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DEHRADUN, MONDAY JANUARY 21, 2019; PAGES 16 ₹2

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DON'T FORCE YOUR KIDS: SOHA ALI KHAN
13 VIVACITY

K'taka Cong MLA in hospital after brawl

Chest pain, says Cong, showcauses 4 MLAs for skipping CLP meet

KESTUR VASUKI ■ BENGALURU

As its attempts to keep its flock together, the Congress on Sunday sent show-cause notice to four of its MLAs who skipped the legislature party meeting on Friday even as a Congress MLA Anand Singh was hospitalised after he and JN Ganesh, both from Bellary district, had a heated argument and came to blows on late Saturday night at the resort where the party MLAs are herded together.

In its notices to four MLAs on Sunday, the party sought to know why action should not be taken against them under the anti-defection law for not attending the Friday's legislature party meeting that was a show of strength against BJP's alleged bid to dislodge the ruling coalition.

The MLAs who skipped the meetings are: Ramesh Jarkiholi, who was dropped as Minister in the recent Cabinet rejig, B Nagendra, Umesh Jadhav and Mahesh Kumatahalli, Congress sources said.

Meanwhile, Anand Singh was hospitalised after he was allegedly hit on the head with a bottle by JN Ganesh, another MLA from Kampli in Bellary district. The brawl took place at the resort on the outskirts of Bengaluru where they were housed fearing 'poaching' after the CLP meeting on Friday.

Congress denied the reports but many leaders beelined to hospital to visit Anand Singh, who is a mining baron from Bellary district. He was also arrested in the illegal mining related cases.

A Minister Zameer Ahammed Khan confirmed that there was a skirmish between three friends and Anand Singh had a small injury to his eye.

"I have visited Anand Singh at the hospital. He is fine and will be discharged soon. It was a friendly fight between three friends and he (Anand Singh) had a small injury."

Congress strongman DK Shivakumar and his MP brother DK Suresh denied any such fight had taken place at the resort and said he (Singh) was hospitalised due to chest pain. DK Suresh visited Anand Singh at the hospital.

According to reports, Kampi MLA JN Ganesh allegedly hit Anand Singh on his head with a liquor bottle amid a heated argument.

The two reportedly had an argument over allegation that Ganesh was trying to defect to the BJP, reports said. However, senior Congress leaders denied the reports.

"I don't know about the fight. Anand Singh is admitted in hospital due to chest pain. There are no injuries or anything. His parents are here at the hospital. Other issues are just speculation," Suresh said.

- Congress sought to know why action should not be taken against them under the anti-defection law for not attending the Friday's legislature party meeting that was a show of strength against BJP's alleged bid to dislodge the ruling coalition
- The MLAs who skipped the meetings are: Ramesh Jarkiholi, who was dropped as Minister in the recent Cabinet rejig, B Nagendra, Umesh Jadhav and Mahesh Kumatahalli
- Anand Singh was hospitalised after he was allegedly hit on the head with a bottle by JN Ganesh, another MLA from Kampli
- The brawl took place at the resort on the outskirts of Bengaluru where they were housed fearing 'poaching' after the CLP meeting on Friday

BJP TWEET

What more proof do we need to tell all is not well within Congress. Congress MLAs in Eagleton Resort indulged in physical fight & 1 MLA is admitted. How long will Congress be in denial mode & blame BJP for all their differences? When political party is lame, it loves to blame

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara also downplayed reports of adverse events at the resort. "When one of our colleagues isn't well, if it's true, naturally somebody would've gone to see him. I don't know who the person is."

Another senior Congress leader and chairman of the coordination committee Siddaramaiah said he heard about the brawl but yet to get full information about the incident. He said, "I have heard about the news but yet to confirm it. I am away from Bengaluru. I will get the full information and comment on it."

In view of the embarrassing incident, Karnataka Congress in-charge Venugopal is rushing to Bengaluru to douse the fire.

The jittery Congress fearing poaching by the BJP has moved all its 74 MLAs to Eagleton Resort and the infighting has caused a major damage to the efforts of the party to keep its flock together.

The Opposition BJP was quick to react and wanted a criminal case filed against the MLA who has assaulted Anand Singh.

The BJP tweeted, "What more proof do we need to tell all is not well within Congress. Congress MLAs in Eagleton Resort indulged in physical fight & 1 MLA is admitted. How long will Congress be in denial mode & blame BJP for all their differences? When political party is lame, it loves to blame."

Another tweet read: "It's unfortunate that @KPCCPresident was unable to stop the fight in Eagleton resort. We hope Anand Singh is being treated & we pray for his speedy recovery. Unfortunately @dineshgrao can't even blame BJP now, MLAs were locked up under his watch at Eagleton. Whats your excuse now?"

Senior BJP leader and MLA R Ashok slammed the incident and called it shameful. He said, "Congress party is known for goondaism and it's shameful to the entire polity."

Another BJP leader and spokesperson S Prakash described the incident as Congress culture and said, "The incident has made political class bow down their heads in shame. They should explain to the people of the State. Police should file a case."

It may rain on Republic Day this year

Met predicts drizzles in NCR on Jan 25, 26

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Rain may play spoilsport to the Republic Day celebration as India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted rain and thundershowers on January 25 and 26 in Delhi and NCR areas due to cyclonic circulation developed over Afghanistan, Central Pakistan and adjoining parts of Rajasthan. Rain had also marred R-day revelry when US President Barack Obama was the chief guest in 2015.

The northern and northwestern parts of the country including Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Uttrakhand, East and West Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh and Delhi will witness rain, hailstorm at isolated places and thundershowers on Monday and Tuesday also due to sudden formation of western disturbances and cyclonic circulation.

Northern India has been reeling under a cold spell in January due to approach of multiple western disturbances which has resulted in the change of wind pattern from northwesterly (cold in nature) to west/southwesterly (warm in nature) over Delhi-NCR region and northwest India.

This system will bring widespread rain across the north west India including Delhi-NCR , along with heavy showers, hail and thunderstorms as well as gusty winds in some areas. Further, from January 21 evening, spell of rain and thundershower with strong winds is likely to affect Delhi and its adjoining areas such as Gurugram, Noida, Faridabad and Ghaziabad. Due to approaching of these systems and change of air mass, the pollution levels will remain in very poor to severe category.

A western disturbance is a storm that develops over the Mediterranean Sea and brings moisture-laden winds to northwest India, leading to snowfall in the Himalayas and rainfall in Delhi.

CAPSULE

SHAH DISCHARGED FROM AIIMS

New Delhi: BJP president Amit Shah, who was undergoing treatment for swine flue at All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi, was discharged on Sunday.

OZ OPEN: TSITSIPAS KNOCKS OUT FEDERER

Melbourne: Young Stefanos Tsitsipas signalled a changing of the guard at the top of world tennis as he shocked defending champion Roger Federer in the Australian Open fourth round on Sunday.

BJP MLA SAYS SORRY AFTER INSULTING MAYA

Lucknow: BJP MLA Sadhna Singh has finally apologised for calling BSP chief Mayawati "worse than eunuch". In a written statement on her letter head, Sadhna Singh said, "I had no intentions of disrespecting anyone, I express regret if someone was hurt by my words." She added that she had no intentions of insulting, but was trying to remind Mayawati how BJP had helped her in 1995.

DELHI RECORDS WARMEST JANUARY DAY SINCE 2012

New Delhi: Delhi recorded the warmest January day since 2012 on Sunday with the maximum temperature settling at 28.7 degrees Celsius, seven notches above the season's average.

Stalin clears air on not echoing 'Rahul for PM' at TMC rally

Says DMK wants Rahul as PM but Opp parties will take a call later

PNS ■ CHENNAI

A day after attending Mamata Banerjee's show of strength in Kolkata, DMK president MK Stalin has again backed Congress president Rahul Gandhi as his party choice for next Prime Minister.

Reacting to criticism about his silence in the Kolkata rally over the PM's choice of the Opposition, Stalin rubbished speculation of a re-think on his part and said he did not repeat his endorsement of Rahul Gandhi in Kolkata "as the situation is very different in West Bengal".

Claiming that the people of Tamil Nadu want Rahul Gandhi as Prime Minister, Stalin, as per a report by the news agency *ANI* said, "I had said this about Rahul Gandhi in Chennai, what was wrong in it? It is the wish and aspiration of the people in Tamil Nadu. But in West Bengal, they have decided to finalise it after the election. It is their wish."

The DMK chief said he proposed Rahul Gandhi's name at his party-held event here whereas the Kolkata rally saw the convergence of several Opposition parties who had decided to pick the PM nominee post Lok Sabha election in keeping with the unique political scenarios in their respective States.

"It was a DMK-held event where we had every right and we proposed Rahul Gandhi since people of Tamil Nadu expected and what is wrong in it," asked Stalin addressing a function. Affirming that Rahul would be the next Prime Minister, Stalin said, "Wait and see if it happens or not," and added that no leader at the Opposition rally had questioned him for backing the Congress chief for the top post.

Taking a potshot at Stalin, the BJP said the fact that Stalin could not reiterate his "Congress chief Rahul Gandhi for Prime Minister pitch" in the Opposition rally at Kolkata showed that he has diverged from his avowed stand.

Kumbh to generate ₹1.2L crore revenue: CII

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The mega Kumbh Mela, which began on January 15 and will continue till March 4, is expected to generate a revenue of ₹1.2 lakh crore for Uttar Pradesh, says apex industry body Confederation of Indian Industry.

Although the Kumbh Mela is spiritual and religious in nature, the economic activities associated with it generate employment for over six lakh workers across various sectors, CII said in a report.

The Uttar Pradesh government has allocated ₹4,200 crore for the 50-day Kumbh Mela this time, which is over thrice the budget of the Maha Kumbh in 2013, making the mega pilgrimage perhaps the costliest ever.

The hospitality sector aims at employing 2,50,000 people, airlines and airports around 1,50,000 and tour operators around 45,000.

The employment numbers in eco-tourism and medical tourism are being estimated at 85,000, says a CII study.

BJP road map for Pandits' rehab, return to Valley ready: Madhav

Says if situation gets conducive, will implement it

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav and party's State president Ravinder Raina address a Press conference in Jammu on Sunday PTI

Ahead of launching party's Lok Sabha campaign, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has once again raised the issue of 'safe' return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir valley.

Interacting with the mediapersons here at party headquarters in Jammu on Sunday, BJP national general Secretary Ram Madhav said, "The BJP has prepared a road map for the community's return and rehabilitation and it will be implemented only when the situation in the Valley turns conducive".

"When we formed an alliance Government in the State, we had a road map for them. We had tried to set up townships for Kashmiri Pandits at five or six places in the Valley and it goes to the credit of the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Government that those places were also identified," he said.

He said further progress in the matter was derailed mainly because of the prevailing security situation in the Valley. "Even today, it does not seem that they will be able to live in peace there," Madhav said.

"However, we are committed to safeguard their interests and political rights," he said, adding that the next step would be taken after discussions with the Kashmiri Pandit leadership.

The BJP had earlier attempted to start the process as it had accorded top priority to the issue of their return in its election manifesto of 2014.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh had even directed then Chief Minister Mufti Muhammad Sayeed to initiate process to bring back Pandits for settlement in "composite townships".

Separatists and mainstream political parties in Kashmir, including Congress, had opposed the move.

The BJP's former alliance partner PDP had also explained that they won't allow Israel-like ghettos for Pandits.

Kulhad to make comeback at rly stations after 15 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

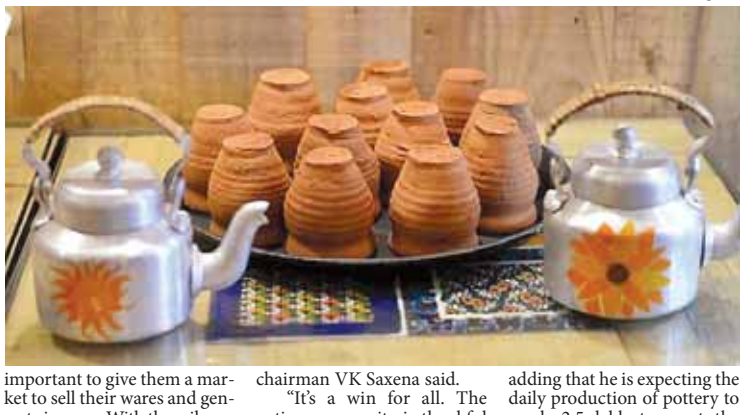
Introduced first by then Railway Minister Lalu Prasad, kulhads are all set to make a comeback after 15 years.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal has instructed caterers at Varanasi and Rae Bareli railway stations to use terracotta made kulhads cups and plates. The proposal had come in December last year from the chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) who had written a letter to Goyal, suggesting that these two stations be used to generate employment for potters around the area.

The move will not only give passengers a refreshing experience but also provide a huge market for local potters who are struggling to make ends meet. The circular has been issued by the board to the chief commercial managers of Northern Railway and the North Eastern Railway.

"Zonal railways and the IRCTC are advised to take necessary action to ensure use of locally produced, environmentally savvy terracotta products like 'kulhads', glasses and plates for serving items to passengers through all static units at Varanasi and Rae Bareli railway stations with immediate effect so that local terracotta product manufacturers could easily market their products," the circular stated.

"We have been giving potters electric wheels which have increased their productivity from making 100 cups to around 600 cups a day. It was important to give them a market to sell their wares and generate income. With the railways agreeing to our proposal, lakhs of potters have now got a readymade market," KVIC chairman VK Saxena said.



"It's a win for all. The entire community is thankful to the railways and hopefully we can do this across its network eventually," he said, adding that he is expecting the daily production of pottery to reach 2.5 lakh to meet the demands of these two stations. Under the Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana, the Government has been distributing electric wheels to potters to increase their productivity.

In Varanasi, Prime Minister's parliamentary constituency, around 300 such wheels have been distributed with 1,000 more in the pipeline. In Rae Bareli, the parliamentary constituency of UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, 100 have been distributed with 700 more to be given out.

"Overall, the KVIC will distribute around 6,000 electric wheels across the country this year, Saxena said.

In 2004, Lalu had introduced 'kulhads' to boost the dying pottery industry and also give passengers a taste of eco-friendly cups. He had made it clear that hot beverages should be served only in 'kulhads'.

MARKETS

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Guest Column

Migration from the mountains & how to check it

Ashish Joshi

The issue of out-migration from the mountain districts of Uttarakhand has been repeatedly brought up. While it has been identified as a problem, for some years now, effective efforts to address the problem have been lacking.

The severity of the problem can be gauged by the existence of some villages in Pauri district in Garhwal region from where all the residents have migrated. These villages are called 'Ghost Villages'. According to the census of 2011, out of Uttarakhand's 16,793 villages, about 1,053 have no inhabitants.

Migration for better employment opportunities and education was always a feature of mountain districts. But what has changed over the last few decades is that the migration has become permanent.

Initially the Army used to be one of the main sources of employment in mountain districts. After completion of their service (retirement), the men would return to their villages/towns. The migration was not permanent. But with the diversification of employment opportunities in the plains and need for higher and specialised education the migration increased and over time became permanent in nature.

The hardships of village life such as poor transport connectivity, lack of water, inadequate medical facilities, poor educational facilities and inaccessible markets further accelerated the process of migration- especially of the youth.

The Interim Report (2018) of the State's Rural Development and Migration Commission on the Status of Migration in Gram Panchayats has listed out the main reasons for migration (in percentage) :

(a)Unemployment : 50.06 per cent

(b)Lack of Health facilities :8.83 per cent

(c)Lack of educational facilities:15.21 per cent

(d)Infrastructure related issues (road,water,electricity) :3.74 per cent

(e)Low productivity of agriculture: 5:44 per cent

(f)Influence of relatives who have migrated : 2.52 per cent

(g)Menace of wild animals destroying crops :5:61 per cent

Remittances from members of the household working in the plains and agriculture have been the main sources of sustenance. The agriculture has been stagnant because of low productivity, lack of diversification and technical know-how. This has forced many to discontinue farming and search for some alternate source of income and of regular nature, even though small. The migration is not simply in anticipation of higher wages but to minimise uncertainties in incomes back in their villages.

There has been a lack of any major effort to improve the agriculture and its productivity through its diversification in favour of high value crops. The required support of agricultural extension services, development of irrigation channels, use of better seeds, improved inputs, technology and marketing remain major concern.

Like land, the availability of other assets like livestock, farm and non-farm assets is extremely limited. Livestock mainly consists of local breed of milch, draught and other animals like goats and sheep to support the crop production and augment the milk requirements of the households. As per a report of National Institute of Rural Development (2015) the number of such animals has drastically reduced over the years in the mountain districts.

Now rural households tend to retain proportionately lesser number of milch animals to augment their livelihoods. Moreover, the quality of milch animals is poor resulting in very low milk yields. Due to limited land, the shortage of fodder poses a serious problem for most of the households as they have to travel longer distances to collect fodder from reserve forests.

This also discourages households from maintaining a large number of milch animals.

The Industrial Policy of the State has almost remained ineffective in attracting investment to the mountainous districts. The policy needs to be re-looked in to and made more effective to ensure balanced industrial growth by attracting more capital to backward districts, particularly in the mountain areas.

The real policy challenge would be to create environment friendly micro and small enterprises in the mountainous region.

The huge potential of horticulture and eco-tourism needs to be developed on a wider scale in the mountain districts. Agriculture extension services need to be strengthened to improve their outreach and effectiveness.

Various forms of tourism as outlined in the Tourism Policy of the State need to be developed in letter and spirit in a given time frame. A thrust on ecotourism like home stays and adventure tourism activities like trekking, rafting, etc, may create better income avenues for locals and stop further migration from our villages.

This will create large number of employment opportunities for local youth and arrest their distress driven migration. Similarly, given the relatively higher educational levels of mountain population, expansion of communication network, better electricity and comparatively cheap land, there is a good scope for developing knowledge based information technology services in montain districts.

Hence, an integrated approach is required to check out-migration from mountain districts. If not, then we are looking at the spectre of more 'Ghost villages' in future.

(A civil servant, the writer is presently posted as Controller, Communications, Uttarakhand. He belongs to Jaiharikhal village in Pauri Garhwal)

Visitors browse items at roadside stalls selling woolen items in Nainital on a cold Sunday

Pioneer photo

Divorcee's body found in home

Police at the murder scene in Haridwar

Pioneer photo

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

The body of a 40 year old woman was found in her house on Sunday morning. She had been allegedly hit with a heavy object on her head which led to her death. The police could not retrieve any such article from the room of the woman during investigation. She was a divorcee living with her son in-law and daughter, said the police.

The victim has been identified as Lakshmi Devi, a resident of Brahmpuri Colony in Kankhal area of Haridwar.

The daughter of the woman Annu resident of Kharkhari told this correspondent that she had talked to her deceased mother past Saturday midnight. When she came to her mother's house on Sunday morning at 11 AM, she found her dead body and blood spots on the walls of the room.

The daughter of the woman Annu, a resident of Kharkhari, told this correspondent that she had talked to her deceased mother past Saturday midnight. When she came to her mother's house on Sunday morning at 11 AM, she found her dead body and blood spots on the walls of the room

The district senior superintendent of police, Janmejay Khanduri reached the site of crime. The city Kotwali incharge Praveen Singh Koshyari said that the woman was hit with a heavy article.

He added that prima facie it seems some family member was involved in her murder. The police are probing the case and very soon the guilty will be caught, he added.

Recalling "Humanist" MN Roy's Deep bond with Doon

JASKIRAN CHOPRA ■ DEHRADUN

January brings to mind thoughts about a man who lived many of his life's years in the Doon valley, being extremely fond of it. It is an occasion to pay tributes to him for his brilliance of mind and his philosophical temperament.January 25 this year will be his 65th death anniversary.

His "Humanist Home" still stands in the valley . The man was M.N.Roy and this home is a small monument of memories ,a house that once belonged to this great man's glorious and fascinating days. Renowed philosopher and revolutionary Manbendra Nath Roy ,known popularly as M.N.Roy, lived here for sixteen years from 1938 onwards. He died here on January 25, 1954.

In the early years of the twentieth century ,India's indomitable spirit of revolt found a befitting expression in M.N.Roy. His revolutionary activities at home,the mysterious flight across the Eastern countries and to the American continent and his exploits on the foreign soil are events which made Roy a legendary figure for patriotic Indian youth

Born as Narendranath Bhattacharya on March 21 ,1887 in a village in West Bengal,he was involved from a young age in underground revolutionary activity under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee . In 1915, Roy went to Java in search of arms. He then went from country to country to secure German arms. He reached San

Francisco in 1916 where, alongwith some other Indians, he was charged in a conspiracy case. It was here that he changed his name to Manabendra Nath Roy.

After founding , in Mexico, the first communist party outside erstwhile Soviet Union ,Roy went to Russia at the invitation of Lenin and was elected a member of the presidium of the Communist International during the 1920s .He went to China in 1927 as the special representative of the Communist International.

Roy returned to India ,incognito, in 1930 ,was arrested by British police and sentenced to six years' imprisonment .After he was released from Dehra Dun prison in November 1936, Roywas then invited by Jawaharlal Nehru to Allahabad. He then went to Bombay where he began taking interest in the Indian National Congress.

It was in 1938 that Roy came to Doon valley again when he was advised six weeks of rest in a quiet place. The house, on Mohini Road, was taken up only for six weeks but the beauty of the Doon valley worked its magic and the weeks turned into sixteen long years. Roy stayed on here till he died on January 25,1954. His wife, Ellen ,a German lady, stayed on till 1960 when she was murdered.

After the end of the war, Roy began to express differences with Marxism and Communism. He evolved the philosophy of humanism and issued a manifesto on "new humanism". According to this thought ,the quest for freedom and search for truth constitute the basic urge of human progress.

The basic inspiration and consuming passion of Roy's life was human freedom and he applied his great intellectual powers in the service of the ideal of freedom.When Roy realized in 1948 that human freedom could never be achieved through political parties, he dissolved the radical Democratic Party which he and his friends had formed in 1940.

Roy's former residence is known as "Humanist Home" and is recommended by the members of the Indian radical Humanist association as a place for all humanists to visit. Doon valley is indeed proud to have been the beautiful home to such a man.

A man who was far ahead of his times and whose revolutionary urge was not solely directed towards the liberation of the motherland but was ultimately the urge for individual human freedom.. Sadly, Roy is now a forgotten man. The high point in Roy's turbulent political life was when he rubbed shoulders with the most important leaders of the international communist movement. His most well-known books include Science and Philosophy, New Humanism: A Manifesto and Reason, and Romanticism and Revolution.

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E-Tender Notice No. 02/2019

The Astt. General Manager (Elec.), Food Corporation of India, Regional Office, Dehradun (Uttrakhand) on behalf of FCI invites item rate tenders, online (two bid system) tenders are invited on website http://fci.gov.in & https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app for the Tender Notice No.02/2018-19 dated 16-01-2019

The bid from & other details can be obtained from http://fci.gov.in & https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app

Astt. General Manager (Elect)

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, निर्माण मण्डल,
उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल संसाधन विकास एवं निर्माण निगम, नई टिहरी
दूरभाष : 01376–233911, E-mail: setehripeyjal@gmail.com

पत्रांक 85 / 508 / 07, **ई–निविदा सूचना** दिनांक : 18.01.2019

1. **कार्य का नाम** :– निर्माण शाखा उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम, मुनि की रेती के अन्तर्गत विकास क्षेत्र–नरेन्द्रनगर की क्वीली पालकोट ग्राम समूह (पम्पिंग) पेयजल योजना फेज–प्रथम एवं द्वितीय नाबार्ड कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत वितरण प्रणाली एवं तत्सम्बन्धी निर्माण कार्य।
2. **कार्यदायी संस्था** :– निर्माण शाखा, उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम, मुनि की रेती।
3. अनुमानित लागत / कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि :– रू0 1500.00 लाख / 18 माह
4. निविदा प्राप्ति की अन्तिम तिथि :– दिनांक 06.02.2019 समय 17.00 बजे अपरान्ह
5. निविदा मूल्य :– रू0 10,000.00 + जी0एस0टी0 18%
6. धरोहर धनराशि :– रू0 30.00 लाख

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अधीक्षण अभियन्ता

"जल संचय–जीवन संचय" कृपया जल स्रोतों को प्रदूषित होने से बचायें"
वैधानिक चेतावनी–जल स्रोतों को प्रदूषित करना दण्डनीय अपराध है।

Clock Tower to get its six clocks fixed within a month

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The prominent landmark of Dehradun city, its Clock Tower is to get its six clocks fixed within the time period of one month. The work of beautification and renovating was given to the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) last year after which Bridge, Ropeway, Tunnel and Other Infrastructure Development Corporation of Uttarakhand Limited (BRIDCUL) was awarded the tender. The work was divided into two phases in which repairing and fixing of the clocks was part of phase one. However, after one complete year, it is still under process.

According to official sources, the process took so much time because of the fund issues between MCD and BRIDCUL, as a result of which the process of repairing the clocks was stalled for some time. About ₹8 lakh has been proposed by the corporation for the repairing of the clocks which has been released by the MCD recently.

RP Uniyal, general manager of BRIDCUL Dehradun said, "The part to repair the clocks was pending as there were some issues regarding the budget. But we are in talks with the MCD and the issue has been resolved.

The repairing of the clocks is a time consuming process which is very likely to get complete within a time period of one month."

It is pertinent to mention here that apart from being the most prominent landmark in the centre of Dehradun, the

Clock Tower is also one of the major historical constructions of the provisional state capital.

The foundation stone for the Clock Tower was laid on July 24 1948 by the then Governor of Uttar Pradesh Sarojini Naidu and after five years of effort in its construction the monument was inaugurated in October 1953 by the then Union Railway Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. About 80 feet tall, the Clock Tower was designed by Hariram Mittal and Ram Lal whereas reputed constructers of the Doon valley Chaudhary Natthulal, ND Singhal and Ishwari Prasad worked hard for five years to complete the construction of the Clock Tower as per the design.

Though presently the real estate covered by theClock Tower is estimated to be valued crores of rupees, at the time of its construction the monument cost up to ₹ 50,000. From the time of its inauguration in 1953, the routine maintenance of the Clock Tower has been undertaken by the urban local body. Since its inauguration in 1953 till about 1970 the ULB undertook regular maintenance of the Clock Tower as a result of which all its clocks worked properly and its bell also used to ring regularly.

The chime of the bell of the Clock Tower was a regular sound in town till 1970 after which year the condition of the clocks of the tower deteriorated and the bell stopped ringing. From 1970 onwards the working of the clocks of the tower has been occasional and erratic.

The foundation stone for the Clock Tower was laid on July 24 1948 by the then Governor of Uttar Pradesh Sarojini Naidu and after five years of effort in its construction the monument was inaugurated in October 1953 by the then Union Railway Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri

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Come on one platform to save Ganga: Medha

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Medha Patkar said this while addressing the gathering at the two-day seminar held at Matri Sadan in Jagjeetpur in Haridwar. Targeting the central government Patkar said that despite the sacrifice of lives by two ascetics in Haridwar there has been no action from the state of Central Government which appear to be in slumber

One of the leaders of Narmada Bachao Andolan, Medha Patkar has said that all organisations, big and small that are fighting to save the Ganga river shall have to come together on one platform to ensure the unbridled flow and purity of waters of the Ganga river. A national campaign shall be launched to achieve this. She said that the dedication of ascetic Brahmchari Atmabodhanand for the Ganga will not go in vain. She also said that a campaign shall be launched at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi through which dialogue shall be made with the Government of India on the issue of Ganga conservation .

Medha Patkar said this while addressing the gathering at the two-day seminar held at Matri Sadan in Jagjeetpur in Haridwar. Targeting the central government Patkar said that despite the sacrifice of lives by two ascetics in Haridwar there has been no action from the state of Central Government which appear to be in slumber. The government has not taken any initiative for talks with Atmabodhanand who is on hunger strike for the past 88 days. During the two days seminar many eminent people from across the country have gathered including noted columnist Bharat Jhunjhunwala, Ram Singh, Prakash Nautiyal ,Snigdha Tiwari, Nirmala Pandey, Vijay Verma, Pallavi Joshi, Gilbert Kolankar and others.

Preparations for a big campaign for Ganga conservation are underway at Matri Sadan Ashram which would be led by Patkar. Observers opine that this clearly indicates that the fight for Narmada and Ganga are now on the same platform and hundreds of Ganga lovers from across the country will fight on both legal and physical fronts.

The struggle is not going to remain confined to one Ashram only but will be a country wide movement. A team is being prepared with legal advisors, writers, scientists, environmentalists and social media experts to strengthen the movement. At the same time attempts are also being made to involve many youths with this crusade

Pant interacts with public on State Budget

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

State's Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prakash Pant communicated directly with the people regarding the State budget for the fiscal year 2019-20, through Facebook at Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali hall in the secretariat here on Sunday. He said that there was a direct dialogue with 1,127 people through Facebook during an hour long programme.

All those who raised questions will be provided information in written and after the Vidhan Sabha session, such interactive programmes will be held with the public. Pant said that the State government believes that a budget should not be limited to paper but should be based on the expectations of the public.

Replying to a question about youth and employment, the minister said that presently there are total 2,17,000 posts in various government departments out of which 1,73,000 are currently occupied. The government is facilitating appointments to the vacant posts in a transparent manner. In 2017-18, 3,000 posts have been filled by Uttarakhand Subordinate Services Selection Commission and recruitment process for 1600 posts is under progress. The process of recruitment by the Public Service Commission is also underway, employment has been provided in non-government institutions by Employment Offices by the government holding employment fairs and employment opportunities have been provided to the youth by organising the army recruiting fairs by requesting the union government. Apart from the government jobs, the State government is working on the concept of skill development among the youth to provide them employment, due to which 13800 youth have been made skilled this year and the process is in progress. In 2018, there has been proposals for investment of ₹1.24 lakh crore in Investors Summit, out of which nearly Rs 24,000 crore investment has already been made and this will also provide employment opportunities to the unemployed. Pant further said that the state government is constantly trying to get basic amenities in the remote areas of mountain districts to prevent migration and the government is working towards connecting villages having population of 250 with road traffic and its good results have also come and the number of non-populated villages has decreased. Home Stay Scheme has been launched by the government to provide employment to the youth of the villages. In order to expand the health services in remote areas, 190 primary/community health centers are being equipped with modern medical services and appointment process for 2286 heath related jobs is in process. The government is working fast in every village in the direction of road connectivity. In response to a question, the Finance Minister said that the GDP of three districts in plains of the state has increased and increase of the GDP in the mountain districts is a challenge before the government, in view of which investment by the government in agricultural services is being increased.

Responding to another question, Pant said that the government supports women empowerment and the government is moving ahead in the campaign "Beti Bachao – Beti Padhao" started for the protection of women on January 22, 2015. The women are the backbone of the economy of the state- especially its mountainous regions, considering which the Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has announced the provision of zero per cent interest loan to women.

Head of the fourth State Finance Commission and former Vice-Chancellor of Kumaon University professor BK Joshi also answered the questions on topic of education women disparity. On this occasion, Additional Secretary of Finance Savin Bansal, LN Pant and others were also present.

Heavy rain, snowfall likely at isolated places

Mountains in Nainital shrouded in fog on Sunday

Pioneer photo

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Meteorological Centre has forecast the possibility of heavy rainfall and snowfall at isolated places located in Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudraprayag, Dehradun, Nainital, and Pithoragarh districts on January 22. There is also a possibility of hail which may be experienced in some places of districts including Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar on the same day.

The overall weather for the state on Monday is going to be generally cloudy. Light to moderate rain and snow is likely at most of the places of the state.

For the provisional state capital, the meteorologial centre has forecast a generally cloudy sky on Monday.

There is also a possibility of thunder cloud development and light rain. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be 23 degree Celsius and 10 degree Celsius respectively.

Meanwhile, the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded at various towns of the state on Sunday were 25.4 degree Celsius and 9.6 degree Celsius in Dehradun, 23.4 degree Celsius and 5.6 degree Celsius in Pantnagar, 18 degree Celsius and 4.4 degree Celsius in Mukteshwar, 17 degree Celsius and 7.4 degree Celsius in New Tehri respectively.

SCPCR sends reminder to ACS on primary women's policy

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A primary policy was made by the government in 2003, but there is no data about the work done by the government or officials under it. We are seeking an insight regarding the work done in the field like how much fund has been provided in the schemes under the policy and what the officials has done in the last 16 years

The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) sent a letter to the Additional Chief Secretary Radha Raturi seeking information about the women policy which was made in 2003. The policy consists of nine points focusing on the upliftment and betterment of the women of Uttarakhand.

According to the officials from the SCPCR, the points were drafted and submitted by the current chairperson of the SCPCR, Usha Negi after which a primary policy was made for the state.

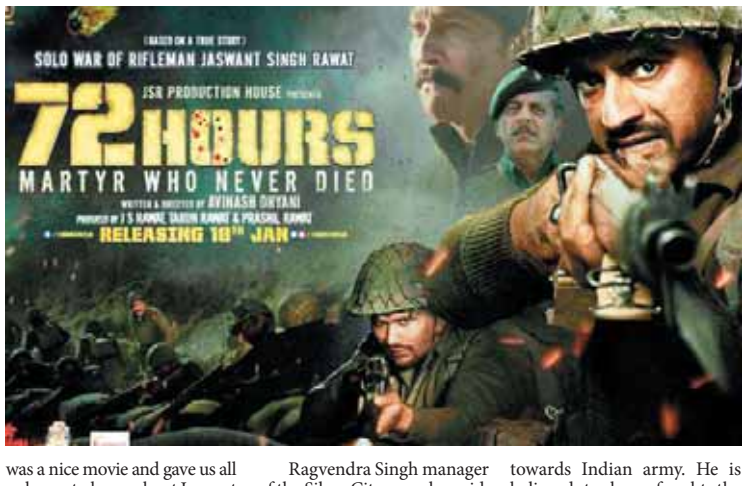
The policy covers nine points which dwell on political opportunities for the women belonging from the Uttarakhand, better education opportunities for the girls in primary education with different other benefits, counselling session for women interested for jobs, better opportunities for women in the government fields, remarriage supports for the widowed women, secure laws for the women right to property, steps to ensure the security of women, and to spread awareness about gender equality.

"A primary policy was made by the government in 2003, but there is no data about the work done by the government or officials under it. We are seeking an insight regarding the work done in the field like how much fund has been provided in the schemes under the policy and what the officials has done in the last 16 years. If there are loopholes in the policy or scheme we will give our suggestion in it," the official added.

The chairperson of SCPCR Usha Negi said, "The policies were suggested by us when I was a member of Mahila Panchayat. Our initiative honoured women who did great in various fields. All the nine policies were made to give empowerment to the women even living in the remotest village of the state. It also aims to honour girls and women doing exceptionally great in their field. In the recent scenario if we see the crime against women has increased. If all these policies would have been working properly then the condition could have been better. The aim to send a reminder is to make these policies strong again in the state."

72 Hours: Martyr Who Never Died receives mixed response

PNS ■ DEHRADUN



Yet another movie based on a patriotic theme was released this Friday -- 72 Hours: Martyr Who Never Died. The movie received a mixed response from the Dehradun audience however managers of some cinemas and multiplex in the city stated that the movie is able to attract a good footfall even after two days of the release.

It should be mentioned here that 72 Hours: Martyr Who Never Died is a biographical drama based upon the real life of fifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat who hailed from the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. The story revolves around the struggle he went through during his life and how he became a soldier in the Garhwal Rifles. The main highlight of the movie is the struggle he faced during the Indo-China war of 1962. The movie stars Avinash Dhyani (also the writer and director of the movie), Virendra Saxena, Shishir Sharma and Alka Amin among other actors.

Shruti Kaul a resident from Dehradun said, "The movie was slow, maximum part of the movie showed the life events of Jaswant Singh Rawat rather than the war on which the movies is supposed to be based upon. The scene near the end however was good- it was portrayed nicely and gave a message of patriotism. Overall it was a nice movie and gave us all a chance to know about Jaswant Singh Rawat who hailed from Uttarakhand," she said.

Another viewer of the movie Shubham Rawat said, "The theme of the movie revolves around a soldier but there was a love angle too which seemed a bit out of place. The best thing about the movie was the locations, many of the locations were in Uttarakhand so we were also able to relate to these."

Ajay Barthwal an official at Mukta Cinemas said, "We have received a good response of the audience from Friday. The shows are getting booked and almost two shows went houseful after the release."

Ragvendra Singh manager of the Silver City complex said, "We had one show of the movie daily since its release. On the first day the show was almost house full. On the second day, 188 seats out of 194 were booke while on the third day 107 seats had been booked online."

This Hindi film is based on the life of Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat. Written and directed by Avinash Dhyani and produced under JSR production house banner, the movie has Dhyani also playing the role of Rawat. The movie depicts the dramatised true story based on the 1962 Indo-China war. It showcases the determination of Rawat towards Indian army. He is believed to have fought the Chinese army for 72 hour against 300 enemy soldiers in the border area of Arunachal Pradesh.

On November 17, 1962, Indian soldiers were attacked by the Chinese army with 300 soldiers at what was then the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) border in Arunachal Pradesh. The movie depicts the valour of Rawat and others which is now part of legend. He was awarded Mahavir Chakra posthumously for his bravery, and is believed to be still guarding the post to this day. Rawat has also attained the status of a deity at the Indo-China border.

SJVN Foundation presents cheque for ₹5 crore

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

For the construction of fodder/wood storage rooms in the tribal belt of Mori, Purola, Naugaon and Chinyalisaur in Uttarkashi district, a cheque for Rs five crore in the form of first installment from Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) Foundation was handed over to Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat by SJVN Limited chairman and managing director Nand Lal Sharma at CM Residence on Sunday. This amount will be used for works including making of permanent constructions for the purpose of mitigating incidents of fire in the winter season in the said areas.

SJVN Limited CMD Nand Lal Sharma said that under corporate social responsibility, SJVN Limited will provide financial assistance of Rs 13.28 crore for this work in Uttarkashi district. This will effectively prevent future incidents of fire in the entire region. In this connection, a memorandum of understanding has also been signed between SJVN Foundation and Uttarkashi District Administration on January 14, 2019.

The Chief Minister discussed details with SJVN Limited officials about the the progress of ongoing projects in Uttarakhand. He asked them to accelerate the construction of these projects. SJVN Limited CMD said that the corporation currently doing construction work of 60-MW Naitwar Mori hydroelectric project in Uttarakhand. Apart from this, the corporation is also undertaking construction work of 252 MW Devsari hydroelectric project on Pindar river in Chamoli district and 44 MW Jakhol Sankri Hydroelectric Project on Supin river in Uttarkashi district.

The chief secretary Utpal Kumar Singh, Uttarkashi District Magistrate Ashish Kumar Chauhan, SJVNL General Manager/Head of Dehradun Area, Devinder Wadhera and other officials concerned were also present.

Book on migration issues presented to Rawat

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Professor Atul Joshi presented his research book on "Migration from Indian Himalayas- Challenges and Solutions" to Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Sunday. This book contains various articles written by scholars and researchers. He said that this book has been reviewed by the Director General of Information and Public Relations department of the state.

The Chief Minister said that the state government is trying to stop the migration from the mountainous areas of Uttarakhand. Local products are being promoted in the mountain areas. Loan of Rs five lakh to women self-help groups on zero per cent interest and loans of Rs one lakh to farmers on zero per cent interest is being provided. Rawat said that students undertaking research in all the universities of the state and PG Students will go to the villages of each block and work plan for the development of the villages will be made.

Director of IPSDR in Kumaon, professor Atul Joshi said that a two-day national seminar on topic "Migration from Indian Himalayas- challenges and solutions" was organised on November 19-20, 2018 under the aegis of Kumaon University and Himalayan Educational Research and Development Society. In the seminar, vice-chairman of Rural Development and Migration Commission, Sharad Singh Negi was present as the chief guest. Joshi said that this research book will prove to be a milestone for understanding the reasons behind migration and its redressal in the Himalayan area particularly Uttarakhand.

ECoR to have safety audit of level-crossings

After Puri case

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

After the incident of an express train passing a level crossing near Puri in open condition, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) will launch a safety audit drive in all the 828 level-crossings.

Meanwhile, viewing the Puri incident seriously, two pilots and assistant loco-pilots have been axed on the basis of a preliminary inquiry.

General Manager Purnendu Sekhar Mishra called upon all staff and officers to identify weaknesses in the system and bring it to the fore. He has asked senior officials to interact with junior colleagues to know more about problems on the field.

The audit will cover all safety aspects of the level crossing.

Starting from the boom barriers to the approach road, the siren to the warning boards, all aspects will be checked in detail. The gatemen will be subjected to tests on their working knowledge. The level crossing drawings will also be matched with actual ground position to rule out any inconsistencies. Loco pilots will also be tested for awareness of rules related to crossing level crossings. These tests will be in the form of counseling and in interactive mode.

Vidyadhan scholarship launched in Odisha

For poor students seeking higher education

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Vidyadhan, a scholarship programme set up by Sarojini Damodaran Foundation (SDF) founder and patron Kumari Shibulal and SDF trustee and co-founder , Infosys, SD Shibulal, was formally launched in Odisha.

The scholarship is for economically backward students, from families with an annual income below Rs 2 lakh.

It covers higher education, starting XIth grade onwards by providing for annual fees ranging from Rs 6,000 to Rs 60,000 a year, depending on the financial need, merit, course and duration.

During her visit to Odisha, Kumari Shibulal said, "We are happy to know that we have received over 700 applications from all districts of

Odisha. Nearly, 90 per cent of the applications are from students studying in Government and Government-aided schools and colleges."

Vidyadhan provides all students with training in soft skills, employability and career counselling. In addition to Odisha, the programme is also operational in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat.

Scholarship is for economically backward students, from families with an annual income below Rs 2 lakh

Cong involves masses to form poll manifesto

Drive starts with Sambalpur meet

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Seemingly unfazed by the ongoing trend of leaders quitting the party or party removing leaders, the Congress is focusing on strengthening its base and giving a tough fight to both the BJD and BJP in the forthcoming polls.

The initiative has started from the land of Maa Samaleswari with first step to prepare an election manifesto.

In a programme- 'Meet the Intellectuals' held here, the leaders of Congress from Sambalpur and neighbouring districts, besides common people and intelligentsia congregated with the resolve.

"We are going to create history in the country. For the first time, the opinions, suggestions and demands of people will find place in the election manifesto of our party," said PCC president Niranjan Patnaik.

Initiative has started from the land of Maa Samaleswari with first step to prepare an election manifesto

The manifesto committee that is present here will note down the suggestions of the people. At the same time it will also collect the same from other places, and prepare a manifesto accordingly, Patnaik said, adding, "Within five hours of forming Governments in MP and Chhatisgarh, we have fulfilled our promises and we will do the same in Odisha."

And, when it came to the part of the people, they of course came forward with very constructive and precious suggestions. "The locals are not getting the benefits of the industries here. All the young people are doing contractual jobs where as outsiders are enjoying the cream. Congress needs to place in its election manifesto to abolish contractual appointments in both Government and private sectors," suggested Rashmi Ranja Swain of Hirakud.

Others present suggested for sufficient care of environment and pollution control in the industrial areas, free electricity and solar water pumps to the farmers, paddy MSP hike and bonus, pension to farmers and many more. One farmer, Chandramani Barik, suggested for mini mandis for paddy procurement in Panchayat level to save small farmers from middlemen.

Patnaik and all others present assured that they will give due importance to the people's suggestions and election manifesto will be prepared in the similar line.

Senior leaders of the party including Mastana Walli, Sambalpur district president Aswini Guru, senior leader Asaf All Khan, former MLAs and ministers were present.

Five ultras arrested in Giridih

PNS ■ GIRIDIH

Police arrested five cadres of New Sastra People's Morcha (NSPM), a left wing extremist group, from Mundro Biharo forest area on Sunday.

Giridih SP, Surendra Kumar Jha informed the Pioneer that the five extremists were all suspected to be involved in levy collection from local contractors and were also accused of organizing a deadly attack on a contractor, Surendra Mahto, in 2018.

The arrests were made from a hill near Mundro village under the Bagodar police station limits by a joint team of Special Investigation Team (SIT) and local police stations.

"On getting a tip-off, the security forces had intensified the patrolling in the interior forests of the LWE-hit districts to apprehend the lower-rung cadres, who have been planning to target the local contractors for collecting levy," said SDPO Jit Wahan Oraon. Acting on information about the presence of extremists, the joint team launched an operation from the Giridih towards Mundro Biharo forest, located around 30 km from the headquarters and apprehended the ultras, the police official added.

All of them, identified as Rajesh Mandal, Sachin Mandal, Nageshwar Mahto, Santosh Kumar, and Saukat Ansari-were allegedly involved in levy collection.

Himachal sees slight improvement in temperature

PNS ■ SHIMLA/CHANDIGARH

The hills of Himachal Pradesh saw an increase in temperature level by one to six degrees above the normal on Sunday. The Meteorological Department has, however, warned of heavy snowfall and rains in the high and mid hills of Himachal on Monday and Tuesday

The western disturbances--storm systems originating from Caspian Sea and moving across the Afghanistan-Pakistan region-would intensify on January 21, a Met official said. Most of the prominent tourist towns like Shimla, Narkanda, Kufri, Chail, Manali and Dalhousie, located in mid-hills, may witness snowfall, he said.

According to the Met Department, tribal district Lahaul and Spiti's administrative centre Keylong continued to be the coldest place in Himachal with a low of minus 3.5 degrees Celsius. Shimla, Dalhousie and Kufri recorded minimum temperatures of 7.5 degrees Celsius, 5.1 degrees Celsius and 3.8 degrees Celsius, respectively. The minimum temperature in Kinnaur's Kalpa town was minus 0.6 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, cold weather conditions continued unabated in most parts of Punjab and Haryana on Sunday, with Gurdaspur being the coldest in the two States at 3.3 degrees Celsius.

The night temperature, however, rose several degrees above normal in various parts of both States.Chandigarh, the joint Capital of Punjab and Haryana, experienced cold weather conditions at 10.6 degrees Celsius. Among other places in Punjab, Amritsar, Ludhiana and Patiala experienced cold weather conditions at 7.6, 8.8 and 10 degrees Celsius, respectively.Pathankot, Adampur, Halwara, Bathinda and Faridkot recorded their respective lows at 8.9, 10.7, 8.7, 9.5 and 8 degrees Celsius.In Haryana, Ambala, Hisar and Karnal recorded their respective minimums at 10.7, 8.7 and 8 degrees Celsius, up to four degrees above normal. Bhiwani, Sirsa, Rohtak and Narnaul recorded minimum temperatures of 9.9, 10.3, 8.4 and 7.5 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Punjab Govt to give subsidy for boosting industrial sector

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Government has decided to give subsidy to the industrial units to enable the industrial sector in the State to act as propeller of its economic growth. The decision would result in generating more and more employment avenues for the youth of Punjab, said the State Industries and Commerce Minister Sunder Sham Arora on Sunday adding that the intended move would strengthen the industrial infrastructure. Punjab Government has released an amount of ₹2crore for the purpose. Arora said that ₹7crore would be provided soon as subsidy to the currently operating industrial units.

Sand art on freedom fighters at city street fest

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Sand art portraying freedom fighters, rangoli art, painting and quiz among others were major attractions during the 75th Patha Utsav here on Sunday.

Sand artists of DPR Art Live put up portraits of Veer Surendra Sai, Pandit Gopabandhu Dash and Jai Rajguru during the street festival in the city. Debi Prasad Rout from DPR Art Life said the new method of creating huge portraits with sand dust was a big draw.

Itishree Dixit and her troupe portrayed some of freedom fighters in Odisha. In a rangoli they had also drawn a map of Odisha to relate the freedom fighters to their birth places.

Sand artists of DPR Art Live put up portraits of Veer Surendra Sai, Pandit Gopabandhu Dash and Jai Rajguru during the street festival in the city

While the artists at Artecion also created beautiful images of freedom struggle through water colours, the Women In Society Help (WISH) organised a painting competition on the freedom struggle theme. Volunteers of Jai Odisha organised quiz on freedom struggles.

The other activities included Yoga, Ayurveda consultation by the AYUSH Directorate of the Health and Family Welfare Department, routine health check up by city-based Sparsh Hospital and other local Ayurveda institutions and health-care tips by gyms and professional organisations. A major attraction was also from an artist from Bargarh in the attire of Kansha.

11 coal mines identified for CBM extraction

PNS ■ BOKARO

As many as 11 coal mines belonging to Coal India Limited (CIL) in Jharkhand and West Bengal have been identified for the exploration and commercial production of Coal Bed Methane (CBM).

"CIL and ONGC will work together on the project. After extraction of CBM, coal would be mined from the sites. It will reduce the chances of accidents inside the coal mines," an official informed.

There are huge stocks of CBM reserves in Jharia, North Karnpura, Bokaro and Raniganj. The Jharia block is estimated to hold 85 billion cubic meters of gas reserves, North Karanpura 62 billion cubic meters, Bokaro 45 billion cubic meters and Raniganj North 43 billion cubic meters, he said. Besides these, ONGC will develop some other coal blocks belonging to SAIL and others for the exploration and commercial production of CBM. ONGC is on the move to erect the country's biggest Coal Bed Methane (CBM) project at Bokaro with an investment of Rs 823 crore to produce natural gas from coal seams of its Bokaro block in the current fiscal, said an official of ONGC CBM Division Bokaro.

"For this ONGC is working towards erecting a 'technical laboratory' for exploration and commercial production of CBM gas at Balidih in Bokaro," he said. The lab will be set up with an estimated investment of Rs 175 crore. The Jharkhand Industrial Area Development Authority-JIADA has allotted 13 acres of land near Dalmia Cement Plant at Balidih Industrial Area for the purpose, informed Manoj Jaiswal Secretary JIADA (earlier known as BIADA).

Meanwhile, under Coal Mines Methane (CMM) Project, Bharat Cocking Coal Limited (BCCL) is eyeing to erect a 2 MW Power plant. With an estimated investment of Rs 60 Crore, this unit is proposed to come up at Munidih in Dhanbad. Recently, a meeting was held at Munidih between BC Nayak, Nodal Officer and General Manager of CBM Project ONGC, GM Project and Planning

Haryana CM invites industrialists to invest in State

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Sunday appealed and invited the industrialists to set up their ventures and invest in the State.

The Chief Minister assured to provide them a favourable and friendly environment for their businesses to flourish which will lead to creating large scale job opportunities for the youth. He was speaking at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit-2019 at Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

The Chief Minister said that people from different regions get the opportunity to share their views in such summits which opens new avenues for developing a conducive atmosphere for business. Manohar Lal said that Haryana covers 57 per cent area of the National Capital Region (NCR) and in today's era, it is best State to make investments. 13 districts of the State are covered in the NCR region. In 2016, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) amounting to about ₹5.84 lakh crore were signed for setting up various projects and the work on MoUs worth about ₹3lakh crore are either on war footing or in the pipeline, he said.

The Chief Minister also said that alongwith railway and airway, better connectivity of roads is available in Haryana. There are 15 national highways and 29 State highways in the State which provides a better connectivity throughout the State. Efforts are in the process to develop five big cities on about 2.5 lakh hectares of land on both sides of Kundli Manesar Palwal (KMP) Expressway under Panchgram project.

In order to facilitate people, Saral Kendras have been established in each district, sub division and tehsil level. Apart from this, Antyodaya Saral Kendras are also being established where information of all Government schemes would be provided to the people, Manohar Lal added.

The Chief Minister further said that the process of setting up Hisar airport is in full swing. Haryana is at third place in terms of Ease of Doing Business.

Skill Development University has been established in the State to generate new employment opportunities. Also, a plan is under consideration to establish Global City over 1,200 acres near Gurugram, he added. On the occasion, the Chief Minister also held one-on-one interaction with entrepreneurs and answered their queries.

BJP to form Government in Odisha: Bhupinder

Many Cong, BJD workers join BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

BJP national general secretary and MP Bhupinder Yadav on Sunday alleged that the Naveen Patnaik Government has failed in making Central schemes reach grassroots level. So, people would drive away it in the upcoming general elections.

"People have been fed up with the failures of the Naveen Patnaik Government. This time, people of Odisha will elect the BJP to form Government," Yadav said at a Press conference here.

Yadav said the BJP will inform people about various welfare schemes introduced by the Narendra Modi Government at the Centre and how the State Government has failed in implementing them.

Stating that country's real development depends on the development of farmers, he said the Modi Government has always given priority on the agriculture sector. "While UPA Government had allocated Rs 1,21,000 crore for the agriculture sector between 2009 and 2014, the Modi Government gave out Rs 2,11,000 during its five years.

On Sunday, former PCC vice-president Jayashree Patnaik and many BJD and Congress workers of the Bolagada Assembly constituency joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and retired administrator Aparajita Sarangi.

12 to get PEN IN Books Award this year

Felicitation on February 14

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Publishing house, the PEN IN Books, announced the final list of winners for PEN IN Books Young Author Award.

For the first time apart from 10 young Odia writers, one each writing in Hindi and English has also been included in the list, informed author and director of PEN IN Books Subhransu Panda.

For the first time apart from 10 young Odia writers, one each writing in Hindi and English has also been included in the list

The 10 adjudged winners –writing in Odia– are Naresh Kumar Behera for his poetry manuscript Gudae Prashna, Asutosh Acharya for his poetry manuscript Jeebanara Sandhanare, Shree Gobinda for his poetry manuscript Panapatra O Samudra Muhana, Chakradhar Patra for his poetry manuscript Kuhudira Hatadhari, Dr Pratyush Mishra for his poetry manuscript Samudre Shosa, Sipunu Jena for his poetry manuscript Swapna Jeuthi Harijae, Debadatta Mishra for his poetry manuscript Aaji O Aau Kichhi Kabita, Gitanjali Maharana for her short story manuscript Prayaschita, Girish Ranjan for his satirical poetry manuscript Byanga Baruda and Sarthak Pradhan for his collection of essays Drushyapatta.

Besides, Rinku Taunk for her Hindi poetry manuscript, Jigisha and Subhalaxmi Senapati for her English poetry manuscript Tee Off, will also receive the award this time.

While the award ceremony is scheduled to be held on February 14, all the manuscripts will be published in form of books later on, Panda informed.

Min's remark proves graft in Rafale: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Launching a fresh attack over Rafale, the Congress on Sunday alleged that Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's remarks about "corporate warfare" proved that the Modi Government had given preference to corporate interests over national interest.

Congress spokesperson Priyanka Chaturvedi said Sitharaman's recent statement has "conclusively proved that this is a Government of the suited-booted, for the suited-booted and by the suited-booted". Accusing the Opposition of spreading misinformation on the Rafale deal, Sitharaman on Saturday wondered whether parties were becoming pawns in corporate rivalry and whether the procurement of 36 fighter jets was being "sabotaged".

"By bringing this argument about 'corporate warfare', the Modi Government's 'defenceless' Defence Minister seals and stamps the Congress party's charge that the ₹30,000 crore offset contract and ₹1 lakh crore life cycle cost contract in the Rafale deal was given to his crony friend's company which had zero experience and was brazen 'cronyism' at its best," Chaturvedi alleged at AICC Press conference.

Chaturvedi said the Congress wants answers from the Defence Minister as to what was the compulsion to "snatch" the Rafale contract from HAL, even though a work share agreement worth approximately ₹36,000 crore was already signed on March 13, 2014. The Modi Government needs to explain why it cancelled the UPA deal of 108 aircraft and announced a fresh RFP for 110 MMRCA aircraft on July 6, 2018, after four years of assuming office, Chaturvedi said.

The Government has to reply as to why it rejected the Air Force's need and demand for 126 fighter aircraft and decide to buy only 36 jets, she said. The Congress leader also alleged that Sitharaman claimed HAL did not have the capability to produce 108 aircraft in India and asked whose corporate interests was she defending.

Chaturvedi also slammed Sitharaman for her reply in Parliament on the Rafale deal, alleging that the defence minister said she cannot divulge the offset partners in the deal, but in October, 2017, the French Defence Minister met Sitharaman and went to Nagpur to attend stone-laying of Dassault-Reliance JV with her Cabinet colleagues and Maharashtra CM.

"Why did she lie to the Parliament? What brief is she holding and to guard which 'corporate entity'? Chaturvedi asked. While we all know that Reliance Defence was incorporated 12 days prior to the deal, what is interesting is that Reliance Aerostructure Limited was incorporated 14 days after the announcement of purchase of deal and the licence for the same was granted by Ministry of Commerce helmed by Sitharaman, she said.

The Congress has been alleging corruption in the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter aircraft with Rahul Gandhi repeatedly targeting Prime Minister Modi over the issue.

Statue of Unity reminder of Patel's vision, courage, says V-P Venkaiah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday said the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's statue in Gujarat, known as the Statue of Unity, was a way of correcting the imbalance in presenting the historical narrative of India, which justified the amount spent on it.

Naidu visited the 182-metre-tall statue in Kevadiya in Gujarat's Narmada district and said only a partial account of Patel's role and contributions in the freedom struggle was documented. "This Statue of Unity is a firm reminder of the vision, courage, capabilities and contributions of Sardar Patel in the making of modern India. In the true sense, it is a way of correcting the imbalance in presenting the historical narrative of our country," Naidu was quoted in a statement issued by the Vice-President's office.

Justifying the money spent on the statue, Naidu said given the significance of the structure, "the amount spent on erecting it was worth it and it is a priceless investment". He also complimented Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his initiative to build the statue and said it should serve as a reminder to uphold unity among all Indians.

Known as the "Iron Man", Patel was the country's first deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister. Citing a letter written by Patel to Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first Prime Minister, in which he had cautioned about the threat from China, Naidu said the situation after the 1962 Sino-India war could have been different if Patel's words had been heeded.

"We all know that one of our neighbours waged war against us in 1962 and its result. Had Sardar's concerns been taken seriously, the situation could have been different. All other issues raised by Sardar Patel still remain relevant," he said.

Underlining the importance of the unification of the erstwhile princely States after Independence, Naidu said getting freedom from the British was a milestone in the country's modern history, but the integration of the 565 self-governed States that existed at the time of Independence was another equally important milestone.

"Without Patel and his vision and resolve, many of these 565 princely States would have preferred and remained as independent countries. Had this happened, the map of India would have been vastly different from what we have today," he said.

The people of India would forever remain grateful to Patel for realising his dream and vision of consolidating the country with a steely resolve, Naidu said. "For this act of courage and determination, Patel is rightly called the 'Iron Man of India'," he said.

MHA TWEAKS TRAVEL NORMS

Indians over 65, under 15 can use Aadhaar to visit Nepal, Bhutan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 travelling to Nepal and Bhutan, according to a Home Ministry communique.

Indians other than those in the two age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel to the two neighbouring countries, for which no visas are needed, clarified the communique issued recently.

Indian citizens going to Nepal and Bhutan don't need a visa if they have a valid passport, a photo identity card issued by the Government of India or an election ID card issued by the Election Commission, it added.

Earlier, persons over 65 and under 15 could show their PAN card, driving licence, Central Government Health Service (CGHS) card or ration card, but not the Aadhaar, to prove their identity and visit the two countries.

The Aadhaar card has now been added to the list, explained a senior Home Ministry official.

"Now, persons in the age group of over 65 years and below 15 years have been allowed to use Aadhaar as a valid travel document," the official told *PTI*.

Aadhaar is a 12-digit unique identification number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). It is being made mandatory for using a host of Government services.

Giving details, the official said a certificate of registration issued by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu, to Indian nationals is not an acceptable travel document for travelling between India and Nepal.

"However, the emergency certificate and identity certificate issued by the Indian Embassy in Nepal will be valid for single journey for travelling back to India," he said, citing the communique.

Teens between 15 to 18 years will be allowed to travel between India and Nepal on the basis of an identity certificate issued by the principal of their school in a prescribed form, the officer said.

In case of a family (like husband, wife, minor children and parents) travelling together, all persons will not be required to carry relevant documents (such as a passport or an election ID) if one of the adult members has valid travel papers, he said.

However, the other family members must have some proof of their identity with a photograph and their relationship as a family, such as a CGHS card, ration card, a driving licence or an ID card issued by school/college, the official explained.

Indian nationals travelling to Bhutan need to have either an Indian passport with minimum validity of six months or a voter identity card issued by the Election Commission of India.

Bhutan, which shares borders with the Indian states of Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal, has about 60,000 Indian nationals, employed mostly in the hydroelectric power and construction industry.

In addition, between 8,000 and 10,000 daily workers enter and exit Bhutan everyday in border towns.

About six lakh Indians live in Nepal, according to data by the Ministry of External Affairs.

These include businesspersons and traders who have been living in Nepal for a long time, professionals (doctors, engineers, IT personnel) and labourers (including seasonal/migratory) in the construction sector, it said.

Nepal shares a border of over 1,850 km with five Indian States — Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Cries of help are of people seeking freedom from tyranny, Rahul on Modi's 'bachao' jibe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rahul's attack came a day after Modi, taking a dig at the Opposition rally organised by Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata, said the BJP had only one MLA in West Bengal

Congress president Rahul Gandhi hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday over his "*bachao, bachao*" swipe at the Opposition, saying the cries of help were of people "begging" to be freed from "your tyranny and incompetence".

Gandhi's attack came a day after Modi, taking a dig at the Opposition rally organised by Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata, said the BJP had only one MLA in West Bengal, "but still they are so afraid of us, because we follow the path of truth, that they have gathered parties from across the country and are crying '*bachao , bachao, bachao*' (save us)".

"Your Highness, The cries for help are the cries of millions of unemployed youth; of farmers in distress; of oppressed Dalits & Adivasis; of persecuted minorities; of small businessmen in ruin; begging to be freed from your tyranny & incompetence. In 100 days they will be free," Gandhi said in a tweet.

On a day when several Opposition parties came together on a common platform in Kolkata, Modi had hit out at their proposed "mahagathbandhan" (grand alliance), saying it was a combine of those who were angry at his stringent action against corruption as they had been stopped from looting public money.

Research on Ayurveda drugs through nanotech

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Gwalior situated University and Delhi-based AIMIL Pharmaceutical firm, engaged in manufacturing herbal drugs recently inked a pact to develop new drugs as well as scientifically validate the existing drugs in the ayurveda sector using nanotechnology

Efforts of Union Ayush Ministry have started yielding results with various research institutions initiating experiments using latest scientific technology in the ancient Indian medicine. After Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), now Madhya Pradesh-based Jiwaji University has come forward in this direction.

The Gwalior situated University and Delhi-based AIMIL Pharmaceutical firm, engaged in manufacturing herbal drugs recently inked a pact to develop new drugs as well as scientifically validate the existing drugs in the ayurveda sector using nanotechnology.

Several researches have shown that drug delivery through nanoparticles is efficient and is important in allopathy, as well as in Ayurveda. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Jiwaji University Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sangeeta Shukla and AIMIL Pharmaceutical Executive Director Sanchit Sharma in the presence of Union Health Ministry's Department of Health Research (DHR) ex-Secretary VM Katoch.

On the occasion, Katoch said that Ayurveda has answers to many chronic diseases and if intensive research on modern scientific basis is undertaken in the sector, world class medicines can be developed for the humankind.

Katoch gave instance of how in the past, the DRDO had developed Leukoskin to treat white patches while country's premier research agency, CSIR has developed anti-diabetes herbal drug BGR 34. It has properties to contribute to the maintenance of normal blood glucose metabolism, restore quality of life and reduce the chances of long-term complications. Incidentally, AIMIL Pharmaceutical has role in developing and marketing both the herbal medicines.

Amil Pharmaceutical Vice President Anil Sharma explained that as per the MoU, emphasis will be on testing old formulations as well as developing new medicines. "Nano techonolgy will be used for research purpose. With the help of this technology, huge difference can be brought in the quality of molecules."

It means, he explained, it will be possible to prepare more effective medicines. As per the MoU, a battery of scientists and experiment related facilities will be provided by the Jiwaji University while AIMIL Pharmaceuticals will help in chipping requisite equipments and infrastructure for the initiative.

BUDGET 2019

Govt likely to hike agri credit target to ₹12L cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to focus on farmers' debt, the farm credit target is likely to be raised by about 10 per cent to a record ₹12 lakh crore in the 2019-20 Budget to be presented on February 1.

For the current fiscal, the Government has set a credit target of ₹11 lakh crore. The agricultural credit flow has increased consistently over the years, exceeding the target set for each fiscal.

For instance, credit worth ₹11.68 lakh crore was given to farmers in 2017-18, much higher than the ₹10 lakh crore target set for that year.

Top sources said that the Finance Ministry has been increasing the credit target for the farm sector every year. "This time too, the target is likely to be increased by around 10 per cent or ₹1 lakh crore to ₹12 lakh crore for the 2019-20 fiscal," the sources said.

Similarly, crop loans worth ₹10.66 lakh crore were disbursed in the 2016-17 fiscal, higher than the credit target of ₹9 lakh crore.

Credit is a critical input in achieving higher farm output. Institutional credit will also help delink farmers from non-institutional sources where they are compelled to borrow at usurious rates of interest, the sources added.

Normally, farm loans attract an interest rate of 9 per cent.

However, the Government has been providing interest subvention to make available short-term farm credit at an affordable rate and help boost farm output.

The Government is providing 2 per cent interest subsidy to ensure farmers get short-term farm loan of up to ₹3 lakh at an effective rate of 7 per cent per annum.

An additional incentive of 3 per cent is being given to farmers for prompt repayment of loans within due date, making the effective interest rate 4 per cent.

The interest subvention is given to public sector banks (PSBs), private lenders, cooperative banks and regional rural banks (RRBs) on use of own funds and to Nabard for refinancing RRBs and cooperative banks.

Search panel did not shortlist 2 commissioners for CIC post

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The search committee for selection of Chief Information Commissioner did not short-list two senior Information Commissioners who had applied for the position and brought in four others who did not show interest in the post, documents made public by the Government show.

The search committee led by the Cabinet Secretary had finalised five names to be put before the selection panel, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and comprising Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge.

The six-member search committee was headed by the Cabinet Secretary and included the Secretaries of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), Expenditure Department, Information and Broadcasting Department, and Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister.

The Director of the Institute of Economic Growth was the independent member.

Dard Aryans Ladakhi tribe struggling to preserve legacy

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Busy in promoting its Look East policy, the Modi Government seems to have forgotten the Dard Aryans — a colorful and vibrant tribe of Jammu & Kashmir's lower Ladakh region which is believed to be the original descendants of "pure Aryan race."

Living in the harsh weather of the cold inaccessible terrain comprising of Hanu, Beema, Darchick, Garkone and Dha villages, their population is dwindling fast — just 4,000 members left — because of the rapid modernisation, negligence, migration and religious conservation.

Now in Delhi to participate in the six days festival 'Celebrating Dard Aryans of Ladakh' that kicked off on January 16 at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), they shared their concerns about threats to their existence. In fact they have already submitted a charter of demands to Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Sudarshan Bhagat recently.

The members feel that they should be recognised as world's endangered community so that their culture and tradition is preserved.

They know better. The members of this minority community have retained their age old cultural practices and beliefs despite facing many odds

Virendra Bangroo, an INGCA scholar and curator of the exhibition showcasing their culture and coordinator of the Arya Utsav said, "this is for the first time that such an event is being held in the national Capital.

Aim is to showcase their rich and colourful culture, their lifestyle and the harsh life they have been living".

"So far, the Government has not been able to do anything for this community. Its policies and programmes are yet to reach them. Not many people in the country know about this rich colorful legacy, which today stand threatened," said Bangroo who has already set up two community museums in the region which have become role models for safeguarding the cultural heritage and sustainable development in the region.

He further said that the villages are together called the Aryan valley. The community prohibits marriage with outsiders to keep the gene pool intact. However, of late, the Dard men are marrying outside the tribe.

"We are making an effort to help these people preserve their culture and tradition. They are living in the isolation. But we must make them feel that they too are part of India and we are proud of them. Want to tell them they are our proud," Bangroo said.

However, now their children are migrating to cities as not sufficient basic facilities are available in the region, said Tundu,one of the members of the tribe even as he added that if timely steps were not taken, they will lose their Dar language which has no scripts presently. "Our children do not speak the mother tonguge," he pointed out

The Dard Aryans do not document their history and they have carried forward their cultural legacy orally. Most of them have embraced Islam or Buddhism and modernisation, said 55-year-old Tashi Namgial, another member of the tribe whose kids are studying in Chandigarh.

The government should set up a tribal hostel in the region and declare the Aryan valley a heritage village.

Talking about the need to hold such festival, Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA said, "Arya Utsav is not merely a spectacle but our endeavour is to have a holistic view of the region encompassing the sustainable development in the region. Cultural interaction of the visiting group of Dard Aryans with the institutions in Delhi is one such initiative." He said that exhibition on Dard Aryans of Ladakh will be open to public till January 26.

'BJP to form stable J&K Govt with some friends'

Will go it alone in upcoming Assembly polls, says Madhav

Jammu: BJP general secretary Ram Madhav on Sunday said while his party will most likely go it alone in upcoming Jammu & Kashmir Assembly elections, it will form a "stable Government with some friends" in the State after polls.

He said his party would contest all seats in the State.

"There is the least possibility of a pre-poll alliance with any party for the Assembly elections in the State. The BJP will emerge (as) the largest party after the elections and will give a stable Government to the people with some friends," Madhav told reporters here.

Due to the special circumstances in the State, "we have no hesitation in joining hands with others" to form the Government, he said.

Talking about the BJP's erstwhile ruling alliance with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), he said, "After elections we formed an alliance, but today again the BJP is going it alone in the elections."

The BJP leader said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will kick start the party's campaign for upcoming parliamentary and assembly polls in the state during his visit on February 3.

"While the parliamentary elections are scheduled for April-May, the BJP is ready for the Assembly polls in the state as well. It is up to the Election Commission to decide whether the two polls are held together or separately," Madhav said.

The Election Commission had in November last said fresh elections in Jammu & Kashmir would be held within the next six months. The state is currently under President's rule.

Madhav dismissed allegations that the BJP did not favour Assembly polls in the State.

"There is no truth in rumours being spread that the BJP is not in favour of early Assembly polls in State," he said. He claimed some other parties wanted the polls to be deferred as they feared losing.

Asked about the PDP expelling former Minister Altaf Bukhari, Madhav said, "I don't want to talk about internal matters of another political party, but I must underscore one point here that he is the same leader who was projected as the Chief Minister of the combined Opposition when they (PDP, Congress and National Conference) were trying to form the Government in the State just a couple of months ago." ***PTI***

Sabarimala: Age in Kerala Govt's list submitted to SC incorrect, says TN woman

Chennai: A Tamil Nadu woman, whose name figured in Kerala Government's list of 51 women of menstrual age who visited the Sabarimala shrine, on Sunday said she was 62 and not 48, as mentioned in the affidavit submitted before the Supreme Court.

Chandira Sundaram, a resident of Tiruvannamalai — about 190 kilometres from here, said her name was wrongly included in the list of women below 50 years of age who visited the hill shrine after the Supreme Court removed the bar on their entry.

She said her year of birth was mentioned as 1970 in her Aadhaar card by mistake, apparently indicating that it may be the reason for inclusion of her name in the list.

In an interview to a Tamil news channel, Sundaram said she has been undertaking the pilgrimage to Sabarimala ever since she turned 54.

"Now I am 62 and for the past eight years I have been visiting the Sabarimala temple," she said.

She added that police helped her climb the sacred 18 steps of the shrine.

The Kerala government submitted the affidavit with the names of 51 women to the apex court on Friday saying they had entered the Sabarimala temple through an online process during the annual pilgrimage season.

The affidavit triggered a controversy with many alleging discrepancies with regard to age of those named in the list.

The son of a woman from Goa claimed that his mother's age was 52 and not 43, as mentioned in the list. A Tamil Nadu man said his name was also included in the list.

The BJP, the Sabarimala Karma Samiti and the Pandalam royal family, associated with the Lord Ayyappa temple, also hit out at the Kerala Government. ***PTI***

Mahagathbandhan an alliance of corruption, negativity: PM

Margao (Goa): Unfazed by the Opposition's show of unity at a rally in Kolkata, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday dismissed it as an alliance of corruption, negativity and instability, saying while those parties have "money power", the BJP has "people's power". He also said seats in educational institutes will be increased to implement 10 per cent general category quota.

Modi was addressing BJP's booth-level workers from Lok Sabha constituencies of Kolhapur, Hatkanangle, Madha and Satara in Maharashtra and South Goa through video-conference. Leaders from over a dozen Opposition parties gathered in Kolkata on Saturday and vowed to put up a united fight in the coming Lok Sabha elections and oust Modi from power.

Several Opposition leaders at the rally demanded the use of ballot papers instead of the electronic voting machines (EVMs) which, they said, were the source of "all sorts of malpractices". Modi said the Opposition was staring at a

defeat in forthcoming elections and looking for excuses ahead of their impending loss and thus, were vilifying EVMs.

"You must have seen that one of the leaders who was sharing the dais recalled the Bofors scam. Truth cannot be kept hidden. The Opposition's mahagathbandhan is an alliance of capitalists, corruption, scams, negativity and instability," he said.

"The Opposition has 'dhanshakti' (money power), we have 'janshakti' (people's power)," he added. Replying on the query from a booth worker in Kolhapur, Modi said while the Opposition alliance is with political parties, "our alliance is with the dreams of 125 crore Indians and their hopes and aspirations".

"Those who were on dais in Kolkata were either son or daughter of big person or who wanted to make his son or daughter big in politics," he alleged. Those who never believed in democracy within their parties were now talking about democracy from public platform, he said. He said such people do not have faith in any institution and are busy defaming constitutional authorities.

"We get worried when some groups take people for granted. They think people are fools. That is why they don't leave any stone unturned to change their colour... I would like to repeat, this is a dangerous game for the country and a thing to worry about," Modi commented.

"While on one hand they are busy saving or nurturing their own families, we are busy developing a nation. Our country is our family... Those who start violence against the person contesting against them even at panchayat level, are now singing songs of protecting democracy," he said. ***PTI***

Students pour water on each other as they take a holy bath during a ceremony organised in the auspicious Hindu month of Magh in Ahmedabad PTI

2 killed during mock drill on Jammu ropeway project

PNS ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the formal inauguration of Jammu ropeway project by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 3, two members of the rescue team, conducting a mock drill here on Sunday, were killed while four others received serious head injuries.

According to preliminary reports the accident took place around 5.30 pm apparently due to mechanical failure.

Eyewitness reports claimed the rescue trolley crash landed on the ground on Mahamaya-Peerkho section during the mock drill. Six people were present in the trolley at the time of the accident.

The State Government has set up high-level enquiry to ascertain the cause of accident leading to death of two persons.

Adviser to the Governor, Iqbal Ahmad Ganai visited the Government Medical College, Hospital in Jammu to enquire about the well being of injured.

He told reporters in the hospital, during a mock drill a rescue trolley of ropeway construction company Damodar Ropeways and Infra Limited (DRIL) crash landed on the ground in which one person died on the spot while another injured succumbed to his injuries. Ganai said, a safety team of Chief Engineers has been constituted to thoroughly investigate the mishap.

The 1.66-km-long cable car project has two phases, first from Bahu Fort to Mahamaya Park and second from Mahamaya to Peer Kho over the Tawi river, with a total length of 1,118 metres.

An injured person being rushed to hospital after cable car collapsed at ropeway project at Mahamaya temple in Jammu on Sunday PTI

Navy abandons efforts to pull out decomposed body of trapped miner

Shillong: The Indian Navy abandoned all efforts on Sunday to pull out the decomposed body of a miner that it spotted four days ago inside a coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills District, officials said.

The Navy divers had spotted the decomposed body of a trapped miner on Wednesday, using an unmanned, remotely-operated vehicle (ROV) at a depth of around 160 feet inside the mine's main shaft.

At least 15 miners are trapped inside the mine since December 13 last year after one of them accidentally punctured the wall of the mine, leading to its flooding.

"The Navy today suspended the pulling of the remains, which they had been trying since yesterday evening, as too much disintegration (of the body) took place with every pull by the ROV jaw," operation spokesperson R Susngi said.

The families of four of the 15 miners had on Saturday urged the rescuers to retrieve the decomposed body so that they could perform the last rites.

A multi-agency operation, which included de-watering of the main shaft where the miners are trapped, and of the nearby mines, has failed to yield any result as the water level has not gone down.

The Navy divers were awaiting further instructions from the Government, Susngi said.

The family members of the victims from Garo Hills have also been summoned to the site to help identify the body from the video shot underwater by the ROV earlier this week.

An ROV operator from Chennai went on with a search operation in the nearby mines and the Coal India continued de-watering in the two nearby abandoned shafts by running their pumps for 23 hours since Saturday evening, Susngi said.

In the last 46 hours, the Coal India had pumped out over 52 lakh litres of water from the nearby abandoned mines, but it was not enough to bring down the water level that was causing hindrances in the rescue work, Susngi said.

The Kirloskar Brothers Limited, which has also joined the rescue efforts, had managed to pump out over 45 lakh litres of water, he said, adding Odisha Fire Services had pumped out approximately 4.5 lakh litres.

Meanwhile, the Meghalaya Government was likely to apprise the Supreme Court of the problems in continuing with the search-and-rescue operations, an official said.

The apex court had earlier expressed dissatisfaction with the rescue efforts to trace the miners and rapped the Meghalaya Government for not seeking Army's help.

The top court is hearing a public interest litigation, seeking steps to rescue the 15 miners. ***PTI***

Irani: India to soon have own standard of apparel size

Gandhinagar: Union Minister Smriti Irani on Sunday said Indian textiles and garments industry would soon get its own country-specific apparel size.

Addressing the 'Textile Conclave' at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit here, Irani said a study will be carried out before introducing the 'Size India' project for apparel measurement.

"In the apparel export segment, one of the biggest challenge is that the UK has its size, the US has its size, and Europe has its size of measurement. But, India does not have it (size of apparels, such as 42, 44 and XL)," she said.

"I hereby present the Central Government's resolve that 'Size India' project will soon be rolled out for the entire country, the first-of-its-kind project in the Indian history," she said, adding that a study will be undertaken for the project. ***PTI***

EWS quota will get NDA 10% more votes, says Paswan

New Delhi: The measure for 10 per cent general category quota will boost BJP-led NDA's vote share by 10 per cent, paving the way for Narendra Modi's re-election as Prime Minister, Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said on Sunday, asserting that people will reject the Opposition's proposed grand alliance due to its inherent contradiction and instability.

The BJP ally and Lok Janshakti Party president said the Modi Government's priority to long-term development policies over "populist" programmes may have caused at times some resentment in a section of society but people will vote for the Prime Minister's "strong and stable" leadership in Lok Sabha elections.

He, however, hinted that the Government will come out with a bevy of schemes in the run up to the election, saying that the ruling alliance has learnt its lessons from its loss

in the recent State elections and that there are many arrows in the quiver of Prime Minister Modi.

The BJP lost power to Congress in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in December.

"Some months are still left for the polls. The Government will shoot one arrow after another. What will also weigh the most on people's mind is who will be the Opposition's choice as Prime Minister," he told *PTI* in an interview. ***PTI***

Didi's rally aimed at saving democracy: Shatrughan Sinha

Patna: Firing a fresh salvo at the BJP leadership and the Narendra Modi Government at the Centre, disgruntled party leader Shatrughan Sinha on Sunday said the rally at Kolkata where he shared the stage with a host of Opposition leaders was aimed at "saving Indian democracy from being ruined".

The actor-turned-politician and Patna Sahib MP, who had rankled the party by his presence at the rally and speaking about "tanashahi" (dictatorship) prevailing under the leadership of Modi and Amit Shah as against "lokshahi" (democracy) that characterized the Atal-Advani era, sought to twist the knife with a couple of tweets.

"What an amazing gathering and what mammoth audience came together in Bengal in lakhsto listen to and support this spontaneous show of solidarity in favour of a change parivartan!" exclaimed Sinha in his first tweet about the public meet which was organised by West Bengal CM and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee.

Leaders of 22 Opposition parties came together at a mega rally on Saturday and declared they will put up a united fight to oust Narendra Modi Government which has "passed its expiry date".

"Kudos to our sister, the great lady of Bengal, fiery Mamata di, who needs to be roundly complimented for bringing together one of largest congregations of strongest and most influential political minds and leaders from all corners of the country on the same stage under a common causeof saving the Indian democracy from being ruined," Sinha said in the second tweet. ***PTI***

Maha under-trial prisoner dies, family alleges custodial torture

Mumbai: An under-trial prisoner died after being found unconscious in his cell in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district on Saturday, the police said.

The family of Yogesh Rathod (29), the deceased, alleged that he was tortured by police which led to his death.

Rathod, a resident of Bharamba Tanda in Kannad tehsil of the district, had been arrested a few days ago in a case of house trespass, a police official said.

He was sent to Harsul prison after a court remanded him in judicial custody.

He was found unconscious in his cell on Saturday evening and rushed to a Government-run hospital where he was declared dead, the official said.

While his family members alleged that he died due to police torture, the exact cause of death will be known after autopsy, he added. ***PTI***

BSF-BGB BLAME-GAME ON

31 Rohingyas stuck at border since Friday

Agartala: Thirty one Rohingya Muslims are literally in no-man's land, holed up behind the barbed wire fencing along the Bangladesh border in Tripura since Friday, while a blame-game is on between the border guards of the two countries over their refuge.

The Border Security Force (BSF) officials said six men, nine women and 16 children were detained by the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) and are behind the fencing at Rayermura in West Tripura district, about 15 km from here.

While the BGB asserted that the Rohingyas came from India, the BSF denied the claim. Both the sides have met twice since Saturday but failed to make any headway to resolve the issue.

"They are stranded between the international border and the barbed wire fencing for last 48 hours. They tried to enter Indian territory from Bangladesh side and we stopped them," BSF Deputy Inspector General C L Belwa told PTI Sunday.

The barbed wire fencing has been erected 300 feet into the Indian side from the international border.

"We are supplying water and other basic needs from our own resources to the Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds since last night," the DIG said.

Despite The BGB stressing that the Rohingyas were from India, the BSF said there was no tell-tale sign of breach of fence on the Indian side.

The BSF has also offered the BGB to join a survey on the Indian side to identify any sign of breach in fencing.

Around 8.30 pm on Friday, BGB Commanding Officer Lt Col Gomal Kabir had called up BSF Commandant Ratnesh Kumar to inform him that they had detained 31 Rohingyas at the border.

"BGB commanding officer insisted that the BSF take those Rohingyas inside the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing. Commanding Officer BGB also alleged that BSF have been pushing Rohingyas into Bangladesh territory," Belwa told reporters.

"We were expecting that BGB will contact us for a flag meeting. But they did not contact us, rather we contacted them and yesterday 12 o 'clock, an officer level meeting was conducted at zero line," Belwa said.

He said the BSF offered BGB officials to come and survey the Indian side to see if there is any breach of the barbed wire fence.

However, the BGB authorities declined the offer and stuck to their demand that the BSF must take the Rohingyas into the Indian territory. A Battalion Commander level meeting was held at the Zero Line at 11 am on Sunday.

"The BGB battalion commander was of the same view that Rohingyas came from Indian side. We have denied their allegations and said there is no tell-tale sign of breach of fence on Indian side," BSF DIG Belwa said.

He added that the Rohingyas might have come from the other side (Bangladesh).

Twelve and 62 Rohingyas were apprehended in Tripura in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

In October 2017, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had ordered all State Governments to identify and monitor Rohingya refugees.

It said the Centre viewed infiltration of Rohingyas from Rakhine state of Myanmar into Indian territory as a burden on the country's resources and it aggravated security challenges to the country.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims, described by the UN as the most persecuted minority in the world, fled their homes in 2017 to escape an alleged crackdown by the Myanmarese military.

Many of them reached India via Bangladesh. ***PTI***

AFTER INSULTING MAYAWATI

BJP MLA apologises

Chandauli(UP): Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator Sadhana Singh on Sunday expressed regrets for calling BSP chief and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati a "eunuch." Singh said that she did not intend to insult anyone.

Sadhna Singh on Sunday issued a press release in Hindi, which roughly translates as, "Recently, the speech given by me was not intended to insult anyone, but to remind how the BJP had helped Mayawati in the Guest House case on June 2, 1995.

"I didn't want to insult her. I would like to apologise if my words have hurt anyone," she said.

On Saturday, Sadhana Singh had alleged that Mayawati sold her dignity in exchange for power.

"I don't think Uttar Pradesh's former Chief Minister is a woman or a man. She doesn't understand the concept of dignity. Draupadi was a victim of sexual misconduct. She vowed to get revenge. That was a self-respecting woman. Look at this woman. Everything was looted from her, despite which she sold all her dignity to get power," Sadhana had said at a public rally in Chandrauli on Saturday.

"I take this opportunity to condemn Mayawati, who calls herself a woman. She is a shame on the entire womankind. BJP leaders saved her dignity, and she sold it for the sake of her comfort and power. Women from the entire country condemn her," Sadhana added.

Her comment drew flak from the BSP and its new ally Samajwadi Party (SP) amongst others.

The National Commission for Women had also said that it would issue a notice to Sadhana Singh regarding her comments. ***Agencies***

BJP MLA's remarks show party's anti-women mentality: Congress

New Delhi: The Congress on Sunday said the remarks by a BJP MLA in Uttar Pradesh calling BSP chief Mayawati "worse than a transgender" were "absolutely condemnable" and exposed the saffron party's "anti-women mentality".

Mughalsarai BJP MLA Sadhana Singh made the controversial remarks at a rally on Saturday while referring to the infamous incident when Mayawati was assaulted by Samajwadi Party workers in a Lucknow guest house in 1995.

"Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati sold her dignity for power and joined hands with those who disrespected her... She is a blot on womankind. Cannot say if she can be counted among men or women, she is worse than a transgender person," Singh alleged.

Reacting to the remarks, Congress spokesperson Priyanka Chaturvedi said the words used by the BJP MLA were "absolutely condemnable" and shameful.

"I believe she owes the women of the nation an apology besides apologising to Mayawati Ji. What I find absolutely unfortunate as a woman is that a woman leader speaks such derogatory words about another woman," she said. ***PTI***

Gujjars, Bakerwals being selectively targeted in Jammu, alleges Mehbooba

Former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti along with senior party leaders adresses a Press conference in Srinagar on Sunday PTI

KHURSHEED WANI ■ SRINAGAR

Former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday accused the Governor administration of unleashing a reign of terror upon nomadic Muslim minority population in pockets of Jammu region. She alleged that the population is being hounded by "fanatic elements".

"There is selective targeting of Gujjar and Bakerwals. After the end of our Government, dozens of families were selectively served notices to vacate their homes. Today also in the name of anti-encroachment drive many families are being evicted from their homes," Mufti said at a press conference here.

She said that she took up the issue with the state Governor Satya Pal Malik in Jammu recently and he assured to look into it.

"I briefed the Governor about the situation faced by nomadic population in Jammu. He assured me that they would not be touched in winter months," she said adding that despite Governor's assurance, the harassment of nomads is going on unabated.

She asked the Governor's administration to take immediate steps to restore the confidence of this community, in the system. She said that targeting nomadic population in Jammu would impact the social fabric of the region that has safeguarded the secular values in the most trying times.

Rajnath justifies EWS quota, says Ambedkar wanted equality

Union Minister for Home Affairs and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and other leaders hold a torch during the party's 'Vijay Sankalp Sabha' in Nagpur, Maharashtra on Sunday PTI

Nagpur: Accusing the Congress of trying to secure votes of Dalits in the name of BR Ambedkar, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said the new law guaranteeing 10 per cent quota for the poor among the general category was in tune with Modi Government's commitment to ensure development of all sections.

The Constitutional amendment to provide the 10 per cent quota in Government jobs and higher education to the Economically Weaker Secions (EWS) among the general category received assent of President Ram Nath Kovind January 12.

Some sections of the society have opposed this provision saying it has violated the Constitution which doesn't recognise economic backwardness as the criterion for reservation.

Addressing a public rally-here on the concluding day of the national convention of BJP's scheduled Caste (SC) cell, Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced the new reservation to realise Dalit icon Ambedkar's dream of the egalitarian society.

"Babasaheb Ambedkar had talked about liberty, equality and fraternity. He enshrined reservation in Constitution to ensure equality and the quota facility was provided for people who were economically and socially backward. Ambedkar's dream was to ensure equality," Singh said.

The Home Minister further said those people who could not get benefits of reservation, and those among them who are economically backward who could contribute in the development of the country, should also get reservation.

"With this objective, the Prime Minister provided 10 per cent reservation to fulfil the goal of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas," Singh said.

Attacking Congress, the senior BJP leader said India became the fastest growing economy in the world in just 55 months under PM Modi, which he said is the "truth" accepted by economists across the world.

"The situation will become totally clear if you compare 55 years of work by the successive Congress Governments to the work done by Modi Government in the last 55 months," he said.

He said in a group of ten nations, the Indian economy has jumped to the sixth slot from previous ninth rank in the last four-and-a-half years.

Singh said India will leave behind Russia, the USA and China to be among the top three nations by 2030, and its credit goes to the Prime Minister.

Singh said many political powers are trying to mislead the dalit community. ***PTI***

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill not applicable to Nagaland, says CM Rao

Kohima: Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Sunday said that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016 is not applicable to Nagaland as the State stands protected under the provisions of Article 371(A) and the Inner Line Permit.

He said the state cabinet which met on January 18 discussed the Bill and re-iterated the earlier decisions adopted by the Cabinet on June 5, 2018 and January 7, 2019.

"The cabinet was of the unequivocal view that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is not applicable to Nagaland and we stand protected under the provisions of Article 371 (A) and the Inner Line Permit (ILP) as per Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, (BEFR) of 1873, affirmed under Clause 16 of the 16 Point Agreement," Rio said in a statement.

Moreover, he said the Cabinet decided to adopt a resolution re-affirming all provisions of Article 371(A) and to strengthen the implementation of the ILP as per the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) of 1873 that will also be taken up in the upcoming Nagaland Assembly session.

"The Cabinet also decided to refer the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill to the Standing Committee on Article 371(A) under the Nagaland Assembly to examine the issue in its entirety," Rio said.

The Cabinet decided to further appeal to the Indian government to have wider consultations with all northeastern states to ensure that the rights of the indigenous people were fully protected.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which has triggered massive protests in the northeastern states, was passed in the Lok Sabha on January 8.

The Bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 to grant Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who entered India before December 31, 2014. ***PTI***

Jallikattu enters world record

Pudukottai (TN): A grand "jallikattu" (bull-taming) event held here on Sunday entered the world record for the maximum number of bulls released into the sporting arena which was over 1,300 and almost double than the previous record.

The bull taming sporting event, coordinated by Tamil Nadu Health Minister C Vijayabaskar at Viralimalai near here saw the participation of 1,354 bulls and 424 tamers.

Two of the participants were killed in the event while 31 men, including some spectators, were injured, according to the district police.

"The number of 1,354 bulls that participated was almost double (than the previous record) of 647 two years ago and it is an amazing record for Tamil Nadu," a Worldkings World Records Union representative said. Although about 2,000 bulls were originally scheduled to be released into the sprawling sporting arena, it could not be completed owing to paucity of time, the organisers said.

"It was the highest number of bulls in a single day," Vijayabaskar said and added that he was happy to have coordinated the sport of valour of the Tamil people.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami hailed 'Jallikattu' as a symbol of the valour and courage of the Tamil people. Successful bull tamers and owners of bulls that could not be tamed were showered with gifts.

On January 17, a spectator died of heart attack during the bull taming sport of Jallikattu which was held at Alanganallur in Madurai district. ***PTI***

Jammu & Kashmir Disaster Response Force discovered two more bodies from the site of the avalanche in Ladakh's Khardung La area near Leh on Sunday PTI

Massive fire at 5-storey building in south Kolkata

Firefighters douse the fire which broke out at a garment store at Gariahat Market in Kolkata on Sunday PTI

Kolkata: A major fire broke out early on Sunday at a five-storey building in southern Kolkata, gutting goods worth lakhs and destroying multiple shops next to the building, a senior fire department official said.

At least 19 fire tenders had been pressed into service to douse the fire at Traders Assembly building in Gariahat area after it was noticed around 1am. The building houses a garment store on the ground and first floor and residential apartments on the floors above, the official told PTI.

All families have been evacuated from the building and no one was injured in the fire, the official said, adding that some people had to be taken to hospital after they complained of breathing problems. "The building does not have an elevator and people had to climb down stairs to escape the fire," the official said. ***PTI***

AYYAPPA DEVOTEES RALLY IN KERALA

Last chance to save Sanatan Dharma, says former DGP

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

TP Senkumar, the then Director General of Police, Kerala, who also headed the Intelligence Wing , cautioned the Ayyappa devotees on Sunday that the agitation for preserving traditions and customs at Lord Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala was the last opportunity to save the Sanatan Dharma. Addressing a mammoth rally named Ayyappa Bhaktha Samgamam at the historical Putharikandam Maidan in the Capital city, Senkumar warned the devotees that the next target of the Kerala Government would be Sri Pamanabha Swamy Temple which is believed to own treasure worth more than ₹1,50,000 crore.

"The writ petition demanding the entry of women of all ages in the Sabarimala Temple was filed by five individuals who were ignorant of the Agama Sasthras that Govern the customs and traditions of the temple. Three of the petitioners withdrew from the case once they understood the reasons behind the rules governing the worshipping by women. The present Kerala Government led by the CPI-M and the Travancore Devaswam Board did not furnish the relevant details to the Supreme Court which resulted in the September 28, 2018 verdict by the five-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court," said Senkumar.

The former Kerala Police Chief accused the Kerala Government aswell as some of the over zealous police officials for vitiating the atmosphere in Sabarimala by "air-dropping" women devotees camouflaged as men inside the sanctum with an intention to humiliate the devotes. "Would this government dare to meddle with places of worship belonging to the minority religions? The need of the hour is a provision in the Constitution which offers the rights enjoyed by the minority communities to the majority community too," said Senkumar.

The rally and meeting held to mark the protest of the Hindu community towards the Kerala Government for its "high-handed" actions in Sabarimala and elsewhere in the State turned out to be a unique event as Matha Amritanandamayi, known as the Hugging Saint of Vallikkavu making her first ever appearance in a public function. The meeting also saw saints, sants and sanyasins from all the southern States participating in the meeting despite severe criticism from the Kerala Government and the CPI-M.

The Matha and Swami Chidanandapuri, spiritual leader of the Hindus in the State made an important disclosure in their speeches. "The mandatory 41 days penance observed by the Ayyappa devotees as a prelude to their pilgrimage to the shrine is the time of the year when women in the rural households see peace and happiness. This is because the pilgrims stay away from consumption of alcohol," said Swamy Chidanandapuri. The Matha said that a research held by the medical team of her Ashram has found that the number of patients brought to hospitals in Kollam and neighbouring districts were 40 per cent less during the Sabarimala season because of the disciplined life and abstinence from liquor.

She said she was for gender justice and equality. "But one should not destroy temple traditions and culture in the name of gender justice. If the temple culture si destroyed , the temple ceases to be a plae of worship," warned the soft-spoken Matha. The Samgamam had its own dramatic scenes. Bharat Bhooshan, brother of Kanaka Durga, who entered the sanctum of Sabarimala, declared from the stage that his family or Kanaka Durga's husband's family won't accept her till she apologises to the devotees for violating the tradition.

Vice-President for united efforts to fight terrorism, corruption

Gandhinagar: Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday urged the world community to come together to address the "pressing issues" of terrorism, climate change and corruption.

Speaking at the valedictory ceremony of the ninth edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit here, VP Naidu said these issues need to be addressed for ensuring peace, prosperity and the partnership of individuals in the inclusive growth story.

"The entire world must be peaceful. Peace is the prerequisite for progress. I would like to tell the entire world community from this forum of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit that three important challenges are there before the humanity, before the world...One of them is terror. Terror has no religion. It is the enemy of humanity. It has to be rooted out totally by all countries coming together. That is the need of the hour," he said.

The vice president also urged the world community to work together to ensure that the effect of climate change is minimised.

"We must all come together, work together to take care, to see that the climate change effect is minimised, and we all take proactive steps to face the challenge of climate change," he said and praised the "solar alliance" initiative.

International Solar Alliance is an alliance of more than 121 countries initiated by India, most of them being sunshine countries, which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

Speaking on corruption, VP Naidu said that that practice "eats" into the vitals of our system, and is a big challenge world-wide.

He also appealed to the world community to come together "to exchange information about illegal bank accounts of different countries and have treaties on economic fugitives who loot and cheat the countries".

"If the world has to be peaceful, prosperous, and see inclusive growth of everybody becoming the partner in the development stories, they must all come together on these three major issues. And I hope everybody concerned should apply their mind and give a serious thought to these three things," he said. VP Naidu said India's growth in the last 15 years is not limited to industry alone, but was also witnessed in the fields of agriculture, infrastructure, rural development, and IT services.

He said India was trying to go beyond the trade and investment and hoping to develop "long-lasting bonds between nations that will cement the seeds of trust and cooperation".

"This will be paramount to identifying solutions to issues in the economic, social and cultural sphere, especially in today's world which is much heterogeneous," he said, adding that initiatives like the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit are endeavours in the same direction. India's growth is supported by "progressive and long-term reforms, sound financial acumen and the impetus given to building a robust infrastructure", the VP said. ***PTI***

Govt of Bihar

TENDER
NIT: 29/CME/PMC/2018
Date: 10.12.2018

Inviting proposals from interested bidders for Remaining work of Laying, Testing & Commissioning of Water Supply Distribution System, Construction of RCC OHT, Pump House, Submersible Pumping, Transformer, Chlorine dosing unit, house connection & Allied works at various locations for Patna Municipal Corporation, Patna

Sl. No.	Locations	Estimated Cost	Bid Processing fees (Beltron)	Bid Document Cost	Bid Security (EMD)	Contract Duration
1	Khajekalan	9,38,95,091	1180	10,000	19,00,000	6 months
2	PMC (Patna City Circle office)	12,33,12,067	1180	10,000	13,00,000	6 months
3	Mangal Talab	10,14,65,476	1180	10,000	11,00,000	6 months
4	Katra	10,99,33,121	1180	10,000	11,00,000	6 months
5	Didarganj	12,43,91,833	1180	10,000	13,00,000	6 months
6	Mithapur	6,49,82,650	1180	10,000	13,00,000	6 months
7	Karbighiya	9,93,16,189	1180	10,000	20,00,000	6 months
8	Saristabad	12,29,93,291	1180	10,000	13,00,000	6 months
9	BEUR	7,57,40,994	1180	10,000	16,00,000	6 months
10	Gardanibagh	10,35,09,347	1180	10,000	11,00,000	6 months
11	Bahadurpur	14,82,15,649	1180	10,000	15,00,000	6 months
12	Lohiya Udhyan	9,57,48,463	1180	10,000	20,00,000	6 months
13	0-1 (Bahadurpur Sec-7)	10,45,03,555	1180	10,000	11,00,000	6 months

The preferred bidder would be selected through a single-stage two-part competitive bidding process based on evaluation of technical and financial proposals. Bidders can apply for maximum two sites. The bidders are expected to submit their Proposals in accordance with the instructions provided in the Standard Bidding Document (SBD).

Detailed SBD incorporating instructions for submission of bids and other relevant information is available on the website www.eproc.bihar.gov.in. The bidding documents will be available with effect from 24.01.2019. The deadline for bid submission is 16.02.2019 at 15:00 hours IST. The bids will be opened on the same day at 16:00 hours IST. A Pre-Bid meeting will be held on 31.01.2019 at 16:00 hours IST at PMC office, Patna.

There is a non-refundable fee for SBD documents which is INR 10,000 (Rupees Ten Thousand only) payable through Demand Draft/Online Payment in the name of 'Patna Municipal Corporation' at Patna. The bidders are also required to deposit Earnest Money through Demand Draft/Bank Guarantee in the name of 'Patna Municipal Corporation' payable at Patna.

Patna Municipal Corporation
Maurya Lok Complex, Buddha Marg, Patna, Bihar, 800 001
W: www.pmc.bihar.gov.in
E: patnamc-bih@gov.in, M: 9819489327

Municipal Commissioner
Patna Municipal Corporation

PR No. 15351 (Ni.Ni.) 2018-19

अवैध शराब एवं मादक द्रव्य के संबंध में शिकायत टॉल फ्री नं. 18003456268 या 15545 पर करें

DEHRADUN | MONDAY JANUARY 21, 2019
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Didi's headline act

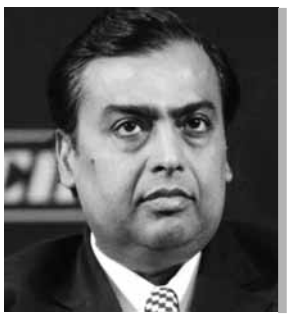
The Mamata-led United India rally infused blood in the Opposition campaign. Will it devise a poll charter now?

If there was some doubt about the visual solidity and chemistry of the Opposition *mahagathbandhan*, then the United India rally organised by the key federal front architect and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee changed that rather dramatically. With 23 leaders arrayed on stage, each articulating talk points that have a huge electoral impact and projecting an issue-based alternative rather than a personality test of Modi vs Rest, there was some seriousness of purpose on display. All of them, perhaps given the tidal surge of a live and expectant audience, agreed that they needed to sacrifice parochial concerns of turf politics and micro territoriality and in a time-bound manner look at the macro template of the Lok Sabha elections. This mutual accommodation of interests for unseating the NDA may have sounded hyperbolic so far but at least today's acknowledgment that it be confined to the concerns of the general election only was a public invocation to practical logic. Of course, there was no discussion on the hows of on-ground equations or even post-poll convergence but there was grandstanding that without keeping it together, it would be difficult to effect a change. Old warhorse and JD(S) leader H D Deve Gowda categorically laid out the specifics, asking all senior leaders to not waste time, get down to the job of formulating an action plan of a new united front and go to people with that vision. He reminded that as Prime Minister himself he had sanctioned the Bogibeel bridge in Assam and seen the Metro rail through but unfortunately others encashed the projects once they got over. So a vision paper was the need of the hour. Of course, there were the usual noises made about vote-catching issues like minority and Dalit rights, state of the economy, Rafale, farmers' issues, the citizenship bill and the most overarching of them all, the arrogance and presumption of majoritarianism.

Then there was the pan-India panorama, beginning with the change-making young Gujarati leaders like Hardik Patel and Jignesh Mewani, an array of Northeastern leaders like Gegong Apang — a clear challenge to the Modi regime's focus on the Northeast — stalwarts like Sharad Pawar, Sharad Yadav, Farooq Abdullah and Yashwant Sinha and, of course, the transformative chief ministers like TDP's Chandrababu Naidu, AAP's Arvind Kejriwal, SP's Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati's proxy Satish Mishra, Akhilesh and Kejriwal managing to sway the crowd quite a bit. It was this chief ministerial line-up of proven track record that lent robustness to the idea of a federal front rather than a Congress-led alternative. If each Chief Minister was able to consolidate their home states, collectively they could call the shots and force Congress to be their peer instead of the king. While two other Chief Ministers, BJD's Naveen Patnaik and Telangana's Chandrashekhar Rao, stayed away to appear equidistant, the fact that the rest held their own despite the presence of the Congress brass was more purposeful. Of course, it was Mamata who had reached out to Rao first but the latter appeared like a safe player. The Congress — although lending its blessings, with Sonia Gandhi sending a letter of support through Mallikarjun Kharge and Abhishek Manu Singhvi saying no deals with regional allies would split votes — seemed to be in need of being convinced rather than sound convincing. The SP-BSP-TMC combined vote bloc, given their tested arithmetic, have managed to pose a counter though all three have to ensure the Congress does not end up eroding their bases in a multilateral fight. Even for Mamata, the local Congress and the Left stayed away given their antagonism. Nobody talked of a prime ministerial candidate either, letting the seats and electoral performance decide the chair. As for Mamata, she may have strategically taken a step back to let other leaders do the talking but she did manage to get them together, advertise that Bengal farmers were not in distress with assured incomes and exude her kind of magnetism. One that even made stentorian DMK leader MK Stalin speak in Bengali. Hopefully, collective action won't be a thumbnail.

The new retail king

Mukesh Ambani wants to dethrone Amazon and Walmart from the Indian e-commerce space. It may not be easy



It is quite clear that Mukesh Ambani has been wanting to get into online retail for some time. A lot of the discussions around a new e-commerce policy being put together by this government can clearly be seen to be influenced by his vision. The tycoon's comments at the Vibrant Gujarat summit about 'data colonialisation', which indirectly attacks foreign players in the online space from social media companies to e-commerce players, has been timed to make maximum impact. And Mukesh Ambani could well be very successful in this space given the tremendous success he has had in telecom. Reliance Jio has pretty much overnight become one of the largest players in India and has done wonders to Ambani's reputation. From a man routinely dissed by some politicians and a person whose reputation was not necessarily the best among the public, he is now widely considered the man who brought down the prices of data. Frankly, there is little arguing with that contention. But transforming telecom and transforming retail, especially online retail, are two different things altogether. However, one stratagem that Ambani used in telecom might come in handy in online retail as well, which is going after the mass market instead of the top-end. While India is a very lopsided consumer economy with the top 25 million households contributing an outsize amount to the economy, Ambani, with Jio, clearly looked at the next hundred million big spenders, who may not be big spenders today but as the Indian economy continues to grow, this aspirational 'middle class' is where the big bucks are.

Or so the idea is. The 'great' Indian middle-class has been a fairly ephemeral beast so far, its potential held back by a lack of jobs or as some have described, enough high-paying jobs, which is evident from income tax data. However, Mukesh Ambani seems confident that this growth will come, a confidence that American investors in the Indian e-commerce space Amazon and Walmart also feel confident about. The changes in policy that appear to be driven by Reliance might, however, have an impact of driving them away. The last thing Indian consumers need is a monopoly but that is the way that Reliance has always operated. While we wish Mukesh Ambani the best in his endeavours, the government through its policies should ensure a competitive sector that is viable and thriving.

Anatomy of a heat shield

The impact of climate change would leave a large part of the population vulnerable in India. It needs to develop its industrial strengths in a technology of the future

RK **PACHAURI**

In December, 2018 a two-week long event took place in Katowice, Poland, which represented the 24th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. It is relevant to know that COP24 made some headway, despite some serious and disturbing developments on the part of the US, Saudi Arabia and Russia. The Conference in Katowice was preceded by the completion of a special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which clearly brought out some of the impacts and risks associated with temperatures between 1.5°C to 2°C, and beyond. This report, which highlighted some of the impacts that would be projected for temperatures between 1.5°C to 2°C, clearly emphasised the need to maintain global temperatures below 1.5°C by the end of the century. The earlier target of 2°C laid down in the Paris agreement — with a clear provision for revisiting the target of 1.5°C based on the IPCC's assessment — would certainly result in a number of climate related risks, which the world needs to avoid with mitigation of emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and adaptation measures.

Awareness about climate change has changed substantially over the last 11 years or so, since the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC came out in 2007. This was further strengthened in 2011 when a special report of the IPCC on extreme events and disasters led to an acceptance of the fact that climate change would be accompanied by an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events, including heat waves, extreme precipitation events, sea level-related events and large-scale precipitation associated with hurricanes and cyclones in different parts of the world. Indeed, the public at large is now witnessing some of these extreme events, including the terrible wild fires in California, which were clearly the result of extreme heat waves and dry conditions. In some cases across the world these are also followed by mud slides which cause further disaster with rainfall that follows.

India is no exception to some of these impacts. In fact, a report published by the Lancet entitled as '2018 Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change' clearly establishes the linkages between health and climate change and implications for India's policy commitments. For instance, the health effects associated with heat waves in India are increasing, and the Indian Government and related public health agencies need to identify established hotspots in India through rigorous tracking and modelling of meteorological data. Health effects include increased rates of heat stress and heat stroke, exacerbation of heart failure and acute kidney injury from dehydration.

It was in 2003 that Andhra Pradesh suffered the longest ever heat wave, and the then Chief Minister of the State, Chandrababu Naidu, set up a committee under this writer to not only look at immediate impacts of what had happened but also make projections for the future. It is unfortunate that for a major calamity such as this there was hardly any coverage by the media or through other channels by which those who were affected by heat stress could find relief and survival. Typically, a number of those human beings who succumbed to these conditions often went inside their homes, which were typically far hotter than the ambient temperatures outside. They had no awareness of and did not resort to oral rehydration therapy; many deaths occurred as a result.

Many lives would have been saved, if this very simple measure could have been conveyed by the media and other channels to the areas which were the real hotspots at that stage. The Lancet report also talks about the large-scale loss of economic opportunities on account of heat waves, which in particular have clear economic implications for the rural poor spread across various parts of the country.

It is sad that despite the large population of rural households, we have not really come up with alternative means by which suitable designs of homes, including passive designs, on which considerable knowledge exists today, could be constructed for the poor. Indeed, those who are part of the middle class or above can often resort to air conditioning — and even heating in the winter — but it is the poor who are exposed to the elements, and the progressive impacts of climate change.

> IT IS SAD THAT DESPITE THE LARGE POPULATION OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS, WE HAVE NOT REALLY COME UP WITH ALTERNATIVE MEANS BY WHICH SUITABLE DESIGNS OF HOMES, INCLUDING PASSIVE DESIGNS, ON WHICH CONSIDERABLE KNOWLEDGE EXISTS, COULD BE EXECUTED FOR THE POOR

In the follow-up of this article, some global implications of climate change and the need for maintaining the1.5°C target by the end of the century would be explored. However, it is important to remember that for India as a society, the impacts of climate change would leave a large part of the population vulnerable. If global action is neglected, in which India has high stakes, then we cannot blame others as a nation, which many developed countries have been responsible for as a measure of neglect for much too long.

In particular, quite apart from the economic merits of large-scale renewable energy production, which the Government of India has now committed itself to, what is perhaps of even greater priority is to electrify those villages which are as yet un-electrified, and which may have major constraints in supply of grid based power. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) launched a major programme in 2008 called "Lighting a Billion Lives," which focussed on the provision of lighting in the homes of these villages, using renewable energy, mainly through supply of PV based power. India had a great opportunity to not only complete this task within its own borders, but perhaps make the experience available to homes in Africa and other parts of the developing world. There is, of course, a significant benefit in exploiting economies of scale both through an approach such as the programme on "Lighting a Billion Lives" as well as large-scale supply of grid-based power using renewables.

India can become a leader in mitigation of emissions of GHGs and set a path for growth with significantly low carbon emissions. India may thus develop its industrial strengths in a technology of the future, with significant commercial benefits and reach across other regions of the world. This, of course, would also have major implications for action at the global level for meeting the provisions of the Paris agreement and maintaining the limit of 1.5°C, which the next article would focus on.

(The writer is former chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2002-15)

SOUNDBITE

Strong India-Africa relations will redefine the contours of the international order on egalitarian lines. We view our engagement with Africa through the prism of our own experience.

External Affairs Minister
—Sushma Swaraj

The importance of both India and Pakistan is such in international affairs, I hope that the two countries will be able to engage in a meaningful dialogue.

UN chief
— Antonio Guterres

The majority of society has not grown up intellectually to embrace the truth. That is why we are still living in the same society and stuck in time.

Actor
—Nawazuddin Siddiqui

The Indian Prime Minister makes fun of the opposition alliance, but his party made the most unethical alliance in Kashmir. What would he say about it?

Congress leader
—Abhishek Manu Singhvi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Epic win

Sir — This refers to the report, "India finish off in style" (January 19). My hearty congratulations to Team India for an exceptional victory in the Third One Day International (ODI) match, played against the Aussies at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. With the victory, the Indian Team clinched the series of three ODI matches with a 2-1 lead. The win is laudable as it is for the first time that the Indian team has defeated Team Australia in their home ground in an ODI series and a Test Series as well. Their splendid performance have heartened all the Indian fans.

The Indian cricket team's wicketkeeper-batsman and former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has made a massive comeback in the ODIs. He consecutively scored three 50s in the three ODIs and also remained unbeatable (Not Out) in the last two ODIs played at the Adelaide Oval and Melbourne Cricket Ground respectively. Considering the bowling side, the Indian leg spinner Yuzvendra Chahal highly impressed the fans after he took six wickets at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and became the 'Player Of The Match.' With a magnificent match-winning knock of 87 runs in the decider match of the series, MS Dhoni has once again shown his calibre: "A player's form may be temporary, but his class remains permanent." The victory has made it clear that the Indian team bears the aptitude of defeating any other country in their home ground without any difficulty.

Tushar Anand
Bihar

Only Modi can change BJP's fortunes

The BJP is looking at novel ways to boost its sagging fortunes for the 2019 elections. In 2014, it had catchy slogans — banking on an extremely strong anti-incumbency — to oust the UPA Government. Five years around, the NDA is grappling with anti-incumbency. The biggest gamble or mistake — demonetisation — has had an impact on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image. When the 'note ban' came into being, people generally welcomed it though they had to wait for hours for their own hard-earned money. They put up with the tribulation by pinning their faith on their leader and reconciling themselves to the general feeling that he was in charge and control.

The Vijay Mallyas, the Nirav Modis and Mehul Choksis actually provided a splendid opportunity for the Opposition to tell the people why Modi had "snatched their money away." The BJP's National Council Meeting at New Delhi has given people an inkling on the party's plans for the election. Honesty, stability, courage, security and able governance to show are the takeaways. Everything depends on how the Prime Minister projects them to the people. The party has only one leader who can appeal to the masses: Modi. Therefore, it is upon him to galvanise all opportunities to pick holes in Opposition theories. The year 2014 saw a fiery, firebrand Modi. Will 2019 witness a sombre, sensible Modi?

Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

Records broken

Sir — This refers to the report, "India finish off in style" (January 19). Indian Cricket Team has won its first-ever bilateral ODI series against Australia on their home ground. The former Indian captain MS Dhoni's unbeaten 87 runs propelled India to a comfortable run chase after Australia were bundled out for a modest score of 230. On top of that, Yuzvendra Chahal recorded his best ever match figures in an ODI; he picked up 6 for 42. Indian players went the extra mile to exhibit good performance and vital processes on the ground. It was a collective effort from the entire team to pull back two back-to-back wins to seal the ODI series. From Dhoni to Kohli, Chahal to Bhuvneshwar Kumar, almost every player played a crucial role and will remember this tour for a very long time.

Tarik Hasan
Lucknow

Not acceptable

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "A morality play" (January 19). Keeping the interest of the family above, the Supreme Court would have done well if it had ordered for closure of dance bars. Dance bars are a gateway for violence and troubles at home. It is foolish to think that dance bars only provide employment. While a large section of people is unable to make ends meet, others having excessive wealth over their needs are indulging in merry-making without giving thought to the ill-effects of their actions on society and nation as a whole.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRSTCOLUMN

Systematic destruction

Tilting at each other using extreme expletives seems to be the rule of the day. When accusations fly sharp, logic is the first casualty

VINAYSHIL **GAUTAM**

The current social environment in India has some distinguishing characteristics. It is a high decibel environment. Whether it is the television chat show or the public opinion leaders in action, the pitch is high, the language is sharp and moderation is conspicuous by its absence.Tilting at each other using extreme expletives and incoherent logic seems to be the rule of the day. This cannot be a sensible way of either individual of social discourse. When accusations fly sharp, logic is the first casualty. So the subject or the topic becomes irrelevant and aggression becomes paramount. It is becoming commonplace with some to say that our institutions are under attack. The question automatically arises: From which quarter?

Consider the case of the Supreme Court, which is the ultimate custodian of collective morality. Not so long ago the Chief Justice of India (CJI) was being threatened with impeachment. This is a grave matter on more than one score. Since 1947, there has never been a case where there was a threat held out of impeaching any constitutional authority. Then came the judgement over the number of days that would be granted for voting in the Karnataka Assembly to prove one's majority. The Supreme Court judge, under the chairmanship of the then CJI, decided to close the matter by reducing the number of days given by the Governor of Karnataka to prove majority to 48 hours. The rest is history.

The purpose of these remarks is not to comment on the judgement of the Governor or the wisdom of the Supreme Court bench. The focus of this narrative is merely to highlight the strangely quiet way in which, after this judgement, the proponents of the impeachment of the Supreme Court Chief Justice in the Rajya Sabha allowed the matter to lapse. To the layman, there are only two options in drawing a conclusion. One is that the proponents of the impeachment had a sudden change of heart and the overlap of the timing with the vote of confidence in the Karnataka Vidhan Sabha was a coincidence. The second option is that the movement for impeachment was essentially a political act aimed at warning the Chief Justice to 'behave himself' as seen by some. Once the key player read the message that was delivered, the select Opposition did not find it necessary to push through their demands. It stretches the imagination to talk of the first option at face value. The protagonists of the impeachment move are sharp people with good legal mind and great ability at marshalling a given argument. They acted deliberately and buried the hatchet, when the Chief Justice was interpreted as serving their purpose. If the latter was the case, as seems likely, the damage done to the institution of justice is something to ponder about. If this was an isolated case, not too much need be made of it beyond a point.

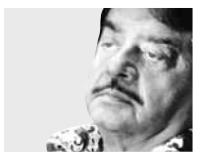
However, the story goes on. The statutes have it that the Director of CBI will be appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, Chief justice of India and the leader of the biggest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha. Nearly two years ago, Alok Verma was appointed as the Director. The leader of the biggest Opposition party at that point of time put in a note of dissent. Around 23 months later when circumstances led to the consideration of removing him, the matter came up for discussion to the same committee. The committee deemed it desirable that the serving director should quit. The same person in the committee, who had given a note of dissent at the time of the appointment, said Verma should not be sent away. In this case, too, two possibilities are there. First, the similarity in two notes of dissent is coincidental. Second, the notes of dissents were dissent for the sake of dissent. It is for anyone to judge what this kind of behaviour indicates.

Several other examples can be cited but this collective indication of damage to institutions can't do anyone any good. Never the less juggernaut rolls on. The Prime Minister of the country has been called a *'chor'* more than once by the president of a major national party. It has been repeated over and over again. If indeed the Prime Minister is a *chor,* then he should have been proceeded against in Parliament. Name-calling may be yet another novel way of strengthening the institution devised by this particular person but that is not how public institutions are normally built. In this case, the options of interpretation-coincidence or otherwise, raised in other two instances above, are not available. Alas, the apparent observation seems to be: There is more to map on how institutions get destroyed.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant)

POINT**COUNTER**POINT

SHATRUGHAN SINHA HAS BEEN SPEAKING AGAINST THE PARTY AT VARIOUS PLATFORMS. AND THE PARTY WILL TAKE COGNISANCE OF IT.
—BJP'S NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON
RAJIV PRATAP RUDY



I'M NOT AFRAID OF BEING REMOVED FROM THE RULING PARTY. I'LL CONTINUE TO SHOW MIRROR TO THE PARTY AND CALL A SPADE A SPADE.
—BJP LEADER
SHATRUGHAN SINHA

Demystifying Rafale riddle

The UPA created the policy of allowing foreign defence manufacturers to decide their partners for fulfilling offset obligations. Why is it having a problem with Dassault's selection then?

PATHIKRIT **PAYNE**

The debate surrounding the purchase of 36 Rafale jets by the Modi Government from Dassault Aviation has one critical element that needs to be mentioned. It was an emergency purchase necessitated by the dwindling fleet of the IAF, massive fleet augmentation by both Pakistan and China in the last decade and negotiations between Dassault and HAL over production of Rafale in India reaching a dead end. The 36 fighters or two squadrons, one each for the western and eastern fronts, are expected to contain the downslide of the IAF fleet even as negotiations continue for bigger deals.

Why 36 and not 126: An emergency purchase cannot be of the entire quantity but of the bare minimum requirement and thus the order was for 36 and not 126. Also, as mentioned by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, there is enough precedence of India opting for two squadrons initially while acquiring new platforms as was the case with acquisition of MiG-29, MiG-23 and Mirage-2000s in the 1980s and then going forward for follow-on acquisition of more platforms once IAF was reasonably acclimatised itself with the platform.

Government in process of acquiring 229 combat craft in total: Further, the decision of the Modi Government to purchase 36 Rafale jets was complemented with RFP sent by IAF to HAL for an additional 83 LCA in Mark 1A configuration. Likewise, an RFI has also been issued for acquisition of 110 combat craft to be made in India by a shortlisted global aerospace manufacturer under the strategic partnership model. Therefore, India is in the process of acquisition of 229 combat craft for IAF in total. This nixes the false argument that Government is only buying 36 craft.

Why Rafale: Dassault Rafale was shortlisted for IAF during the UPA era. Spread over several months, IAF had already conducted extensive technical and flight evaluations, based on more than 600 parameters. Thus, purchasing Rafale by the Modi Government made sense. Just because of stalled negotiations between HAL and Dassault, it would have made no sense if the NDA Government had chosen some other jet or started the process all over again.

What went wrong with HAL: In fact, negotiations between HAL and Dassault reaching a dead-end had little to do with the quality of Rafale and more to do with the refusal of Dassault to agree to the humongous man-hour quoted by HAL (2.7 times more than what Dassault needs to make a Rafale) for the deal, and also, the refusal of Dassault to guarantee the quality of production if the jets were to be built by HAL in India. Under the MMRCA project, HAL was supposed to manufacture 108 planes in India while 18 were to be procured in fly-away condition from Dassault's factory. This was eventually scrapped.

Incidentally, Dassault's complaints about HAL's production quality has precedence too. In 2015, Boeing had walked out of a contract with HAL for construction of weapons bay doors for P8I Poseidon aircraft due to alleged "poor quality" of production by HAL. Before that, WikiLeaks released a confidential cable sent by former US Ambassador to India Timothy Roemer in which he wrote, "The potential for HAL to successfully partner with US firms on a truly advanced aircraft remains untested and suspect."

On the issue of why 36 Rafales ordered by the Modi Government are not being manufactured in India, the UPA should first answer why its purchase of aircraft like C-17, C-130J and P-8I Poseidon happened as off-the-shelf purchases from abroad instead of them being manufactured in India by HAL. If the rationale then was justified that the quantum was too small for licence production in India, the same logic applies now too for 36 Rafale.

Myth surrounding CCS approval: A dubious allegation that has often been made by Opposition parties is that the Modi Government went ahead and announced the deal without necessary approval of the Cabinet Committee of Security or CCS. For the uninitiated, as per Defence Procurement Procedure, CCS approval is needed just before signing of the final contract with equipment manufacturer for a deal, and not before that. Incidentally, when Prime Minister Modi announced in France in April 2015 that India would acquire 36 Dassault Rafale in fly-away condition from France, it was a mere 'Statement of Intent' which does not need CCS approval. This was followed by intense negotiation on pricing over several months by the Contract Negotiation Committee. As per reports, the CCS approval was given in August 2016 followed by signing of the final contract in September 2016, which is absolutely in tune with laid down rules.

Myth of ₹520 crore price: During his speech in Lok Sabha in July 2018, Congress chief Rahul Gandhi had stated that UPA had negotiated a price of ₹520 core for each Rafale combat jet. One should ask Congress if this includes the cost of missiles, avionics, spares and training. If yes, then where is the documentary evidence? If not, then what was UPA negotiating for ₹520 crore? Why could it not conclude the deal with Dassault even then?

In reality, for ₹520 crore in the present day, one would not even get the chassis of a Rafale jet, leave alone a battle-proven, combat capable aircraft armed with missiles and avionics. In the battlefield, a fighter jet without requisite weapon systems, cutting edge avionics and spares is comparable to a bullock cart which may be good enough for air show acrobatics but not good enough for fighting wars and winning them.

As per reports, the Rafales ordered by Modi Government would be armed with Scalp cruise missiles with a 500 km range, air-to-air missiles like Meteor with around 100 km range, Thales made Spectra Electronic Warfare Suite, RBE2 AESA radar and Thales' Airborne Reconnaissance Observation System, namely AREOS. There are also reports of specific enhancements (possibly to carry Brahmos) to be made on Rafales for India. All these cost money. Therefore, in addition to the price of the basic craft negotiated by Modi Government for ₹670 crore a piece (compared to ₹737 Crore of UPA for the basic craft) the rest of the cost can be justifiably attributed to weapon systems and avionics.

Additionally, the current deal for 36 Rafales also has an unprecedented 50 per cent offset and local sourcing clause, which means that Dassault and its tier-1 vendors would have to invest back around ₹30,000 crore in developing aerospace capabilities in India through joint ventures with Indian companies, source components from them and thus eventually help Indian companies become part of the global aerospace supply chain.

The irrationality of ₹520 crore claim: The irrationality of the ₹520 crore price quoted by Rahul Gandhi can be proved by the fact that for a basic platform of LCA MK 1A, HAL is quoting a price of ₹463 crore a piece, which does not even include cost of logistics or weapon systems. Does it then make sense if it is claimed that a weapon and avionics-laced fifth generation Rafale (which is a generation ahead of the LCA MK1A), would be made available to India for a mere ₹520 crore? If in 2011, UPA could spend $3.9 billion for upgradation of 25-year-old Mirage 2000s of IAF wherein it agreed to pay $2.4 billion to Dassault for upgradation, an additional $1 billion for complementary weapons and another $500 million more for developing a facility for HAL to get them modernised here with Dassault's support, then one wonders on what ground Rahul Gandhi expects an armed Rafale to cost a mere ₹520 crore a piece in 2016.

Truth about offset: Perhaps the biggest misinformation that has been spread systematically is that the Anil Ambani Group has replaced HAL in the Rafale deal and that Ambani's company would be getting ₹30,000 crore of contracts. First, Reliance Defence has not replaced HAL. Rafales being procured by the Modi Government would be built in France and not in India. Therefore, there is no question of them being made by Reliance. Second, of the ₹30,000 crore worth of offset and local component sourcing obligation of Dassault and its tier-1 vendors, namely Safran and Thales, the biggest beneficiary is DRDO.

Recently, a television channel graphically explained how DRDO would get ₹9000 crore worth of offset benefits through collaboration with Safran, which would help it in reviving the stalled Kaveri engine programme. The remaining ₹21,000 crore worth of offset obligations are to be split among around 90 odd companies which are proposed offset partners of Dassault, Thales and Safran. Out of those 90 companies, Reliance has one joint venture each with Thales and Dassault. The list also includes other companies like the state-owned BEL, Samtel, HCL, Mahindra Aerostructures, L&T, IBM India, TCS, Tata Advanced Systems, Godrej & Boyce and Wipro Infrastructure Engineering to name a few. As per media reports, the total offset contracts accruing to Reliance Defence may be just over three per cent of the ₹30,000-crore offsets in the offing.

Incidentally, it was during the UPA era that a policy decision was institutionalised which stated, "The OEM/vendor/Tier-I sub-vendor will be free to select the Indian offset partner for implementing the offset obligation, provided the IOP has not been barred from doing business by the Ministry of Defence." This is as per Section 4.3 of the 'Defence Procurement Procedure-Revision of Defence Offset Guidelines', approved by the Ministry of Defence on July 23, 2012. In other words, it was the UPA which created the policy of allowing the foreign defence manufacturers to decide their Indian partners for offset obligation fulfilment. If Rahul Gandhi had no problem with this policy during the UPA era, one wonders why he has a problem with Dassault's selection of offset partners now?

(The writer is a New Delhi-based strategic affairs analyst)

Syria's carnival of treachery

It would be wrong to blame it all on Trump. Turkey's President Recep Tayyib Erdogan is much better informed than the US President and probably a lot smarter too, but he is just as impulsive, just as ruthless, just as much a bringer of chaos

GWYNNE **DYER**

"Where America retreats, chaos follows," said US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Cairo last week. It's not the sort of remark you'd expect from an American diplomat only three weeks after President Donald Trump declared that US troops were pulling out of Syria. Is it possible that behind Pompeo's severe and even pompous exterior there lurks a secret ironist?

Probably not. Pompeo truly believes (like many American evangelical Christians) that the United States is engaged in a struggle of good against evil in the Middle East. "It is a never-ending struggle … until the Rapture," he said three years ago.

He may just be angry at Trump, in a passive-aggressive way, for abandoning Syria to the (evil) Iranian and Russian forces that back Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian dictator.

At any rate, Pompeo is right about the chaos that will follow, but it would be wrong to blame it all on Trump. Turkey's President Recep Tayyib Erdogan is much better informed than the American President and probably a lot smarter too, but he is just as impulsive, just as ruthless, just as much a bringer of chaos.

It was Erdogan, in a telephone conversation in mid-December, who persuaded Trump that pulling all the US troops out of Syria would be a good idea. Turkey would be happy to take the strain instead.

Trump has always opposed America's endless Middle Eastern wars, so he swallowed Erdogan's suggestion hook, line and sinker — and tweeted his decision to pull the US troops out without discussing it with anybody. Only later did the remaining grown-ups in the White House explain to him that Erdogan planned to subjugate or kill America's main allies in Syria, the Kurds.

To his credit, Trump hated the idea of betraying the Syrian Kurds, whose militia, the People's Protection Units (YPG), suffered thousands of deaths while helping US forces to defeat the fanatical jihadis of Islamic State.

Trump still wanted to bring the US troops home, but now he had one condition. The Turks must promise not to invade north-eastern Syria and crush the YPG as soon as the US troops leave.

Erdogan replied that nothing Trump said or did could stop him from destroying these Kurdish 'terrorists' (who have never attacked Turkey). At which point, on Monday past, Donald Trump tweeted that the United States "will devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds."

All clear so far? Good.

You'd never guess, from the story thus far, that the United States and Turkey have been close allies for the past half-century but the alliance is fading fast. Erdogan has been playing his own hand in the Middle East and playing it quite badly.

The 'Sultan,' as his admirers call him, wants to secure his own one-man rule and re-Islamise Turkey, which had evolved into a secular and democratic republic over the past 80 years. He also wants to promote Sunni Islam throughout the region. The two goals are not fully compatible, so he shifts position a lot.

When the revolt in Syria broke out in 2011 during the Arab spring, Erdogan supported it because Bashar al-Assad's regime is dominated by Alawites, a Shia Muslim sect. He kept the border open and let supplies and recruits flow into the rebels, including even the Islamic State extremists.

When Russia intervened militarily to save Assad in 2015, Erdogan was so angry that he even had the Turkish air force ambush and shoot down a Russian bomber. But he was almost equally angry with the United States, which had made an alliance with the Kurds of northern Syria to fight against Islamic State.

The Kurds gradually choked off the aid coming in to Islamic State from Turkey, and IS has now lost almost all its territory. So Erdogan told Trump he could bring the US troops home now, and Trump believed him.

But what Erdogan actually wants to do is crush the Syrian Kurds, which he can do once the US troops leave.

Erdogan thinks the Syrian Kurds are allied with the Turkish Kurds, who make up one-fifth of Turkey's population, live just across the border from Syria and are currently at war with Erdogan's regime. (That's why he calls them 'terrorists'.)

The weird thing is that four years ago Erdogan was on the brink of making peace with the Kurds. There was a ceasefire, the Turkish Kurds were no longer demanding independence and he was negotiating a compromise settlement that enhanced Kurdish rights within Turkey.

But then he lost a parliamentary election in 2015, mainly because the Kurds stopped voting for him. So he re-opened the war against the Kurds, wrapped himself in the Turkish flag, and won the next election on an ultra-nationalist platform.

All Kurds are now the enemy, they are all terrorists, and they must be crushed.

Given Erdogan's ruthlessness and Trump's volatility, I have no idea how all this works out. Badly, I suspect.

But I actually admire Trump's refusal to betray his allies, once he realised what Erdogan was up to. You don't see that much in the Middle East.

Of course, it probably won't last.

(The writer is an independent journalist)

FOREIGN EYE

THE NEXT TWO YEARS OF TRUMP

Trump came into office ill-prepared to lead the country, a blustery character too arrogant to recognise the weaknesses amid his strengths. He stumbled into the biggest scandal of his presidency — the Russia investigation. For the next two years, Americans will stand on either side of the wall and yell at each other. The country is strong enough to handle this political trauma. But it won't be better.

(Chicago Tribune editorial)

Soon, no e-way bill if GST returns not filed for 6 months

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Non-filers of GST returns for 6 consecutive months will soon be barred from generating e-way bills for movement of goods.

The Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) is developing such IT system that businesses who have not filed returns for two straight return filing cycle, which is 6 months, would be barred from generating e-way bills, an official said.

"As soon as the new IT system which will ensure barring of e-way Bill generation if returns are not filed for 6 months is put in place, the new rules will be notified," an official said.

The move, officials believe, would help check Goods and Services Tax (GST) evasion.

Central tax officers have detected 3,626 cases of GST evasion/violations cases, involving ₹15,278.18 crore in April-December period.

Touted as an anti-evasion measure, e-way bill system was rolled out on April 1, 2018, for moving goods worth over ₹50,000 from one state to another. The same for intra or within the state movement was rolled out in a phased manner from April 15.

Transporters of goods worth over ₹50,000 would be required to present e-way bill during transit to a GST inspector, if asked.

Officials feel that to shore up revenue and increase compliance, stringent anti-evasion measures have to be put in place.

To this effect the revenue department is working towards integrating that e-way bill system with NHAI's FASTag mechanism beginning April to help track movement of goods.

It has come to the investigative officers' notice that some transporters are doing multiple trips by generating a single e-way bill. Integration of e-way bill with FASTag would help find the location of the vehicle, and when and how many times it has crossed the NHAI's toll plazas.

As against the budgeted monthly revenue target of over ₹1 lakh crore, GST collections have so far this fiscal averaged ₹96,800 crore per month.

Financial stress may impact flight safety, warns AI pilots' union

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Raising concerns over delayed salary payments, a group of Air India pilots has said that financial stress could impact flight safety.

The Indian Pilots' Guild, which represents pilots of wide-body planes of Air India, has also told aviation regulator DGCA that the management has continuously used the guise of financial losses to illegally change their service conditions and withhold payment of arrears as well as overtime.

"We are already engaged in multiple litigations for our basic rights and service conditions.

"If even our salaries are now withheld and reduced at the whims and fancies of airline management, it is not humanly possible to keep all this stress away from the cockpit," the guild has said.

The guild has around 700 members.

In a letter to DGCA chief B S Bhullar, the grouping's general secretary Captain K Jayakumar said that such a prolonged atmosphere of financial uncertainty is not conducive to flight safety.

"For more than six months, our wages are not being paid on time.

"Our January wages have still not be paid even after half the month is gone and even now nobody can give us a straight answer as to when we can expect payment," the letter dated January 17 said.

Vibrant Gujarat: Over 28k MoUs signed this year, says Guj CM

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Sunday said 28,360 Memorandums of Understanding were signed during the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019 and it was expected to generate over 21 lakh jobs.

Rupani, however, did not specify the amount of investment that would come into the state by way of these MOUs.

Speaking at the concluding session of the ninth edition of the three-day Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019, Rupani said the event had seen the realisation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision as "several big ticket investments (were) placed and committed, which will bring in jobs."

"Gujarat has become the gateway to the world and it has become an ideal platform for everyone. The summit has also become a platform for social upliftment rather than only for business and trade," he said.

"A total of 28,360 MoUs were signed which will bring in over 21 lakh employment to the state," Rupani said.

He said Gujarat has become a preferred investment destination after 2003 when Narendra Modi as the state CM decided to organise the Vibrant Gujarat Summit every two year.

"Not many business houses participated in the first summit in 2003. The PM's vision has been fully realised in this 9th summit. This event has also become an ideal platform for knowledge sharing and networking," Rupani said in his address.

He claimed the summit gave MSMEs a platform to be globally competitive.

Gujarat Deputy CM Nitin Patel, addressing the media later, said out of total 28,360 MOUs signed, maximum number of 21,889 were connected to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector.

He informed that 408 MoUs were signed in agro and food processing, 548 in power and gas, 1,516 in urban development, 977 in mineral based projects, 197 in engineering and auto and the remaining in other sectors.

Patel also said these MoUs would generate 21 lakh jobs in Gujarat but refused to reveal the quantum of investment they would attract.

"The figures of investment are not that important. We are still calculating it. But the important thing is these MoUs would lead to employment generation and boost economic activity," Patel told reporters.

At the event's inauguration function, held in the presence of PM Modi, several captains of industry had made announcements regarding projects they intended to start in Gujarat.

Terming the summit a success, Patel said over 42,000 national and international delegates participated in the three day event.

Business Corner

CS Ranjeet Pandey, a Fellow Member of the Institute has been elected as President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India for the year 2019. He is a Fellow Member of "The Institute of Companies Secretaries of India". He is also an Insolvency Professional, registered with IBBI.

CS Ashish Garg, a Fellow Member of the Institute has been elected as the Vice-President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India for the year 2019. He is a Fellow Member of the Institute of Companies Secretaries of India. He is a Post Graduate in Economics (M.A.) and Commerce (M.Com.) and Graduate in Law (L.LB.) from Vikram University, Ujjain

Raksha Rajya MantriDr. Subhash Bhamre, (Union Minister of State for Defence) visited NCC Republic Day Camp-2019 being conducted at the Cariappa Parade Ground. On arrival, the Minister was received by Lieutenant General PP Malhotra, VSM, Director General National Cadet Corps

FIEO seeks Govt, RBI intervention in resolving exporters' banking issues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Exporters body FIEO has sought immediate intervention of the Government and RBI to resolve issues related to payment mechanism for Iran and flow of credit to push shipments.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ganesh Kumar Gupta said that a clarity is required on product coverage under rupee payment mechanism to Iran.

"Exporters have pointed out that UCO bank branches are not clear about products, which can be exported under such mechanism. The main problem is related to Engineering and Chemical products," Gupta said.

He said that the understanding of trade is that if the end use of product is not under the sanctioned list, or exports is not to the Iranian Government, it should be allowed for exports under the Rupee Trade Mechanism.

"A clarification will help exporters to take such orders and push for quantum jump in our exports to Iran," he said.

He also said that banks have expressed their inability to handle documents of exporters for shipments to Central Asian countries, if there is a reference to Bandar Abbas as a transit port in Iran.

"This has affected the movement of cargo through INSTC which Government of India is promoting as an alternative route being time and cost effective," he said.

It is requested that directives to banks be issued for handling of documents properly for transit goods through Iran, where the combined transport bill of landing shows the destination to be Afghanistan/Russia/ Central Asia or any other non-restricted countries, he said.

It is expected that a meeting of bankers and exporters is soon being convened by the Finance Ministry to address some of the concerns.

Talking about flow of credit to export sector, he said that the recent data of the RBI for August, 2018 shows a decline of over 50 per cent in export credit as compared to the corresponding month in 2017.

Some better performing banks likely to be out of PCA: Kumar

Recently, the Government announced infusion of ₹28,615 crore into seven PSBs through recapitalisation bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Some of the public sector banks are likely to come out of the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework in next few months on the back of improvement in various parameters, a top Finance Ministry official said.

Eleven out of the total 21 public sector banks are under the central bank's PCA framework, which imposes lending restrictions and prevents them from expanding, among other curbs.

"Some of the banks out of 11 have shown better performance...If some banks are performing well and they are adequately capitalised as per the Basel norms. Hence, capitalisation will facilitate them coming out of PCA. RBI is seized of the matter," Financial Services Secretary Rajiv Kumar told PTI.

There is a strong case on the basis of performance of some banks to be removed from the PCA list if not all, he said.

Recently, the Government announced infusion of ₹28,615 crore into seven public sector banks (PSBs) through recapitalisation bonds. Out of the seven state-owned banks, Bank of India got the highest amount of ₹10,086 crore, followed by Oriental Bank of Commerce, which received 5,500 crore.

Other banks that got capital included Bank of Maharashtra (₹4,498 crore), UCO Bank (₹3,056 crore) and United Bank of India (₹2,159 crore).

Kumar expressed hope that those who are not performing well, they should improve their results.

"They need to improve all parameters of NPAs, capital savings, non-core assets monetisation etc. All that agenda have been given to them," he said.

The recapitalisation will enhance the lending capacity of public sector banks and help them come out of the RBI's watch list. These include Allahabad Bank, United Bank of India, Corporation Bank, IDBI Bank, UCO Bank, Bank of India, Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce, Dena Bank and Bank of Maharashtra.

The PCA framework kicks in when banks breach any of the three key regulatory trigger points — namely capital to risk weighted assets ratio, net non-performing assets (NPA) and return on assets (RoA).

Globally, PCA kicks in only when banks slip on a single parameter of capital adequacy ratio, and the Government and some of the independent directors of the RBI board, like S Gurumurthy, are in favour of this practice being adopted for the domestic banking sector as well.

CAIT to launch campaign to strengthen importance of traders in LS polls

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Traders' body CAIT on Sunday said it has decided to launch a nation-wide campaign in order to establish the importance of trading community in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) is launching a national campaign 'One Nation-One Trader-Ten Votes' beginning February 1 to establish the importance of trading community in polls, the association secretary general Praveen Khandelwal said in a statement.

As part of the campaign, it said, special teams of local trade associations in each city affiliated with the association will contact traders in their respective area and will make them aware of the importance of traders in national economy and urge them to cast their vote on the whip by CAIT.

"The Lok Sabha poll is an opportunity to underline our importance in Indian economy and we are gearing ourselves for the cause," he said.

Indians biggest supporters of international aid: WEF global survey

PTI ■ DAVOS

Indians have emerged as the biggest supporters of international aid, with a global public opinion survey putting India on the top when it comes to people expecting their nation to help other countries.

The survey released by the World Economic Forum ahead of its high profile annual meeting in this ski resort town on the Swiss Alps showed that South Asian countries, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, as also Nigeria and Saudi Arabia exhibit widespread support for international aid.

CHD Developers appoints Vineet Nanda as director for sales and marketing

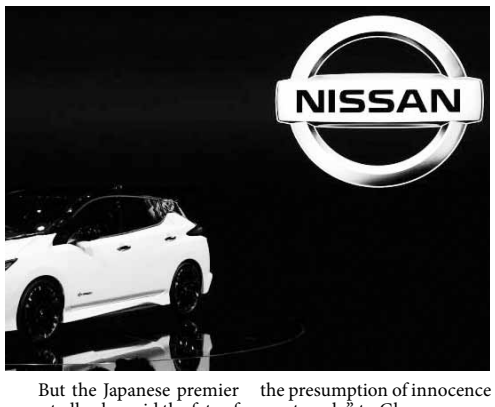
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm CHD Developers has appointed Vineet Nanda as Director — strategy, sales and marketing — of the company. Nanda has over three decades of experience in manufacturing and real estate sectors.

Prior to joining CHD Developers, Nanda held top management positions in several organisations such as USHA International, Omaxe, M3M India and Central Park, the filing said.

France pushes Japan to accept Renault-Nissan merger: Reports

AFP ■ PARIS



Japanese media reported on Sunday that France wants a merger between Renault and Nissan following the arrest of former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn, but according to France's economy minister changing the current set-up is "not on the table".

Ghosn headed a powerful alliance between Nissan, Mitsubishi and Renault before his arrest in November on charges of financial misconduct.

A delegation including Martin Vial — a Renault director designated by the French Government — made the merger request at talks with Japanese officials in Tokyo, Kyodo News reported, citing sources close to the matter.

The French Government is the biggest shareholder in Renault with a stake of more than 15 per cent, while Renault owns 43.4 per cent of the Japanese carmaker Nissan with voting rights.

A merger between the two is favoured by French President Emmanuel Macron, Kyodo said.

Japanese business daily Nikkei also reported the merger request by the French delegation, saying Nissan had been opposed to giving Paris greater sway over the Japanese carmaker.

According to Nikkei, the delegation also said Renault wants to name Nissan's next chairman — a post that has remained vacant since Ghosn was ousted on his arrest in November.

But the reports appear to contradict comments French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire made to *Le Journal du Dimanche* (JDD) newspaper, published Sunday.

"A shareholder rebalancing, a change in cross-shareholdings between Renault and Nissan is not on the table," he told the French weekly.

Contacted by AFP, a French economy ministry spokesman had no comment to make on the Japanese media reports.

Macron last month held talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Argentina, at which they only agreed to ensure a stable relationship within the three-way alliance, which also includes Japan's Mitsubishi Motors.

Abe reportedly stressed the importance of all three companies "maintaining their stable relationship" at the summit talk.

But the Japanese premier reportedly also said the fate of the group should be decided by "private businesses" and "Governments should not commit to how the alliance should operate going forward", according to a senior Government official quoted by Kyodo.

Last week, Renault said it had launched the search for a successor to Ghosn, after a Tokyo court quashed his appeal for bail as he faces three charges of financial misconduct.

But Le Maire also said in his interview with the JDD newspaper: "The principle of the presumption of innocence must apply" to Ghosn.

But over and above Ghosn's case, "there are also the interests of Renault and of the alliance", he added.

"A business of this scale needs solid and stable Governance."

The French Government has called for a board meeting to pick Ghosn's successor.

Nissan, which holds a 15-per cent stake in Renault, is widely seen as hoping to reduce the influence of the French partner on its management and review the alliance to make it more equitable.

US hiring to be sustained effort, onboarded over 7,600 people: Infosys

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Infosys has hired over 7,600 staff in the US — more than three-fourth of its target of recruiting 10,000 American workers — and said it is making recruitment from local schools a "sustained effort" in its largest market.

"...We have pretty much done 7,600-plus. We have opened five hubs now, we have announced six of them and we have opened five of them and we have hired 2,000 plus school grads — campus hires," Infosys President and Deputy Chief Operating Officer Ravi Kumar said in a recent investor call.

He added that the company is "on track on localisation".

North America is the largest market for Infosys accounting for 60.4 per cent of the topline, followed by Europe (24.2 per cent), rest of the world (12.8 per cent) and India (2.6 per cent) at the end of December 2018 quarter.

The Bengaluru-based company reported 20.3 per cent increase in revenue from operations at ₹21,400 crore in the said quarter.

In May 2017, Infosys had announced that it will set up four technology and innovation hubs and hire about 10,000 locals in the US over a two-year period.

Infosys CEO Salil Parekh, who took over the top job last year, has outlined 'localisation', along with strategic investments and enhancing company's digital capabilities as key areas of this three-year strategic plan. The strategy outlined focussed on stabilising the company's business in 2018-19, building momentum the next year, followed by acceleration in 2020-21.

Kumar explained that Infosys has recruited from campuses, trained them, and then moved them into live projects.

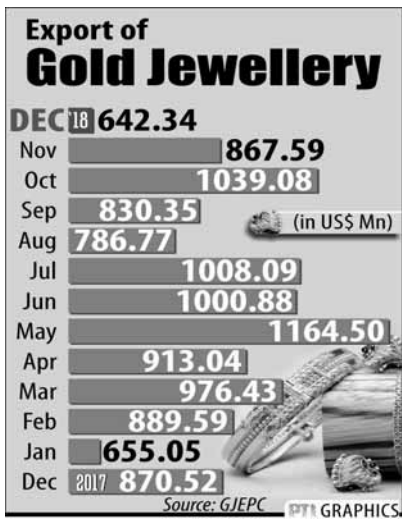
"This is a sustained effort, and as a part of our operating model, we would like to continue hiring in the US from schools, building a training infrastructure around it and then actually building a natural pyramid onsite as well. So, this is a sustained effort. It is going to continue as we go forward," he said.

Infosys had announced setting up of technology and innovation hubs in Indianapolis (Indiana), Raleigh (North Carolina), Hartford (Connecticut), and Phoenix (Arizona). It is also establishing a design and innovation hub in Providence, Rhode Island.

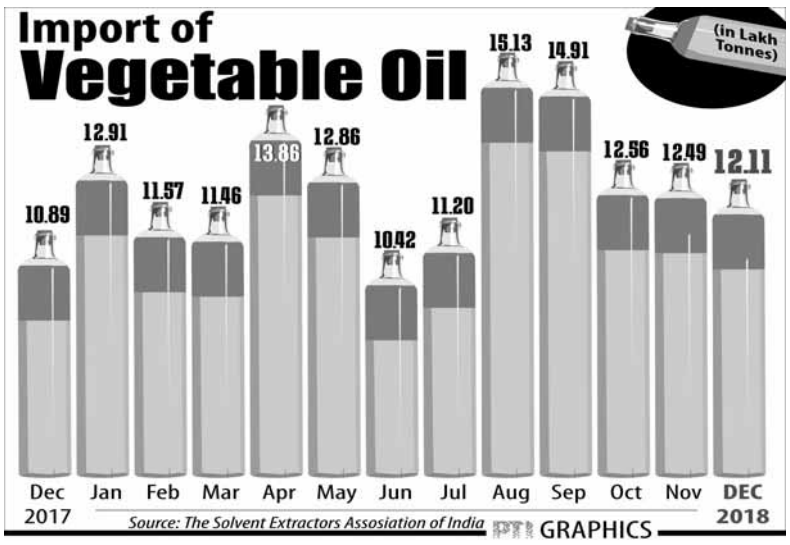
Infosys, like many of its peers, has been ramping local hiring in key markets like the US, the UK and Australia to tackle increasing scrutiny around work visas by various governments.

In November last year, Infosys said it will set up three innovation hubs in Australia and create 1,200 jobs in the country by 2020 — a move that will enable Infosys to co-create and co-innovate alongside clients, academia and government to accelerate innovation as well as upskill talent in emerging technologies and solutions.

Scheme	NAV	1Yr %
Tata Digital India Fund-Reg(G)	14.48	21.49
ICICI Pru Technology Fund(G)	59.09	18.61
SBI Technology Opp Fund-Reg(G)	62.18	16.29
Aditya Birla SL Digital India Fund(G)	51.15	11.39
Franklin India Technology Fund(G)	154.45	10.83
Franklin India Feeder-Franklin U.S. Opportunities Fund(G)	28.43	10.80
DHFL Pramerica Global Equity Opp Fund(G)	17.25	9.38
Aditya Birla SL Global Real Estate Fund(G)	18.81	8.94
Reliance US Equity Opp Fund(G)	14.09	8.66
ICICI Pru US Bluechip Equity Fund(G)	26.07	7.94
ICICI Pru FMCG Fund(G)	238.17	6.31
Axis Multicap Fund-Reg(G)	10.76	6.22
Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-A(G)	20.22	5.79
Axis Bluechip Fund(G)	26.83	5.34
Reliance Pharma Fund(G)	149.80	4.51
SBI Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	16.39	4.05
Tata Index Fund-Sensex Plan(G)	89.32	4.01
HDFC Index Fund-Sensex(G)	321.38	4.01
Sundaram World Brand Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	13.82	3.50
Reliance Index Fund - Sensex Plan(G)	17.89	3.47
Sundaram World Brand Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)	13.98	3.46
Kotak US Equity Fund(G)	15.82	3.15
Canara Rob Equity Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	61.90	2.26
ICICI Pru Growth Fund-2(DP)	11.44	2.20
IDFC Nifty Fund-Reg(G)	22.45	2.13
HDFC Index Fund-NIFTY 50 Plan(G)	98.78	1.99
UTI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	70.82	1.92
Canara Rob Bluechip Equity Fund-Reg(G)	23.45	1.91
DSP US Flexible Equity Fund-Reg(G)	23.58	1.90
Tata Index Fund-Nifty Plan(G)	65.64	1.80
ICICI Pru Global Stable Equity Fund(G)	14.69	1.74
ICICI Pru Business Cycle Fund-2(G)	14.21	1.57
SBI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	93.37	1.48
SBI Magnum Equity ESG Fund-Reg(G)	98.87	1.44
UTI Equity Fund-Reg(G)	135.02	1.21
Reliance Index Fund - Nifty Plan(G)	18.21	1.15
DSP Global Allocation Fund-Reg(G)	11.91	1.10
Kotak India EQ Contra Fund(G)	49.59	1.10
ICICI Pru Nifty Index Fund(G)	104.97	1.10
Aditya Birla SL Index Fund(G)	106.74	0.91
Franklin India Index Fund-NSE Nifty(G)	86.22	0.86
Axis Midcap Fund(G)	34.52	0.73
IDBI Nifty Index Fund(G)	20.07	0.60
Sundaram Select Focus(G)	169.76	0.44
Canara Rob Consumer Trends Fund-Reg(G)	37.56	0.43
Canara Rob Equity Diver Fund-Reg(G)	126.58	0.37
Tata Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	17.30	0.00
Mirae Asset Great Consumer Fund-Reg(G)	33.93	-0.28
Baroda Banking & Fin Serv Fund(G)	21.34	-0.47
Edelweiss Large Cap Fund(G)	33.57	-0.74
DHFL Pramerica Large Cap Fund-2-Reg(G)	11.99	-0.87
JM Large Cap Fund(G)	64.85	-1.44
ICICI Pru India Recovery Fund-4(G)	16.83	-1.46
UTI MNC Fund-Reg(G)	196.91	-1.65
ICICI Pru LT Equity Fund (Tax Saving)(G)	358.49	-1.65
Invesco India Largecap Fund(G)	27.29	-1.76
Parag Parikh Long Term Equity Fund-Reg(G)	23.53	-1.79
DSP World Agriculture Fund-Reg(G)	15.96	-1.82
HDFC Top 100 Fund(G)	466.62	-1.87
Aditya Birla SL CEF-Global Agri-Reg(G)	23.31	-2.07
Sundaram Large and Mid Cap Fund(G)	32.87	-2.08
UTI Mastershare-Reg(G)	116.09	-2.12
ICICI Pru Multicap Fund(G)	279.56	-2.24
ICICI Pru Banking & Fin Serv Fund(G)	61.34	-2.28
UTI Dividend Yield Fund-Reg(G)	63.09	-2.29
Principal Focused Multicap Fund(G)	61.55	-2.33
Aditya Birla SL India GenNext Fund(G)	79.81	-2.37
Invesco India Growth Opp Fund(G)	32.39	-2.38
Kotak Standard Multicap Fund(G)	33.10	-2.39
ICICI Pru Value Fund-5(G)	15.04	-2.53
Mirae Asset India Equity Fund-Reg(G)	47.96	-2.62
ICICI Pru Bluechip Fund(G)	40.28	-2.71
Reliance Large Cap Fund(G)	33.09	-2.82
Tata India Pharma & Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	8.70	-2.87



Reliance Japan Equity Fund(G)	12.38	-2.95
Axis Long Term Equity Fund(G)	41.37	-3.00
UTI India LifeStyle Fund-Reg(G)	25.17	-3.06
Invesco India Tax Plan(G)	48.68	-3.26
Reliance Banking Fund(G)	264.47	-3.39
Invesco India Financial Services Fund(G)	52.31	-3.50
Baroda Large Cap Fund(G)	13.77	-3.97
UTI Value Opp Fund-Reg(G)	58.05	-4.08
Mirae Asset Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	16.57	-4.12
Franklin India Taxshield(G)	542.63	-4.17
L&T India Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	25.41	-4.22
Tata India Consumer Fund-Reg(G)	17.16	-4.22
Aditya Birla SL Frontline Equity Fund(G)	215.76	-4.22
IDFC Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	31.01	-4.39
Axis Focused 25 Fund(G)	25.74	-4.42
Kotak Bluechip Fund(G)	219.65	-4.44
Kotak Tax Saver Scheme(G)	41.34	-4.45
Aditya Birla SL MNC Fund(G)	741.34	-4.49
ICICI Pru Value Fund-8(D)	10.20	-4.50
Invesco India Feeder-Invesco Global Equity Income Fund(G)	12.26	-4.54
Aditya Birla SL Tax Relief '96(G)	30.49	-4.66
Reliance Capital Builder Fund-II-B(G)	12.45	-4.73
Edelweiss Large & Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	29.89	-4.75
ICICI Pru Growth Fund-1(DP)	10.59	-4.80
Reliance Multi Cap Fund(G)	94.82	-4.82
Reliance Quant Fund(G)	24.31	-4.87
DHFL Pramerica Large Cap Fund(G)	157.51	-4.90
Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)	13.20	-4.98
Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	14.20	-5.00
Sundaram Value Fund-II-Reg(G)	15.49	-5.01
Invesco India Contra Fund(G)	45.83	-5.05
Tata Large Cap Fund(G)	206.62	-5.13
HDFC Equity Fund(G)	633.27	-5.13
SBI Consumption Opp Fund-Reg(G)	115.04	-5.16
HDFC Growth Opp Fund-Reg(G)	108.91	-5.19
Edelweiss Multi-Cap Fund-Reg(G)	13.97	-5.20
ICICI Pru Focused Equity Fund(G)	28.41	-5.21
JM Tax Gain Fund(G)	15.82	-5.34
Edelweiss Emerging Markets Opp Eq. Offshore Fund-Reg(G)	12.20	-5.39
ICICI Pru R.I.G.H.T Fund(G)	41.59	-5.43
DSP Top 100 Equity Fund-Reg(G)	193.36	-5.45
BNP Paribas Large Cap Fund(G)	83.24	-5.55
Aditya Birla SL Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	26.85	-5.56
Aditya Birla SL Equity Fund(G)	695.93	-5.64
Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-B(G)	17.88	-5.71
IDBI Equity Advantage Fund-Reg(G)	25.60	-5.74
Franklin India Bluechip Fund(G)	446.07	-5.80
Aditya Birla SL Focused Equity Fund(G)	55.96	-5.86
Mirae Asset Emerging Bluechip-Reg(G)	49.84	-5.91
SBI Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	129.98	-5.93
SBI BlueChip Fund-Reg(G)	36.93	-5.94
SBI Magnum Multicap Fund-Reg(G)	46.07	-5.99
Kotak Equity Opp Fund(G)	112.67	-6.02
SBI Large & Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	212.86	-6.02
Franklin India Equity Advantage Fund(G)	77.22	-6.08
Principal Dividend Yield Fund(G)	51.49	-6.18
Sundaram Fin Serv Opp Fund(G)	38.47	-6.21
DHFL Pramerica LT Equity Fund-Reg(G)	13.58	-6.28
IDBI Diversified Equity Fund(G)	20.41	-6.33
Franklin India Equity Fund(G)	569.56	-6.37
JM Core 11 Fund(G)	8.31	-6.37
Tata Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	192.09	-6.41
UTI LT Equity Fund (Tax Saving)-Reg(G)	83.43	-6.57
DSP World Energy Fund-Reg(G)	12.77	-6.58
IDBI India Top 100 Equity Fund(G)	22.84	-6.78
DHFL Pramerica Tax Plan(G)	29.43	-6.81
Sundaram Global Advt(G)	16.19	-6.85
ICICI Pru Value Discovery Fund(G)	139.46	-6.88
ICICI Pru Value Fund-15(G)	10.23	-6.92
JM Multicap Fund(G)	29.38	-6.97
Reliance Close Ended Equity Fund-II-A(G)	17.25	-7.19
HDFC Capital Builder Value Fund(G)	284.01	-7.29
Motilal Oswal Focused 25 Fund-Reg(G)	20.41	-7.31
Invesco India Midcap Fund(G)	47.37	-7.34
ICICI Pru Value Fund-3(D)	10.14	-7.51
Tata Ethical Fund(G)	153.35	-7.74
UTI Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	83.36	-7.85
Franklin India Focused Equity Fund(G)	38.55	-8.02
Principal Nifty 100 Equal Weight Fund(G)	68.79	-8.10
DSP Focus Fund-Reg(G)	21.46	-8.16
SBI Healthcare Opp Fund-Reg(G)	120.70	-8.19
Tata India Tax Savings Fund-Reg(G)	16.94	-8.21
UTI Banking and Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	93.17	-8.25
ICICI Pru Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	309.75	-8.41
DSP Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	44.71	-8.45
IDFC Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	43.23	-8.47
Sundaram Rural and Consumption Fund(G)	40.59	-8.50
ICICI Pru Value Fund-9(G)	11.75	-8.56
Canara Rob Emerg Equities Fund-Reg(G)	88.85	-8.68
Tata Equity P/E Fund(G)	128.88	-8.75
SBI Magnum Tax Gain'93-Reg(G)	138.72	-8.76
L&T Long Term Advantage Fund-I(G)	49.33	-8.78
Invesco India Feeder - Invesco Pan European Equity Fund-Reg(G)	10.45	-8.83
BNP Paribas Long Term Equity Fund(G)	36.04	-8.88
L&T Equity Fund-Reg(G)	78.31	-8.97
DSP World Mining Fund-Reg(G)	7.99	-8.99
ICICI Pru Growth Fund-3(DP)	10.05	-9.11
UTI Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	60.62	-9.14
SBI Equity Opp Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)	15.17	-9.34
DSP Equity Fund-Reg(G)	35.95	-9.41
Templeton India Equity Income Fund(G)	44.66	-9.51
HDFC Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	42.24	-9.51
IDFC Multi Cap Fund-Reg(G)	88.57	-9.52
DHFL Pramerica Diversified Equity Fund-Reg(G)	12.47	-9.57
Franklin India Prima Fund(G)	922.36	-9.59
ICICI Pru Exports & Services Fund(G)	54.33	-9.71
Aditya Birla SL Global Commodities Fund(G)	12.37	-9.72
DHFL Pramerica Euro Equity Fund(G)	12.79	-9.74
SBI Magnum Global Fund-Reg(G)	167.51	-9.79
Edelweiss Long Term Equity Fund (Tax Savings)-Reg(G)	44.44	-9.80
DSP Equity Opportunities Fund-Reg(G)	207.46	-9.91
Reliance Value Fund(G)	70.12	-9.98
DSP World Gold Fund-Reg(G)	11.00	-10.07
Motilal Oswal Multicap 35 Fund-Reg(G)	24.75	-10.08
ICICI Pru Value Fund-11(G)	11.60	-10.15
Franklin Build India Fund(G)	39.32	-10.62
Franklin India Opportunities Fund(G)	70.06	-10.76
Reliance Consumption Fund(G)	62.97	-10.76
Principal Personal Tax saver Fund	188.55	-10.78
Reliance Growth Fund(G)	1064.97	-10.91
Motilal Oswal Long Term Equity Fund-Reg(G)	16.32	-10.92
HDFC TaxSaver(G)	497.31	-10.94
Principal Multi Cap Growth Fund(G)	137.24	-10.95
ICICI Pru Nifty Next 50 Index Fund(G)	24.25	-11.09
Edelweiss Eur Dynamic Equity Off-shr Fund-Reg(G)	10.37	-11.11
Principal Tax Savings Fund	200.82	-11.48
SBI Tax Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	22.49	-11.48
DSP Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	51.78	-11.54
L&T Tax Advt Fund-Reg(G)	52.01	-11.60
IDBI Nifty Junior Index Fund(G)	20.66	-11.63
JM Value Fund(G)	29.73	-11.64
Sundaram Diversified Equity(G)	95.76	-11.66
ICICI Pru Value Fund-10(G)	10.98	-11.67
SBI Tax advantage Fund-II(G)	33.58	-11.90
ICICI Pru Midcap Fund(G)	93.32	-11.95
HDFC Mid-Cap Opportunities Fund(G)	52.47	-11.98
Motilal Oswal Midcap 30 Fund-Reg(G)	23.73	-11.98
Principal Emerging Bluechip Fund(G)	99.63	-11.98
Kotak Emerging Equity Scheme(G)	36.81	-12.03
Franklin Asian Equity Fund(G)	20.56	-12.06
IDFC Tax Advt(ELSS) Fund-Reg(G)	52.86	-12.40
ICICI Pru Value Fund-4(G)	20.63	-12.70
Principal Global Opportunities Fund(G)	26.78	-12.75
IDFC Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	35.45	-12.88
ICICI Pru Dividend Yield Equity Fund(G)	16.27	-12.95
BNP Paribas Multi Cap Fund(G)	44.21	-12.96
Templeton India Value Fund(G)	243.97	-13.17
SBI LT Advantage Fund-IV-Reg(G)	12.16	-13.19
Tata Mid Cap Growth Fund(G)	129.42	-13.25
L&T India Value Fund-Reg(G)	34.19	-13.29
Aditya Birla SL Equity Advantage Fund(G)	382.75	-13.36
Invesco India Multicap Fund(G)	45.83	-13.51
Baroda ELSS 96(G)	42.34	-13.68
L&T Large and Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	44.87	-13.68
L&T Emerging Businesses Fund-Reg(G)	24.31	-15.96
ICICI Pru Infrastructure Fund(G)	48.05	-16.01
IDFC Sterling Value Fund-Reg(G)	49.11	-16.02
IDBI Midcap Fund(G)	10.51	-16.05
Invesco India Infrastructure Fund(G)	16.10	-16.10
Aditya Birla SL Dividend Yield Fund(G)	155.74	-16.17
Tata Resources & Energy Fund-Reg(G)	13.37	-16.33
DSP Natural Res & New Energy Fund-Reg(G)	30.38	-16.73
IDBI Small Cap Fund(G)	9.33	-16.77
UTI Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	49.17	-16.84
UTI LT Adv Fund-IV(G)	10.21	-16.88
Franklin India Smaller Cos Fund(G)	52.62	-16.91
Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series IV-Reg(G)	29.03	-17.15
Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series III-Reg(G)	30.61	-17.16
SBI LT Advantage Fund-II-Reg(G)	12.91	-17.31
Edelweiss Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	25.47	-17.50
SBI Magnum MidCap Fund-Reg(G)	70.75	-17.56
BNP Paribas Mid Cap Fund(G)	30.68	-17.60
Tata Infrastructure Fund(G)	52.00	-17.75
L&T Business Cycle Fund-Reg(G)	14.52	-17.76
SBI Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	14.01	-17.85
Kotak Small Cap Fund(G)	68.74	-17.90
Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series II-Reg(G)	30.77	-18.23
Canara Rob Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	42.97	-18.42
DSP India T.I.G.E.R Fund-Reg(G)	84.68	-18.45
Reliance Small Cap Fund(G)	39.25	-18.47
Tata Infrastructure Tax Saving Fund(G)	22.92	-18.58
SBI LT Advantage Fund-I-Reg(G)	12.55	-18.91
Reliance Vision Fund(G)	503.07	-19.31
L&T Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	15.34	-19.69
Kotak Infra & Eco Reform Fund(G)	18.81	-20.60
Sundaram Infra Advantage Fund(G)	30.63	-21.00
SBI Magnum Comma Fund-Reg(G)	33.74	-21.02
UTI Transportation & Logistics Fund-Reg(G)	99.20	-21.10



Aditya Birla SL Mfg. Equity Fund-Reg(G)	13.02	-13.72
L&T Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	130.91	-13.85
Sundaram Select Small Cap Series-IV-Reg(G)	13.29	-14.07
Reliance Focused Equity Fund(G)	44.34	-14.09
HDFC Focused 30 Fund(G)	74.20	-14.43
UTI LT Adv Fund-III(G)	13.18	-14.46
Sundaram Select Small Cap Series-III-Reg(G)	13.26	-14.47
UTI Focussed Equity Fund-I(G)	12.84	-14.49
Kotak World Gold Fund(G)	7.62	-14.60
Kotak Global Emerging Mkt Fund(G)	14.81	-14.64
Baroda Mid-cap Fund(G)	8.78	-15.09
UTI LT Adv Fund-V(G)	9.43	-15.15
DHFL Pramerica Midcap Opp Fund-Reg(G)	17.51	-15.29
UTI Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	98.53	-15.36
Invesco India PSU Equity Fund(G)	16.46	-15.72
Sundaram Mid Cap Fund(G)	453.26	-15.83
Edelweiss Gr China Equity Off-Shore Fund-Reg(G)	24.07	-15.85
SBI Contra Fund-Reg(G)	104.17	-15.89
SBI LT Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	12.48	-15.91
Aditya Birla SL Midcap Fund(G)	278.42	-15.91
SBI Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	49.66	-21.13
Reliance Tax Saver (ELSS) Fund(G)	53.76	-22.14
Aditya Birla SL Infrastructure Fund(G)	30.08	-22.33
SBI PSU Fund-Reg(G)	9.66	-22.48
ICICI Pru Smallcap Fund(G)	23.20	-23.93
Aditya Birla SL Small Cap Fund(G)	33.72	-24.32
Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series X-Reg(G)	13.14	-24.69
Reliance Power & Infra Fund(G)	94.22	-25.07
Aditya Birla SL Emerging Leaders Fund-7-Reg(G)	12.68	-25.10
Aditya Birla SL Pure Value Fund(G)	51.05	-25.24
DSP Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	53.07	-25.54
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr V-Reg(G)	8.60	-26.52
IDFC Infrastructure-Reg(G)	14.33	-27.04
Aditya Birla SL Emerging Leaders Fund-3-Reg(G)	13.73	-28.08
Aditya Birla SL Emerging Leaders Fund-4-Reg(G)	14.21	-28.77
Sundaram Small Cap Fund(G)	79.58	-28.81
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)	10.30	-29.45
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr IV-Reg(G)	8.76	-29.79
HDFC Infrastructure Fund(G)	15.76	-30.00

Trump launches plan to end Govt shutdown

Offers protection to undocumented immigrants in exchange of border wall funding

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has launched a new plan to end a Government shutdown, which has been ongoing for nearly a month, by offering protection from deportations for some undocumented immigrants in exchange for $5.7 billion for constructing a wall on the US-Mexico border.

The Democrats, however, rejected the deal as a "non-starter" and called on Trump to open the government before negotiations on immigration could start.

Trump, who made his offer during a televised speech from the White House, offered that he would give protection from deportation for young people brought to the country illegally as children -- also known as 'Dreamers' -- and also extend it to those with temporary protected status after fleeing countries affected by natural disasters or violence.

The president also called for USD 800 million in "urgent humanitarian assistance" and USD 805 million for drug detection technology to help secure US ports of entry.

Trump also proposed a slew of measures to increase border security, including an increase in law enforcement, saying he was offering a "commonsense compromise both parties (Republicans and Democrats) should embrace."

The president said these concessions would "build the trust and goodwill necessary to begin real immigration reform."

The divide between the Trump-led Republican Party and the Democratic Party led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi over the border wall led to the partial shutdown, which has rendered 800,000 federal government workers without work and crippled key departments.

The shutdown -- the longest in the US history-- entered its 29th day, as Trump Saturday made the announcements.

"Both sides in Washington must simply come together," Trump said in a White House speech, adding he is trying to "break the logjam."

Fuel pipeline blaze in Mexico kills at least 79

AFP ■ TLAHUELILPAN (MEXICO)

An explosion and fire in central Mexico killed at least 79 people after hundreds swarmed to the site of an illegal fuel-line tap to gather gasoline amid a Government crackdown on fuel theft, officials said.

Hidalgo state governor Omar Fayad announced that the toll had increased to 79 after the discovery of five additional bodies. The blast — which Fayad said injured 74 people —occurred near Tlahuelilpan, a town of 20,000 people about an hour's drive north of Mexico City.

As soldiers guarded the devastated, still-smoking scene, forensic specialists in white suits worked among the blackened corpses — many frozen in the unnatural positions in which they had fallen — and grim-eyed civilians stepped cautiously along in a desperate search for missing relatives.

The pungent smell of fuel hung in the air. Fragments of burnt clothing were strewn through the charred brush.

When the forensic workers began attempting to load corpses into vans to be transported to funeral homes, some 30 villagers tried to stop them. They demanded their relatives' bodies, saying funeral homes were too expensive. The bodies were ultimately taken to a morgue, authorities said. On Friday, when authorities heard that fuel traffickers had punctured the pipeline, an army unit of about 25 soldiers arrived and attempted to block off the area, Defense Secretary Luis Crescencio Sandoval told reporters.

But the soldiers were unable to contain the estimated 700 civilians -- including entire families -- who swarmed in to collect the spilled gasoline in jerrycans and buckets, witnesses said.

The armed soldiers had been moved away from the pipeline to avoid any risk of confrontation with the crowd when the blast occurred, some two hours after the pipeline was first breached, Sandoval said.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, a leftist who took office only weeks ago, traveled to the scene early Saturday.

He did not fault the soldiers, saying, "The attitude of the army was correct. It is not easy to impose order on a crowd." He vowed to continue fighting the growing problem of fuel theft.

"I am deeply saddened by the suffering in Tlahuelilpan," Lopez Obrador wrote on Twitter. He called on his "whole government" to extend assistance.

The US Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen, tweeted that her department "stands ready to assist the first responders and the Mexican government in any way possible." Video taken in the aftermath showed screaming people fleeing the scene as an enormous fire lit up the night sky.

Forensic experts working in the area an oil pipeline explosion in Tlahuelilpan, Hidalgo State, Mexico on Saturday AP

GLOBE TROTTING

TOP FINANCIER OF DHAKA CAFE ATTACK HELD

Dhaka: A top Islamist extremist, who allegedly supplied arms, explosives and money to the militants who carried out 2016 terror attack on a cafe in Bangladesh, has been arrested, police said on Sunday.

2 KILLED IN LARGE FIRE AT FRENCH SKI RESORT

Paris: Two people have been killed and 25 others injured in a large blaze that broke out on Sunday in the French ski resort of Courchevel, local authorities said.

INDIAN AMONG 8 HELD IN NEPAL FOR DRUG PEDDLING

Kathmandu: An Indian man is among eight persons arrested from different parts of Nepal on Sunday for possessing contraband drugs, police said here.
The man identified as Rajesh Mahato, a resident of Sonbarsa area in Bihar, was arrested from Malangawa town in Nepal's Sarlahi district during a security check.

BLAST KILLS 5 DEMINING EXPERTS IN YEMEN

Dubai: An explosion killed five demining specialists in war-torn Yemen's central province of Maarib on Sunday, security and medical sources said.

Attack on UN base in Mali kills 8 peacekeepers: UN source

AFP ■ BAMAKO

Gunmen killed at least eight Chadian UN peacekeepers in an attack Sunday on one of their bases in northern Mali, a source close to the MINUSMA force said.

"According to a new toll, still provisional, at least eight peacekeepers have been killed," the source said.

The attack happened early Sunday at the Aguelhok base 200 kilometres (125 miles) north of Kidal and towards the border with Algeria, the source added.

A Malian security source spoke of at least six killed and 19 wounded, while a diplomat in northern Mali told AFP that several of the attackers were also killed.

An attack at the same base last April killed two peacekeepers and left several others wounded.

More than 13,000 peacekeepers are deployed in Mali as part of a UN mission that was established after Islamist militias seized northern Mali in 2012.

They were pushed backed by French troops in 2013.

A peace agreement signed in 2015 by the Bamako Government and armed groups was aimed at restoring stability to Mali following a brief Islamist takeover in the north.

But the accord has failed to stop violence by Islamist militants, who have also staged attacks in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Trump celebrates new citizens in Oval Office ceremony

AP ■ WASHINGTON

On a day focused on his demand for a border wall, President Donald Trump used music and pageantry to welcome "the five newest members of our great American family" during a naturalisation ceremony in the Oval Office.

In a ceremony Saturday that began to the strains of a violin and ended with a booming national anthem, Trump celebrated the five new Americans from Iraq, Britain, South Korea, Jamaica and Bolivia.

"Each of you worked hard for this moment. You followed the rules, upheld our laws," the president said, stressing that they had arrived in the country legally.

A couple of hours later, Trump would unveil his offer to extend temporary protection to young immigrants brought to the US Illegally as children if Democrats would agree to fund the southern border wall he promised as a candidate. Democrats quickly dismissed the plan as a "non-starter."

Trump introduced each of the new US citizens, noting that some had come to the country with American spouses and some had children who were born here.

To a woman from South Korea who came to the US to pursue graduate studies and is now a university professor, he said: "I want to congratulate you, and you're going to have a great time."

The new citizens had the oath of allegiance administered by Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and received their naturalization certificates from Vice President Mike Pence, followed by a handshake from Trump.

"By taking this oath, you have forged a sacred bond with this nation, its traditions, its culture and its values.

This heritage is now yours to protect, promote and pass down to the next generation and to the next wave of newcomers to our shores," the president said.

Strong 6.7 strength quake jolts north-central Chile: USGS

AFP ■ SANTIAGO

A strong 6.7-magnitude earthquake hit north-central Chile on Saturday, the US Geological Survey said.

The quake struck at a depth of 53 kilometers (33 miles) with an epicenter some 15 km southwest of Coquimbo, according to the USGS. The earthquake, which hit at 0132 GMT (Sunday), was felt in Valparaiso, O'Higgins and the region of the capital Santiago, as well as in Atacama and Coquimbo up north.

Thousands of homes lost power, which showed how intense the quake was, according to Ricardo Toro of the National Emergency Office.

'Bomb blast' rocks Syrian capital Damascus, 1 held

AFP ■ DAMASCUS

A bomb blast hit the capital of war-torn Syria on Sunday and a "terrorist" was arrested, state media said, in a rare attack in the city that has been largely insulated from violence.

A Britain-based war monitor said a "huge explosion" near a military intelligence office in southern Damascus had left a number of people dead and wounded.

State news agency SANA said that a "bomb blast" had caused an explosion "without leaving any victims".

"There is confirmation of reports that a terrorist has been arrested," it said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor told AFP that "the explosion took place near a security branch in the south of the city".

"There are some people killed and injured but we could not verify the toll immediately," it said.

It was unclear if the blast was caused by a bomb that was planted or a suicide attack, according to the monitor, which relies on a network of sources inside the country.

UK faces 'political tsunami' if Brexit halted: Minister

AP ■ LONDON

A senior British opposition politician said Sunday that it's unlikely the UK will leave the European Union as scheduled on March 29, while a Government Minister warned that failure to deliver on Brexit would betray voters and unleash a "political tsunami."

The Brexit process has been deadlocked since Prime Minister Theresa May's divorce deal with the EU was rejected by Parliament last week. Some lawmakers are pushing for the UK to delay its departure until politicians can agree on a way forward. Labour Party Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer said "it's inevitable" Britain will have to ask the EU to extend the two-year Brexit countdown that ends on March 29.

The 29th of March is 68 days away, Starmer told the BBC. 'We are absolutely not prepared for it. It would be catastrophic'

"The 29th of March is 68 days away," Starmer told the BBC. "We are absolutely not prepared for it. It would be catastrophic."

Britain's political impasse over Brexit is fueling concerns that the country may crash out of the EU on March 29 with no agreement in place to cushion the shock. That could see tariffs imposed on goods moving between Britain and the EU, sparking gridlock at ports and shortages of essential supplies. Many economists expect Britain to plunge into recession if there is a "no-deal" Brexit.

May's government is split between ministers who think a "no-deal" Brexit must be avoided at all casts, and Brexit-backers who believe it would be preferable to delaying or reversing Brexit.

World's oldest man, 113, dies at his home in northern Japan

AP ■ TOKYO

The world's oldest man has died at his home — a hot springs inn — in northern Japan at the age of 113.

Masazo Nonaka died in the early hours of Sunday while sleeping at home in Ashoro on Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido, his family said.

He died peacefully from natural causes, according to his granddaughter Yuko Nonaka.

The supercentenarian, whose family has run a hot springs inn for four generations, was certified by Guinness World Records in April 2018 as the world's oldest living man at 112 years and 259 days. Born on July 25, 1905, Nonaka grew up in a large family and succeeded his parents running the inn. The 106-year-old inn is now run by his granddaughter Yuko.

She said her grandfather appeared to be as usual until her elder sister noticed he was not breathing. He was pronounced dead by his family doctor.

"He didn't have any health problem. ... He went peacefully and that's at least our consolation," she said. Nonaka, who enjoyed eating sweets, used to regularly soak in the springs, and would move about in the inn in a wheelchair, wearing his trademark knit cap.

He outlived all seven of his siblings, as well as his wife and three of their five children.

The fastest-aging country in the world, Japan as of September 2018 had a centenarian population of 69,785, nearly 90 percent of them women, according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Outcry in Pak as couple, teenage daughter killed in police 'encounter'

PTI ■ LAHORE

The killing of four people, including a man, his wife and their teenage daughter, in what Pakistan's Punjab police called a shootout with "terrorists" has triggered a public outcry and the victims' family held a protest against the "staged" encounter.

The family was travelling in a car when the alleged encounter — which the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) officials later termed an 'intelligence-based operation' — took place on a highway in Sahiwal, about 200 kms from Lahore, on Saturday.

Those killed in the encounter included grocery store owner Mohammad Khalil, 42, his wife Nabila, 38, their 13-year-old daughter Areeba and their friend, Zeeshan Javed, who was driving the car and police said he was on the country's wanted terrorist list. The couple's minor son also sustained a bullet injury while two other daughters remained safe.

According to CTD, the operation was conducted after an intelligence was received that terrorists were travelling towards Sahiwal with arms and explosives.

The CTD claimed in a statement that the law enforcers signalled a Suzuki Alto car and a motorcycle to stop near a toll plaza, but they did not pull over and instead opened fire.

Eyewitnesses and the victims's family memembers, however, strongly refuted the CTD's version, and told Pakistani daily Dawn that the four were shot dead in "cold blood by the police" in the "staged" encounter.

They claimed that no weapon was recovered from the vehicle after the alleged shootout, the daily reported.

The family members of the victims and area residents held a protesting and blocked a road in Lahore. Prime Minister Imran Khan has sought a report from Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar over the incident.

A woman holds a placard reading 'Living is right, not a choice' during a demonstration on Sunday AP

Pope heads to Panama for giant youth meeting

AFP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis will make his first trip to Panama on Wednesday for a gathering of more than 150,000 young Catholics from across the globe at the World Youth Day festival.

The 82-year-old pope will use the major event on the Catholic calendar to address the problems of poverty, corruption and migration in his native Latin America, church officials said.

"Our youth, particularly in Central America, need opportunities," said Panama Archbishop Jose Domingo Ulloa.

Often, their "hard reality" was a choice between emigration or "falling into the clutches of drug traffickers," said Ulloa, in Rome for a preparatory visit.

It will be Francis' third World Youth Day event, having presided over the gathering in Rio de Janeiro shortly after his election as pope in 2013 and again in Krakow, Poland in 2016.

In Poland, he challenged conservative Governments in Central and Eastern Europe to soften their resistance to migrants seeking refuge from conflict in the Middle East.

In a similar way, he is expected in Panama to stand up for migrants from El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras who make up the majority of those traveling in caravans to the US border, despite the opposition of President Donald Trump and the American right.

"Many of the young people who are participating in the WYD are immigrants themselves," Vatican spokesman Alessandro Gisotti said.

Hundreds of thousands of Central Americans cross the border into Mexico every year, heading north in search of a better life.

Millions more have fled economic collapse and political repression in Venezuela, straining social services in neighboring countries.

"The recent image of migrant caravans from Central America, with all their suffering, will be very much in mind," said Ulloa.

In an advance message to the event, Francis said many young people, both believers and non-believers, had "a strength that can change the world." On Friday, he said in a separate video message to the World Indigenous Youth gathering in Soloy, Panama, to hold on to their cultures and roots by fighting marginalization, exclusion, waste and impoverishment.

Netanyahu visits Chad, expected to renew ties

AFP ■ N'DJAMENA (CHAD)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Chad on Sunday for what he called a "historic" trip, during which diplomatic ties with the African state were expected to be renewed.

"I am now leaving on another historic and important breakthrough, to Chad, a huge Muslim country bordering Libya and Sudan," he told reporters before boarding the plane at the Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv.

"There will be big news," Netanyahu said, hinting at the formal resumption of diplomatic relations between the countries that Chad had cut in 1972.

His office later confirmed he had landed and was meeting with Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno in N'Djamena.

Netanyahu has sought to improve ties with countries in the Arab and Muslim world and said he expected more such diplomatic breakthroughs soon.

"There will be more countries," said Netanyahu, who is seeking re-election in April 9 polls while also facing the possibility of being indicted in corruption investigations in the coming weeks.

The one-day visit follows Deby's November trip to Israel.

The two leaders at the time declined to comment on whether their talks have included arms deals.

Chadian security sources say the country has acquired Israeli equipment to help battle rebels in the country's north.

Chad is also one of several African States engaged in Western-backed operations against Boko Haram and Islamic State group jihadists.

Pressure from Muslim African nations, accentuated by the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, led a number of African states to sever relations with the Jewish State.

Trend Blazer

'Mira tells me to calm down'

Actor **SHAHID KAPOOR** says he and his wife Mira have a different approach when it comes to parenting. He says she tells him to calm down a bit when it comes to their two children, while he feels she is "too casual." Shahid said, "My wife tells me that I am a little obsessive and protective and that I need to calm down a little bit. I tell her that she is too casual. Having said that, we try and find the middle ground which I think is good for the kids because you need to have both types of parents. If both are too obsessive or both are too careless I don't think that works, so you need to find that balance."

Shahid and Mira have a daughter named Misha and son named Zain.

'Few stories are so compelling that when a filmmaker is ready to tell the unadulterated version of it on the big screen, as an actor you feel excited to do such a film. Of course, *Manto* was one such project and I will be doing such films in coming days.'
—Nawazuddin Siddiqui

Actress **SOHA ALI KHAN**, also a mother, says people should not force their children to have anything.

"I would say don't force your child to have anything. Be persuasive and charming, but don't force them and respect their decisions. Try again another time if they refuse," Soha said.
"Inaaya (her daughter) likes her milk fortunately for now, but we all know how tempestuous toddlers can be. Be creative with the milk also — use fun containers, straws, make milkshakes and mix it in a healthy mix," she added.

'Don't let fashion hurt your feelings'

Singer **JOHN MAYER** feels people should not let fashion hurt their feelings.
He said, "You shouldn't let fashion hurt your feelings. If it does, that's a good indicator that you are taking it way too seriously. Anybody, at any time, should be allowed to wear whatever they like. Whether it works or not will be for their future self to make peace with."

According to Mayer, one should not pay much thought while dressing up.
"God knows I have a very well-documented history of attempts. Take a hat, for example. Do you know how many hats you have to wear before you find the one that actually works? Wearing bad hats is the only path to a good hat," the

TRAVELLER 2.0

Exploring new destinations and old linkages, experiencing luxury and adventure, Indians are redefining wanderlust and how. By TEAM VIVA

Travel, the very word conjures up images of golden sand beaches, towering mountains and exotic locales. But then it is no longer about tick marking the must-visits at a destination. The concept is changing and evolving. People want to experience adventure activities that a place can offer specific to the place. There is also 'bleisure' (leisure on business trips), which is an ideal way for workaholics to balance work with some leisure or bachelorettes at fancy locales where the brides/grooms can spend some quality time with their friends.

ACTIVITY-BASED

Experts say that the rise of recreation activities during holidays is the most noticeable trend. Through these people make the most of their vacations even if they travel for short breaks. Not surprisingly, the travel companies are viewing it as new opportunities.

Sunil Gupta, CEO of Avis India, says that there has been a growth in travellers who are inclined towards new experiences and adventures rather than simply strolling through the markets during their vacation. This in turn translated into an increase in the average spending. He says, "Keeping this factor in mind, travel portals are making sure to act as catalyst in encouraging the adventure options for their travellers." Keeping this in mind, Avis India has come up with self-drive options even in foreign countries to ease the journey. Cleartrip, on the other hand, has partnered with the Hong Kong-based adventure park Klook and is offering packages for activities. Travel company, Tirun is associating with many Indian chefs to offer more elaborated Indian cuisines even outside the country.

"We have noticed that Australia and New Zealand have a beautiful coastline that can only be accessed through the medium of a cruise. Keeping this in mind, a cruise will be launched to cater to this market and its rising demand," says Naresh Rawal, vice president, sales & marketing, Asia Pacific, Genting Cruise Lines.

INTERNATIONAL IN FOCUS

Experts have also observed a rise in international travels among Indian travellers during the past one year, and believe that they're bound to rise even more.

According to a report by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), India will account for 50 million outbound tourists by 2020, which is twice the current figures. The average expenditure by Indian outbound travellers on short-haul trips will be about $857 or ₹61,065 per trip per person, and long-haul trips will be about $1,687 or ₹1,20,207.

ROAD LESS-TRAVELLED

Karan Anand, head, relationships, Cox & Kings, says that among international destinations, Northern Europe is becoming the prime travel region for Indian travellers with many less-travelled spots like Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland and Morocco securing a place in their travel maps. Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Laos and South Korea are also luring Indian travellers. In terms of romantic destinations or spots for the newly-weds, the Reunion Island in France is emerging as the ideal vacation spot. In Asia where people were typically travelling to Hong Kong and Malaysia, now they have extended their horizons to Vietnam and Cambodia. Tanzania and Zanzibar in Africa are also the new hotspots.

Vishal Kejriwal, ceo and co-founder of Taxidio also echoes similar observations. "People are shifting from West Europe to East and Central parts of the continent. Malta, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro are trending the most," says Kejriwal.

Overall among international travel spots, Rawal says, "McLeod islands in Thailand and Southern islands of Japan — Miyakojima and Naha — are now being picked up as hot new destinations specifically in Asia."

There has been yet another pattern observed for the travellers who don't step out very frequently or are first-time travellers. Anand says, "First-time travellers usually pick conventional destinations or the ones that are not very new to people's knowledge. It is specifically the segment of experienced travellers who look for newer destinations, be it personal vacation with family and friends or for business travel."

EXPLORING OLD ROADS

While going to unknown destinations is a must-do, exploring back in time is also the way to go. The old Silk Route is an experience that the traveller wants to undertake. Central Asian countries are like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and more are reviving the old linkages and the industries associated to it. Florian Sengstschmid, CEO of Azerbaijan Tourism Board, says, "Travelling from Baku, the capital, you can go to the other end of the country along this ancient road. There are many houses that still use the old methods for printing on silk or even the way they use metals. An intrepid and curious traveller with the help of a local guide can have an enriching experience."

BLEISURE

If looking at it categorically, Middle-East countries like Qatar and Oman have become top picks for MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) due to a rise in work or business trips, says Anand.

It is also corroborated by a report by Forbes which says that 87 per cent of business travellers are likely to mix business and leisure on the same trip. However, the irony is that 92 per cent of respondents still admitted to doing some work on dedicated leisure vacations, while 56 per cent of travellers with children included family on business trips.

LUXURY ON CALL

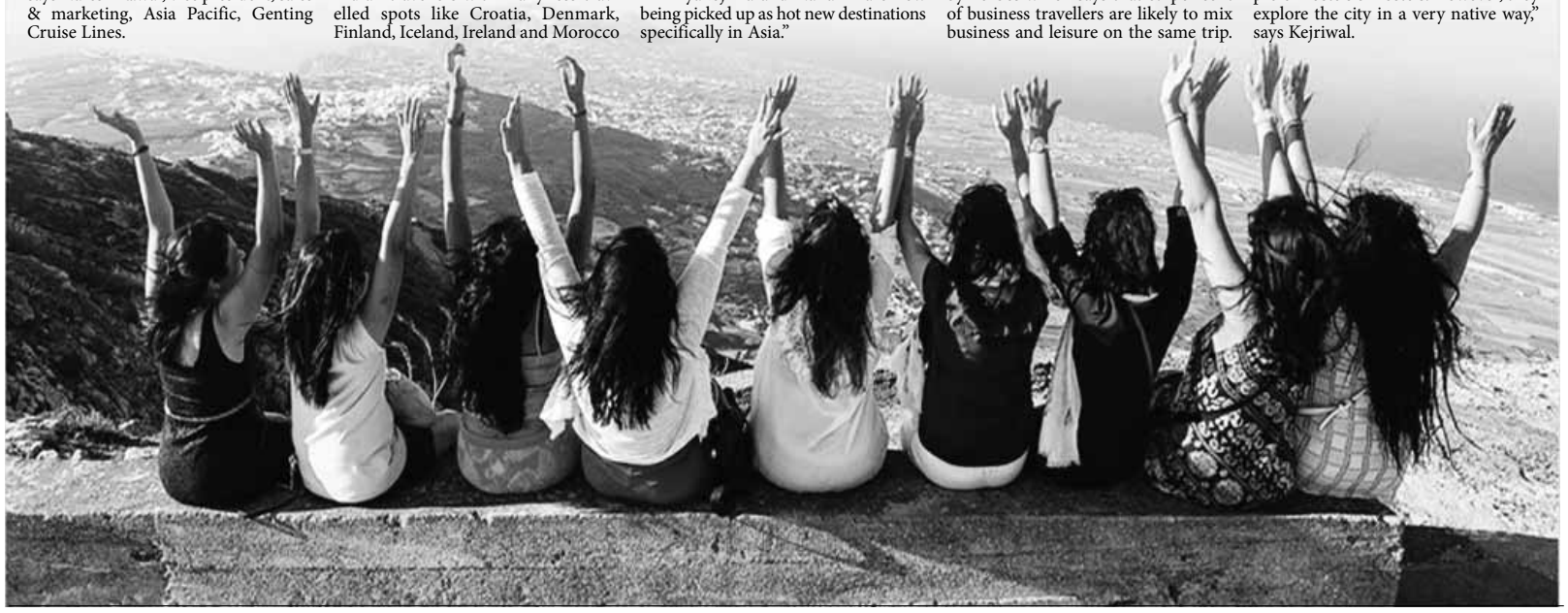
Domestically, the demand for luxury and boutique resorts at serene locations is on rise. Travellers are taking more interest in desert camps, participation in local activities/ festivals, culinary trails and private small group journeys. This is why our packages for TUTC camps in Sangam Niwas (Prayagraj-Kumbh Mela), Jaagir Lodge (Dudhwa), Kohima camp (Nagaland-Hornbill festival) and Ladakh, city walks of Trip 360 and culinary quest through Tour to Feasts journeys are getting extremely popular among the travellers.

BONDING OVER BACHELORETTES

According to Kejriwal, there has been a growing trend in bachelors and bachelorette parties internationally. Spots like Spain, London, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Prague and Budapest are the ones that these groups head to. And for destination weddings, places like Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are more convenient for people keeping the budget in consideration as it offers great facilities in minimum expenditure.

Anand has also observed a similar pattern in terms of destination weddings, "Tropical spots such as Bali, Phuket, Krabi and Koh Samui, Langkawi and Pangkor island and islands in the Maldives fit the wedding budget perfectly. Boracay, Da Nang and Nha Trang are also emerging as wedding destinations gradually. Those having higher budgets also go for exotic locations in US, Europe and Australia."

A growing trend that has been observed over the past one year — is the rise of the solo traveller. "People who travel alone have a tight budget so they prefer hostels or zostels. However, they explore the city in a very native way," says Kejriwal.



TECH TALK

Media must rebuild trust

A new study says that this will be a critical year for both publishers and platforms in re-establishing credibility

Media houses taking up arms against fake news, publishers looking towards subscriptions to make up for the losses, which may fuel lay-offs and thus weaken further their ability to hold politicians and tycoons to account, are the key trends in the media sector in 2019, finds a report.

Titled *Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions 2019* authored by Nic Newman, Senior Research Associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, the report said 2019 will be a critical year for both publishers and platforms in terms of rebuilding trust and credibility after years of self-inflicted wounds around quality, privacy, and user experience.

"This will be the year when the regulation of platform companies start to bite following growing concern about misinformation, privacy, and market power. Something once considered unthinkable has become 'inevitable'...," reads the report.

"Meanwhile the spread of false, misleading and extreme content will continue to undermine democracies around the world with polarising elections in India, Indonesia and Europe likely flashpoints."

Newman said technology platforms will remain cautious and defensive in the light of regulatory threats.

The report predicted a renewed focus on trust indicators this year for news and better labelling designed to help consumers decide what and who to trust.

It said journalism will continue to be hollowed out by structural shifts that have already led to significant falls in advertising revenue.

"Publishers are looking to subscriptions to make up the difference but the limits of this are likely to become apparent in 2019. Taken together these trends are likely to lead to the biggest wave of journalistic lay-offs in years — weakening further the ability of publishers to hold populist politicians and powerful business leaders to account," it says.

The report is based on the input of 200 editors, CEOs, and digital leaders from 29 countries, who responded to a survey around the key challenges and opportunities in the year ahead.

Subscription and membership is the key priority for the news industry going forward and it would be the main revenue focus in 2019, 52 per cent of the respondents believed, while 27 per cent opted for display advertising, eight per cent for native advertising and seven per cent for donations.

'THE SPREAD OF FALSE, MISLEADING AND EXTREME CONTENT WILL CONTINUE TO UNDERMINE DEMOCRACIES AROUND THE WORLD WITH POLARISING ELECTIONS IN INDIA, INDONESIA AND EUROPE'

The report said the news industry is losing patience with Facebook and publishers are refocusing attention elsewhere.

"Less than half of respondents (43 per cent) say the platform is likely to be important or extremely important this year, a similar number to Apple News and YouTube — but far less than for Google (87 per cent)," reads the report.

Over 78 per cent of the respondents said it was important to invest more in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help secure the future of journalism as increased personalisation is as critical a pathway to the future.

They also believed that audio would become a more important part of the content, and commercial strategies and emerging voice-activated technologies, like Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant would have a significant impact on how audiences access content over the next few years.

Media platforms are reconfiguring their algorithms to be more respectful of signals of meaningful content, which would provide a basis by which the problems of misinformation might eventually be solved, said the report.

—IANS

WEBBED

MADE IN HEAVEN

Directed by Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti, Nitya Mehra, Prashant Nair and Alankrita Shrivastava, the series revolves around Tara and Karan, two wedding planners in Delhi. Their stories unfold over the course of an opulent wedding season. Against the backdrop of a big fat Indian wedding, tradition jostles with modern aspirations unraveling hidden secrets and lies.

The ensemble cast of the show includes Jim Sarbh, Arjun Mathur, Sobhita Dhulipala, Kalki Koechlin, Shashank Arora and Shivani Raghuvanshi.

The show is expected to hit Amazon Prime Video in March.

UNBREAKABLE KIMMY SCHMIDT SEASON 4, PART 2

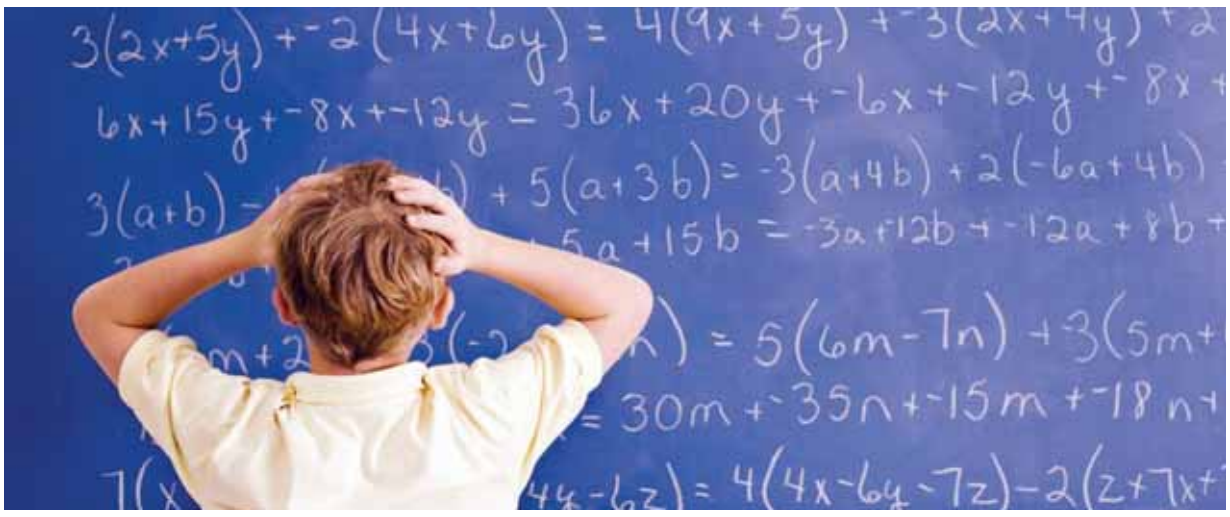
From Kimmy being rescued from a doomsday cult after 15 years, she has started her life afresh in New York City. Now that she is trying to work her way through the publishing world, that venture brings her in contact with a number of new faces in the Schmidt-iverse. The season stars Zachary Quinto and Jon Bernthal in debut roles in the final episodes. This season will also star Ronan Farrow and Greg Kinnear, who'll be playing themselves.

Starring Ellie Kemper, the final season of the series will imagine an alternate state of Kimmy's timeline, following what might have happened if she'd never been taken prisoner in the first place. The show premieres on January 25 on Netflix.

ELIMINATE FEAR FACTOR

Regular maths practice can go a long way in reducing stress during board exams, says educationist Divya Jain

For most students, maths is the bug bear that makes many break out into a cold sweat. Fearing it seems to be an endemic malady afflicting the student community. The dread of the subject aggravates especially during examinations as students feel flustered trying to cram and memorise the various formulae and theorems at the last minute. Often parents pass on their fear of the subject to the children. Added to this is the widely-held perception that maths requires an extraordinary level of intelligence. However, it should be understood that a little creativity and regular practice can go a long way in alleviating maths phobia and in reducing the stress during board exams.



TIPS TO UNDERSTAND THE PHOBIA

To understand maths phobia, we need to accept the fact that it's not an easy subject to grasp. This can be categorised as a feeling of anxiety that students feel when they attempt to solve problems. It is marked by stress, which ranges from mild to high, inducing a sense of helplessness and psychological disorganisation. This can have a prolonged impact on the mind and in some cases, negative influence on health as well. Some students even experience serious issues like depression, panic attacks, shivering, headache and nausea. So, it is imperative to eliminate this phobia at the very beginning to prevent it from developing into a more serious problem. This is possible only when the reasons behind maths phobia are understood.

The reasons can be different for each child. Teachers on their part need to be patient and adjust their pace keeping in mind the aptitude and comprehension capabilities of different students. They can break down mathematical concepts into small understandable units to enable students to understand them easily. Teachers should also be accessible and approachable so that students do not hesitate to talk to them when they face a challenge. This support can go a long way in eradicating a negative attitude and making them proficient in the subject.

TIPS TO ELIMINATE THE PHOBIA

Acknowledge the phobia

The first step in getting rid of maths phobia is to acknowledge that you have it. Once there is realisation, it is easier to take steps that will help alleviate any stress or panic caused by the subject.

Try breathing exercises

Since it can induce stress and panic, breathing exercises come in handy and help to calm the mind. This is very crucial for tasks that require critical thinking and problem-solving.

Practice daily

The proverb, practice makes perfect, is particularly true for maths. It demands constant practice to gain expertise and also helps in understanding the complexities of the subject.

A STUDENT SHOULD NEVER BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS IN A MATH CLASS. RAISING QUERIES WILL HELP RESOLVE DOUBTS THAT A STUDENT MIGHT HAVE. POSTPONING THIS CAN ADVERSELY AFFECT THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SUBJECT

Apply maths in real life

Math skills are very important in everyday life for dealing with tasks that range from simple to complex. Incorporating it into everyday activities will make it a part of your life. Fear of the subject will disappear once you understand that it is everywhere.

Ask questions

A student should never be afraid to ask questions in the math class. Asking questions will help to resolve any doubts a student might have while postponing this process can adversely affect the understanding of the subject.

Take help from classmates

Working together as a group can help students immensely as learning in a cooperative environment works wonders for a subject like maths. This also adds an element of fun and excitement.

Practicing these tips makes easier to develop math skills as well as boost confidence levels. Maths as a subject is not an insurmountable challenge; regular practice, reading up on tips and tricks, finding creative ways to solve problems etc., can make it easier to grasp in no time. It is important that students are not frustrated and remain calm and concentrate when faced with a challenging math problem. Apart from teachers, parents should also help their children understand tough concepts in a communicative environment, encourage them with positive feedback and make sure their feedback is taken constructively. This will remove the psychological blocks that young students develop due to past negative experiences of trying to learn the subject.

A MORAL AWAKENING

It is a cause for concern as to why plans that are ambitiously conceived by influential people and funded liberally by national and international bodies collapse so miserably, says Rajyogi Brahmakumar Nikunj Ji

Looking at the global scenario, we can notice that many countries including some developed nations are under heavy external debts. Others have borrowed unscrupulously from financial institutions as well as common citizens and are surviving on deficit budgets or on printing a huge amount of paper currency that is no longer tied to any national gold reserves. Still few other nations, who have high standards of living, have their own burden of problems that arise from workaholism among the people which is the outcome of exorbitant costs of living and deep mental discontent. Perhaps, the worst-off are some third world countries which are hit hard by poverty that causes acute suffering and humiliation to millions of people who live in pathetic sub-human conditions. And yet this gloomy situation is in spite of the fact that versatile and high-calibre economists and their political comrades in-arms in these countries put their brins together to determine the developmental thrusts, goals and strategies. It is a cause for concern as to why plans that are ambitiously conceived by knowledgeable people and funded so liberally by national and international bodies, eventually collapse so miserably.

Impartial surveys into these grave realities and their causes reveal that, in some countries, the developmental efforts are nullified by high population increase. In others, there is a lot of corruption in high places, or the 'insensitive' government incurs unaffordably high expenditure, or the greedy rich illegally deposit huge sums of money in banks abroad.

Other nations cannot make any worthwhile progress because of political instability, a disturbed law and order situation or because they have to spend enormous amounts on military and para-military build-up in order to counteract violence that is widespread. In many other cases, the main cause of wide-spread economic misery is the apathy of the people in high places towards the common populace. In one short sentence, it can be said that all the prevailing economic misery is due to the loss of values like sympathy, self-control, non-violence, spirit of service, feeling of concern for the well-being of others and more.

Our knowledge of science, technology, communication and managerial skills has not been able to bring inner happiness because our level of honesty, sincerity, cordiality, fair dealing duty, discipline and mutual trust are eroding rapidly. In other words, there has been a rapid decline in social, moral and family values. It is not that science and technology or management skills have caused our present sufferings. On the other hand, it is a fall in the standards of morality that has prevented even science and technology as well as management or administrative ability from enabling a nation realise its full potential. Moreover, it is not as if people do not know that moral values are necessary to build a happy and peaceful society. They wish to have morality in their lives but do not have the spiritual knowledge that would enable them to follow these values successfully in their life nor do they know meditation which would make the values stay in them and should give them a deeper sense of peace and happiness. Thus, the need of the hour is that we create mass awareness among people for values like tolerance, humility, mutual respect in order to realise our dream world which has peace, happiness and harmony.

A changing landscape of opportunities, for individuals and organisations, makes for a dynamic environment of skill development and learning, says Pooja Bajaj

Buckle up

In order to succeed, a business must possess three basic essentials — a robust strategy, extraordinary leadership and engaged employees. The workplace needle has shifted from being economy-driven to service-driven, where the employee's interest is extremely vital for the company's growth. A changing landscape of opportunities, for individuals and organisations, creates a dynamic environment of skill development and automation. As per the 2018 Workplace Learning Report by LinkedIn Learning, businesses are fighting to stay ahead of the curve, holding onto their best talent to fill key positions.

The need for employee engagement

According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace Report, a mere 15 per cent of employees are engaged in their jobs, which in turn shows low productivity and their demands couldn't be met by the organisations.

Imagine, if every employee has the zeal and passion to see the company succeed with satisfied and loyal customers, wouldn't that be the ideal workplace? You can only ensure the retention of your customers by taking care of your employees and keeping them motivated and happy. An engaged and enthused environment in an organisation leads to higher productivity levels, gives it a creative boost, retains the best talent while ensuring wellness, good health and much more. The mindset of transformation is powerfully assisted by the right employee engagement tools and knowledge.

Effective employee engagement is the glue that holds together the employee's goals and the strategic objectives of the business. This means the organisation's goals are well-aligned with the employee's goals and there should be a constant flow of information on how this alignment helps the company grow while at the same time motivating and integrating them.

Digital revolution of employee engagement

There is a distinct transformation visible in the talent development and management today, according to the 2018 Workplace Learning Report. A majority of organisations depend on digital and online learning solutions to meet the demands and needs of their employees. The workplace consists of an increasingly diverse, multi-generational and digitally inclined workforce. A recent ATD report found that almost 90 per cent of companies offer digital learning today.

Almost 58 per cent of employees prefer opportunities to learn at their own pace, 49 per cent prefer to learn at the point of need this shows the pressing need to cater to varied learning needs with personalised digital solutions. These solutions not only deliver content, but also measure learning success and employees are more engaged, as per the report, when they are accountable and can measure their success.

Keeping employees engaged at the workplace

A few ways to ensure a motivated and performance-driven workforce are:

Personal growth

It is vital for an employee to experience self-development and grow personally, as well as professionally.

Recognition

Appreciation, recognition and incentivising tasks are essential tools to improve the performance of your workforce.

Well-defined roles

Ensure proper division of work and roles among employees, while connecting the organisation's overall objectives to their individual goals. This makes them realise the integral role played by them in the company's success.

Foster friendships

It is very important for employees to stay well-connected and acquainted for personal and professional requirements in office.

Manager relations

To develop loyal and accountable teams with amazing manager relations, giving each employee an opportunity to grow with learning and development programmes. According to the Workplace Learning Report, managers account for at least 70 per cent of employee engagement scores.

Health and wellness

Organisations must take initiatives to help employees maintain a work-life balance, to look after their mental and physical health.

Purpose and communication

When the goal or purpose of a job is well-defined, an employee feels motivated to do it accordingly and achieve success. This is possible through effective and authentic communication at the workplace.

Career development

The organisation must help employees 'make time for learning' as 94 per cent of employees say that they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career development, based on the Workplace Learning Report.

Reaching employee engagement nirvana in 2019

With high paying jobs hard to come by, it is essential for employers and leaders to engage their employees and make them feel as if they are an integral part of the business. Employers can follow a three-part module:

Inspire-Motivate-Partners

When employees, especially millennials, are inspired by opportunities and co-workers, they feel empowered to make a difference in their organisations and the world. Their motivation is driven by learning, promotions and relationships with their managers. These relations guide employees on which qualities need to be cultivated pass the next level and grow in their careers. Lastly, finding out their expectations and feedback pushes organisations to get them involved in making change within the company.

(The author is the ceo of an employee engagement firm.)

"Peace begins with a smile. —Mother Teresa"

DRUGS MAY PUT YOU AT HEART ATTACK RISK

If you have been hit by the winter cold and are thinking about taking medicines that relieve your aches, pains and congestion, be careful. Those may also put your heart at risk, the American Heart Association has warned.

A study has showed that both decongestants and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs), found in many cold medicines, were listed as medications that could increase blood pressure.

People who used NSAIDs while sick were more than three times as likely to have a heart attack within a week compared with the same time period about a year earlier when participants were neither sick nor taking an NSAID.

"People with uncontrolled high blood pressure or heart disease should avoid taking oral decongestants. And for the general population or someone with low cardiovascular risk, they should use them with the guidance of a health care provider," said Sondra DePalma, from the University of Pittsburgh in the US.

MORE ANIMAL SPECIES LIKELY TO GET EXTINCT

Researchers have found that more than a hundred species currently identified as non-threatened on the Red List of Threatened Species, are actually likely to be at risk of extinction.

The study emphasises on the urgent need for re-assessment of animal species on the Red List. The findings, led by a team from Radboud University in the Netherlands, showed that 20 per cent of the 600 species, such as the brown-banded rail and Williamson's mouse-deer, which were impossible to assess by the Red List experts are likely under threat of extinction. In addition, 600 species that were assessed previously as being non-threatened, are actually likely to be threatened, such as the red-breasted pygmy parrot and the Ethiopian striped mouse.

Once every few years, specialised researchers voluntarily assess the conservation status of animal species in the world, which is then recorded in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

STILLBIRTHS DUE TO OVERSLEEPING

Sleeping more than nine hours per night during pregnancy may be associated with late stillbirth, suggests a new study.

This is because blood pressure reaches its lowest point during sleep which has been linked with foetal growth problems, preterm birth, and stillbirth.

The study, led by a team from the University of Michigan, explored how maternal sleep habits, including lengthy periods of sleep without waking more than once in the night, may be associated with foetal health independent of other risk factors. Moreover, pregnant women often report waking up and getting up in the middle of the night.

Very disruptive sleep has also been associated with poor pregnancy outcomes, including growth restriction and preterm growth.

"Our findings add to research indicating that maternal sleep plays a role in foetal well being. Studies aiming to reduce stillbirths should consider maternal sleep as this is a potentially modifiable risk factor," said lead author Louise O'Brien, researcher at the varsity.

GUT BACTERIA MAY COMBAT FOOD ALLERGY

Healthy infants have intestinal bacteria that can prevent the development of food allergies, research has found.

Researchers from the University of Chicago, Argonne National Laboratory and the University of Naples Federico II in Italy transplanted gut microbes from each of eight infant donors: four healthy and four with cow's milk allergy, into groups of mice via fecal samples, Xinhua news agency reported.

The mice had been raised in a completely sterile, germ-free environment, and were fed the same formula as the infants to help the bacteria colonise properly by providing the same sources of nutrients.

The results show that mice receiving bacteria from allergic infants suffered from anaphylaxis — a life-threatening allergic reaction, when exposed to cow's milk for the first time.

DISTRESS INCREASES RISK FOR DEMENTIA

Men and women who are distressed in midlife could be at higher risk of developing dementia in their old age, suggests a new study.

The study showed that vital exhaustion, which can be perceived as an indicator of psychological distress, is a risk factor for future risk of dementia.

Psychological distress is potentially linked to the risk of dementia through neurological and cardiovascular mechanisms.

The findings, led by researchers from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, revealed that for each additional symptom of vital exhaustion, the risk of dementia rose by two per cent.

While participants reporting five to nine symptoms had a 25 per cent higher risk of dementia than those with no symptoms, those reporting 10 to 17 symptoms had a 40 per cent higher risk of dementia compared with not having symptoms.

100 UP MAN CITY

Danilo, Sterling and Sane score as City reach century of goals in 2018/19 season in 3-0 win over Huddersfield

Leroy Sane celebrates after scoring Manchester City's third goal against Huddersfield Town at John Smith's stadium; (right) Alexandre Lacazette, centre, attempts to get through the Chelsea defence *AP*

AFP ■ LONDON

Manchester City reduced Liverpool's lead at the top of the English Premier League table to four points as they eventually found top gear to win 3-0 away to basement club Huddersfield Town on Sunday.

This was by no means City's most outstanding display of the season but, ultimately, goals from Danilo, Raheem Sterling and Leroy Sane ensured they did not trip up in the latest leg of their quest to keep the Premier League title-race alive.

Liverpool's captivating 4-3 victory over Crystal Palace on Saturday ensured this was a crunch fixture for Pep Guardiola's side, yet any hopes Huddersfield could pull off a shock win never materialised.

After 12 minutes, Sterling felt he was denied a penalty after Terence Kongolo's heavy challenge in the box.

But City's wait to break the deadlock lasted just six more minutes as Danilo's fierce shot was deflected past Jonas Lossl by Christopher Schindler.

The goal was City's 100th of the season in all competitions, a statistic underlining their potent attack, but they were surprisingly lacklustre in the remainder of the first half

Yet after the break, City finally upped the tempo and were soon out of sight.

After 52 minutes, De Bruyne's pass found Sane on the left and his pinpoint cross was met by Sterling who finished off a diving header with some aplomb.

City's afternoon soon got even better when Sane then scored a wonderful team goal that demonstrated how City had finally woken up.

Danilo pumped a ball forward and Aguero steered a fantastic cushioned header into the path of Sane who slipped the ball past Lossl.

Immediately, it felt as if Huddersfield would need to enter damage-limitation mode to stop City from running riot as they did in the 6-1 reverse fixture victory at the Etihad Stadium in August.

But to the credit of Huddersfield caretaker coach Mark Hudson, he implored his team to keep on trying to attack despite being three goals down.

However, Huddersfield never really looked like conjuring up a miracle comeback as Stevie Mounie resorted to attempting to score from 30 yards but with little effect.

A close-range header from Mounie was also well saved by Ederson towards the end.

But that incident was the City goalkeeper's first real piece of action, which said everything about the lop-sided nature of this contest.

GUNNERS HAMMER BLUES

Arsenal blew the race for a top-four Premier League finish wide open as first-half goals from Alexandre Lacazette and Laurent Koscielny saw the Gunners beat Chelsea 2-0 at the Emirates Stadium.

Chelsea remain in pole position for a return to Champions League football next season in fourth, but are now just three points ahead of Arsenal and a surging Manchester United, who beat Brighton earlier on Saturday to stretch caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's winning streak to seven games in all competitions.

Maurizio Sarri's men risk being caught after a fourth defeat in 11 league matches that underlined the need for a striker, as the club close in on signing Gonzalo Higuain on loan from Juventus.

Aubameyang should have opened the scoring after just five minutes when perfectly picked out by Lacazette's low cross, but he dragged his shot wide.

Kepa Arrizabalaga then produced a brilliant save to deny Koscielny from point-blank range, but it counted for little as from the resulting 14th-minute corner Arsenal took a deserved lead.

Lacazette did well to stay on his feet as he skipped past Marcos Alonso and Pedro Rodriguez before smashing the ball past Kepa at his near post.

Aubameyang should have doubled Arsenal's lead moments later but fired too close to Kepa when clean through.

Chelsea's start was horribly reminiscent of the 3-1 defeat at Tottenham in November that began their dip in form after a fine start to Sarri's reign at Stamford Bridge.

However, Arsenal's defence remained vulnerable when put under pressure and Pedro could have levelled when his lob over Bernd Leno shaved the outside of the post.

Aubameyang came close again, this time in spectacular fashion with an overhead kick that flew inches wide with Kepa beaten.

Chelsea were repeatedly caught out by Arsenal's well-worked set-pieces and paid for it again, albeit in fortunate fashion for the Gunners, six minutes before the break.

Sead Kolasinac headed down Lucas Torreira's free-kick into the path of Sokratis Papastathopoulos and his cross picked out the unmarked Koscielny.

The Arsenal captain mistimed his header, but the ball bounced in off his shoulder for his first goal since he ruptured his Achilles in April.

Chelsea could have got a foothold in the game before half-time as David Luiz's header came back off the post.

But in keeping with so many of their performances of late, Chelsea created little thereafter despite dominating possession.

Axel Witsel celebrates after scoring against RB Leipzig in Bundesliga clash *AP*

Witsel restores six-point cushion

AFP ■ BERLIN

Borussia Dortmund restored their six-point lead over Bayern Munich at the top of the Bundesliga as Axel Witsel netted in their 1-0 away win at fourth-placed RB Leipzig.

Leipzig suffered their first home league defeat this season and Dortmund's victory was all the more impressive without captain and playmaker Marco Reus, who twisted an ankle in training on Friday.

On the first weekend of the Bundesliga after the winter break, Dortmund claimed the winner on 19 minutes when the ball fell to Witsel from a corner and the Belgium midfielder reacted fastest, firing home off the underside of the crossbar.

"I am happy to score, like I did in the first game," said Witsel, who scored his first Bundesliga goal against Leipzig in last August's 4-1 win in Dortmund.

"But I am more happy with the three points, because it was really important to get a win at the start of the second half of the season."

Dortmund created chances after the break as England winger Jadon Sancho and Maximilian Philipp, Reus' replacement, both got in behind the Leipzig defence, but failed to convert.

At the other end, Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Buerki twice denied Leipzig forwards Timo Werner and Marcel Sabitzer as hosts pushed for an equaliser.

Paco Alcacer, Dortmund's top scorer with 12 league goals, had an effort ruled out for offside and smacked the crossbar with another shot when he came on for the final, nervy 10 minutes.

Earlier Saturday, Borussia Moenchengladbach kept pace with Dortmund and Bayern in the title race as Alassane Plea scored in their 1-0 win at Bayer Leverkusen.

The away win leaves Gladbach three points behind Bayern and nine adrift of Dortmund.

Elsewhere, Eintracht Frankfurt climbed to fifth, a point from the CL berths, with a 3-1 win at home to Freiburg as striker Luka Jovic claimed his 13th goal this season to become the league's top-scorer.

SINGLES

CHINA ROAR BACK FROM BEHIND

Al-Ain: China flirted with disaster before mounting a second-half revival as they fought back from behind to beat Thailand 2-1 and reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals on Sunday. The giant nation were all at sea as they fell behind to Supachai Jaided's opener but they hit back after the break through substitute Xiao Zhi and Gao Lin's well-taken penalty. It meant China live to fight another day under Marcello Lippi, who is expected to step down after the Asian Cup, while Thailand exit with their heads held high. In an open start, Theerathon Bunmathan saw a free kick tipped over and Wu Lei had an attempt smothered by Thai goalkeeper Siwarak Tedsungnoen before Thailand went ahead on 31 minutes. But China finally scored midway through the second half when substitute forward Xiao, three minutes after coming on, headed straight at Siwarak before prodding home the rebound. The onslaught didn't stop and after Gao was brought down by Chalermpong Kerdkaew, he nervelessly swept the spot-kick high into the net for a 2-1 lead.

VIETNAM SHOOT-OUT JORDAN IN LAST 16

Abu Dhabi: Vietnam emerged victorious from a penalty shoot out with Jordan to become the first team to reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals on Sunday — after being the last side to scrape into the round of 16. After extra-time finished at 1-1, BT Dung rolled in the decisive spot-kick for a 4-2 penalties win and saluted the crowd after Baha Faisal and Ahmed Samir had missed for Jordan. The dramatic win upset the odds after Jordan were the first to qualify for the knockouts, and Vietnam only went through because of their disciplinary record after they finished with an identical points and goals record to Lebanon. However, the Southeast Asian champions came back from a goal down to force extra time, and they were on balance the stronger and more positive team over the 120 minutes. Vital Borkelmans' Jordan came into the game as the form side and they spurned a number of chances before opening the scoring six minutes from half-time. But levelled six minutes after the break, when Cong Phuong showed great technique to steer home a volley from close range.

BAJRANG GUIDES PUNJAB TO FIRST WIN

Ludhiana: Living up to his reputation, Asian Games Gold medallist pulled off the deciding bout against Delhi Sultans' Andrey Kviatkovski to guide defending champions Punjab Royals to their first win of the ongoing Pro Wrestling League season on Sunday. In a battle between the two world championships participants Bajrang outclassed Andrey Kviatkovski in the 65kg encounter. In the sixth bout, Rio Olympics Bronze medallist Delhi's Sakshi Malik didn't break much sweat while defeating Punjab's Anita 11-0 and push the tie to the decider. This was a much improved performance by Sakshi than the one she had against Navjot Kaur of UP Dangal in the last match. Earlier, the 2017-18 World Military Championships Gold medallist Khetik Tsabalov of Delhi Sultans won the first bout of the evening against the Asian Championships Bronze medallist Vinod Kumar 14-0.

VERRATTI DOUBTFUL FOR MAN UTD CLASH

Paris: Paris Saint Germain Italian midfielder Marco Verratti was diagnosed with a sprained ankle, which makes him doubtful for their upcoming first leg of the UEFA Champions League last-16 clash against Manchester United, the Ligue 1 club announced on Sunday. On Saturday, Verratti was forced out of the field 20 minutes into their 9-0 rout of Guingamp and coach Thomas Tuchel said the injury was feared to be serious. "Marco Verratti's MRI scan conducted after the match against Guingamp confirmed a twisted left ankle without any further damage," the undisputed Ligue 1 leader said in a statement. "The evolution of the injury over the coming days with treatment and further examinations will allow the club to establish how long the player will need to fully recover," the French club added. ***Agencies***

ATM keep pressure on Barca

AGENCIES ■ SEVILLE

Atletico Madrid moved to within two points of LaLiga leaders Barcelona after a comfortable 3-0 win over bottom club Huesca on Saturday.

Full-backs Lucas Hernandez and Santiago Arias put Atletico in control before Koke ensured Atletico extended their unbeaten run in the league to 17 games.

Lucas' first goal of the season put Atleti ahead and Arias doubled their lead before Koke sealed the points on a foggy night in northern Spain, keeping Diego Simeone's men firmly in title contention.

Lucas made no mistake just after the half hour, though, as he tapped home at the back post after Lemar and Koke had unlocked the Huesca defence.

While the visibility deteriorated in the heavy fog, Atletico were not affected and almost doubled their advantage when Correa burst through, but Santamaria reacted superbly to deny the forward from point-blank range.

A second goal did arrive after 52 minutes as Antoine Griezmann was given time to pick out Arias at the far post, the full-back volleying past Santamaria in style.

Huesca continued to pose a threat, but their challenge was ended when Koke lashed home in the 71st minute, the midfielder finishing in style after Griezmann's header had come back off the crossbar.

Meanwhile on Sunday, Real Betis prevailed over Girona 3-2 thanks to a last gasp penalty successfully converted by midfielder Sergio Canales, to earn their first La Liga win in four matches.

Having ousted Atletico Madrid from the Spanish Cup round of 16, Girona hoped their momentum would continue in La Liga, where they have been unable to post a win in the last six matches.

Girona's hopes received a setback in the 11th minute, when forward Cristian Tello got Real Betis on the scoreboard with a set piece.

But Girona was not ready to quit without a fight; they struck twice over an eight-minute stretch.

After the intermission, Betis aggressively sought out the equalizer and efforts paid off eventually eight minutes into the second half as striker Loren Moron fired home, off a pass by Canales to make the score 2-2.

It was in the fourth minute of the second half stoppage time when Canales delivered from the 12-yard spot.

After the win, Betis have 29 points in the seventh spot in the La Liga table, while Girona fell into the tenth spot with 24 points.

Inter launch anti-racism campaign with goalless draw

AFP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan launched their anti-racism campaign in reaction to last month's abuse of Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly as 11,000 local schoolchildren watched a goalless draw with Sassuolo at the San Siro on Saturday.

Inter Milan were ordered to play two matches behind closed doors as punishment for racist chants and monkey noises directed at Napoli's Koulibaly on December 26.

Luciano Spalletti's side responded, with permission from Serie A, by inviting children from local schools to the stadium as they launched their 'BUU' initiative, aimed at turning the chant into an acronym for 'Brothers Universally United'.

"With the BUU — Brothers Universally United campaign, Inter wanted to send out a strong message," said club chief executive Giuseppe Marotta.

"It's an initiative that demonstrates how much the club cares about certain values."

But on the pitch it was a drab affair as Inter were pegged back by their midtable rivals as they missed the chance to close in on second-placed Napoli, only escaping with a point thanks to superb saves by goalkeeper Samir Handanovic.

"You could hear these children shouting, the sound of kids enjoying any situation that was happening," said Spalletti.

"They weren't all Inter supporters, there were kids who like other teams too, but they were all enjoying the occasion."

Inter, coming off three consecutive wins, struggled to create any chances with captain Mauro Icardi and Ivan Perisic both wasteful in front of goal.

Handanovic came to the rescue twice — saving a Kevin-Price Boateng header after the break, and again in injury time, denying Jeremie Boga.

Inter Milan are now four points behind Napoli who host Lazio on Monday, without Koulibaly after he lost his appeal against a two-match ban imposed for his sending off during that defeat by Inter.

Lagat, Worknesh win Mumabi marathon

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Cosmas Lagat of Kenya and Worknesh Alemu of Ethiopia surprised pre-race favourites to win the men's and women's crowns respectively in the $ 405,000 Tata Mumbai Marathon here on Sunday.

Lagat, winner of the Sevilla Marathon in 2016, made the 42.195-km race in this coastal city his own over the last 10 km to storm his way home in 2 hours, 9 minutes and 15 seconds, the second-best in the 16-year history of the race.

The course record of 2:08:35 of his own Kenyan compatriot Gideon Kipketar, done in 2016, just about survived the long-legged Lagat's onslaught after he had left behind all his rivals, including pre-race favourite Abera Kuma of Ethiopia well behind his wake.

In second place was Aychew Bantie of Ethiopia in 2:10:05 while Akalnew Shumet, also from Ethiopia, took the third spot in 2:10:14.

The man with the best time going into the race, Kuma, finished seventh in 2:13:10 after he was with the lead bunch of ten runners, including some pacers, on the sea link after 19 kms before the bunch split up.

"I did not think of course record and only winning was on my mind," said Kenyan Lagat who was a pacemaker in the 2012 London Olympics and started running when in primary school.

The women's race also became a one-horse course over the last 5 km once Ethiopian Alemu split the field with 12 km left in the race.

Finally, she came home all alone well in front of the others, including pre-race favourite, compatriot and defending champion Amane Gobena, in 2:25:45 which was outside the course record.

Gobena came in second in 2:26:09 while another Ethiopian woman, Birke Debele, was third in 2:26:39 to mark a clean sweep for the African nation.

Significantly, India's Sudha Singh finished on top among the Indian runners while setting a personal best of 2:34:56, but also dipped well under the qualifying mark of 2:37:00 set by IAAF for the September-October Doha World Championships.

The woman athlete, a 3,000m steeplechase specialist and winner of gold and silver medals in two Asian Games, finished 8th overall, ahead of former champion Dinkesh Mekash of Ethiopia who finished in 9th spot in 2:36:31.

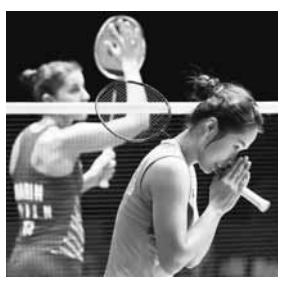
Her earlier personal best in the marathon was 2:35:35 that she clocked while finishing 19th in the 2015 Beijing World Championships.

The Indian Railways athlete also bettered the national course record of 2:37:29, which previously stood in the name of O P Jaisha since 2015.

This was her third best finish among Indians bringing her on par with Lalita Babar, who did it three times in a row between 2012 and 2014.

"I am coming to the Mumbai Marathon for the first time and am happy with the result," said womens race winner Worknesh Alemu, for whom this was her second title in six attempts with the first one coming in Morocco in 2017.

Intanon beats Marin in summit clash



IANS ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon beat Spanish badminton star Carolina Marin 21-9, 22-20 here on Sunday, clinching the Malaysia Masters final in just 42 minutes.

Heading into the final, Marin had won three of her last four matches against Intanon.

The Thai, seeded No 6 in the tournament, dominated the match from the start, jumping to a quick 6-1 lead and never letting Marin back into the set.

Marin played better in the second set, grabbing a 10-7 lead before Intanon managed to tie it at 12-12.

The players went back and forth, with Marin making a huge push and going up 19-18.

Intanon, however, was not to be denied and she managed to edge Marin and take the title.

Intanon had a spectacular run in Malaysia, upsetting top-ranked Tai Tzu-ying of Taiwan and defeating 18-year-old home crowd favorite Goh Jin Wei of Malaysia 21-16, 21-16 in Saturday's second semi-final.

In the men's decider South Korea's Son Wan Ho defeated China's Olympic champion Chen Long.

Son defeated Chen 21-17, 21-19 after making comeback in both sets as the Chinese shuttler failed to hold on to early lead.

Japanese Yuta Watanabe and Arisa Higashino handily beat their Thai opponents Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai 21-18, 21-18 to win the mixed doubles title.

Japan also came out on top at the women's doubles with world No1 Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota edged off Indonesia's Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu 18-21, 21-16 and 21-16.

Doomsday for Biggies

Defending champion Federer, runner up Cilic sent packing as Sloane, Sharapova and Kerber make exit after shock defeat in last 16 clash

Aus Open (4th Round)
Live from 5:30am IST
SONY TEN 2 NETWORK

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Defending champion Roger Federer was stunned by fiery Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas who ended his bid for a record seventh Australian Open on Sunday in a day of upsets that also saw second seed Angelique Kerber crash out.

The Swiss master caved in under the energy and pressure of a man 17 years his junior to tumble out 6-7 (11/13), 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) in the last 16 on Rod Laver Arena.

World number two, Kerber was also sensationally bundled out by a woman playing the event for the first time, with American Danielle Collins humiliating the Wimbledon champion 6-0, 6-2 in under an hour.

The man Federer beat in last year's final, sixth seed Marin Cilic was also sent packing by Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut, who now plays Tsitsipas in the quarter-finals.

Five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Shaparova was another to fall, but there was no such drama for a rampant Rafael Nadal who powered into the last eight with a straight sets win over Tomas Berdych.

Federer was gunning for a 21st Grand Slam title but had a battle on his hands from off against the 20-year-old, touted among the new generation of young stars as a future champion.

"I'm the happiest man on Earth right now, I cannot describe it," said the 14th seed, who is the first Greek in history to reach the quarter-finals of a Slam.

"I've been idolising him (Federer) since the age of six. It was a dream comes true for me just being on Rod Laver facing him. Winning at the end, I can't describe it."

The Swiss great was gracious in defeat, saying "I lost to a better player who was playing very well, who hung in there and stayed calm".

Wimbledon winner and 2016 champion Kerber, the bookies' favourite along with Serena Williams after defending champion Caroline Wozniacki was ousted early, was no match for Collins, ranked 35 in the world.

Collins is little known after playing much of her tennis in the US college system and was making her debut in the main draw at Melbourne Park. She had never won a Grand Slam match before this year.

"I may not have won a Grand Slam match before this but I tell you, it's going to keep happening," said the 25-year-old. "I better have many more of these."

CHIPPING AWAY

Men's second seed Nadal, returning from foot surgery, barrelled past former world number four Tomas Berdych 6-0, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) as he stays on track for an 18th Grand Slam title.

"I always say the same when I am back for injury," said the Spaniard. "I don't expect negative or positive things. I just try to do my work every day and just be with (the) right attitude every single day."

He will play world number 39 Frances Tiafoe for a place in the semi-finals after the young American celebrated his 21st birthday by grinding his way past Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 7-6 (8/6), 6-7 (1/7), 7-5.

Hometown hero Ashleigh Barty also made the last eight after muscling past Sharapova and will next meet Petra Kvitova.

Sharapova claimed her biggest scalp since completing a drugs ban in 2017 when she rolled Wozniacki in round three and looked on track to carry the momentum forward.

The 30th seed won the first set but then fell to pieces, eventually succumbing 4-6, 6-1, 6-4.

"I knew I had to keep chipping away — in a sense, trust the work we've done. I know that I can match it with the best," said Barty, seeded 15.

Next up for the diminutive 22-year-old is Kvitova, who beat Barty in the final of the warm-up Sydney International this month.

The two-time Wimbledon champion beat 17-year-old Amanda Anisimova 6-2, 6-1 to match her best performance at a major since being slashed in a terrifying attack at her home in late 2016 that left her with lasting nerve damage in her fingers.

Kohli is greatest ODI batsman: Clarke

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

That Virat Kohli is destined to be among the pantheons of all-time greats is an oft-repeated assertion but for former Australia captain Michael Clarke, the India skipper is already the "greatest ODI batsman to have ever played the game".

Kohli, the world's No 1 Test and ODI batsman, led India through a historic tour of Australia, during which the team won the Test and ODI rubbers and drew the T20 International series.

Kohli's India was the first team ever not to lose any series Down Under and along the way, he continued to add to his rapidly-rising count of international hundreds.

"To me, Virat Kohli is the greatest batsman to have ever played one-day cricket. I have no doubts after seeing what he has achieved for India," Clarke, himself a former World Cup-winning captain, said.

Kohli has already scored 10,385 runs in 219 ODIs with an astounding average of 59 plus, including 39 hundreds.

An unabashed Kohli fan, Clarke said that the 30-year-old Indian's passion is unmatchable.

"You have to respect Virat's passion to win games for his country. Yes, he has aggression but no one can question his commitment, how much he has achieved. He is the greatest in ODIs," Clarke said.

While Kohli's craft continues to evoke awe, his predecessor Mahendra Singh Dhoni's current form has the cricketing world divided.

Dhoni's style of batsmanship in ODIs, no longer as aggressive as it used to be, has been a matter of concern but for Clarke, the 37-year-old former India captain should be left alone to play his game.

"MS knows how to react to any given situation. He has played 300 plus ODIs so he knows how to go about his job," Clarke said.

But would Dhoni have been as effective as he was in the third ODI against Australia if the target would have been 330 instead of 230?

"I think he would have played differently. It was 230 and he had a particular strategy and it would have been different if the target would have been bigger," he said.

"Look at his approach in the second game in Adelaide and the third game in Melbourne. It was different," Clarke said.

Asked what should be Dhoni's batting position in the World Cup, Clarke said, "Any position 4, 5 or 6. He is good enough to bat at any position and I believe Virat will use him accordingly."

ODI STATS

M	219
Runs	10385
HS	183
Avg	59.68
100/50	39/48

Virat Kohli celebrates after scoring century against Australia in the second ODI at Adelaide *AP*

Clarke, however, made it clear that the currently suspended Hardik Pandya would play an important role for India going into the World Cup in England.

"A talented player like Hardik is very necessary for the balance of the side. He can win games alone with his batting and I am confident he will be in that World Cup squad," Clarke sounded confident.

Asked if India are favourites to win the World Cup, Clarke said, "Certainly one of the favourites with the kind of bowling talent India have at the moment. The batting was always strong and they also have wonderful young spinners.

What has impressed Clarke is the fact that India doesn't have any "apparent weakness in the bowling department".

"Jasprit Bumrah is a skillful bowler who is improving every day. He continues to get better with his seam, swing, and pace. He is the best death bowler in ODI cricket at the moment," said Clarke.

However, the cricket analyst in him also feels that England will be a very difficult team to beat at home.

"England is a very good ODI side and will be hard to beat at home. Also, I would like Australia to be in the mix. Australia will get better when the frontline pacers including Nathan Coulter Nile come back," explained Clarke.

Dhoni is still world's best finisher: Chappell

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

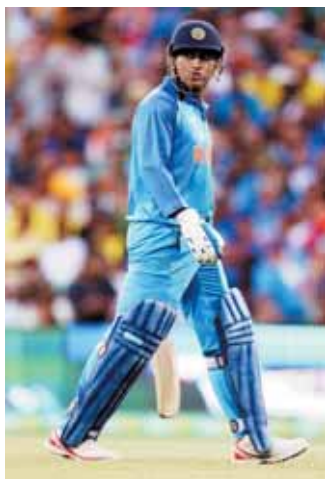
The jury is still out on whether Mahendra Singh Dhoni's much acclaimed finishing powers are on the wane or not but former Australia captain Ian Chappell still considers the World Cup winning former skipper as the "best finisher" in 50-over format.

Dhoni was recently awarded the *Man of the series* for his match-winning knocks which helped India win their maiden ODI series in Australia.

Chappell saluted the former India skipper's nerve and longevity.

"Nobody has Dhoni's nerve for finishing off victories. Many times I've thought, "He's left it too late this time", only to be amazed as he produced a couple of powerful shots to bring India a nail-biting victory," Chappell wrote in his column in *ESPNcricinfo*.

"His outward calm is no illusion since his tactical adeptness in these situations is proof his brain continues to work perfectly." Drawing a comparison with Michael Bevan, who is considered to be one of the greatest finisher of the game, Chappell said Dhoni has surpassed the former Australian number six.



MS Dhoni returns to pavilion after getting dismissed *AP*

"Where Bevan finished matches with fours, Dhoni does so with sixes. The one area — running between wickets — where you'd expect the fleet-footed Bevan to have an advantage is debatable, because even at age 37, Dhoni is among the quickest in the game," he wrote.

"Even allowing for improved bats and the advantage of playing T20 cricket, statistically Dhoni is superior to Bevan. There can be no argument — Dhoni is the best ODI finisher."

Of late, Dhoni has often been criticised for his slow innings but the former India skipper silenced the doubters when he unleashed a massive six at Adelaide to seal the third ODI and the series 2-1.

"His trademark lofted on-drive comfortably cleared one of the longer Adelaide Oval boundaries to settle the issue in that particular finishing effort," Chappell wrote.

"It was a clear reminder that any thought that his power might be waning was only wishful thinking on the part of opponents. That he achieved the feat in stifling heat only added to the lustre of his performance."

Regarding the 'best ODI batsman' debate, Chappell feels Virat Kohli will surpass legends like Viv Richards, Sachin Tendulkar and AB de Villiers and end his career as the 'Sir Donald Bradman of ODI batsmen'.

"Kohli reminds me of Richards in his approach to ODI batting; he eschews fancy shots and relies on a wide range of traditional strokes ... As the only one of this quartet still playing ODIs, Kohli already heads some important statistical categories," he wrote.

"If he were to continue at his current rate — an unlikely outcome as he ages — he would pass Tendulkar's aggregate with more than one hundred innings to spare and nearly 20 centuries in advance of the Little Master.

"If he even came close to achieving these amazing feats, there could be no argument: Kohli would be the Sir Donald Bradman of ODI batsmen."

Imam, Hafeez steer Pak to victory over SA

AFP ■ PORT ELIZABETH

Imam-ul-Haq and Mohammad Hafeez set up a five-wicket win for Pakistan in the first one-day international against South Africa at St George's Park on Saturday.

The left-handed Imam made a cultured 86 off 101 balls and Hafeez hit an unbeaten 71 off 63 deliveries as Pakistan chased down a target of 267 with five balls to spare.

Hashim Amla's 27th one-day international century was not enough for South Africa, who lost only two wickets in scoring 266 runs after winning the toss.

Pakistan's bowlers deserved credit for their team's win, which came after the tourists were well-beaten in all three Test matches.

Sarfraz Ahmed used his bowlers in short spells and their mixture of seam and spin proved better suited to a slow pitch than South Africa's attack.

South African strike bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Duanne Olivier conceded a combined 124 runs in 19.1 overs.

The Pakistan batsmen also proved better at rotating the strike, particularly during a 94-run second-wicket stand between Imam and Babar Azam (49).

Amla (108 not out) and new cap Hendrick 'Rassie' van der Dussen (93) put on 155 for South Africa's second wicket but although they gradually increased the tempo of their partnership they were unable to dominate the bowling.

Pakistan looked to be cruising to an easy win until Imam was dismissed in the 37th over when he stepped out of his crease and sliced an attempted drive to deep cover.

Two more wickets fell cheaply before Hafeez and Shadab saw their side home, maintaining an unbeaten record for Pakistan in five one-day matches in Port Elizabeth.

Nitesh hopeful of better performance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After a forgetful home leg where the side failed to secure single win, UP Yoddha changed fortunes in the second half of the recently concluded Pro Kabaddi League season 6 to finish third in the tournament.

Playing its second season after formation in 2017, the UP side initially trailed in the recently concluded sixth edition of Kabaddi league but after a string of impressive performance towards the end of the league phase.

The side not only pip three time defending champion Patna Pirates by winning five of the last six games to make into the playoffs but also send U Mumba and Dabang Delhi packing to only fail short by Gujarat Fortunegiants in the second qualifier.

The side though failed to bag trophy home but its star defender Nitesh Kumar is hopeful that the side's impressive spell will motivate the players to rise level up in the next outing to fulfill unaccomplished task to taking trophy home.

"This season our performance was a lot better especially after the poor home leg where we weren't able to fetch out single win. But even then we were motivated to do well and beacuse of that only we became successful to pull out good result."

"Though we couldn't get succesful this time to win the trophy but this performance will surely motivate us to do well in the next season."

UP Yoddha's defender Nitesh Kumar holds Patna Pirates Pardeep Narwal during PKL clash

RECORD FEAT

Nitesh Kumar's earned the distinction of becoming the first defender to notch up 100 tackle points in a single season of the Pro Kabaddi League.

"There are still couple of weak points and we have realised the need to rectify that and hopefully we will come out strong in the next season will lot more improved skill set."

The product of Future Kabaddi Heroes programme, which was developed to scout promising young talent in age group of 18 to 22 years, 21-year old Nitesh emerged as the star for Yoddha in the sixth edition.

His compact defensive skill laced with strong ankle hold proved decisive for the UP side and the defender achieved personal milestone as well by becoming the first defender to notch up 100 tackle points in a single season of the Pro Kabaddi League surpassing Surender Nada (80 tackle points in season five) record for the most tackle points in a single season.

Speaking about his performance the star defender says, "I am very pleased with my performance this time. I did very well, infact a lot more than what I was expecting initially. But I still feel I can improve more and with the consultation with my coach I'll come up even stronger."

"I am motivated to do better than time next time", he said.