-dithering Congress, appear to be more focused and consistent. Post this development, the Opposition has been making efforts to forge a common anti-BJP front for the 2019 polls.

Third, the BJP’s alliances are showing signs of strain. Most of its allies have voiced concerns about the party’s ‘big brother’ attitude. Some even abandoned the NDA fold dur-

ing the year. Most important of them all was the Telugu Desam Party’s (TDS) decision to break alliance with the NDA in March. Bihar’s Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) led by Upendra Kushwaha, was the latest one to quit. What’s worse is that both leaders have now joined the Congress’ ranks. What was also strange was the tie-up between the Congress and the TDP in the Assembly elections in Telangana. The two parties remained bitter rivals ever since the 1980s.

Earlier in year, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)-BJP experiment in Jammu & Kashmir, too, collapsed, thus proving that unnatural alliances cannot work in Indian politics for long. The BJP lost the support of Jitan Ram Manjhi’s Hindustani Awam Morcha in Bihar. On top of that, the Shiv Sena has been threatening to quit the alliance in Maharashtra. Pawan Kalyan’s Jana Sena also quit in Andhra Pradesh. The Congress, on the other hand, did the unthinkable by joining hands with the TDP and the JD(S).

Fourth, today, the BJP and its allies

are ruling in seven States. This is indeed a big change from the earlier days when the Congress ruled the ‘seven sisters’ for long. The BJP has proved that it has become a pan national party by spreading its wings in the west, east and central India, besides having roots in Karnataka. The North-East has become Congress-mukt now.

Fifth, agrarian crisis has led to more than 3,00,00 suicides among farmers in the last 20 years. The BJP is in denial mode even after suffering electoral losses in some States. Agrarian crisis is going to be one of the biggest issues in the 2019 polls. The party should have taken note of it when 30,000 farmers came knocking at the doors of the national capital in October-November. Few of their demands included unconditional loan waiver, implementation of the recommendations of the MS Swaminathan Commission, *et al* — a demand ignored by successive Governments. The Opposition as well as the ruling dispensation will have to come up with a new narrative. Farm loan waivers are not an answer to their problems. More

innovative solutions are needed.

Sixth, the issue of demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST), too, needs to be addressed. It is clear that the former hit the people hard. Even two years after demonetisation, the informal and agricultural sectors are suffering. Demonetisation also resulted in job losses and a decrease in labour force participation rate.

Seventh, Mayawati cannot be ignored politically. The year 2019 will see more and more parties running after her for alliance.

Eighth, national parties have not been able to defeat regional satraps, as was proved by the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) chief K Chandrababhai Naidu. Also, the BJP has not been able to expand its base in the south. The year 2019 will show how much the political parties will address the lessons learnt in 2018. It will be visible in the poll results but both the NDA and the UPA need to move from the existing machinery and build a new narrative to woo the voters.

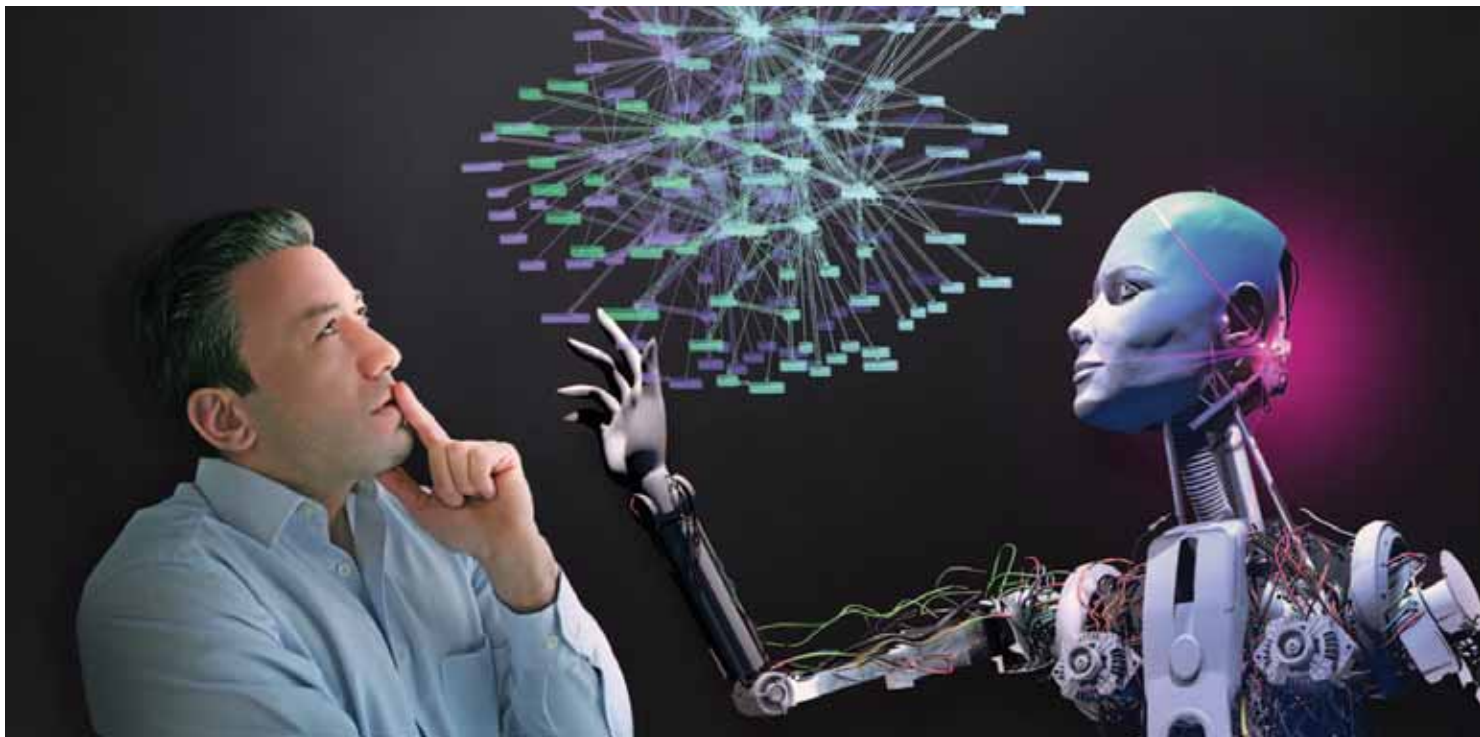
(The writer is a senior political commentator)

A statement made 2,500 years ago stands relevant even today. More so, for the start-up eco-system that goes hand in hand with dynamism, agility, and innovation. With every year that passes, it witnesses the influx of cutting-edge technologies and ingenious approaches that solve long-standing market challenges. And in the due process, change the market entirely.

However, it is important to note that this change is primarily driven by the building blocks of the startup ecosystem, for example: The industry professionals. If you are one of them, or are planning to become one, here are some of the hiring trends of 2018 that you surely must know:

■ Blockchain eco-system

Blockchain technology has proven itself to be a game-changer for an array of industry applications. Just before 2018, India revealed its own plan to develop a blockchain network called IndiaChain which will be interlinked with IndiaStack and help in reducing frauds, speed up contract enforcement, increase transparency, and



HIRING TRENDS 2018

MANISH KHERA lists five hiring trends in the start-up eco-system that dominated this year

boost economy. A report suggests that India can add \$5 billion to its economy within five years just by implementing blockchain. So, blockchain was one of the prime focus areas amongst startups throughout 2018 and will continue to remain the same for the coming few years.



■ Artificial Intelligence

Another area of focus during this year has been Artificial Intelligence (AI). Startups are typically known to have a very lean team which has to manage across-the-board operations. AI is now enabling them to streamline these operations through process automation while also extending deeper insights within their area of deployment.

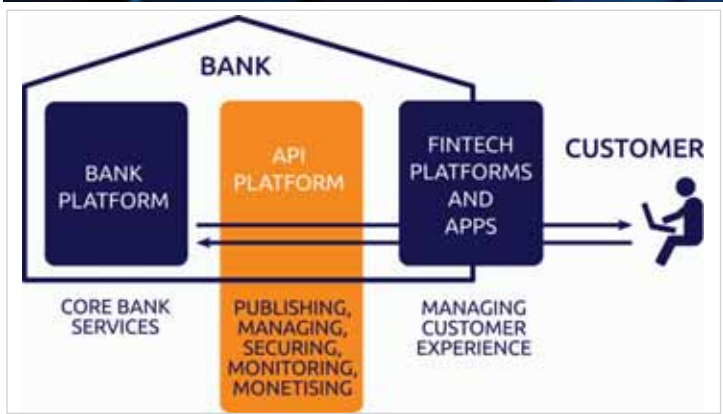
The technology, at the same time, also eliminates human errors, omissions, and negligence. Given these advantages, the adoption of technology, and so, the recruitment of related talents, was quite high during 2018.

■ Open banking

The ongoing digitisation drive in India is truly transforming the regular Indian lifestyle. Now, people from all walks of life are looking towards digital services to meet their everyday needs including banking. The Indian regulatory has also been very supportive of the change and is readily promoting its open banking infrastructure.

With it, banks are also joining forces with fintech startups to lever-

THE INDIAN REGULATORY HAS BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF THE CHANGE & IS PROMOTING ITS OPEN BANKING INFRASTRUCTURE. WITH IT, BANKS ARE JOINING FORCES WITH FINTECH START-UPS TO LEVERAGE THEIR TRAILBLAZING, TECH-DRIVEN APPROACHES IN A RANGE OF APPLICATIONS



age their trailblazing, tech-driven approaches in a range of applications. This was the main reason why the demand for talent within the fintech domain was specifically high.

■ Cybersecurity

Digital technologies, though

adding tangible value to the broader ecosystem, also come with their own downsides. Cyber attacks have been mounting on India for quite some time now — which grew from 49,000 in 2015 to 50,000 in 2016 and 53,000 in 2017 (according to CERT-In) — and were expected to reach 58,300 in

2018. Start-ups, as they are mostly based on digital technologies, have adopted a prudent approach and started recruiting cyber security talent apart from leveraging MSPs (Managed Service Providers). Cyber security challenges are also being addressed right from the ground up with startups adopting DevSecOps instead of the typical DevOps.

■ Information Technology

At present, India is facing acute skill shortage with more than 140,000 jobs being vacant within the IT industry. This is despite fresh graduates constantly entering the job market every year. The situation is expected to further worsen in the future as more than 1.4 million new IT jobs will be created by 2027 (Cisco and IDC report).

Forward-looking start-ups are now trying to tackle the situation by collaborating with different educational institutions. They are helping shape the curriculum of various institutions as per market-facing applications and future needs. It is also enabling them to recruit candidates who can deliver and solve market challenges.

These have been some of the most prominent trends that were witnessed during 2018. It will be interesting to see how the grand scheme of things change in the year about to come. But now, it time to prepare for its arrival and revel in festivities!

The writer is CEO, Happy Loans

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Great leaders harness personal courage, capture the hearts and minds of others and empower new leaders to make the world a better place

— Maxine Driscoll

Founder, Think Strategic for Schools

DIGITAL MARKETING— SEO

Digital Vidya has launched a new programme in digital marketing— SEO Executive Training Programme.

The course is targeted at making fresh graduates build a rewarding career in the field of digital marketing. The organisation has tied up with major agencies in India who are willing to hire the successful pass-outs of this course.

Selection process: The candidate needs to apply for the course and upon acceptance, he has to clear an hour-long communications and analytical abilities exam to be able to enroll. The greatest benefit of this comprehensive SEO Training Programme, which is a 12-week course, is that every successful candidate is guaranteed a job.

For more details, log on to www.digitalvidya.com.

DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP

The Indian School of Development Management (ISDM), New Delhi, invites application for admission to its one-year full-time Post Graduate Programme in Development Leadership (PGP-DL).

Its curriculum develop an in-depth understanding of the development sector and its management practices, all rooted in value-based transformational leadership. The programme is co-developed by large social purpose organisations and is designed and driven by practitioners and eminent leaders from the sector.

The sector has career opportunities for a varied range of professionals as job profiles include strategy building, communications and engagement, fund raising, being part of the CEOs office (strategy, data-based decision making, planning), managing M&E, programme leadership, CSR, partnerships and alliances, social entrepreneurship, operational leadership and many others.

Scholarship: The institute is offering a scholarship of ₹1,00,000 for all applicants who would apply before December 23, 2018 and is also offering up to 100 per cent scholarship on a need basis with up to 50 per cent discount on the living expenses.

MBA

The Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) invites application for admission to Master of Business Administration (MBA) for the academic session 2019-20 offered by the School of Business, Public Policy and Social Entrepreneurship.

The fees for the two-year MBA programme payable is ₹2,84,760 for Indian students and ₹5,06,520 for foreign students.

Around 85 per cent of the seats are reserved for candidates belonging to the NCT Delhi and the remaining 15 per cent of seats are for candidates from all over India.

Deadline: The last date for application is February 11,



2019. The entrance exam will be held on February 24, 2019. To apply, log on to www.aud.ac.in.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has launched certificate programme in Spanish Language and Culture. The admission to this new course is open.

This certificate course is meant for learners who are interested in learning Spanish language and who desire to receive cultural information about the Spanish-speaking countries. Learners will get the opportunity to acquire language skills as well as socio-cultural competence that will enable them to communicate effectively with the Spanish-speaking world in the activities related to daily life.

The Certificate in Spanish Language and Culture is a tightly structured multimedia integrated bilingual programme (Spanish and English). The contact sessions are a very important aspect of this programme which will be conducted at designated Study Centers of IGNOU on weekends.

Eligibility: Aspiring students should have passed Class XII or equivalent and should possess some knowledge of English.

Deadline: The last date to apply is January 15, 2019.

BTECH

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's School of Engineering has announced admissions open to its various B.Tech degree courses offered at its all five campuses — Amritapuri (Kollam), Bengaluru, Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), Coimbatore and Chennai.

Students can apply for online entrance examination to be held from April 22 to 26, 2019. Simultaneously, written examinations will be held at 27 centres across Tamil Nadu. However, only students of Tamil Nadu will be eligible to take the written examination. Specific dates, centres and time for counselling, to be held in May 2019, will be intimated to successful students by email.

Eligibility: Candidates should be born on or after July 1, 1998. Aspirants should have passed Class XII or its equivalent examination, securing an aggregate of 60 per cent marks in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry with not less than 55 per cent in each of these three subjects.

Seat allocation will be done separately for candidates of AEEE 2019 and JEE Mains 2019. To apply online, students can log on to www.amrita.edu/admissions/btech-2019

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A study on the Indian AI industry by Great Learning indicates that there are over 4000 positions related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) in India that remain vacant due to shortage of qualified talent at the mid and senior levels. This is despite the industry growing by close to 30 per cent in the last one year to \$230 million in size.

These opportunities do not include the slew of new jobs that are advertised every month but refers to opportunities that have been vacant for a period of 12 months. The key reason behind this is the massive shortage of AI talent at the middle and top level. Out of current working professionals in India, almost 55 per cent have less than five years of total work experience. Only 23 per cent of this workforce has over 10 years of total work experience.

Contrary to this, as per the report, around 57 per cent of organisations that are hiring for AI in India are looking for candidates with more than five years of experience. This supply-demand gap indicates huge opportunity for mid and senior level professionals across industries like IT, finance, healthcare and e-commerce, who are looking to transition into AI, over the next

Report on AI industry

few years.

Another big challenge being faced by companies when recruiting in India is the lack of talent that is experienced in the AI domain. As per the report, the average AI experience of Indian professionals stands at a mere three years, with almost 67 per cent AI professionals in India having joined/ transitioned to their current role, only in the last two years.

When it comes to remuneration, the median salary of AI professionals in India is ₹14.3 lakhs across all experience level and skill sets. Around 40 per cent of AI professionals have an entry-level salary of ₹6 lakh onwards. Around 4 per cent of AI professionals in India command a salary higher than ₹50 lakhs, reflecting the massive demand for mid and senior level AI talent in the country. The study also points out that the salary trends across various industries like finance, e-commerce and healthcare are also improving steadily.

A city-wise remuneration comparison reveals that Mumbai is the highest paymaster in AI at almost ₹15.6 lakhs per annum, followed

by Bengaluru at ₹14.5 lakhs. Chennai on the other hand, is the lowest paymaster at ₹10.4 lakhs.

DEMAND SIDE VIEW

On the demand side, the 10 leading organisations with the most number of AI openings this year are — IBM, Accenture, Amazon, Fractal Analytics, Societe Generale, SAP Labs, 24/ 7 Customer, Atos, Nvidia and Tech Mahindra. The top skill sets that AI employers are looking for are Machine Learning, Natural Language Processing, Neural Networks, Analytics, Cloud Computing and Pattern Recognition.

More than 1,000 companies claim to work on AI in some form. This includes a small number of companies into products (Chatbots, AI-powered visual search and recommendation engine) and a larger chunk offering either off-shore, recruitment or training services. There is a 30 per cent year-over-year increase in the number of companies setting up dedicated AI teams in India. That said, India still has a long way to go with us contributing only 10 per cent

to the global AI job openings.

A breakup of AI talent across companies reveals an even spread across enterprises, mid-sized companies and start-ups. Almost 37 per cent of AI professionals in India are employed with large-sized companies (total employee base of 10,000 plus). Mid-size organisations (total employee base in the range of 200-10,000) employ 29 per cent of all AI professionals, while start-ups (with less than 200 employees) employ 34 per cent of AI professionals in India.

Bengaluru is the front runner when it comes to AI action in India, housing almost 31 per cent of AI firms. It is followed by NCR that houses around 25 per cent of AI firms. Mumbai comes third housing 14 per cent of AI players. In terms of workforce, 33 per cent of AI professionals in India are working in Bengaluru, followed by 30 per cent in Delhi/NCR.

Hari Krishnan Nair, co-founder, Great Learning said: "AI is in nascent sector. The industry is facing a skill gap. The field offers great potential for working professionals who are looking to transition into newer technologies. AI will make a huge dent across sectors like IT, healthcare, fin-tech and e-commerce. This is the right time to enter the field and be at the forefront of these changes."

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Around seven million graduate in India every year. According to various reports, depending on the stream, 50 to 94 per cent are deemed unemployable as they lack the skill-sets and practical abilities needed to do well in today's jobs.

Most of what they learn in college is focussed on preparing them for the jobs of yesterday. Very little is geared towards what is needed for today and nothing to prepare them for the future.

"Most young people in India finish college feeling lost about what to do next and are ill-equipped with the skills needed to get into the jobs that they want, or a job at all," says Shronit Ladhani, founder of NASS-

COM and Essel Group supported edu-media startup Career Ninja.

Universities are realising this, along with the fact that they can't adapt their curriculum, quality of teachers and teaching style to keep pace. Others are barely aware and are focussed on filling their seats. Most believe the solution to this is making internships compulsory, leading to students running about and taking up any internship that they get.

"But who is helping them get the internships? Most students have no guidance. Also, how are colleges checking the quality of

internships their students take up and the learning from it? And are they collaborating with Industry to provide the required amount of internships?," questioned Ladhani.

"We are ensuring our content can play a key role in helping students on how to apply for and get internships across various fields along with pointing to some of the best organisations in them. Further, connecting students to young professionals in their space as part of a mentoring program gives them much needed personalised guidance."

The Government, too, is aware

of this skill-gap, as can be seen by the large push on skilling initiatives. But one of the largest problem of those, amongst the many, is that the students aren't coming and taking them up.

"We need a real solution. I have realised that nothing will work well until the intent in the student isn't strong enough. We need to put the ownership of their future on the students. We should help them understand where their interests and abilities lie, to find what they are passionate about. We must then inspire them to take action and guide them on how to prepare for a career they

are passionate about. Today, the average student just wants a job, any job, because he has no idea. And because he is not driven about it, he isn't doing much to equip himself. Despite the numerous courses available online, only a tiny percentage of students take these up," Ladhani said and believes if every young person is allowed and given support to work on their passions and interests, they will themselves ensure that they build the rights skills for the job.

"One has to show them the way and cheer them on. And if each person becomes skilled for careers that exist today and will exist in the future, our country will be able to harness its biggest advantage, the large youth population in the country," Ladhani said.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Class X students of Shiv Nadar School, a not-for-profit initiative of the Shiv Nadar Foundation in K12 education, showcased their innovative technology projects at recently held Colloquium 2018.

The winner for this year's competition was Team Silverlane from Shiv Nadar School Noida that comprised students — Romsha Singh, Arvind Raja, Archisha Arun, Shoumya Barua, Rishit Dhyan and Aaryaman Singha.

The team developed first of its kind walkcum-stepper for senior citizens to enable them to climb and descent stairs unassisted. The annual conference provides a platform to students, who work

Innovation by students

on a year-long tech project to solve a real-world problem.

The competition follows a two-tier selection process, where student projects are first scrutinised by a sub-jury, followed by a presentation and interaction with an external jury who judge the efficacy and viability of the projects. While a total of 15 projects from both Shiv Nadar School, Noida and Gurugram were presented to the sub-jury, only seven made it to the final jury round. The external jury comprised Deep Kalra, founder, chairman

and CEO, MakeMyTrip; Rajiv Makhni, India's Tech Guru and Managing Editor of Technology, NDTV and Vineet Nayar, founder, chairman and CEO, Sampark Foundation.

Apart from the winning project, the other innovations showcased at this year's Colloquium included:

■ **Eatabowl:** Provided an alternative to plastic disposables in the food industry. The students made edible sporks and bio-degradable cups. The spork is a hybrid between a spoon and a fork. The sporks

are made by baking a mixture of flour and water. The cup has a seed and fertiliser embedded at the bottom.

■ **Posture Perfect:** A device that helps in early detection of incorrect sitting posture in modern workspaces. They have built an intelligent system that uses a camera to calculate and collect the user's posture data while they work on their machines to determine and suggest postural improvements.

■ **MoodBox:** Reduce the stress levels of teachers under 180 seconds by making them play a game in the staff room using brainwaves. The team designed a game that requires users to consciously generate more Delta Waves as part of its game play to unconsciously relax themselves.

■ **Enkindle:** A block-chain based eco-system designed to ensure timely and righteous payments supply chain management in the agricultural sector.

■ **ZILEO:** Creation of a device for electronically masking noise for schools and hospitals through dynamic usage of white noise.

■ **Sophros:** The students have designed an organic air purification unit which also acts as an aesthetic indoor air cleaning device. The device involves a unique usage of dust to filter particulate matter along with usage of plants and moisture sensors for constant oxygen supply and filtration of gases and VOCs while keeping them hydrated automatically.

Talk on earthquake engineering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Department of Earthquake Engineering and The Indian Society of Earthquake Technology (ISET) organised the 16th Symposium on Earthquake Engineering to discuss and evaluate the current earthquake resistant design practices and suggest enhancement/modifications to various agencies in the country for implementation.

The symposium aims to evolve key guidelines, for communication to various agencies. It acted as a platform for researchers, professionals, planners and policy makers associated with

earthquake engineering to share views and exchange professional experience and recent technological advances in earthquake engineering and allied fields. The event, held once in four years, attracted a galaxy of internationally renowned experts presenting cutting-edge research and practical applications in this field.

The event focused on evolving appropriate strategies to enhance the knowledge on earthquake resistant construction for the end-users & draw an agenda for future course of action, in the wake of damaging scenarios due to the recent earthquakes faced by the country.

Online education in India is estimated to be a \$1.96 billion industry by 2021. KSHITIJ JAIN shares online education trends that are mostly likely to dominate in the coming year

ONLINE EDUCATION TRENDS

Online education, that was once considered humble cousin of mainstream education, has witnessed an upward swing in the last few years. The change has been brought in not only by various technological innovations but by innovative newage content and curriculum that online education providers offer to the learners. The industry in India is estimated to be a \$1.96 billion industry by 2021, according to a research conducted by KPMG, with insights from Google search. According to the report, the paid user base is likely to grow six-fold — from 1.6 million users in 2016 to 9.6 million users in 2021.

Increased penetration of internet and smart phones, factors such as convenience, increased reach and personalised content offered by online education providers have led to the growth and expansion of online education market to tier-II and tier-III cities. Online education modules today allows distant learners to join in virtual lectures, pose questions to professors, chat with fellow students and take virtual exams. Most of the programmes are career-focused helping students to chalk a career path and set goals. Here are some trends that are likely to dominate online education.

Emergence of cloud computing: According to Technavio analysts, emergence of cloud computing will be one of the major trends that we will witness in the coming year. The cloud computing technology enables online education providers to save significant

amount of content and data on a single platform. This makes it easier for users and providers to process, obtain, access and manage information from anywhere at any time.

Focus on future-ready career skills: With a changing world, the online educational institutions are trying to keep a balance between learning and skills required by enterprises and industry. They are offering new courses which help students become well equipped for the jobs of tomorrow. In 2019, we are likely to witness launch of more such courses and career programmes.

Many institutions are offering online degrees in specialised areas like AI, IoT, business management, data science and digital marketing. These courses have been designed to equip the students with skills that are likely to dominate in the years to come.

Game learning: The trend is likely to catch up as it makes the learning process more interesting and effective. Game learning techniques ensure higher level of involvement and interaction from students, offers them opportunity to experiment and introduce new technological innovations.

The modern business environment is becoming complex every day. With the help of game techniques, it is easier to explain these. During the interactive sessions, participants make decisions, develop strategies, immediately observing their influence on the financial position of the company.

Project-based learning: This



IN 2019, TRAINING WILL BECOME MORE SPECIFIC & PERSONALISED. THE ONLINE COURSES WILL NEED TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN CREATING A ROADMAP THAT LEADS FROM BASIC KNOWLEDGE TO EXPERTISE IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME

allows students to demonstrate skills by developing apps and product. Many a time, it requires constant instructor feedback and multiple attempts if a student fails to meet the criteria. Project-based education is the foundation of the curriculum of some online educational institutions. Students create several projects over six-12 months and receive regular feedback to earn a degree.

Blended e-learning programmes: These courses with offline touch points are increasingly gaining popularity amongst individuals and organisations looking to upskill their employees. E-learning providers have witnessed a 25-30 per cent jump in companies opting for blended model over 100 per cent e-learning courses. The model facilitates discussions and collaborative learning, offers flexibility to learners has better completion rate.

Increase in interest in AR and VR: Though AR and VR are yet to reach their full potential in online learning, these technologies are expected to have a impact. Engagement, that has been one of

the weakest aspects in many e-learning platforms, can be increased using these technologies. Use of AR and VR in online learning platforms have shown significant increase in engagement and improved results.

Adapting existing content: Not everyone can incorporate the latest technologies into their learning processes. In most cases, users are only looking for information that is important. Therefore, online educational institutions should review their existing study material, in terms of how useful, relevant and detailed the information is. They must be prepared for constant changes.

In 2019, training will become more specific and personalised. The online courses will need to play a key role in creating a roadmap that leads from basic knowledge to expertise in the shortest possible time. The focus will remain on people who want to learn about specific skills and not waste time learning about everything. The decisive factor will depend on the person's motivation to regularly devote time to self-education.

The writer is Vice-President, Career Education Business, NIIT Ltd

‘Tech help for specially-able’

Learning is for everyone and lack of infrastructure should not be a barrier. Technology can help specially-abled students to compliment classroom learning, says RAJSHEKHAR RATREY

Around six lakh children with special needs, between the ages of 6 to 13 are out of school. This isn't just a statistic, this is the result of an ancient assumption that still operates in the classroom; one approach fits all. Our infrastructure can't facilitate the allocation of specialised teachers to every class. This has led such students to question their ability to learn in such an environment. But learning is for everyone and infrastructure should not be a barrier. That's where technology can be used to compliment classroom learning.

Select the pace and space: In a classroom of 60, it's hard for students with special needs to understand every concept. They may take time to learn, depending on their grasping power. Before they can start to break the concept down, the teacher has already moved on to the next one. Every student's pace is different and technology provides for that uniqueness. Video lectures give students the power to pause a lecture, rewind it or even select the speed of the explanation. With e-learning apps available on any mobile device, students can choose to study in an environment that suits them best.

Adaptive learning: Adaptive learning, a feature that is transforming the way students learn, is embedded in most e-learning platforms. This can help specially-abled students, teachers and parents understand how much they have grasped. They are given a question, depending on their answer, they will be given another question of either a higher difficulty level or a lower difficulty level. The practice questions adapt to the student's ability. This ensures constant assessment. This ensures there are no gaps in the student's understanding.

Interactive and quality content: Technology has opened the doors to quality content and teachers. With a simple video conferencing, children can learn from experts, anywhere in the world. Ed-tech has bought content designed for specially-abled students to smartphones and computers. The use of animation in videos have made lectures interactive, rather than just instructive. Children can actually play with objects in 3D and see



Rajshekhar Ratrey
VP, Educational Content, Toppr.com

visual representations of a lecture in the form of videos, diagrams, graphs and images.

Help 24x7: Doubts are very bothersome and students need someone to solve them instantly. It becomes difficult for children with special needs to raise a doubt in front of people. Ed-tech is bringing them support around the clock! Students can ask their doubts on a chat platform and experts in that subject, will patiently explain the concept, until it's grasped. To make it easier for the students, they don't even have to type, they can simply send a picture! Now help is just a click away.

Better engagement with gamification: It can be challenging for a teacher to keep all the students engaged. It's especially difficult to engage students with ADHD or other conditions. Gamification is making this task easier with badges, leaderboards and experience points.

Each time students complete a set of tasks, they are rewarded a badge for their performance, speed, accuracy, consistency and other factors. This is even making learning fun, increasing participation from students with a short attention span. Thus, leading to better engagement and participation.

It is an indispensable truth that: This life is yours. Take the power to choose what you want to do and do it well. Isn't it a beautiful feeling to know that you have the power to create the life of your dreams? The world is waiting for your gift.

All of us have the nascent powerhouses burning inside us just waiting to be unleashed. We already have that inner strength. Unfortunately, a lot of people are not activating it because they are living with a victim mentality. This "poor-me" attitude encourages the abandonment of responsibility. It feeds off of the deceitful belief that no one has control over their own life.

However, the only way

that you can move forward is if you commit to stepping out of the victim role. The right way to claim your inner power is to take responsibility for everything

The outside world does not dictate your inner world. You are the hero of your life which means that you need to take ownership of it. When something doesn't go your way, step back and ask yourself what role you played in the final outcome.

Did you know that you give your power away every time you negatively react to someone or something? You created your reality which means that you are the only person that has the power to change it. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself, trust that life is always happening for you.

MIND IT

Ways to unleash the power houses within you:

Make an effort to align with your inner power every single day: This can be achieved by Yoga & Meditation. Never forget that you are powerful beyond measure.

When you allow your light to shine you give others the permission to do the same. It's time to claim your power!

Know what you want: Having direction and clarity of mind will help you move forward with confidence. If you row the boat in direction of the winds, the sail will be

smoother & faster.

Discover your strengths: As with any venture, it is best to work from a solid foundation. Think of your confidence as a table top that is supported by four legs. Each leg needs to be solidly planted to support the table top. What are your strengths? What are you good at? Maintain your focus on what you are good at, not on what you perceive to be your shortcomings.

Eliminate the what-ifs: This type of thinking is equivalent to getting under that table top and shaking a leg or two. It will

destabilize your beliefs, introduce doubt into your thinking, and shake your foundation. Any time you start to think what-if, change your thinking to I will.

Forget about being perfect: So often people don't pursue things because they feel it has to be just right. They ruminate over how to approach things, conduct themselves, or say something to the point of getting filled with anxiety and either not taking any action at all or doing so in a way that lacks confidence.

Speak: Anyone who has made a mark in this world has spoken up, presented their ideas, and taken a chance. Dare to say what you believe in. You might be pleasantly surprised by who listens to you and is

impressed by your confidence in sharing your ideas.

Be resilient: There will be naysayers and those who doubt you, but don't let that stop you from speaking up, taking a chance, and doing what you believe in. Criticism just means you got people thinking. Many who have taken confident and bold steps have faced resistance. Stay focused on what you believe in and forge ahead.

By practicing these guidelines, you will unleash the real power within. Once you master your thoughts, emotions and beliefs, you will realise that this is the only power that you need.

The writer is Pallavi Prakash, Founder-CEO Knowledge Seed Learning Center



Tata Motors has launched the Season-6 of Tata Delight Star Scholars

under the Tata Delight loyalty program with a prize money of ₹25,000. The company has also gone a step ahead and offered a special prize of 40 Tablets for women applicants based on their performance to encourage education for girl child.

This special programme is designed to make a meaningful contribution towards the upliftment of the trucking profession, constantly striving to reward, recognize and delight the commercial vehicles customer, making every interaction a rewarding one.

The programme over the last five editions has helped fulfill the dreams and aspirations of over 1,000 deserving children by ensuring that they receive adequate support to pursue their right to higher education. The company to date has granted scholarships to over 1,000 students, amounting to approx ₹1.5 crores to all the beneficiaries.

The Fox International Fellowship is available for students of Yale University or from students of any of the exchange partner institutions in Fox International Fellowship network. Applicants of all nationalities

are eligible to apply for scholarship.

Eligibility: The fellowship places a strong emphasis on communicative competence in the host country language(s) to truly engage colleagues and establish long term personal relationships with people from the Fox Partner University and the larger community of that University and the overall Fox alumni/ae network. **English language requirements:** Candidates must demonstrate sufficient mastery of national or regional language skills relevant to their research projects as well as to thrive in the local and larger communities of the Fox Exchange partner university. For English-speaking countries with strong local or regional language bases, candidates with evidence of familiarity and interests in those languages, as relevant to their research and larger cultural engagement, may receive some competitive preference, like Hindi and or Gujarati. Students without these language skills are also welcome to apply.

How to apply: Submit application online through the Student Grants and Fellowships Database at Yale University. Application must have: Statement of interest, leadership statement, recent curriculum vitae, and two letters of recommendation.

Application deadline: The last date to apply is February 13, 2019.

STUDY CENTRES

Off late, India has become a hotbed of medical tourism given the fact that we have some of the best doctors who are providing treatment at reasonable cost. Medical tourism providers or facilitators should have good knowledge of the topography of various places and hospitals offering medical tourism. A career in medical tourism involves providing facilities for a client to travel, financing options for visas, arranging the hospital, boarding, lodging, best treatment, and tourism after treatment. To begin with MBA graduates with work experience can earn anything between ₹30,0000-₹50,000 per month. A few colleges where one can study:

■ **NBA School of Health Care Management**, New Delhi. **Course:** Graduate Diploma in Health Care Management, Hospital Operation Management and Medical Tourism
■ **Agra College of Management and Technology**, Firozabad. **Course:** MBA Medical Tourism
■ **Academy of Business and Management Studies**, Kolkata. **Course:** MBA Medical Tourism
■ **ICRI Health Campus**, New Delhi. **Courses:** PGD in Medical Tourism, Diploma in Medical Tourism



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AT IMAGINE MARKETING

Location: Delhi
Stipend: ₹15,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/16946
Application deadline: December 31, 2018

OPERATIONS AT THE ENERGY AND RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Location: Delhi
Stipend: ₹3,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/16947
Application deadline: January 1, 2019

CONTENT EDITING AT LIMEROAD

Location: Gurugram
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/16948
Application deadline: December, 31, 2018

GRAPHIC DESIGN AT LETSDISKUSS.COM

Location: Delhi
Stipend: ₹3,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/16949
Application deadline: January 2, 2019

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) AT TETRAHEDRON MANUFACTURING SERVICES

Location: Delhi
Stipend: ₹5,000-₹10,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/16950
Application deadline: January 3, 2019

WEB DEVELOPMENT AT GOPLANNR

Location: Bengaluru
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/16951
Application deadline: January 3, 2019

STRATEGIC RESEARCH AT ANJALLI RAVI KUMAR

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹20,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/16952
Application deadline: January 4, 2019

IN BRIEF

ONLINE INTERNSHIP FAIR

Internshala has launched an online internship fair for degree students from tier-II cities. The initiative is to create awareness on internships and to bring opportunities closer to the students.

The online internship fair is a nine-day internship drive which will be live from December 19-27, 2018.

The drive brings exclusive internship opportunities for the

students pursuing BBA, BCom, BA, BSc and similar degree courses in tier-II cities like Jaipur, Indore, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, and many more.

Through this drive, students will get an opportunity to intern with a company for two-six months and earn a stipend of up to ₹10,000 per month.

For more details visit: <https://internshala.com/internships-in-your-city>.

FASHION SHOW ORGANISED

Khazani Women's Vocational Institute

organised — Fashion Fiesta — as part of its annual curriculum, at Talkatora Stadium. The creations were showcased under 13 categories — from casual to formal executive wear, wedding attires to club

wear.

The show was a platform for the students to showcase their creative talent, while creating a bridge between the students and commercial markets.

Bijendra Chaudhary chairman-founder Khazani Educational Society

said: "Women are ahead in every field and make them self-reliant. Women empowerment is a major contribution in the progress and advancement of the nation. Our focus is to make each girl of our institution self-reliant and give the wings to their dreams."

NEW PG DIPLOMA IN PLANT PROTECTION

The Sharda University, Greater Noida, and Dhanuka Agritech Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to launch a one year Post Graduate Diploma in Plant Protection.

The students will be taught the theory, practical and business aspects of pests, diseases and weed problems of field and horticultural crops and their management at the university. They will also be given a two-month field training who will also pay a stipend and allowances to the students. The

15 students, after completion of course and evaluation process, will be placed on permanent roll of the company as frontline staff in BD or sales department as per the band and compensation structure of Dhanuka Agritech Limited.

The programme is a unique collaborative course depicting an Institute-Industry interface directed towards the growth of the agribusiness sector and at the same time addressing the unemployment problem in relation to the agricultural science graduates.

INT'L COLLOQUIUM

Amrita's UNESCO chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Centre for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality at the Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham hosted a three-day first ever International Colloquium for Women's Empowerment in partnership with the United Nations Democracy Fund Women Empowerment team at Amritapuri campus, Kollam.

It was decided that the Israeli Consulate of India will assist the Sustainability Development Officer (SDO)-Pilot, CWEGE in launching a new position for key women in a community to protect, monitor and report on natural resources especially water and waste management.

In addition to international delegates, more than 90 women from 21 villages across 18 States in India joined the discussions and celebrated the successful completion of a joint-project.

ANNUAL DAY

The Junior DPS celebrated its Annual Day — Shine-The Shining Star — at Janakpuri Delhi Haat auditorium with the aim of promoting safe childhood, education in society and women empowerment.

The function included Talent Show, Ramp Walk, Group Dance, and Rapping by the students. Director and Founder of Junior DPS Vishwa Deepak Gupta extended a warm welcome to the dignitaries present. Students and teachers gave brilliant performances on relevant topics like yoga, Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao and gave awareness among the people present there.

LAGGARDS

Scheme	NAV	1Yr %	UTI LT Adv Fund-III(G)	13.08	-14.64	Index Fund(G)		Tata Ethical Fund(G)	153.71	-6.76	Tata Banking & Financial	16.77	-2.42	
HDFC Infrastructure Fund(G)	15.63	-30.84	Franklin Asian Equity Fund(G)	18.88	-14.55	Motilal Oswal Long Term	16.30	-9.98	HDFC Capital Builder	281.09	-6.70	Services Fund-Reg(G)		
Sundaram Small Cap Fund(G)	79.38	-30.10	Principal Global	24.26	-14.46	Equity Fund-Reg(G)		Value Fund(G)				Reliance Banking Fund(G)	260.55	-2.32
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax	8.79	-29.79	Opportunities Fund(G)			Principal Personal Tax saver	186.90	-9.98	JM Tax Gain Fund(G)	15.76	-6.33	Invesco India Largecap	26.61	-2.06
Adv Fund-Sr IV-Reg(G)			Motilal Oswal Midcap	23.79	-14.42	Fund		ICICI Pru Value Fund-3(D)	10.16	-6.29	Fund(G)			
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax	10.32	-29.67	30 Fund-Reg(G)			Franklin India Opportunities	69.16	-9.96	Edelweiss Multi-Cap	13.65	-6.25	DSP US Flexible Equity	21.75	-1.96
Adv Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)			IDFC Focused Equity	34.82	-14.25	Fund(G)		Fund-Reg(G)				Fund-Reg(G)		
IDFC Infrastructure-Reg(G)	14.31	-27.20	Fund-Reg(G)			Principal Multi Cap Growth	136.14	-9.91	IDFC Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	43.50	-6.14	Reliance Large Cap Fund(G)	32.67	-1.73
Aditya Birla SL Emerging	12.59	-25.85	Invesco India Multicap Fund(G)	45.55	-14.01	Fund(G)		Tata Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	190.12	-6.10	HDFC Top 100 Fund(G)	455.54	-1.72	
Leaders Fund-7-Reg(G)			Tata Mid Cap Growth Fund(G)	130.39	-14.00	ICICI Pru Exports & Services	53.61	-9.88	Aditya Birla SL Tax Relief '96(G)	30.27	-6.02	Invesco India Growth Opp	32.18	-1.71
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax	8.63	-25.80	IDFC Sterling Value Fund-Reg(G)	50.14	-13.97	Fund(G)		Mirae Asset Emerging	49.51	-5.99	Fund(G)			
Adv Fund-Sr V-Reg(G)			Sundaram Select Small	13.29	-13.93	SBI Tax Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	22.53	-9.70	Bluechip-Reg(G)			Mirae Asset India Equity	47.44	-1.49
SBI PSU Fund-Reg(G)	9.69	-25.72	Cap Series-III-Reg(G)			Franklin India Focused	37.59	-9.66	Principal Dividend Yield Fund(G)	51.21	-5.98	Fund-Reg(G)		
Aditya Birla SL Emerging	14.43	-25.70	L&T Emerging Businesses	24.60	-13.80	Equity Fund(G)		Franklin India Equity	77.02	-5.90	UTI Mastershare-Reg(G)	114.64	-1.34	
Leaders Fund-4-Reg(G)			Fund-Reg(G)			Tata India Tax Savings Fund-Reg(G)	16.66	-9.57	Advantage Fund(G)			ICICI Pru Multicap Fund(G)	277.11	-1.32
Aditya Birla SL Emerging	13.89	-25.40	Templeton India Value Fund(G)	240.22	-13.64	DSP World Gold Fund-Reg(G)	10.61	-9.51	Sundaram Value Fund-II-Reg(G)	15.23	-5.88	Parag Parikh Long Term	22.99	-1.31
Leaders Fund-3-Reg(G)			Sundaram Select Small	13.33	-13.31	SBI Magnum	135.25	-9.46	Edelweiss Emerging Markets	11.27	-5.85	Equity Fund-Reg(G)		
Sundaram Select Micro	13.09	-25.28	Cap Series-IV-Reg(G)			TaxGain'93-Reg(G)		Opp Eq. Offshore Fund-Reg(G)				DSP Global Allocation Fund-Reg(G)	11.32	-1.26
Cap-Series X-Reg(G)			Aditya Birla SL Mfg. Equity	13.16	-13.25	Motilal Oswal Multicap	24.72	-9.31	ICICI Pru Value Fund-8(D)	10.19	-5.83	ICICI Pru India Recovery	16.92	-1.23
DSP Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	52.61	-25.25	Fund-Reg(G)			35 Fund-Reg(G)		Aditya Birla SL Focused	55.48	-5.78	Fund-4(G)			
ICICI Pru Smallcap Fund(G)	23.10	-23.96	Reliance Focused Equity	43.88	-13.04	ICICI Pru Value Fund-2(D)	10.46	-9.30	Equity Fund(G)			UTI Dividend Yield Fund-Reg(G)	62.42	-1.18
Aditya Birla SL Small Cap	33.91	-23.76	Fund(G)			Templeton India Equity	43.50	-9.24	HDFC Growth Opp Fund-Reg(G)	107.34	-5.78	UTI MNC Fund-Reg(G)	197.07	-1.03
Fund(G)			ICICI Pru Dividend Yield	16.15	-13.03	Income Fund(G)		IDFC Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	30.20	-5.77	Sundaram Large and Mid	32.67	-0.96	
Aditya Birla SL Pure Value	50.95	-23.64	Equity Fund(G)			Reliance Value Fund(G)	70.00	-9.19	ICICI Pru Value Fund-15(G)	10.30	-5.76	Cap Fund(G)		
Fund(G)								Sundaram LT Tax Adv	13.96	-5.76	Baroda Banking & Fin	20.81	-0.95	
Aditya Birla SL Infrastructure	30.35	-23.38						Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)			Serv Fund(G)			
Fund(G)								SBI BlueChip Fund-Reg(G)	36.60	-5.72	ICICI Pru Global Stable	13.79	-0.93	
Sundaram Infra Advantage	30.18	-23.28						Motilal Oswal Focused 25	20.40	-5.72	Equity Fund(G)			
Fund(G)								Fund-Reg(G)			Canara Rob Equity Diver	123.84	-0.89	
Reliance Power & Infra Fund(G)	95.32	-21.94						Sundaram Fin Serv Opp Fund(G)	37.62	-5.66	Fund-Reg(G)			
Reliance Tax Saver (ELSS)	53.76	-21.42						Sundaram Global Advt(G)	15.34	-5.60	ICICI Pru LT Equity Fund	355.36	-0.71	
Fund(G)								Kotak Tax Saver Scheme(G)	40.72	-5.59	(Tax Saving)(G)			
Canara Rob Infrastructure	42.50	-21.34						BNP Paribas Large Cap Fund(G)	81.70	-5.52	Sundaram Select Focus(G)	165.32	-0.45	
Fund-Reg(G)								Aditya Birla SL Equity Fund(G)	689.92	-5.33	DHFL Pramerica Global	15.36	-0.13	
SBI Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	49.46	-21.21						L&T Equity Fund-Reg(G)	78.56	-5.32	DHFL Pramerica Large	11.79	-0.05	
Kotak Infra & Eco Reform	18.78	-20.76						Baroda Large Cap Fund(G)	13.40	-5.30	Cap Fund-2-Reg(G)			
Fund(G)								Sundaram LT Tax Adv	12.97	-5.22	Canara Rob Consumer	36.92	-0.03	
UTI Transportation & Logistics	101.75	-19.83						Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)			Trends Fund-Reg(G)			
Fund-Reg(G)								ICICI Pru R.I.G.H.T Fund(G)	41.15	-5.16	Edelweiss Large Cap Fund(G)	33.12	0.21	
SBI Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	13.95	-19.82						Franklin India Equity Fund(G)	564.06	-5.11	JM Large Cap Fund(G)	64.49	0.28	
Invesco India PSU Equity	16.45	-19.28						Reliance Quant Fund(G)	24.07	-5.10	ICICI Pru Business Cycle	14.16	0.35	
Fund(G)								DHFL Pramerica Large Cap	153.79	-5.00	Fund-2(G)			
SBI LT Advantage	12.35	-19.07						Fund(G)			Axis Focused 25 Fund(G)	26.42	0.38	
Fund-I-Reg(G)								ICICI Pru Value Discovery	139.08	-4.97	Kotak India EQ Contra	49.06	0.55	
SBI Magnum Comma Fund-Reg(G)	33.71	-18.87						Fund(G)			Fund(G)			
DSP India T.I.G.E.R Fund-Reg(G)	84.52	-18.85						Principal Nifty 100 Equal	69.04	-4.96	Mirae Asset Great	33.69	0.77	
BNP Paribas Mid Cap Fund(G)	30.72	-18.72						Weight Fund(G)			Consumer Fund-Reg(G)			
L&T Business Cycle Fund-Reg(G)	14.52	-18.59	ICICI Pru Value Fund-1(D)	10.40	-12.81	DHFL Pramerica Diversified	12.37	-9.18	Reliance Capital Builder	12.34	-4.96	Franklin India Feeder-Franklin	24.60	0.79
Sundaram Select Micro	30.73	-18.48	SBI Tax advantage Fund-II(G)	33.36	-12.69	Equity Fund-Reg(G)			Fund-II-B(G)			U.S. Opportunities Fund(G)		
Cap-Series I-Reg(G)			BNP Paribas Multi Cap Fund(G)	43.85	-12.69	IDFC Multi Cap Fund-Reg(G)	88.11	-9.15	IDBI Diversified Equity Fund(G)	20.61	-4.85	Canara Rob Equity Tax	60.53	0.98
Reliance Vision Fund(G)	505.43	-18.39	L&T Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	130.92	-12.68	DSP Equity Fund-Reg(G)	35.80	-9.11	Tata Large Cap Fund(G)	203.05	-4.82	Saver Fund-Reg(G)		
Tata Infrastructure Tax	22.85	-18.20	Kotak Global Emerging Mkt	14.11	-12.49	DSP Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	44.13	-9.06	SBI Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	130.09	-4.77	IDBI Nifty Index Fund(G)	19.63	1.29
Saving Fund(G)			Fund(G)			Franklin India Prima	916.31	-9.03	Aditya Birla SL MNC Fund(G)	739.82	-4.76	SBI Magnum Equity ESG	97.21	1.41
SBI LT Advantage Fund-II-Reg(G)	12.66	-18.20	HDFC TaxSaver(G)	491.12	-12.39	Fund(G)			Kotak US Equity Fund(G)	14.10	-4.75	Fund-Reg(G)		
Sundaram Select Micro	30.72	-18.10	Edelweiss Eur Dynamic	9.68	-12.28	L&T Long Term Advantage	49.10	-8.79	Franklin India Bluechip	440.61	-4.70	ICICI Pru US Bluechip	23.24	1.44
Cap-Series II-Reg(G)			Equity Off-shr Fund-Reg(G)			Fund-I(G)			Fund(G)			Equity Fund(G)		
UTI LT Adv Fund-IV(G)	10.10	-18.04	JM Value Fund(G)	29.52	-12.23	Sundaram Rural and	40.46	-8.75	Aditya Birla SL Banking &	26.88	-4.68	Canara Rob Bluechip	23.04	1.54
L&T Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	15.50	-18.03	HDFC Mid-Cap Opportunities	52.44	-12.19	Consumption Fund(G)			Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)			Equity Fund-Reg(G)		
SBI Magnum MidCap Fund-Reg(G)	70.26	-18.01	Fund(G)			SBI Equity Opp Fund-Sr	14.95	-8.67	Edelweiss Large & Mid Cap	29.27	-4.66	Aditya Birla SL Index Fund(G)	104.44	1.59
Franklin India Smaller	51.77	-17.91	Sundaram Diversified Equity(G)	94.72	-12.02	I-Reg(G)			Fund-Reg(G)			Franklin India Index	84.34	1.63
Cos Fund(G)			L&T India Value Fund-Reg(G)	33.99	-12.01	Aditya Birla SL Global	11.52	-8.64	DSP Top 100 Equity Fund-Reg(G)	193.26	-4.52	Fund-NSE Nifty(G)		
Kotak Small Cap Fund(G)	68.38	-17.85	Kotak Emerging Equity	36.67	-11.73	Commodities Fund(G)			Aditya Birla SL Frontline	212.25	-4.31	Axis Long Term Equity Fund(G)	42.31	1.72
Tata Infrastructure Fund(G)	51.76	-17.45	Scheme(G)			DHFL Pramerica Euro Equity	12.29	-8.62	Equity Fund(G)			ICICI Pru Nifty Index Fund(G)	102.64	1.82
Sundaram Select Micro	30.41	-17.43	Principal Emerging Bluechip	99.66	-11.68	Fund(G)			Franklin India Taxshield(G)	539.96	-4.14	Reliance Index Fund -	17.81	1.93
Cap-Series III-Reg(G)			Fund(G)			HDFC Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	42.06	-8.62	Invesco India Contra Fund(G)	45.40	-4.08	Nifty Plan(G)		
SBI LT Advantage	12.18	-17.18	ICICI Pru Midcap Fund(G)	93.80	-11.55	UTI Banking and Financial	90.93	-8.53	Reliance Japan Equity Fund(G)	11.58	-3.86	SBI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	91.31	2.24
Fund-III-Reg(G)			L&T Large and Midcap	44.99	-11.53	Services Fund-Reg(G)			Kotak Bluechip Fund(G)	217.13	-3.82	Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity	18.60	2.25
Sundaram Select Micro	28.94	-17.17	Fund-Reg(G)			L&T Tax Advt Fund-Reg(G)	52.19	-8.46	ICICI Pru Focused Equity	28.53	-3.71	Fund-A(G)		
Cap-Series IV-Reg(G)			Reliance Close Ended	22.63	-11.51	UTI Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	59.94	-8.30	Fund(G)			Axis Midcap Fund(G)	34.99	2.37
Reliance Small Cap Fund(G)	39.36	-17.05	Equity Fund-B(G)			Tata Equity P/E Fund(G)	128.92	-8.02	L&T India Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	25.13	-3.54	Tata Index Fund-Nifty Plan(G)	64.18	2.55
Edelweiss Gr China Equity	22.33	-16.97	Franklin Build India Fund(G)	38.94	-11.49	DSP World Agriculture	14.52	-7.96	Reliance Multi Cap Fund(G)	94.26	-3.48	UTI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	69.23	2.69
Off-Shore Fund-Reg(G)			Reliance Growth Fund(G)	1050.59	-11.38	Fund-Reg(G)			ICICI Pru Growth Fund-1(DP)	10.52	-3.44	HDFC Index Fund-NIFTY	96.57	2.74
UTI Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	49.10	-16.97	Invesco India Feeder -	9.60	-11.33	IDBI India Top 100 Equity	22.48	-7.94	Sundaram World Brand	12.70	-3.28	50 Plan(G)		
Invesco India Infrastructure	16.15	-16.84	Invesco Pan European Equity			Fund(G)			Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)			Reliance US Equity Opp	12.70	2.78
Fund(G)			Fund-Reg(G)			DHFL Pramerica Tax Plan(G)	28.89	-7.82	Sundaram World Brand	12.55	-3.26	Fund(G)		
Aditya Birla SL Midcap Fund(G)	279.93	-16.77	DSP Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	51.49	-11.15	UTI LT Equity Fund	82.22	-7.72	Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)			UTI Equity Fund-Reg(G)	133.94	2.80
Sundaram Mid Cap Fund(G)	453.88	-16.39	DSP Equity Opportunities	206.10	-10.89	(Tax Saving)-Reg(G)			IDBI Equity Advantage	26.21	-3.18	IDFC Nifty Fund-Reg(G)	21.96	2.90
DHFL Pramerica Midcap	17.37	-16.37	Fund-Reg(G)			ICICI Pru Large & Mid	309.46	-7.50	Fund-Reg(G)			Reliance Pharma Fund(G)	147.14	3.36
Opp Fund-Reg(G)			Kotak World Gold Fund(G)	7.73	-10.87	Cap Fund(G)			SBI Consumption Opp	114.45	-3.08	Aditya Birla SL Global Real	17.80	3.54
Tata Resources & Energy	13.41	-16.19	SBI Magnum Global Fund-Reg(G)	165.30	-10.80	Invesco India Feeder - Invesco	11.30	-7.43	Fund-Reg(G)			Estate Fund(G)		
Fund-Reg(G)			DSP World Energy Fund-Reg(G)	11.47	-10.70	Global Equity Income Fund(G)			UTI Value Opp Fund-Reg(G)	57.58	-3.06	ICICI Pru Growth Fund-2(DP)	11.38	3.83
HDFC Focused 30 Fund(G)	73.73	-16.05	IDBI Nifty Junior Index Fund(G)	20.82	-10.57	Aditya Birla SL CEF-Global	21.33	-7.39	Aditya Birla SL India	78.56	-2.94	Reliance Index Fund -	17.45	4.75
SBI Contra Fund-Reg(G)	102.93	-15.96	BNP Paribas Long Term	35.44	-10.57	Agri-Reg(G)			GenNext Fund(G)			Sensex Plan(G)		
Edelweiss Mid Cap	25.32	-15.95	Equity Fund(G)			Reliance Close Ended Equity	17.19	-7.39	Mirae Asset Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	16.44	-2.93	Axis Bluechip Fund(G)	26.63	5.17
Fund-Reg(G)			ICICI Pru Value Fund-4(G)	20.77	-10.55	Fund-II-A(G)			UTI India LifeStyle Fund-Reg(G)	25.39	-2.80	HDFC Index Fund-Sensex(G)	313.25	5.25
IDBI Small Cap Fund(G)	9.33	-15.95	Reliance Consumption Fund(G)	62.73	-10.54	Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity	17.34	-7.25	ICICI Pru Banking & Fin	59.68	-2.80	Tata Index Fund-Sensex	87.09	5.31
Aditya Birla SL Dividend	154.92	-15.65	Principal Tax Savings Fund	199.20	-10.50	Fund-B(G)			Serv Fund(G)			Plan(G)		
Yield Fund(G)			Canara Rob Emerg Equities	87.65	-10.48	DHFL Pramerica LT Equity	13.33	-7.17	Invesco India Financial	51.57	-2.79	Axis Multicap Fund-Reg(G)	10.72	5.51
UTI LT Adv Fund-V(G)	9.37	-15.57	Fund-Reg(G)			Fund-Reg(G)			Services Fund(G)			ICICI Pru FMCG Fund(G)	233.11	5.58
UTI Focussed Equity	12.70	-15.42	SBI Healthcare Opp Fund-Reg(G)	117.16	-10.43	DSP World Mining Fund-Reg(G)	7.43	-7.15	Principal Focused Multicap	60.61	-2.78	SBI Banking & Financial	16.40	6.83
Fund-I(G)			Edelweiss Long Term	43.43	-10.36	UTI Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	82.81	-7.14	Fund(G)			Services Fund-Reg(G)		
UTI Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	98.55	-15.40	Equity Fund (Tax Savings)-Reg(G)			SBI Magnum Multicap	45.31	-7.07	ICICI Pru Value Fund-5(G)	14.87	-2.68	Franklin India Technology	145.62	11.90
Baroda Mid-cap Fund(G)	8.67	-15.33	SBI LT Advantage	12.25	-10.35	Fund-Reg(G)			Invesco India Tax Plan(G)	48.13	-2.67	Fund(G)		
IDBI Midcap Fund(G)	10.46	-15.30	Fund-IV-Reg(G)			DSP Focus Fund-Reg(G)	21.43	-7.02	Kotak Standard Multicap	32.75	-2.67	Aditya Birla SL Digital India	48.94	14.86
ICICI Pru Infrastructure Fund(G)	48.21	-15.26	ICICI Pru Value Fund-10(G)	11.19	-10.34	JM Multicap Fund(G)	29.48	-7.00	Fund(G)			Fund(G)		
DSP Natural Res & New	31.18	-15.20	ICICI Pru Value Fund-9(G)	1										

43 killed in Kabul Govt compound attack

AFF ■ KABUL

An hours-long gun and suicide attack on a Kabul government compound killed at least 43 people, the health ministry said on Tuesday, making it one of the deadliest assaults on the Afghan capital this year. No militant group has claimed responsibility for the raid, which caps a bloody year for Afghanistan as long-suffering civilians and security forces are slaughtered in record numbers.

Another 10 people were wounded in Monday's massacre on a site where the Ministry of Public Works and an office that handles pensions and benefits for war veterans are located, spokesman Waheed Majroh said.

Gunmen stormed the compound mid-afternoon after detonating a car bomb at the entrance, sending terrified government workers running for their lives. Some jumped from windows several floors high to escape the militants.

Hundreds more were trapped inside buildings for hours as heavily armed security forces swarmed the area, engaging the attackers in a fierce gun battle punctuated by multiple explosions.

At least four militants, including the suicide bomber, were killed and more than 350 people freed, officials said. Most of the dead and wounded were civilians, who have borne the brunt of the 17-year war.

It was the deadliest assault in the Afghan capital since a suicide bomber blew himself up in the middle of a religious



Injured men receive treatment at a hospital after Monday's Christmas Eve attack in Kabul, Afghanistan on Tuesday

gathering last month, killing at least 55 people.

President Ashraf Ghani, whose government has been skewered over its security failures, said "terrorists attack civilian targets to hide their defeat on the battleground".

Afghanistan's de facto prime minister Abdullah Abdullah also sounded a defiant note as he blamed the Taliban for the attack.

"Every attack they carry out against our people, our resolve is further strengthened to eliminate them," he said.

But their statements belie the grim reality on the battlefield where the Taliban have the upper hand.

Afghanistan's largest militant group has made significant territorial gains this year as its fighters inflict record casualties on government forces.

The raid followed a tumultuous few days in Afghanistan where officials are reeling from US President Donald Trump's plan to slash troop numbers, which many fear could harm efforts to end the conflict with

the Taliban.

It also comes after a major security shake-up in Kabul that has placed staunch anti-Taliban and Pakistan veterans in charge of the police and military. While there has been no official announcement of a US drawdown, the mere suggestion of the United States reducing its military presence has rattled the Afghan capital and potentially undermined peace efforts.

General Scott Miller, the top US and NATO commander in Afghanistan, said Sunday he had not received orders to pull forces out of the country.

Trump's decision apparently came Tuesday as US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad met with the Taliban in Abu Dhabi, part of efforts to bring the militants to the negotiating table with Kabul.

Many Afghans are worried that Ghani's fragile unity government would collapse if US troops pulled out, enabling the Taliban to sweep back into power and potentially sparking another bloody civil war.

Attackers hit Libya foreign ministry, killing at least 3

AFF ■ TRIPOLI

Suicide attackers stormed the Libyan foreign ministry in the capital Tripoli on Tuesday, killing at least three people including a senior civil servant, the authorities said.

Ten other people were wounded in what the foreign ministry said was a suicide attack carried out by "terrorists".

A car bomb exploded near the ministry, prompting security forces to rush to the scene, said special forces spokesman Tarak al-Dawass, accusing the Islamic State jihadist group (IS) of responsibility.

A suicide bomber then blew himself up on the second floor of the building while a second attacker died when the suitcase he was carrying exploded, he said.

A third assailant, who was unarmed and wearing a bulletproof vest, was killed by security forces outside, Dawass added.

At least three people were killed and 10 wounded, according to the health ministry.

A civil servant who headed a department in the foreign ministry was among the dead, security sources said.

Plumes of smoke were seen rising from the building as ambulances, paramedics and security forces gathered outside.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Torn apart by power struggles and undermined by chronic insecurity, Libya has become a haven for jihadists since the ouster and killing of Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

Two competing administrations, rival militias, tribes and jihadists have been competing for control of territory and the country's vast oil wealth.

IS took advantage of the chaos to gain a foothold in the coastal city of Sirte in 2015.

Forces loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) regained control of the city in December 2016 after eight months of deadly fighting.

Since then, some jihadists have returned to the desert in an attempt to regroup and reorganise.

In September, IS claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on the headquarters of Libya's National Oil Company in the heart of Tripoli which left two dead and 10 wounded.

Four months earlier, it claimed an attack on the electoral commission's headquarters which left 14 dead.

In April, the GNA launched an operation to track down IS fighters operating in areas of western Libya under its control.

Last month IS claimed responsibility for an attack on militia forces in southeastern Libya in which at least nine people were killed.

The US military has regularly carried out strikes on jihadists in Libya, particularly south of Sirte.

The GNA was set up under a 2015 UN-brokered deal, but a rival administration based in the country's east aligned with military strongman Khalifa Haftar refuses to recognise its authority.

Rival Libyan leaders had agreed to a Paris-brokered deal in May to hold a nationwide election by the end of the year. But instability, territorial disputes and divisions have delayed plans for elections.

Two days of meetings last month in Italy laid bare deep divisions between key players in the crisis with some delegates refusing to sit side by side.

GLOBE TROTTER

27 DEAD AFTER BUS, TRUCK COLLIDE IN CONGO
Kinshasa (Congo): A Congolese health official says at least 27 people are dead after a bus and a truck collided west of the Capital, Kinshasa. Dr Sylvain Yuma with the health ministry says the accident occurred overnight and that excessive speed was to blame.

13 NEPALESE WOMEN RESCUED FROM INDIA
Kathmandu: At least 13 Nepalese women, who were allegedly being trafficked on the pretext of jobs, were rescued from hotels in India by an NGO and have been brought back to the country. Maiti India, an NGO has brought eight women from Bangalore and five from Ahmedabad to Kathmandu on Tuesday. Balkrishna Pandey, a representative of the organisation, said.

Pak lawyer to return home to defend Christian woman

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistani lawyer who successfully fought a legal battle to acquit a Christian woman in a high-profile blasphemy case says he will return home to represent her whenever the country's Supreme Court takes up a review petition against her.

Saiful Malook, who fled to Netherlands following threats to him from radical Islamists after the October 21 acquittal of Asia Bibi, said Tuesday that no date has been set by the court to hear the petition.

The announcement by Malook came as the 54-year-old mother of five celebrated Christmas amid security despite being freed.

Bibi had been on death row since 2010 on charges of insulting Islam's Prophet Muhammad. The radical Tehreek-e-Labbaik political party held violent nationwide protests demanding her public execution after her release.

10,500 arrests ahead of B'desh poll: Opposition

AFF ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh police have arrested more than 10,500 opposition activists in a crackdown ahead of elections this week, opposition parties said on Tuesday.

The figures were released after the United States urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government to do more to ensure free polls on Sunday when she is aiming to win a record fourth term.

Opposition parties said the arrests since the election was called on November 8 were intended to create a "climate of fear".

The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), whose leader Khaleda Zia is serving a 17-year jail term, said 7,021 of its activists had been detained.

Its Islamist ally, Jamaat-e-Islami, said more than 3,500 followers were in custody. Jamaat-e-Islami is banned from contesting elections but has candi-

dates taking part as individuals with the BNP.

"Every day 80 to 90 of our activists have been arrested nationwide. These arrests have created a climate of fear," Jamaat secretary general Shafiqur Rahman told AFP.

Police spokesman Sohail Rana did not confirm any figure for arrests, but said they did not make "unnecessary arrests" without warrants.

"We never target any individual unless they break the law. These people have specific warrants against them," he told AFP.

Rizvi Ahmed, a BNP spokesman, said the charges laid against party activists were "fictitious" and "ghost" cases aiming for "a lopsided election" in favour of Hasina.

Hasina and Zia have been political foes since the introduction of democracy in 1991. They have traditionally alternated in power but Hasina's current rule has lasted since 2009 and Zia's jail term this year

prevented her from taking part in the election. The BNP and its allies have also accused police and ruling Awami League party activists of attacking their activists and candidates.

The BNP had hoped the deployment of 30,000 troops on Monday would improve security across the Muslim-majority majority country of 165 million.

"The Awami League activists along with the law enforcing agencies attacked our candidates at 28 constituencies (in the last 24 hours).

Nineteen of our candidates and over 100 activists were injured in the attack," Ahmed told a press briefing.

He said that since the election campaign started at least 152 BNP candidates were attacked and hundreds of activists were injured in clashes. Police spokesman Rana denied police had attacked any opposition activists, acknowledging only that "isolated incidents" were possible.

Sharif shifted to Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif was shifted to the Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore amid tight security on Tuesday, a day after an anti-corruption court sentenced him to seven years in prison in a graft case linked to the high-profile Panama Papers scandal.

Sharif, 69, was sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills graft case but was acquitted in the Flagship Investments case by the Accountability Court in Islamabad on Monday.

The three-time former prime minister, who was taken into custody by police following the court judgement, was taken to Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on Monday.

Upon reaching Adiala jail, jail doctors carried out a medical examination of the PML-N leader and found him physically fit.

On Tuesday morning, Sharif was taken to Nur Khan Air Base amid tight security. Sharif was then flown to Lahore, where he was shifted to

the Kot Lakhpat jail. Tight security had been put in place around the jail and Rangers were deployed at the police checkpoints established on the route to the prison.

Shortly after his conviction in the National Accountability Court's Al-Azizia corruption case Monday, Sharif's counsel requested court to shift him to Lahore jail instead of Adiala since the veteran leader is a heart patient and his personal physicians and family members are stationed in Lahore. The request was granted.

The Punjab province government approved the provision of "better class" jail facilities for Sharif. The better class prisoners are provided with a mattress, a study table and chair in addition to a TV set and newspaper.

A large number of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supporters gathered outside the jail to have a glimpse of their Quaid (supreme) leader. However, due to high security they were not allowed to come close to the prison. Police also baton charged the PML-N workers

for trying to reach the jail.

According to the jail administration, Sharif is provided with "better class" facilities.

Sharif has been shifted to the barrack where former president Asif Ali Zardari was also kept in corruption cases in 1990s.

Upon reaching Kot Lakhpat jail, doctors carried out a medical examination of Sharif and found him physically fit.

Tuesday also marks Sharif's 69th birthday. The PML-N's provincial secretariats have planned celebrations, along with Christmas celebrations.

The party members also cut a cake in front of the Kot Lakhpat jail.

Commenting on the verdict on Monday, Sharif said his conscience was clear as he was never involved in any kind of corruption.

"I was never involved in misuse of authority and corruption so my conscience is at peace," he said.

Sharif's lawyers said the accountability court's verdict will be challenged in the

Islamabad High Court.

The accountability court verdict on Monday concluded a series of three court cases - Avenfield properties case, Flagship investment case and Al-Azizia steel mills case - launched against the Sharif family by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on September 8, 2017 following a judgment by the Supreme Court that disqualified Sharif in the Panama Papers case in July last year.

Sharif, his daughter Maryam and his son-in-law Captain (retired) M Safdar were sentenced to 11 years, eight years and one year respectively in prison in the Avenfield properties case related to their purchase of four luxury flats in London through corrupt practices. However, the three were bailed out by the Islamabad High Court in September.

The apex court set the deadline for December 24 to wrap up the remaining two corruption cases against the Sharif family.

On Monday, the court delivered the judgement in two remaining cases.

Russian envoy: Bad relations with US unlikely to improve

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Russia's UN Ambassador says relations between Moscow and Washington are "practically non-existent," which he says is bad not only for both countries but for the world — and he sees little prospect for improvement anytime soon.

Vassily Nebenzia said in a recent wide-ranging interview with a small group of journalists that the Trump administration should offer some incentives to North Korea to move forward toward denuclearization, saying the situation "is stalemated at the moment."

Russia and China have backed an easing of sanctions to spur momentum, but the U.S. insists that North Korea must first make major steps toward eliminating its nuclear program. "I'm concerned that it doesn't roll back" to the 2017 era of increasing nuclear and missile tests and escalating rhetoric, Nebenzia said.

"I think that the US Hopefully is starting to understand that the situation

may go (back)."

As for Iran, Nebenzia said he worries about U.S. Strategy if its sanctions don't bring about the changes in behaviour the Trump administration wants. He sees "a danger if they go to the limits."

"I'm worried if anybody wants to go to war with Iran, and that is the enigma and the question — what is the strategy about Iran?" Nebenzia asked.

He said the U.S. And Russia need to talk about global issues including strategic stability, terrorism, narcotics and regional conflicts, and he thinks President Donald Trump "understands pretty well that it's better to cooperate."

But he said because Russia has become a major issue in U.S. Domestic policies — accused of hacking and interfering in the 2016 U.S. Elections which is being investigated by special counsel Robert Mueller — "and given the vulnerabilities that drift around this administration, I don't see too bright prospects for improving (relations) any time soon."

Turkey 'determined' to drive out Syrian Kurdish forces

AP ■ ISTANBUL

Turkey said Tuesday it is working with the United States to coordinate the withdrawal of American forces but remains "determined" to clear US-allied Kurdish fighters from northeastern Syria.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters that "if Turkey says it will enter, it will," in comments carried by private DHA news agency.

For weeks, Turkey has been threatening to launch a new offensive against the Kurdish fighters, who partnered with the US to drive the Islamic State group out of much of northern and eastern Syria.

Ankara views the Kurdish forces as terrorists because of their links to an insurgent group inside Turkey.

President Donald Trump announced the planned withdrawal of US forces after a phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan earlier this month.

The minister also said Ankara and Washington have agreed to complete a roadmap on the northern Syrian town of

Manbij until the US withdraws. Under the June deal, Kurdish forces would leave Manbij, in the western Euphrates valley, but delays have infuriated Turkey.

"It is crucial that the US doesn't appear as not having kept its promises," Cavusoglu said.

He argued that Turkey has the "strength to neutralize" IS on its own and criticised France, which has promised to stay in Syria despite the US decision.

Cavusoglu warned it would not benefit France if it was staying in Syria to protect the YPG, the main Kurdish militia in Syria.

Erdogan, speaking to reporters in Ankara, said Turkey was taking into account Trump's announcement on Syria rather than French President Emmanuel Macron's decision.

The future of the international coalition against IS, which includes Turkey, the US and France, remains unclear.

The Turkish president also announced that a delegation was heading to Moscow and that he would meet with

Russian President Vladimir Putin. Turkey has been negotiating on behalf of the Syrian opposition with Russia and Iran, which support the Syrian government, as part of efforts to end the nearly 8-year civil war.

A top Russian official says that Moscow expects that a hotline between Russia and the US military will be kept in place despite the impending US withdrawal from Syria.

Trump announced last week that the US will withdraw all of its 2,000 forces in Syria, a move that will leave control of the oil-rich eastern third of Syria up for grabs.

Russia launched its military operation in Syria in 2015 to back its longtime ally President Bashar Assad.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryakov said Tuesday in an interview with the RIA Novosti news agency that it would be a "big mistake" to dismantle a hotline that Russia and the US use to prevent potential clashes in Syria pending the US withdrawal and said he sees no indications the Americans would do that.

Britain bans puppy and kitten sales by pet shops

AFF ■ LONDON

Britain is forbidding puppies and kittens from being sold by pet shops in a bid to crack down on animal exploitation and abuse.

The government said it will roll out the legislation next year after holding public consultations that showed 95-percent support for the ban.

"This will mean that anyone looking to buy or adopt a puppy or kitten under six months must either deal directly with the breeder or with an animal re-homing centre," the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said on Sunday as part of its Christmas animal welfare push.

The measure is commonly called Lucy's Law in honour of a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who was rescued from a puppy farm in Wales in 2013.

She had spent most of her life in a cage and was no longer able to breed because her hips had fused together from lack of movement.

An icon of Christmas cheer went dark, some parks close

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The lights were not twinkling. The toy trains were not whirring. Even the nearby bathrooms were locked.

The national Christmas tree, symbol of a country's seasonal cheer, instead stood as an icon of a government in paralysis, as the partial shutdown stretched into the holiday with an array of federal services frozen, some 800,000 public servants either idled or about to be and the disruption to the broader public bound to grow when the quiet spell ends later this week.

Already facilities at many national parks were shuttered, if the parks were accessible at all, and thousands of federal buildings were to remain closed when the work week resumed unless President Donald Trump and members of Congress quickly break through a budget impasse that the White House said could drag on into 2019.

Under cloudy skies in a brisk wind on the third day of the shutdown, the capital put on little holiday wonder for visitors like Greg Forcherio of

Columbia, Maryland, a government contractor with no office to work in after the holidays as long as federal buildings stayed closed.

He, his wife and their toddler on Monday came to see the giant, glittering spruce tree brought from Colorado to serve as the national Christmas tree, normally a focal point for Washington holiday visitors.

But a locked chain-link fence blocked access to the site and the nearby White House visitor's center and its bathrooms were closed, with a hand-scrawled sign directing visitors to portable toilets, which also were chained shut. "Kind of annoying when you've got young children," Forcherio said.

Access to the site was restored later Monday and finally, as night fell on Christmas Eve, the lights returned.

The government had announced a day earlier that it would be sealed off because of the shutdown and because repairs had slowed after an episode of vandalism on the tree before the weekend. It reopened with money from the National Park Foundation, a charity.

MAYANK, VIHARI TO OPEN IN BOXING DAY TEST

India axe out of form KL Rahul and Vijay while Aus include Mitch Marsh for third Test

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

A desperate India will punt on the rookie opening pair of Mayank Agarwal and Hanuma Vihari in their bid to regain momentum against a rejuvenated Australia when the 'Boxing Day' Test starts on Wednesday.

After being deflated by 146 runs in the second Test at Perth, India after a week's break will be putting their best foot forward, an indicator of which is the decision to finally drop their out-of-form openers KL Rahul and Murali Vijay.

While there was temptation to play all-rounder Hardik Pandya, a fit-again Rohit Sharma will give the cushion of an extra batsman.

Indian team management in a departure from its convention announced their playing XI, a day prior to the match ending speculations about the possible team combination.

Time had already run-out for Rahul, who had scored only 48 runs in four innings this series, including a highest of 44 in the second innings at Adelaide.

In this year's overseas cycle alone, his average had dropped down to 20.94 in nine Tests with only one fifty-plus score.

Vijay had done no better previously scored 49 runs in four innings this series, including a highest of 20 in the second innings at Perth. Overall in 2019, he only averages 18.80 in eight Tests, with one hundred against Afghanistan.

Otherwise his highest score this year is 46 in the first innings against South Africa at Centurion. In this year's overseas cycle, his average drops down to 12.64 in seven Tests.

The sheer numbers indicated that the two couldn't be persisted with as they had become "walking wickets" for the Australian new ball bowlers.

Chairman of selectors MSK Prasad, who is present in Melbourne indicated that Vihari is being looked as a stop-gap solution (with Prithvi Shaw injured).

Agarwal though has earned his place by sheer weight of runs in domestic cricket as well as for India A and couldn't be ignored any further by



INDIA - AUSTRALIA AT MELBOURNE					
Team	M	W	L	D	Success%
Australia	110	63	30	17	65.00
India	12	2	8	2	25.00

RESULTS OF INDIA-AUSTRALIA TESTS	
Season	Result
1947-48	Australia won by 233 runs
1947-48	Australia won by an innings & 177 runs
1967-68	Australia won by an innings & 4 runs
1977-78	India won by 222 runs
1980-81	India won by 59 runs
1985-86	Match drawn
1991-92	Australia won by 8 wickets
1999-00	Australia won by 180 runs
2003-04	Australia won by 9 wickets
2007-08	Australia won by 337 runs
2011-12	Australia won by 122 runs
2014-15	Match drawn

Australia vs India
Live from 5:30am IST
SONY SIX & TEN NETWORK

Faisel Features

either selectors or the team management.

While Vihari bats at number three for Andhra, he has previously opened for Hyderabad earlier in his first-class career.

It suffices to say that he has impressed the team management sufficiently in his two Test outings thus far to be handed this responsibility against Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood.

Even so, this new strategy from the think tank again puts the spotlight on Rohit Sharma, who will be eager to make an impression after yet another batting order shuffle to accommodate him.

In the past, India have dropped Cheteshwar Pujara (Sydney, 2014), moved Ajinkya Rahane to number three (Colombo, 2015), and even skipper Virat Kohli has batted at number three (St Lucia, 2016) to make way for Sharma in the line-up.

The batsman continues to underwhelm with his indifferent Test form, albeit he did score an attacking 37 runs at Adelaide out of India's first innings total of 250.

India's third change is pertaining to their bowling attack.

After getting the balance awfully wrong in Perth, they have included a spinner along with Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja has recovered sufficiently from his shoulder stiffness and takes Umesh Yadav's spot in the playing eleven.

This was after off-spinner R Ashwin was ruled out of this third Test, as he still needs more time to recover from his left abdominal strain.

Australia too have made one change to their playing eleven.

Peter Handscomb, who is short of runs, makes way for all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, albeit the latter isn't in the best form himself.

The hosts have made this change keeping in mind the placid nature of the MCG pitch, which was rated poor by the ICC after a drab draw played out against England here in December 2017.

The pitch for this 'Boxing Day' Test sported some grass on the top surface, and both teams talked about the possibility of some moisture in the wicket as well.

However, Australian coach Justin Langer and opener Marcus Harris have previously warned about the grass being not too productive here unlike in Adelaide and Perth, and with the sun beating down, the wicket could yet turn out to be a flat surface thus explaining their one change to bolster the bowling unit.

TEAMS

India (XI): Virat Kohli, Mayank Agarwal, Hanuma Vihari, Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Shami.
Australia (XI): Tim Paine, Marcus Harris, Aaron Finch, Usman Khawaja, Travis Head, Shaun Marsh, Mitchell Marsh, Nathan Lyon, Starc, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood.



Ravindra Jadeja trains during practice session ahead of third Test

BCCI

'Jadeja was fit when selected for Aus Tests'

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Chairman of selectors MSK Prasad on Tuesday made it clear that his committee picked Ravindra Jadeja for the Test series based on the fitness report where he was declared absolutely fit.

Jadeja, who had a shoulder stiffness couldn't feature in the second Test in Perth and coach Ravi Shastri told the mediapersons that the player was carrying the niggle from India.

Prasad however wanted to set the record straight on the eve of the Boxing Day Test, which will feature the Saurashtra all-rounder.

"On the eve of any selection meeting, the selection committee is given a fitness report of all the players. In that report, Jadeja was absolutely fit. So we picked him. After we picked him, he went and played Ranji Trophy also, where he bowled 60 overs. So there is no question of him being unfit at the time of selection (for Australia)," Prasad said.

"Whenever a health issue comes up, we have a group in which it is being placed. All that is looked after by the physio and they have very clearly given it in the statement," he said.

On a different note, Prasad said that Mahendra

Singh Dhoni's return in the T20 squad for New Zealand tour was on expected lines as he was only rested for the six T20 Internationals against West Indies and Australia.

"With regard to MS, even while resting also, we categorically told that he was going to be rested for those six matches so that we can give more game-time to Dinesh Karthik and Rishabh Pant. That is the very reason. Now they have played quite a few matches, so we thought that we should bring back MS into the squad," Prasad reasoned, even though it is clear that Dhoni won't be part of 2020 World T20 in Australia.

Prasad said the decision to drop Rishabh Pant from the ODIs against Australia and New Zealand was to keep him fresh for bigger battles ahead. He assured that the young keeper is still in scheme of things for the 2019 World Cup.

"With regards to Rishabh, given the intensity of this series that we are playing right now, so after this series, we want to keep him fresh. Give him a break and he will have a very good game-time of five matches against the visiting England Lions. Definitely a part of our World Cup plans (sic)," Prasad said.

SINGLES

FUTURE HOPE WIN KOLKATA KBD JR LEG

KOLKATA: In a test of strength and passion for kabaddi, the KBD Juniors season 2 Kolkata finale witnessed Future Hope School emerging victorious by thrashing Khalsa High School 31-11. Future Hope School had an unbeaten run to lift the trophy. In a brilliantly orchestrated game with decisive precision, the students from Future Hope School demonstrated skill and strength on the mat, which led them to the victory. Prior to the city finals, the two semi-final matches witnessed Monu Memorial High School test their mettle against Future Hope School and Khalsa High School took on Khalsa English High School. Among the schools in the fray for the coveted title of the Kolkata city champions were Saifee Golden Jubilee Public School, Monu Memorial High School, St Aloysius Orphanage School, Future Hope School, Khalsa High School, Rani Rash Moni High School, St Aloysius Day School and Khalsa English High School.

IRAN HELD TO 1-1 DRAW BY PALESTINE

TEHRAN: Iran's national football team conceded a last-minute equalizer as the team drew 1-1 with Palestine in a friendly match. Iran striker Mehdi Taremi was on target five minutes into the second half but Jonathan Cantillana levelled the match in the injury time. The friendly match was held at the Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha, Qatar as part of the preparation for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. Iran will also meet Qatar on December 31 before travelling to the UAE for the Asian Cup. Iran has been drawn with Yemen, Iraq and Vietnam in Group D. They will start their campaign with a match against Yemen on January 7 at the Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi. The 2019 AFC Asian Cup will be held in the United Arab Emirates from January 5 to February 1.

ROJAS SIGNS OLIMPIA CONTRACT

ASUNCION: Olimpia, this year's two-time Paraguayan football champion, has announced the signing of forward Rodrigo Rojas, who until now had played for Cerro Porteño but who returns to the club where he got his start and with which he will contend for the Copa Libertadores title in 2019. "Rodrigo Rojas has already signed and is once again with the Expreso. Welcome once again to the King of Copas, 'Rorro'!" the Asuncion club posted on its website on Sunday night. Rojas, 30, thus leaves Cerro Porteño, Olimpia's biggest rival and where he has played since January 2015, reports Efe news. After that, he did stints at Chile's O'Higgins and Universidad de Chile before landing at Cerro Porteño. His return to Olimpia has been among the plans of the club's management for the new season after the success last year, when the team triumphed in both the Apertura and Clausura tournaments.

SHIPULIN QUILTS BIATHLON AMID PROBE

MOSCOW: Russian biathlon star Anton Shipulin on Tuesday announced he had lost "motivation" and would retire from the sport, weeks after Austrian prosecutors announced a doping probe into his team. Shipulin has always rejected claims against him but he and other top sports stars were barred from the Winter Olympics this year as part of a ban on Russia for state-sponsored doping. "This race will be the last of my career," the 31-year-old said of a competition in Germany's Gelsenkirchen on December 29, according to Russian news agencies. "There's no sense in carrying on torturing myself, my fans and my loved ones. I can't find in myself the motivation that I need," he told a press conference in Moscow.

Agencies

KOHLI URGES BATSMEN TO COMPLEMENT BOWLING UNIT

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Their patchy performance has stuck out like a sore thumb during the first two Tests and skipper Virat urged his batsmen to complement the superb effort of his bowling unit in the upcoming Boxing Day Test.

While Kohli gave a batting masterclass on a challenging track in Perth, Cheteshwar Pujara had played a decisive role in team's win in Adelaide but other batsmen have not contributed much unlike bowlers, who have picked 40 wickets in four innings.

"It is very important for batsmen to stand up, because as everyone can see, our bowling has been performing really well. Otherwise, the bowlers won't be able to do anything with the totals that we have been compiling," skipper Kohli said on the eve of the third Test.

"If we are batting second, we will try to take the lead or get as close to the opposition total as possible. If you equal a big score, then it becomes a second-innings match and if you take a good first-innings lead, then you can capitalize on that.

"The batsmen must step up collectively. I won't say individually whether someone needs to do that or not, but as a batting



unit, we have to definitely put up a better performance," Kohli sent out a loud and clear message for his batting unit.

The Indian captain made it clear that neither his team's Adelaide victory nor the Perth defeat will have any bearing when Melbourne Test starts.

"As a team, I don't think whether you are 2-0 up or 2-0 down or 1-1, what's hap-

pened in the past has no significance at all to what's going to happen in the next two Tests or what's going to happen in the next Test which is quite immediate. "The key is to stay in the moment, stay in the present, understand and remember why you won the first Test, which was because of us being in the present moment," the skipper reiterated what he has often stressed.

Australian team is still work in progress: Paine

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Buoyed by team's comprehensive victory in the second Test, a cautious Australian skipper Tim Paine believes that his inexperienced side has the potential to get ahead of India but is still a work in progress.

"I don't feel like we are on top of them. We feel like we are getting better with every Test," Paine said on the eve of the Boxing Day Test.

"We are improving with every game but we need to keep stacking up good days and play good Test cricket. If we can do that for the next 4-5 days I think we will be in the thick of it again," Paine said.

"Certainly when you have an inexperienced team and you get a big win like in Perth against the number one team in the world, guys are going to grow in confidence a little bit and come to Melbourne feeling better than when we did to Perth," the skipper



said.

India have made three changes for the Boxing Day Test but Paine is not bothered about changes in opposition rank.

"India's changes don't really bother us because we have done our homework on all of their players for a number of weeks now. We have been pre-

pared for all of them to play. What they do is their business, and we will keep focussing on what we are doing," Paine said.

As is the norm, Australia named their playing eleven with Mitchell Marsh coming in the side replacing Peter Handscomb.

Paine said that the change is to do with bowling and it would help out their four-bowler attack, before adding that Handscomb could be back for the Sydney Test.

"We did it last year during the Ashes as well and majority of this decision is based on the fact that it will be hot and the bowlers have had a big role play. We think Mitch can come in and do a good job with the bat and will be a great support for our bowlers as well.

"Peter knows that there are things we would like him to improve. Going into Sydney, where it spins, I think he will come back into it quickly because he is our best player of spin."

Steelers, Tamil play out thrilling tie

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tamil Thaliavas and Haryana Steelers played out an exciting 40-40 tie in Vivo Pro Kabaddi League season 6.

Haryana Steelers avoided defeat as they scored two points in the last minute. Monu Goyat top scored for Haryana with 17 points and put in a stellar performance.

Ajay Thakur was in fine form for Tamil Thaliavas and he too scored 17 points. Haryana ended their league campaign on a positive note as did Tamil Thaliavas. Both teams finished bottom of the table in their respective zones.

Tamil Thaliavas began strongly and led 3-0 after three minutes with Ajay Thakur picking up a raid point. Haryana Steelers came back to trail 3-4 after five minutes. It was a close affair in the first 10 minutes.

Monu Goyat picked up a two-point raid in the 7th



minute to level the match at 6-6.

Haryana Steelers forced a super tackle in the 13th minute as they tied the match at 11-11. Anand was the star raider for Thaliavas in the first half.

He picked up three raid points in two minutes as they led 16-14 at the end of the first half.

Tamil Thaliavas inflicted an all out at the start of the second half to lead 19-16. Haryana Steelers weren't

deterred by the all out and kept picking up points.

In the 26th minute Haryana inflicted an all out to lead 27-23. Ajay Thakur made a super raid in the next minute to bring Thaliavas back in the match. In the 29th minute, Thaliavas inflicted an all out to lead 32-28.

It was a closely fought encounter with both teams level on 36-36 after 36 minutes. Ajay Thakur picked up two raid points in two minutes to give Thaliavas 39-37 lead after 38 minutes.

Final day surprises in Ranji

Mumbai play epic draw to secure three points against Saurashtra; Himachal win by 9 wickets to punch TN out of k/o race

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former champions Mumbai and Saurashtra featured in an exciting draw on Tuesday after both teams squandered chances to win the contest on the fourth and final day of their Elite Group A game.

Mumbai, champions on 41 occasions and ahead of the visitors by 46 runs on the first innings, declared their second innings closed in the morning session at 238 for 8, leaving Saurashtra a target of 285 in 72 overs.

Saurashtra were sailing along merrily after being 79 for two with the 113-run third wicket stand between Viswarajsinh Jadeja (71 in 129 balls) and Sheldon Jackson (57 in 118 balls) bringing them closer to the target.

Jadeja was run out by a direct throw from point by Jay Bista to break the stand at 192 and then a double strike with the use of short balls in one over by medium pacer Minad Manjrekar put the skids on Saurashtra.

Manjrekar got rid of both Jackson, caught slashing at deep point when Saurashtra needed 55 in ten overs, and Prerak Mankad (24 in 21 balls) three runs later to raise visions of a Mumbai victory.

Manjrekar got two more wickets in that spell to send back Arpit Vasavada and rival captain Jaydev Unadkat after which Saurashtra downed the shuttlers with Chirag Jani holding fort at one end.

After four balls in the final over, the game was called off as a draw with the visitors on 266 for 7, needing 19 more runs to pull off what would have been a come-from-behind win.

Jani (9) and Dharmendra Jadeja (8) were the unbeaten batsmen at the crease when the match ended.

Manjrekar finished with impressive figures of 4 for 39, while Shivam Dube got 2 for 50.

Mumbai secured three points to boost their tally to 11 and are 14th out of 18 teams in the combined A and B Groups standings with two matches left.

Saurashtra secured one point to remain on top of the combined standings with 26 points with one game in hand.

Meanwhile at Shivamoga, hosts



Karnataka bowler K Gowtham celebrates his sixth wicket in the Ranji Trophy match against Railways in Shivamogga; Saurashtra batsman Jackson celebrates his fifty runs against Mumbai

PTI

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Steyn believes there is more to come

AFF ■ CENTURION

Fast bowler Dale Steyn on Monday said he is looking beyond breaking the record for most Test wickets for South Africa in the forthcoming series against Pakistan.

Steyn currently shares the record of 421 wickets with former captain Shaun Pollock, who retired in 2008, and needs one more wicket in the first Test against Pakistan, starting at SuperSport Park on Wednesday, to hold first place on his



MOST TEST WICKETS					
Rank	Wickets	Player	M	Avg	Years
1	421	Dale Steyn	87	22.42	2004-present
2	421	Shaun Pollock	108	23.11	1995-2008
3	390	Makhaya Ntini	101	28.82	1998-2009
4	330	Allan Donald	72	22.25	1992-2002
5	306	Morne Morkel	85	27.74	2006-2018

long time and these records are great things to achieve.

"I will be highly honoured but I will get back to my mark and try to take the next one."

The 35-year-old, who will be playing in his 89th Test, seemed set to take the record when he played in two Tests in Sri Lanka earlier this year but could only take two wickets to tie with Pollock.

"It's just nice to have a red ball in my hand again," he said.

"Sri Lanka was tough conditions for the fast bowlers, but by the looks of things - the way the nets have been playing out in the middle — there is some spice."

"I am looking forward to getting out there and playing five competitive days of cricket."

Steyn is currently joint eleventh in the all-time list of wicket-takers in Test cricket. Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, who retired in 2010, heads the list with 800 while the top fast bowler is current England opening bowler James Anderson with 565.

The first Test match of three match Test series will start from 26th December at SuperSport Park in Centurion followed by second in Cape Town from 3rd Jan.

Mooy ruled out of Asian Cup

AFF ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's Asian Cup defence has been dealt a blow with Huddersfield midfielder Aaron Mooy ruled out of the tournament after a second opinion on a knee injury confirmed the worst.

Mooy has been in top form this season, but suffered ligament damage in his right knee playing against Arsenal earlier this month.

Huddersfield initially sidelined him until February, but he is such a key player for Australia that they insisted on getting a second opinion from an independent specialist.

"It is disappointing to lose Aaron for the tournament," said Socceroos coach Graham Arnold in a statement late Monday.

"However, it was important that we left no stone unturned in exploring every option to get Aaron on the pitch for Australia in the United Arab Emirates."

Mooy needs at least another month to recover and with the Asian Cup starting on January 5, Arnold decided it wasn't worth risking him.

"In a best-case scenario, this would mean he would not be ready to play until after the quarter-final stage," he said.

"With so many games in such a short period we felt it would be



best to bring in a player that is fully fit and ready to go from the outset."

James Jeggo, who plays the Austrian Bundesliga for FK Austria Wien, has been added to the squad as cover.

Australia are in Group B, along with Jordan, Syria and Palestine. They are due to assemble in the UAE from December 26.

REVISED SQUAD

Mustafa Amini, Aziz Behich, Martin Boyle, Milos Degenek, Alex Gersbach, Rhyen Grant, Chris Ikonomidis, Jackson Irvine, Matthew Jurman, James Jeggo, Robbie Kruse, Mitch Langerak, Mathew Leckie, Massimo Luongo, Awer Mabil, Jamie Maclaren, Mark Milligan, Andrew Nabbout, Josh Risdon, Tom Rogic, Mathew Ryan, Trent Sainsbury, Danny Vukovic.

Understanding with Sunil is telepathic, says Jeje

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Indian football team forward Jeje Lalpekhlua on Tuesday said he has developed a "telepathic understanding" with ace striker Sunil Chhetri.

Jeje first caught the attention by scoring a hat-trick against Pakistan at the age of 19 — in his first tournament. Since then, despite scoring regularly, he was in and out of the national squad till 2015, when he cemented his place.

"I played with Sunil-bhai when I made my debut. Since then we have been playing together. I feel, together we fit in well, and complement each other's styles," Jeje stated.

"He has helped me a lot on and off the field. We have a telepathic understanding on the pitch. I know where he is, and he always knows where I am," he added.

India take on Thailand in their opening match of the AFC Asian Cup 2019 and Jeje sounded confident.

"This team is a strong one as we have put in a lot of good work so far," the Mizo player said.



"We are confident in our abilities and feel that we can take on any challenge."

He stated that the side has been improving steadily, and that the progress is there for everyone to see.

"Compared to when I made my debut, there is a lot of difference in the National Team. With every match, we have been getting better and have achieved a lot in between," he felt.

"I'm very happy to be a part of this team. We worked hard to qualify for the Asian Cup. It is

the biggest tournament for us, almost like a World Cup. We hope to do well, and strive for bigger things," he stated.

"In fact, there is still a lot we can do and the AFC Asian Cup is the next step along the way."

Jeje also spoke about the role played by coach Constantine in the recent upsurge.

"The entire team has put in a lot of hard work. He has had the most crucial role to play. When he came in, he had told us that our target was to qualify for the Asian Cup, and we did it."



Relish rather than fear Old Trafford, Ole tells Utd

AFF ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United return to Old Trafford for the first time under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's management against Huddersfield on Boxing Day with a new-found swagger after scoring five goals in the Premier League for the first time in five years.

The Norwegian's caretaker spell in charge until the end of the season got off

to a dream start as United threw off the shackles, that led to turgid football and deteriorating results under Jose Mourinho, to thrash Cardiff 5-1.

United still face a huge challenge to make up an eight-point gap just to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish.

But for now the luxury of just being able to enjoy watching a side play with freedom and the attacking principles that have underpinned the club's history is enough to excite United fans again.

"I think the boys are looking forward to playing at Old Trafford and that's important. We should be looking forward to that, they are the best fans in the world," said Solskjaer when questioned whether some of the current United squad have been inhibited by the pressures of playing at home in the famous red shirt.

Solskjaer is certainly a favourite of the United faithful having scored 126 goals in 11 seasons as a player, including the one that famously won the Champions League final in 1999.

He was serenaded throughout by the visiting fans in the Welsh capital at the weekend as United hit five for the first time since Alex Ferguson's final game in charge.

"I just hope in the next five months I do a good enough job for them to keep singing my name when someone else comes in," added Solskjaer, whose pos-

itivity has immediately lifted a squad

downtrodden by Mourinho's mood swings.

"Just to be positive. Take risks," said Jesse Lingard, who scored twice in Cardiff, at what Solskjaer's message has been.

"If you lose the ball, win it back, and play the United way - attacking football, entertaining football. For us as players, we enjoyed it today."

Rarely has enjoyment ever been top of Mourinho's list of priorities, even in his most successful spells with Porto, Chelsea and Inter

Milan.

'WORK HARDER'

However, the levels of commitment he demanded from those sides was not evident in the current United squad.

For the first time this season, United outran their opponents against Cardiff.

"A Man United team should never ever be outworked," said Solskjaer to highlight the minimum he expects.

"Doesn't matter which team you play. You should run more than them and then your skills will give you the chance to win the game."

A good work ethic should be the minimum required of a Manchester United team, but Mourinho's tactics also didn't help his side's running statistics.

Too often the Red Devils were set up to sit deep and try and counter-attack. Solskjaer instead seems intent on implementing the United way he learned at the heel of Ferguson for so long.

"I said the same to these lads as I do back in Molde: work harder than them, enjoy yourselves, pass it forward, run forward, if you lose it, I don't mind as long as you work to win it back and they did."

"When you've got players like this with the quality you are always going to create chances."





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China's reform, opening-up serve world's common development

China's reform and opening-up that started 40 years ago was the start of its endeavor to achieve common development as well as closer ties with the rest of the world.

What China could do to serve the world formed part of the deliberations when the reforms were still being discussed. In October 1977, then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping told foreign guests that only when China changed its backwardness would it be able to make greater contributions to mankind.

OPEN DOOR FOR COMMON DEVELOPMENT

Senior U.S. diplomat Charles W. Freeman Jr. was immediately aware of a "revolution" underway in China in the summer of 1979 when hearing the words "sole proprietor" from a Beijing street vendor from whom he bought a bowl of noodles. He predicted China's rapid rise when he was back in Washington. However, he said he had underestimated the consequent changes in China.

Actually, no one could foresee in December 1978 when China launched its reform and opening-up that the country's sole proprietors would have increased by over 500 times and privately-owned enterprises by 338 times. With an annual average growth of 9.5 percent, China now makes up around 15 percent of the global economy, up from 1.8 percent.

Now every part of its identity, such as being the world's second-largest economy, or largest trading country in goods, shows that the once poor, populous Asian nation has become



On December 18, a gathering celebrating the 40th anniversary of the country's reform and opening-up held in Beijing, capital of China

Photo by Xinhua

a driving force in global development and progress, with enormous contributions and influence thanks to the "China Miracle."

The reform and opening-up launched the modernization of China and has changed the whole world, said three-term Spanish Ambassador to China Eugenio Bregolat Obiols.

Poverty alleviation is an important episode in China's success story, said United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Achim Steiner. "The achievement China made is outstanding in both scale and time. No other country has done it before," he said about China lifting some 700 million people out of poverty and contributing over 70 percent to global poverty reduction.

Both China and the world benefit from the efforts, said former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in late November,

while praising China's reform and opening-up for having brought about incredible achievements.

Currently, the world's future common development is taking shape partly with China's shift to high-quality growth in its new round of reform and opening-up, a growth based on innovation, coordination, green development, openness and sharing.

NEW PATH OF COOPERATION AMID CHALLENGES

South Asia's island state Maldives opened its first cross-sea bridge to traffic in August 2018.

The China-Maldives Friendship Bridge in the Indian Ocean is a Belt and Road flagship project. In regions beyond, plenty of similar projects are forging closer bonds between countries and peoples while substantiating win-win cooperation marked by mutual

benefit.

The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative has evolved into the largest platform for international cooperation five years after its launch, epitomizing China's thinking concerning development, diplomacy, global vision and international responsibility -- a sum total of the four decades of the country's reform and opening-up.

The reform efforts also helped China develop its answer to a frequently asked question in the West: Does the awakened lion in the East bring opportunities or harbor threats for the world?

The Chinese answer features a commitment to the path of peaceful development and breaking away from the old Western mindset of power resulting in hegemony, and a strong political will to seek shared benefits through consultation and collaboration. China aims for a new type

of international relations as well as a common community with a shared future for mankind.

Aftab Siddiqui, founder of Britain's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Working Group, said China's increasingly deep involvement in international affairs over the years has helped it exert global influence, in addition to setting an example in terms of its peaceful approach, which pursues consensus while objecting to interference in other country's internal affairs.

Amid new challenges stemming from a changing world, China has never stopped seeking solutions. Among them was the conclusion that peace and development are both major global trends or the vision of a common community with a shared future for mankind. The past was a testament to China's growth reinforcing the promotion of global peace and development.

China's approach of aligning the country's interests with the rest of the world's is a bid to build a more inclusive, democratic, open, innovative, and efficient multilateral world, the Spanish foreign policy magazine *Política Exterior* has said, and is inspiring an increasing number of people worldwide.

MUTUAL LEARNING, CONNECTIVITY

The International Free Trade Zone in Djibouti takes up an area about a tenth of the coastal country in Northeast Africa. It is being co-built with Chinese enterprises.

The billboard at the entry reads "Time is Money" and "Efficiency is Life," the same slogans that were

once popular in China. The aim is to build a sea transport, financial and trade center in East Africa.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim said, "Understanding the path China traveled, historical decisions made, and their effects on the course of China's economy can inform decision-makers hoping to achieve similar outcomes in their countries and for their populations."

China's development path offers "an option other than the Western modes," said Zheng Yongnian, director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore. "Importing no foreign mode while exporting no Chinese mode -- this is itself something globally significant," he added.

China's "journey" has repeatedly demonstrated that all roads lead to modernization and that globalization is no Westernization. As the old saying goes, the feet know where the shoes bite, i.e. every country should determine its own development path based on history, reality and the experiences of civilizations.

Martin Jacques, a professor at Cambridge University, noticed a need for Western countries to learn more, saying China, with its new perception of socialism, has offered the world "a new example" and "a new possibility."

The past four decades of China's reform and opening-up have seen common development and progress in its in-depth interactions with the world. The process also testifies to China's confidence and capability to promote global growth and to contribute to a better tomorrow for mankind.

(XINHUA)

STORY

Railway photographer Fu Shikai reflects on past forty years

At the recently concluded Sixth Yunnan Photography Exhibition, we met Fu Shikai, a famous railway photographer. Once a locomotive driver, Fu now contributes to a railway photography column. His works, focusing on the railway, include more than one million photographs.

Recalling his photographing experience in the past 40 years, Fu talked eloquently.

In 1973, he was studying at a locomotive driver school. When he first saw a train driver operating the steam engine, he was greatly impressed. He managed to find a camera and photographed the memorable moment. He described his feelings as follows: The steam engine is like a steel man, masculine and powerful.

Ten years later, when he first saw a diesel locomotive, he again felt excited. In his photographs, the internal combustion locomotive was no longer a steel man but became a pretty girl, with the green body attractively decorated with two yellow ribbons and two small red flags.

In the early 1990s, the electric locomotive came to Yunnan. In Fu's eyes, the electric locomotive not just showed the character of a steel man but was clean and free of pollution, and the

drivers were wearing white gloves. "The electric locomotive is fast and had great capacity. It consumes electricity when going uphill but generates electricity when going downhill. It's amazing!" said Fu. In addition to the locomotive, he also paid attention to people, buses and depots along the railway lines.

Now Yunnan is in the era of high-speed rail, and the great changes make Fu extremely excited and almost overwhelmed. From a professional perspective, he recorded the changes brought by the high-speed rail era as well as his inner feelings. "Formerly unimaginable things are turned into reality. Railway workers' dreams have finally come true. Like the EMU train, our country is developing rapidly," Fu said emotionally.

Now Fu has another dream. He hopes to hold a personal photography exhibition and share the history of the Yunnan's railway development with more people. His photographs are witnesses of the development of railway transportation in the past 40 years of reform and opening up. "I was once a locomotive driver. We must be worthy of this era," Fu said. (By Li Hongfeng, Photo by Fu Shikai)



CULTURE

18 years: Achang cook carries on traditional Guoshou rice noodle

As the food documentary "Once upon A Bite" gets popular around China, the Achang people's *Guoshou rice noodle* (or cross-the-hand rice noodle) has drawn more and more attention of the audience.



Prepare the *Guoshou rice noodle*

Guoshou rice noodle originates from Husa Town, Longchuan County, Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture. It is the delicacy of Achang people. And it gets the name because people eat it banded.

In 2000, Lin Zhengliang, a cook of *Guoshou rice noodle*, left his hometown Husa for Mangshi city, capital of Dehong prefecture, where he opened the Yuanzhi Husa *Guoshou Rice Noodle Restaurant*.

Today, the Yuanzhi Restaurant has developed into one of the most popular restaurants in Mang City. Behind the delicacy, there are Lin Zhengliang's persistence in carrying on the traditional Achang cooking skills and local people's love for their hometown.

Born and growing up in an Achang village, Lin has a special love for *Guoshou rice noodle*. Under the instructions from his father's generation, Lin has become a master in cooking the rice noodle. "As a homemade delicacy of Achang people, *Guoshou rice noodle* is a signature dish whenever there is an Achang wedding banquet," said Lin.

Guoshou rice noodle

is famous for its various ingredients. Among them, the grilled pork is worth mentioning. "How delicious the meat will be is largely dependent on how proper the temperature is. You need to ensure the juice to be contained in the meat, making it taste fresh and tender," Lin introduced.

"If you eat bare-handed, the rice noodle will be more appetizing. With chopsticks and bowls, you can eat one bowl. But no chopstick and bowl, you can have two."

"If you eat bare-handed, the rice noodle will be more appetizing. With chopsticks and bowls, you can eat one bowl. But no chopstick and bowl, you can have two," Lin said, the food tastes differently when you enjoy it in different ways.

In 18 years, Lin insists on using Husa-produced ingredients to cook *Guoshou rice noodle* in Zhiyuan Restaurant. "Only these ingredients from Husa can be cooked into genuine *Guoshou rice noodle*," Lin said, maybe delicacies also have their own "roots". According to him, the *Guoshou rice noodle* is part of Achang people's life. "If you cook the noodle with ingredients from other places, you will lose its soul and weaken its vitality."

(Daguan Weekly)

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Mulberry and silkworm help get rid of poverty

Zhou Yonghong is a farmer from Banqiao Village, Jiucheng Town, Luxi County. He chose to grow mulberry and rear silkworm three years ago. It was a positive choice and a passive transfer as well.

Coal mining used to be the mainstay of Jiucheng Town. Farmers worked on coal mines nearby and their lives were comfortable. However, according to the policy deployed at the national level, small coal mines scattered throughout Jiucheng Town were closed one after another. Villagers lost their income sources and became poor due to lack of other skills.

In 2013, Luxi County launched a program of mine green restoration. Banqiao Village took advantage of the program and guided farmers to plant mulberry trees widely which has not only consolidated the achievements of mine green restoration, but also explored a poverty alleviation way supported by green ecological industry.

"Planting mulberry tree and rearing silkworm is

easy. The cost is low and the skills is easy to learn but the income is pretty good. It can not only solve the employment problem of the surplus rural labor force, such as the elderly, women and the sick, but also enable farmers returning from mines to achieve sustained and stable income. Cheng Zhoufu, secretary of Jiucheng Party Committee, has sorted out his thoughts with other village carders and work team members from the Migrant Development Bureau resident in his village.

Zhou Yonghong is a member of the successful transformation. Not only he himself got rid of poverty, and 4 poor households have been absorbed to work on his base.

Hemin Village and Dabanqiao Village under Banqiao Village Committee provided 3.6 million mulberry seedlings to their farmers. Over 3000 mu mulberry trees were planted and 285 households from 5 village groups got involved, in which 137 are poor households on file.

By Li Shufen



Silkworm helps villagers get rid of poverty (Photo by Yunnan.cn)

World's longest span railway arch bridge in China



Aerial photo taken on Dec. 9, 2018 shows the railway arch bridge across the Nujiang River in southwest China's Yunnan Province. With a grand arch bridge erected on Monday morning, Chinese constructors have built the longest-spanning railway arch bridge with a single span of 490 meters. The bridge is a key project of the 220-km-long Dali-Ruili railway which is a key section of the China-Myanmar international railway corridor linking Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan, with Yangon of Myanmar

Photo by Xinhua

A grand Indian wedding in Kunming

A traditional and grand Indian wedding was held in Kunming on December 8 through 14. The new couples from the Sanjay Jain family of the Siddha Group of India, got married by the Dianchi Lake and added a touch of exotic favor to the Spring City in winter.

"My family members held weddings abroad before, but this is the first time here in Kunming. The beautiful lake and mountain, fresh air and colorful ethnic cultures are very new to us," said one guest at the wedding.

Wang Xiangyun, president of Yunnan China-India Cooperation and Exchanges Promotion Association, said Kunming was selected because of its advantaged climate and unique ethnic culture.

As early as January 20, 2018, Ma Zhanwu, China's Consul-General in Calcutta met with Mahesh Saharia, the honorary local

Consul-General in India and Chairman of the India-China Cooperation Promotion Center in his official residence. Mr. Saharia said that West Bengal is only two hours' flight from Yunnan Province, where there are many advantages for exchanges and cooperation in education, culture and tourism.

At present, West Bengal is increasingly enthusiastic about exchanges with China and looks forward to establishing closer ties with Yunnan. In particular, many Indians go abroad to hold luxury weddings and some intend to go to Yunnan. He hoped that with the support of the China's Consulate General, their first large-scale wedding could be able to hold in Kunming. Consul-general Ma appreciated the counterpart's commitment to promote friendly exchanges between China and India over the years and indicated that his Consu-

late-General would like to work closely with them to promote the development of relations between West Bengal State and Yunnan Province by actively providing assistance.

Yunnan is located at the junction of China and South and Southeast Asia. Its unique geographical location made it a bridge connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean and a link between Southwest China and South

and Southeast Asia. According to the wedding organizer, Kunming has good software and hardware conditions and easy to access for undertaking large-scale weddings from India. They hoped that with the successful holding of this large-scale wedding, Yunnan will become a high-end wedding destination with its unique attractions for Indian couples.

Comprehensive Report, Photo by Li Qiuming

