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Happy Holi

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13 VIVACITY

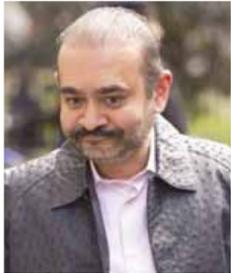


Nirav Modi arrested in UK

Remanded in custody till March 29; India seeks early extradition

PTI ■ LONDON

Nirav Modi, the main accused in the \$2 billion PNB scam case, has been arrested in London where a court on Wednesday remanded the fugitive diamondaire in custody till March 29, saying there are "substantial grounds" to believe that he would fail to surrender if granted bail.



ED to sell Nirav's 173 paintings

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate will sell 173 paintings and 11 vehicles "beneficially owned" by Nirav Modi, prime accused in the ₹14,000-crore PNB credit fraud case, after the agency obtained permission from a special PMLA court in Mumbai on Wednesday. PNS

plea due the "high value amount" attached to the allegations against him and that he would have "every incentive" to evade surrendering before the court.

There are substantial grounds to believe that you would fail to surrender before the court if bail were to be granted," the judge noted.

Nirav, dressed in a plain white shirt and trousers, appeared in the dock where he spoke only to confirm his name and also to formally decline consent to be extradit-

ed to India. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), representing the Indian authorities in court, told the court that Nirav was wanted in India for fraud and money laundering amounting to the tune of \$2 billion.

Under UK domestic law, the CPS said he is liable on charges of conspiracy to fraud, which has a maximum jail term of seven years, and conspiracy to conceal, which could result in anywhere between seven, 10 years and life in jail. "We do object to bail because there are substantial grounds to believe the requested person (Nirav) would fail to surrender," said Barrister Jonathan Swain, appearing for the CPS and on behalf of the Indian Government.

Nirav's legal team was headed by Barrister George Hepburne-Scott, and his solicitor, Anand Doobay, is the same legal expert hired by former Kingfisher Airlines boss Vijay Mallya in his extradition proceedings against India in the UK courts.

Nirav's team made their case for bail, offering 5,00,000 pounds as security and an offer to adhere to "stringent" conditions.

"He strongly contests all the allegations and is prepared with comprehensive arguments to support his case... His legal team has had months contact with the extradition squad and expressed his willingness to cooperate," Hepburne-Scott said.

It emerged in court that Nirav was arrested from a Metro Bank branch in London by uniformed officers on Tuesday, when he went there to open a new bank account.

A bank clerk alerted Scotland Yard as a result of the "high publicity" surrounding the case and Metropolitan Police officers arrived to execute the arrest. This overrode a previous arrangement made between Scotland Yard's extradition unit and Nirav's lawyers for him to surrender "by appointment" at a London police station on Monday, something his legal team blamed on the "nature of publicity" surrounding the case.

The location of the arrest indicates that Nirav, wanted in India in connection with the ₹13,500 crore Punjab National Bank scam case, was arrested from where he is believed to have been living in a plush apartment in Centre Point in the West End.

It also emerged in court that Nirav was in possession of at least three passports, all since revoked by India.

The court was told that Modi arrived in London in January last year before any of the allegations emerged and has maintained a very "visible" presence in the country and offered to cooperate with the UK authorities since his arrival.

Nirav is currently employed by Diamond Holdings Ltd in London for a monthly salary of 20,000 pounds and pays his council

tax regularly, his lawyers stressed in support of his defence.

In New Delhi, ED sources said they expect a "faster" process of extradition in Nirav's case, as compared to Mallya, as this is an instance of "clear defraud" of bank loan money. Unlike Mallya, who was granted immediate bail on his arrest on an extradition warrant in April 2017 on fraud and money laundering charges, Nirav's case will now take a slightly different course as he remains in custody while court proceedings take place.

UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid had certified India's extradition request for Nirav earlier this month, triggering the legal process in the courts, which led to the issuance of a warrant last week.

News of the certification of India's request came just as Nirav was tracked down to a three-bedroom flat in the Centre Point tower block of luxury apartments in the West End of London.

Nirav is one of India's richest men, worth an estimated \$1.75 billion, according to Forbes. He launched his own eponymous brand in 2010 and he soon had stores across India, as well as in New York, London and Hong Kong. His diamond-encrusted designs were worn by Hollywood stars like Kate Winslet, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley and Naomi Watts, while Priyanka Chopra-Jonas appeared in advertisements for the brand.

I'm sorry for Opp barb, Modi tells chowkidars

PM: 'Dynastic netas' defaming kaamdaars

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pointing out that Opposition was insulting him for prefixing "chowkidar" in his name, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday likened it to "naamdaars" (dynastic leaders) defaming "kaamdaars" (those risen in lives by hard work) and asserted "these are the same people who are drawing sympathetic chord in Pakistan."

With chowkidar being the buzzword this election, Modi on Wednesday held an interaction with security guards across the country on the eve of Holi and in an apparent reference to Congress president Rahul Gandhi, he said, "I want to apologise as some people in last few months for their vested interests have run a disinformation campaign against 'chowkidars'. It is unfortunate that language of these people has hurt you."

At the same time, he said maximum languages across the world have understood the word "chowkidar". It seems as if they all have accepted it in their vocabulary, he maintained. The Prime Minister said, "Today chowkidar has become a good substitute of 'deskh bhakti and respect'."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the BJP Central Election Committee meeting for the Lok Sabha elections, at BJP headquarters in New Delhi, on Wednesday. PTI

Hitting out at the Congress while answering a question on the Pulwama terror attack in Kashmir, Modi said armed forces bombed Pakistan but "people are feeling hurt." He said in Pakistan's television and Parliament was echoing and reflecting Indian Opposition leaders' views (aired by them) in the post-Indian Air Force strike across the borders.

This is strange... vaar Pakistan par aur bimarr Hindustan" (Pakistan is hit and hurt but Indians are turning sick)," he said adding "country will not forget and forgive these people."

Congress and other Opposition parties had questioned the effectiveness of IAF airstrike in Balakot, Pakistan, and sought the Modi Government to give evidence

of real damage. Islamabad had said that barring a few trees no damage was caused by the Indian strike.

Modi said all Indians should be proud of their armed forces who have given a fitting reply to Pakistan but Opposition "is supporting tukde-tukde gang."

Prime Minister who took some questions said make your children doctor or engineers but keep alive chowkidar. "Desh ka chowkidar zinda rehna chahiye", Modi said rhetorically.

"Main Bhi Chowkidar" slogan is a part of BJP's campaign strategy which BJP is seeking to intensify as the Congress president has sought to deflate it by saying "chowkidar chor hain" by referring to the controversial Rafale fighter-jet deal with France.

THE PIONEER
wishes its readers a very
Happy Holi
As the offices of
The Pioneer will remain
closed on March 21 and 22
on account of **DOLAJATRA**
and **HOLI**, the next issue of
the paper will appear on
March 24

BJD to win 'plenty of seats': Naveen Files nomination from Hinjili



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Notwithstanding the aggressive campaign by the BJP and the Congress to end the Biju Janata Dal's (BJD) 19-year-long regime, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is apparently quite confident to rule the State for the next five-year term.

He exuded the confidence before media after filing his nomination papers from his old Hinjili Assembly constituency at the office of the Sub-Collector in Chhatrapur in Ganjam district on Wednesday.

When asked about the number of seats the BJD would

win in this election, Patnaik instantly quipped, "Plenty of seats."

Before filing the nominations, Patnaik, accompanied by senior leaders and a large number of workers of the party, had visited the Taratarini Temple in the district to pay obeisance to the deity.

Patnaik said he would file his nomination papers for his second constituency, Bijepur in Bargarh district, very soon.

Temperature to soar from March 23

Temperature in many places is likely to rise above 40 degrees Celsius

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Regional Office of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) here on Wednesday predicted that the temperature would rise across the State from March 23.

The temperature in many places is likely to soar above 40 degree Celsius. The IMD officials said some districts including Nabarangpur, Koraput and Kalahandi might experience nor'wester rains for the next two days but the temperature would soar from March 23.

The department also forecasted that maximum day temperature will see a rise of 3 to 4 degree Celsius over north interior Odisha and by 2 to 3 degree at places over other districts during the next two days.

"Light to moderate rain or thunderstorm is likely to occur at a few places over the districts of south interior Odisha and there is possibility of light rain or thunderstorm at one or two places over parts of other districts of Odisha," added the officials.

First Lokayukta assumes office

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Guwahati High Court Chief Justice Ajit Singh, who was appointed as the first Lokayukta of the State, assumed office on Wednesday.

The office of the Lokayukta, which will work as an anti-corruption watchdog, will start functioning from April 8.

Singh took charge after meeting Governor Ganeshi Lal at the Raj Bhavan in the afternoon. He will head the panel that comprises a total of five members.

On March 3, the former Guwahati HC Chief Justice was appointed as the first



Lokayukta of the State. Notably, Odisha was the first State in the country to pass the Lokayukta Bill.

CBI arrests AAI ED for taking bribe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Wednesday arrested the Executive Director (Finance) of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for demanding a bribe from the owner of a Chennai-based airport ground handling company.

Ravichandran's arrest came soon after the CBI registered an FIR against him on Wednesday. Ravichandran was demanding a bribe of ₹4 lakh for each allotted tenders with respect to ground handling contracts to the Chennai-based firm Bright Shine Services for 'D' category airports.

Owner of Bright Shine Services V Venkatesh approached the CBI with a complaint on March 16, saying he did not wish to pay bribe and sought legal action against the AAI official who had demanded the bribe from him, according to the complaint which is now part of the FIR.

Based on his complaint, the CBI conducted verification from March 16 to March 19 and gathered sufficient electronic evidence. The CBI laid a trap on Wednesday morning when the alleged bribe was to be paid to Ravichandran. The agency nabbed the officer red-handed while receiving ₹2 lakh as bribe, sources said.

CAPSULE

INDIA TO BOYCOTT CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD FORUM

Beijing: India on Wednesday signalled that it will boycott China's second Belt and Road Forum for a second time, saying no country can participate in an initiative that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity. P12

BE 'CHOWKIDAR' FOR ANIMALS, SAYS PETA

New Delhi: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India urged people to guard distressed animals as "chowkidars", a terminology which got currency due to the political slugfest over it.

ROBERT VADRA SEEKS QUASHING OF ED CASE

New Delhi: Robert Vadra on Wednesday moved the Delhi High Court seeking quashing of a money laundering case lodged by the ED in which he has been questioned by the probe agency.

SBI wants Jet Airways to stay afloat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With its operating fleet down to under forty aircraft, its pilots threatening to go on strike from April 1 and its supposed white knight now wanting out, aviation industry experts were predicting that Jet Airways was reaching the end of the road.

However, the biggest lender to Jet Airways, the state-owned State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday made it very clear that bankruptcy for the airline was the "last option". SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar said that it was in everyone's interest that the airline keeps flying and that talks with Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airline are ongoing even though the UAE airline offered to sell its shares to Indian



banks to just ₹150 per share, after having acquired them for ₹750. It is not clear how the banks will manage this, but sources say that there will be an insistence that Jet Airways chairman Naresh Goyal, who has held on to his position doggedly, will be asked to go and a new professional management will be brought in.

The banks are also not keen on moving Jet Airways under the bankruptcy code as that will mean further disrup-

tion, with the airline having to surrender almost all its leased aircraft. Currently, Jet Airways owns only nine of the aircraft it is operating, with the remainder of its fleet leased. With lessors repossessing aircraft on an almost daily basis, the airline on Wednesday axed several new services, stopping several domestic and international routes and almost all flights from Delhi.

However, the time to save Jet Airways might be coming to a close with talk of some of the leasing companies offering some of Jet's grounded aircraft to rival SpiceJet Airlines which itself has suffered a grounding of its Boeing 737 Max aircraft after two fatal incidents involving that particular model in Ethiopia and Indonesia.

Tight police bandobast to ensure safe Holi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has made elaborate arrangements to ensure nothing untoward happens in the national Capital during the Holi celebrations. According to a senior Delhi Police official, around 35,000 personnel backed up by 33 companies will be patrolling the city roads to ensure a safe and secure Holi.

"These measures have been put in place as there are certain intercepts about forces inimical to the society may try to indulge in criminal activities to disrupt the celebrations," the official said. The Delhi Police has also made elaborate arrangements in and around university campuses to ensure



Students play with colours to celebrate Holi in New Delhi on Wednesday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

safety and security of people during the festival on Thursday, officials said on Wednesday.

Apart from deploying almost half of its force, Delhi Traffic Police has advised par-

ents not to allow their minor children to drive vehicles.

In its advisory, the Delhi Police has also appealed to all motorists to avoid traffic violations, especially drunken driving.

"All motorists are advised to obey traffic rules and regulations and follow the directions of the traffic policemen on duty for their safety as well as the safety of other road users," it said.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) have issued advisory. As per DMRC, the Metro operations and services will be closed on Thursday till 2.30 pm on all lines, including the Airport Expressway. The Metro

feeder bus services will also be not available till 2 pm on Holi.

The Delhi Traffic Police teams with alcometers have been deployed at major intersections and vulnerable points to detect and prosecute traffic violators, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Dvender Arya said where women personnel have been deployed along with male policemen to ensure women can easily approach them.

Arya said patrolling has been stepped up in the South Campus area and two special pickets have been placed outside Moti Lal Nehru College and the main entrance of South Campus while an extra van has been patrolling the area.

Kandhamal MP Pratyusha resigns from BJD | After denied party ticket

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Kandhamal BJD MP Pratyusha Rajeshwari Singh resigned from the party's primary membership on Wednesday after being denied a party ticket to contest again. She sent her resignation letter to BJD supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. "I could have been at least informed prior to the announcement of the list of candidates. I was asked to prepare for the coming elections. Furthermore, I am irked as to why (Minister) Bikram Arukh would have any say in the matter of my nomination from Kandhamal," Pratyusha said in her resignation letter. "Furthermore, after my husband Hemendra Chandra Singh's demise, I have been harassed in Nayagarh by (MLA) Arun Sahoo with legal cases multiple times in the last



four years. Though I informed it to the party, no action has been taken in this regard," the letter added.

Notably, KIIT and KISS founder and Rajya Sabha BJD member Achyuta Samanta has been announced as the party candidate for the Kandhamal LS seat. Now, there are speculations that Pratyusha is likely to join the BJP.

Earlier on Tuesday,

Pratyusha had said she wanted to contest from the Nayagarh Assembly seat as the BJD candidate. "If denied ticket for this, I will either join another party or contest the polls as an Independent candidate," she had said.

But most probably, sitting Nayagarh MLA and former Minister Arun Sahoo would be re-nominated by the party as its candidate for the seat.

Ex-BJD MLA Narayan Rao joins BJP | Balangir Cong leader too comes to saffron party fold

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A day after resigning from the BJD, former Paralakhemundi MLA Koduru Narayan Rao on Wednesday joined the BJP.

He joined the saffron party at a function in the presence of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan at the BJP State headquarters here.

"I worked hard for the BJD in the past 20 years in Gajapati, which is a stronghold of Congress. However, the party made injustice with me while allocating tickets for the Paralakhemundi Assembly seat.

Therefore, I along with my supporters decided to quit the BJD and join the BJP," said Rao after joining the national party. "We joined the party being impressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reform programmes, steps against Pakistan and the efforts by Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for development in Odisha," he added.

Along with Rao, 30 Sarpanches, 32 Samiti Members, three Zilla Parishad members and two Block Chairmen joined the BJP.

Besides, Balangir district's senior Congress leader Giridhar Pati joined the



"We joined the party being impressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reform programmes, steps against Pakistan and the efforts by Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for development in Odisha"

BJP on the day. Pati was elected as Zilla Parishad Member twice from Loisingha.

Pati said he joined the BJP being impressed with the ideology of PM Modi and BJP national president Amit Shah. BJP State vice-president Sameer Mohanty, general secretary Bhruge Buxipatra and Yuva Morcha president Tankadhar Tripathy welcomed him into the party fold.

Ex-D'nal MLA Nanda joins Congress

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR



Former Dhenkanal BJD MLA Nabin Nanda along with his many supporters joined Congress here on Wednesday in the presence of Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Niranjan Patnaik and other leaders.

Welcoming him to the party, Patnaik said Nanda's joining would strengthen the party. It may be noted here that BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik had suspended Nanda from the party in July 2018 after he was arrested from a spa in Kolkata, where a sex racket was running in the guise of a massage centre.

Three sitting, two ex-MLAs, ex-MP join BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Three BJD sitting MLAs, two former MLAs, a former JMM MP and the Sundargarh Development Council chairperson, joined the BJP on Wednesday in presence of senior BJP leaders.

Sitting BJD Dasapalla MLA Purnachandra Nayak, Aska BJD MLA Debraj Mohanty, Nilgiri BJD MLA Sukanta Nayak, former Polara MLA Niranjan Pradhan, former Dasapalla MLA Kashinath Nayak, former JMM MP Laxman Tudu and Sundargarh Development Council chairperson Kusum Tete joined the saffron party at a 'mishran parba' in the BJP party office.

These leaders, who were denied tickets by the BJD, are hopeful of getting BJP nominations to contest in the upcoming polls.

BJD to form stable Govt again: Ghadai

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Finance Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghadai, who returned to the BJD with withdrawal of expulsion order on him by the party supremo recently, on Wednesday said the BJD would again achieve better results in the coming elections and form a stable Government to expedite the State's developmental process.

"I have no intention to fight elections. I will only work

for the party. I am fully confident that the BJD will do better results, form a stable Government and expedite the development process," said Ghadai in an interview.

Ghadai said his return to the BJD has made people of Sukinda very happy and they have thanked party supremo Naveen Patnaik.

He said he has been receiving good wishes from people from different parts of the State for which he is obliged to them.

Athamallik seat BJD aspirant in a spot!

Locals allege 80-acre forestland encroached by his father

BHUBANESWAR: Ramesh Sai, a BJD ticket aspirant for the Athmalik Assembly seat, seems to be in a spot now as some locals have approached Economic Offence Wing DIG Asish Kumar Singh with an allegation that his father Narayan Sai has encroached 79.76 acres of forestland in Mamurajharan mouza of Ambasarmunda GP under the Thakurgarh police station in Angul district for long.

"Ramesh Sai misutilising his official capacity has constructed a farmhouse by wire-fencing the entire Government forestland and cutting valuable

forest trees. He is capable enough to manage the said land to record in the name of his father Narayan Sai," a complaint submitted to the DIG read.

The complaint signed by locals like Harihar Nayak, Kamalakant Kar, Ajay Pradhan and Pratap Pradhan also mentioned that Ramesh Sai is trying to enter politics to grab the forestland.

The complaints urged the DIG to take action against father-son due immediately. They have also sent a copy of the complaint to the Chief Minister for his information.

Notably, former Minister Sanjeev Sahoo is the incumbent BJD MLA of Athmalik. PNS

Bioscience has potential for societal benefits

ILS holds 2-day meet

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) Bhubaneswar organised a two-day scientific discussion on 'Emerging Trends in Biological Sciences Research' with focus on health, nutrition, environment and agriculture here on Monday.

ILS Director Dr Ajay Parida said the symposium was of great relevance to the research communities of Odisha as many young researchers are engaged in several research institutes and universities and it is important that they are aware of most recent advances in research and



development and innovation with societal implications.

JNU Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir Sopory, Dr Swapan Datta from the Kolkata University, Dr Amulya Panda of National Institute of Immunology, Dr Sudhanshu Vrat of Regional Centre of

Biotechnology, Dr Umesh Varseny, Dr Deepshikha Chakraborty, Dr Soumitra Das, Dr Satish Raghavan from the IISc, Bangalore, Dr Ramesh Sonti of NIPGR, Dr Dinabandhu Sahoo of IBS, Imphal and Dr SarojBarik of NBRI, Lucknow also spoke.

They called for collaborations and partnerships in research efforts for making a change and impacting the society for greater benefits.

Many leading scientists in the area of plant biotechnology, agriculture, medical biotechnology and product and device development spoke on current priorities and emerging challenges in the area of healthcare, agriculture, nutrition and environment.

On the occasion, five thematic sessions on modern biology, cancer biology, infectious diseases, plant and Agribiotech, developmental biology and translational research were held in the programme attended by more than 500 researchers, faculties and students.

Odisha woman entrepreneur bags TiE-BIRAC award

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Dr Sumona Karjee Mishra, founder of Prantae Solutions, a biotech startup in Odisha, is among 15 women entrepreneurs in the country to be awarded TiE-BIRAC Winner Award for women in Entrepreneurial Research.

The award was presented to Dr Karjee Mishra by NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Dr Rajeev Kumar at a function in New Delhi recently on the occasion of the seventh Foundation Day of BIRAC.

Karjee Mishra has developed a device - ProFlou - for early diagnosis of kidney disorders.

The award includes ₹5 lakh and a one-week residential



accelerator programme at the Chennai Biotech Park. It also includes one-year membership at TiE Delhi NCR.

The patent technology adopted by Karjee Mishra reports kidney health through a precise measurement of microalbumin content in urine.

The ProFlou concept development was funded through Tata Trust-Harvard SAI and DBT BIRAC SIIP grant while the product development was financially supported by the Bharat Petroleum Corporation's startup grant 'Ankur'.

This affordable health self-monitoring device can be very useful for senior citizens, diabetic, hypertension and kidney disorder patients as well as high-risk pregnancies.

NKS seeks CEO's permission to hold rallies

At 42 places in 21 districts from April 2 to 22

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Navnirman Krushak Sangathan (NKS), which has been spearheading a farmers' movement demanding "price, prestige and pension" for long, has sought permission from the State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) for holding awareness rallies against the election process at different places in the State from April 2 to 22 during the election period.

"We have been fighting for the cause of farmers since 2010. Lakhs of farmers have taken to the streets often,



demanding price, prestige and pension. Despite this, both the Union and State Governments have not paid any heed to the demands. Even we are being arrest-

ed and stopped when proceeding to press for our demands in front of the State Assembly.

This violates our right to the Freedom of Expression as

enshrined in the Article 19 of the Constitution.

As elected representatives are depriving us of our right to freedom of expression, we have decided to oppose the election process and take to civil disobedient movement in a non-violence and democratic way. For this, we are going to hold awareness programmes at different places from April 2 to 22 and we hope that you will give permission and support us in protecting our democratic right of freedom of expression," mentioned NKS president Akshay Kumar in a memorandum submitted to the CEO.

The Sangathan also presented its schedule of awareness programmes to be held at 42 places in 21 districts.

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE Parrikar gone, BJP likely to lose much sheen



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

The first ITian to join mainstream politics became Chief Minister of a State and eventually rose to the post of Defence Minister of the country. The inimitable Manohar Parrikar was the batch-mate of the illustrious Indian entrepreneur Nandan Nilekani who has given Indians the Aadhaar card. Parrikar took over as Goa Chief Minister in 2000 during his worst personal times. His wife Medha died of cancer just a month before his oath-taking.

Parrikar became globally famous for his unpretentious simplicity. He rode a bicycle or scooter to the Goa Vidhan

Sabha. Whenever he felt tired or weak, he would proudly travel by public transport. He never moved into the CM's official residence; lived in his own humble house and travelled in his old car until the last healthy day.

He was known as the cleanest politician on the planet at one time. Parrikar had once termed LK Advani a rancid pickle, saying it was time the old man retired happily and provided guidance only when necessary. After victory in 2014, Modi was frantic to have one or two sharp-skilled guys in the Cabinet. Parrikar was the obvious choice to manage the Defence Ministry.

Parrikar told friends that his knees buckled on the first day as a Defence Minister because he knew nothing about the military, arms or warfare. But Modi's honest advisors knew too well that Parrikar would hardly take any time to figure out what was best for the armed forces and what reforms needed to strengthen the forces.

What is not known to many is that long before anyone could figure out that a 'Modi wave' would sweep

across the country, Parrikar had told everyone that if Modi, with his enviable track records in Gujarat, was projected as the PM face, the party would gain immensely. The party honchos went by his advice and the eternal quest for the PM face was over.

Parrikar was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in February 2018. He went for a cure to hospitals abroad and in India. But whenever he felt a little comfortable, he would rush to work in his frail frame as workaholic as always.

He walked out of the hospital and reached workplace with a life-support tube in nostrils and strong medicines taken by the hour, admitting bravely that he was battling a 'life-threatening disease', but there was no reason why he should not continue to work till his mind was alert and body permitted him to move.

He would still beam a faint smile and say he enjoyed doing his job as the people trusted him as one who could give them relief and justice and on time. He died on March 17, 2019. A brilliant star of India is thus gone!

The Modi-Shah team has flourished with support from social marketing wizards. Prashant Kishore did big magic for the party in 2014. Kishore has, meanwhile, left the saffron outfit and landed on more efficient shores where marketing tricks do not count so much.

Parrikar's absence in Goa led to a virtual defeat of the BJP in the last State elections. But the Goa people, used to seeing Parrikar as their leader, began losing faith in the new leader so much as to force the Modi-Shah duo to dispatch Parrikar back home to Goa. On January 30, he presented the State Budget in the Assembly.

The frail appearance, with a tube in his nose drew severe criticism from the opposition which screamed that a 'physically finished' CM should be dropped forthwith to facilitate smooth functioning of the Cabinet.

But the unshaken Parrikar would make it clear in a short speech that he would talk less now to save all his energy to play an active role in the campaign for the coming Lok Sabha elections. He was still

fit enough to run his State with ease.

Parrikar was unlike the typical BJP or RSS leader in some ways but added that the difference was not substantial. He did not implement the Hindutva agenda in the same rabid way the RSS and BJP would have wanted him to.

But he did implement the same agenda in subtle ways. Also, he made some compromises because he wanted to develop Goa and he could not have done it if he carried the Hindutva baggage as distinctly as other RSS-BJP leaders. One thing was certain: Parrikar's identification with the BJP was absolute.

A very senior BJP national leader had publicly said Parrikar was deployed in early 2017 as the BJP's 'only credible weapon' when nothing else was going the party's way. Then they had no leader, no face, nobody who had stature to lead the BJP in the 2017 elections. Goa is not Uttar Pradesh or even Maharashtra where Modi's appeal could see the party through. Goa is a very localised State and it appreciates nativity.

In Parrikar's death, India lost one of the most patriotic politicians who served the people until his last breath and with incredible guts and compassion for distressed communities whom he enjoyed serving with joy and pride.

The Pulwama terror attack witnessed the killing of great sons of India, who became martyrs to occupy space in history books. But Parrikar is one of the greatest martyrs who gave his last breath to the people. He protected them like a super soldier and planned great schemes for their relief and happiness, all at a colossal price due to unheard of personal sacrifice. His two sons have been groomed by him so well as to remain simple and people-friendly.

Without Parrikar, the BJP will never be the same again! When Modi ran in 2014, he promised to replicate the 'Gujarat model' of governance across the rest of India. Most voters expected big, employment and money generating public-private partnership projects like the Kutch Railways, FDI (Ford's Sanand plant) or innovative solutions (Narmada

canal solar panels) and more. Modi did replicate some of these ideas including the pact with France to develop solar farms across rural India. But his boastful promises of black money recovery and abrogation of Articles 370, etc., are causing big trouble now. The Hindi belt has nearly vanquished the saffron party. Stellar party faces like Arun Shourie, Shatrughan Sinha and many more have abandoned him with good logic.

Though the Pulwama and the resultant Balakot episodes have brought in some strength to the regime, there is cry for concrete proofs in hand. Obviously, Modi overrated himself for the overwhelming 2014 mandate which was certainly due to a very strong anti-incumbency factor.

Modi got swayed and ignored to promote a robust private economy that generates good wealth for use for quality development. Instead of keeping the government only as an umpire, he injected the government into everything that is meant for the masses. His promise of minimum government has failed miserably.

His accumulation of power has come at the expense of States which have been robbed of their abilities to be 'laboratories of democracy'. Modi is frantic to keep all powers with the Centre so as to arm-twist the States easily.

The GST regime, which is certainly more efficient than the old one, subsumes all State taxes into one tax to be under the Central Government control. Most significantly, a rabidly Aadhaar-hating Modi chose to embrace Aadhaar even more wholeheartedly than its original promoters. The informal economy where even ill-gotten cash is king as it drove India's economy since the privatisation programmes of the early 1990s initiated by financial wizard Manmohan Singh.

To win a second stint, Modi has to slug with extremely effective campaign plans this election season. He has caused a great deal of public disenchantment for having ignored the 'governance model' promised in the last manifesto.

(The writer is a core member of Transparency International, Odisha)

BJP prospect of winning looks bleak in Subarnapur

Despite Central schemes, grassroots organisation still weak

SRIKUMAR MAHANTA ■ SONEPUR

Subarnapur district has been a focal point in the BJP's efforts to make inroads in western Odisha during the last five years. The ruling party at the Centre has been trying to establish a foothold in the district.

But when the elections are round the corner, the path doesn't look easygoing for the party in the region. Despite expending much energy through aggressive implementation of developmental projects and Central schemes and launching of programmes to

woo voters, the saffron party seems to have not risen to a strong position in the district.

Lack of organisational base at grassroots, bitter infighting in the ranks and file and weak leadership continues to hinder the party's growth, and chances of winning the two Assembly segments looks grim.

The party's focus on Subarnapur was exemplified in a grand manner with former MP Sangita Singh Deo visiting grass rural areas repeatedly. Union Petroleum Minister and party's Chief Ministerial face Dharmendra Pradhan along with many Union Ministers have frequently visited the Subarnapur and nearby districts and launching various developmental projects during the last four years. But they seem to have little impact on the voters.

It is abuzz among farmers that Central Government schemes like Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Ujjwala Yojana are not going to fetch votes for the party.

Sumitra Bagarty, a woman leader, said even as almost half of women residing in rural areas have benefited from the Ujjwala Yojana, it is doubtful if they will cast vote for the BJP because of the weak leadership and lack of coordination among workers at the grassroots.

BJP leader Achyuta Biswal admitted that his party organization is weak at the grassroots level.

He also said that potential BJP voters have been keeping away from the party's public meetings fearing that their names might be deleted from the State Government's KALIA Yojana.

Baleswar district to have 80 pink booths

To be managed by women polling personnel

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR

With the Election Commission encouraging women to participate in the elections process, as many as 80 pink booths in Baleswar district would be managed by women officials.

And for these pink booths or Sakhi booths, women officials from the educational institutions, teachers from the schools and colleges and banks have been pooled and trained how to conduct the election process smoothly.

Sources said for 1,887 booths from eight Assembly segments across the district, there is a requirement of about over 14,000 officials and for the first time, about 3,000 women officials would be deployed in poll duty. The 80 pink booths have been identified which would be solely managed by the women officials.

District Election Officer Manoj Senapati said, "This time there would be 80 pink booths across the district. While all

12 blocks would have five pink booths each, each municipality and urban local bodies (4) will have five booths each. They are given training to conduct the polling process as per guidelines. The objective is to empower women voters."

Each booth while would have one presiding officer and 5 polling officers, all the six would be women officials in the pink booths.

In the town area while five booths within 5 km radius of the town have been identified as pink ones, they would be managed by the women officials.

Senapati said the women officials would transported to the polling station and all the provisions have been made for their stay and food in the station and further for their security, women police officers would be deployed.

Besides pink booths, women officials too would be deployed in the other booths where there are requirements. No single woman would be deployed in any polling station in duty and on the other hand, at least two women would be deployed which would be also managed by male officials.

Denied food card, pension in Pallahara

Disabled warns to boycott poll



PNS ■ PALLAHARA

One Raising Sundhi (51), a disabled of Ranjana village in Batusuan Gram Panchayat of Pallahara block has been deprived of ration card under the NFSA and pension.

He belongs to the ST category and has three children, earning his bread as a daily wager.

All the family members depend upon him. He is also residing in a dilapidated thatched house.

Disabled Raising applied many times to include him in the Government schemes but in vain till now. Now, he has decided not to cast his vote in the coming elections.

BJD, BJP, JMM major players in M'bhanj

Vigorous campaigning on

KAVI VISHNU SATPATHY ■ BARIIPADA

The election scenario in the ST-reserved Lok Sabha constituency of Mayurbhanj is gradually hotting up. Although it is going to polls on April 29 in the fourth phase, all the key political players have now geared up their activities.

Even though major political parties, with the only exception of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), are yet to finalize the names of their candidates for the elections, their leaders are busy campaigning for their respective parties.

The BJP and the BJD, how-

ever, seem to be a little ahead in this respect at this moment.

Whosoever their candidates may be, they have been embarking on different mass mobilising programmes like 'Jana Sampark Yatra', 'Vijay Sankalp Abhiyan', 'Jana Jagaran Karyakram', 'Lok Sampark Padayatra' etc.. While BJP is moving ahead with the slogan "Fir ek baar, Modi Sarkar", BJD is telling people 'Puni thare Naveen' (Naveen once again).

Presently, while the sitting MP and the MLAs here belong to the BJD, the Zila Parishad president and 49 out of the 56 ZP Members belong to the BJP. Thus both BJD and BJP appear to be on an equal footing in campaigning this time.

While the former talks of Naveen's achievements, the latter counts on the success stories of Modi Government.

The regional political player JMM, which has already named Morcha supremo Sibusoreni's daughter Anjani Soreni as its Lok Sabha candidate, is also busy approaching the electorate in various ways. And it does seem to have some considerable influence on the tribal voters in the area.

Significantly, the Congress now appears here to be a fast-fading force. It is only likely to go for a tie-up with JMM and, instead of fielding its own candidate, may extend its support to that tribal-dominated party at the last moment, observers say.

Jayashree to contest from Bijepur

'Spur woman contesting polls unsuccessfully for yrs

SAMBALPUR: Jayashree Mishra, popularly known as 'Jayashree Nani' in Sambalpur town, has decided to contest from the Sambalpur Assembly constituency for the sixth time and, more importantly, from the Bijepur Assembly seat in Bargarh district which Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has chosen as his second constituency this time.

As an Independent candidate, 57-year-old Jayashree has been contesting Assembly elections as an Independent candidate for the last five elections. She had also contested a Lok Sabha election. "I am regularly contesting elections to focus

the right of women and problems of the poor people living below poverty line," Jayashree said.

Jayashree has no house of her own and lives in veranda of the district Collectorate building here using common toilets and sleeping on the floor.

During the 2014 elections, her symbol was 'coconut'. She was seen moving with a coconut rapped on a red auspicious cloth and hanging from her neck. Jayashree started unsuccessfully contesting elections as a Ward member in the Sambalpur Municipality in 1988. Thereafter, she has the record of contesting eight times as ward member, Sarpanch, MLA and MP candidate, also without success. PNS

Tata Steel promotes edu, health at Kalinganagar

Has constructed 9 of 30 model schools, state-of-art hospital

PNS ■ JAJPUR

Guided by the vision of founder Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, the Tata Steel is focusing on promotion of quality education and healthcare services in Kalinganagar area. It has taken several measures in this direction. Under 'Thousand School project', which aims to improve the standards of education in Government-run primary schools in six blocks, the company has reached out to more than 40,000 students in Danagadi and Sukinda blocks under various activities. Importantly, school drop outs are being brought to the main-



Danagadi to Sukinda College recently.

The Loyola School constructed by the Tata Steel at a cost of more than Rs 25 crore is expected to spearhead quality education in the region. Similarly, to provide better healthcare services to the community living in and around Kalinganagar, the CSR wing of the company, Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS), has introduced seven mobile medical vans to cater to the healthcare needs of more than 9,000 people in remotest of villages every month. This apart, the company has facilitated the setting up of a 100 bed state-of-the-art hospital at Kalinganagar.

B'swar rape, murder accused gets lifer

BALESWAR: Special POC SO Court Judge-cum-Additional Sessions Judge Ajanta Sadangi convicted a rape and murder accused and sentenced him for life imprisonment along with fine of Rs 25,000 and in default another 15 months' jail term.

The convict, Muna Das alias Sahani (19), a native of Sun (Iram), under Basudevpur police station limits of Bhadrak, had raped and killed a 7-year-old girl of Remuna area on April 24, 2016. Further, he disposed of the body in the river Sono. The body of the missing deceased was found by the villagers the next day. Muna was residing in his maternal uncle house when he committed the offence. He was caught by the villagers in suspicion and handed over to the police. After interrogation, he confessed to the crime. "Sixteen witnesses were cross examined and 26 documents were exhibited before the court. The medical examination revealed that the convict committed the crime against the victim since his private part bore injury marks," said Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Panda. PNS

Kalahandi RI, Peon held taking bribe

Gajapati RI also nabbed

CUTTACK: The Vigilance police on Wednesday caught Kalahandi district's Narla Revenue Inspector (RI) Rakesh Roshan Sahu and Peon Shyam Sundar Bag red-handed for demanding and accepting illegal gratification of ₹7,000.

They were caught taking bribe in the office from complainant Bharat Chandra Nayak of Kilbeda village under the Narla police station to settle detection of a sand loaded tractor of the complainant at Sahu's level.

Sahu's house at Pastikudi village in the district was searched. Both the accused persons were arrested and forwarded to court.

Similarly, Gajapati district's Chhelagada Revenue Circle RI Chintamani Panigrahi was caught taking bribe of ₹1,000 from complainant Bikram Raita of Anjarba village in the district to submit enquiry report for issue of residence, caste and income certificate in favour of the complainant. His residential Government quarter at Chhelagada and house at Old Brahmapur was searched. PNS

Pakhala Dibas reminds of Naveen's party



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odias in Odisha and outside celebrated the Pakhala Dibas on Wednesday.

The Odisha luncheons are typically an elaborate spread of mouthwatering delicacies comprising dishes keeping in mind the taste of invitees. However, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik once hosted a Pakhala party for former President Pranab Mukherjee, BJP patriarch Lal Krishna Advani, former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda and

CPI (M) leader Sitaram Yechury.

Patnaik played host to the dignitaries at his residence Naveen Niwas in January. The distinguished leaders had arrived here to participate in the launch of book 'The Tall Man Biju Patnaik'. The traditional Odia food had Pajia Peetha, Saga Badi, and Sajana Chhuin Bhaja as side dishes followed by Chhena Podas as dessert. The much-loved summer delicacy was served on banana leaves and brass wares.

Nalco CMD honours martyr's parents

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Nalco CMD Dr Tapan Kumar Chand honoured the parents of Pulwama martyr Manoj Kumar Behera at Puri on the occasion of the 91st foundation day of the Puri Club, which is one of the heritage clubs of the State in the historic city of Puri.

Dr Chand attended the event as chief guest while SJTA Chief Administrator Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra, Puri district Collector Jyoti Prakash Das and



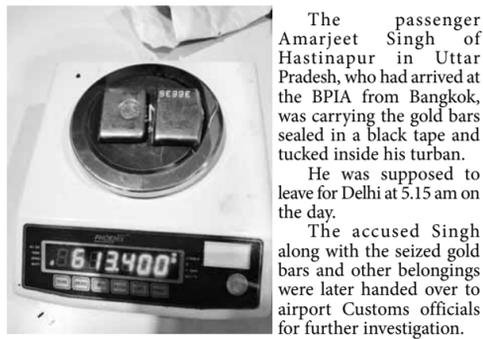
Superintendent of Police Dr Umashankar Dash and DFO Harshvardhan Udgata were guests of honour. Dr Chand was given the honorary membership of the club on the occasion being inducted as a club member by Collector Jyoti Prakash Das, who is chairman of the club.

Gold worth ₹20.5L seized at airport

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Gold bars weighing around 610 grams and worth ₹20.5 lakh were seized from a passenger at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here on the wee hours of Wednesday.

Reports said a CISF personnel deployed at the airport detected suspicious behaviour of the passenger and later recovered two gold bars of foreign origin kept hidden inside his turban after a thorough inspection.



The passenger Amarjeet Singh of Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh, who had arrived at the BPIA from Bangkok, was carrying the gold bars sealed in a black tape and tucked inside his turban. He was supposed to leave for Delhi at 5.15 am on the day.

The accused Singh along with the seized gold bars and other belongings were later handed over to airport Customs officials for further investigation.

Large swathe of rural Odisha water stressed

Bhubaneswar water bodies not protected



MAYARANI PRAHARAJ

Today billions of people are living without safe water. The World Water Day is an annual event celebrated on March 22 as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. The theme for 2019 is "Leaving no one behind". Large parts of Odisha have

already become water stressed. Mismanagement of water resources has led to a critical situation in many parts of the State. Rapid growth in demand for water due to population growth, urbanization and changing lifestyle pose serious challenges to water security.

There are many habitations in Odisha that do not meet the norm of 40 liters per capita per day (lpcd). In a number of areas, tube wells stop yielding water during summer. The problem occurs when the water table falls below the level to which the tube well has been dug.

Around 38.5 per cent families travel at least half a km to fetch drinking water in Odisha villages. The number of such families was 32.5 per cent in 2001, which increased by 6 per cent in 10 years.

Compared to 21.1 per cent people in 2001, around 18.5 per cent have to travel beyond 100 metres for drinking water in urban areas. Out of 157,296 rural habitations in Odisha,

only 72 per cent of the households are fully covered with respect to a provision of 40 liters per day of drinking water.

Proper water and sanitation facilities are crucial and preconditions for promoting quality of life of communities. The National Water Policy - 2002 as well as the Odisha State Water Policy - 2007 defines water as a prime natural resource, a basic human need and a precious national asset. Accordingly, both the National Water Policy and the

Odisha State water policy accord highest priority to water supply for human and livestock consumption for drinking and domestic use.

As per Odisha State Urban Water Supply Policy 2013, all households shall have access to water through direct piped connection.

A comprehensive strategy shall have to be adopted to address the issues and challenges and achieve the objective of the policy framework. A water supply system master

WORLD WATER DAY

plan for the city shall be developed prior to initiating expansion proposals.

Most of the water bodies of Bhubaneswar are not protected. Many ponds are turning dump yards. Sewage water is entering to many other water bodies.

Besides increasing of surface runoff due to more paved areas decrease the ground water recharge. There is a lack in the number of coverage of piped water supply connections in the city.

Out of 67 wards in the city 33 wards are fully covered with piped water supply and 34 wards are partially covered with piped water supply. 62.5 per cent of the water supplied is non-revenue water with more than 2,300 public water stand posts. In a number of urban areas people are not using toilets due to want of piped water supply.

Bhubaneswar has 437 authorized slums and several

unauthorized slums. Most of the people of the slum areas face drinking water problem during summer season. With no access to piped water supply slum residents are forced to use water from dug wells for drinking and other purposes.

Unplanned growth of multi storey buildings in and around water body is also causing fast depletion of the ground water table.

Water body can control city's ecosystem properly and reduce heat island effect in the city. Wetlands and water bodies like lakes, ponds should not be encroached, and they should be protected properly. Rainwater Harvesting should be encouraged to increase the level of groundwater.

Proper water and sanitation facilities are crucial and preconditions for promoting quality of life of communities. Water resource is essential for domestic work, commercial, industrial and agricultural

development. Besides, it is necessary for public health, society and economy. Therefore, it is critically important to manage water resources effectively. Due to uncontrolled development the demand for water increased rapidly and it has impact on water resources like over extraction of surface and ground water.

Over extraction of water from surface and ground water bodies may lead to environmental imbalance in the system.

Restoration of surface water bodies for improving water storage quantity in urban area and maximize the ground water recharge is essential. Recycling and reuse of wastewater is an important aspect of water management providing a way to increase available water while also preventing pollution of water bodies. Development of watershed is an important programme to make best use of the rainwater for agricultural production while improving soil conservation and biodiversity.

The Government has to develop proper framework to secure natural water resources. The optimal harvesting of rainwater is necessary for replenishing surface and ground water reserves.

The ground water resources assessments are being carried out at an interval of five years following on the norms and methodology prescribed by the Ground Water Estimation Committee (GEC) of Government of India. There is a need to map the aquifers to know the quantum and quality of ground water resources (replenishable as well as non-replenishable).

Rainwater harvesting can be done in residential buildings, industrial and large scale commercial, institutional buildings. In addition recharging projects should be undertaken so that extraction is less than recharge.

This would allow the aquifers to provide base flows to the surface system, and maintain ecology. Integrated watershed development activ-

ities with groundwater perspectives need to be taken in a comprehensive manner to increase overall water productivity.

To leave no one behind, we must focus our efforts towards including people who have been marginalized or ignored. Water services must meet the needs of marginalized groups and their voices must be heard in decision-making processes. Regulatory and legal frameworks must recognize the right to water for all people, and sufficient funding must be fairly and effectively targeted at those who need it most. The water demand can be met using the existing quantity of water supplied.

However, this requires improvements on water supply distribution network. The coverage needs to be improved in slums and in partially covered areas for equitable distribution of water.

(Dr Praharaj teaches in Department of Architecture, College of Engineering and Technology, Bhubaneswar)

Forward Bloc's first candidate list out

Names for 3 Lok Sabha, 20 Assembly seats declared

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) Odisha State Committee on Wednesday announced its first list of candidates for the elections.
AIFB national secretary Naren Chatterjee addressing a Press meet here said the party in its first list has announced names of candidates for three Lok Sabha and 20 Assembly seats.
For the Lok Sabha seats, Prafulla Kumar Nayak would contest from Keonjhar, Surendra Baliputia from



Nabarangpur and Rajeeb Chandra Khadenga from Aska. For the Assembly seats, Surjyamani Nayal would contest from Chitrakonda, Polosara, Jitendriya Behera from Puri, Abhijit Mishra from Ghasipura, Narendra Kumar Jena from Anandpur, Padmini Laguri from Patna, Ranjeet Munda from Keonjhar,

Ratikant Parida from Champua, Sarbeswar Mishra from Baleswar and Bijaylaxmi Samantray from Nimapara.
Pradip Das would contest from Bhubaneswar Central, Debraj Sahu from Ranpur, Siddharth Patjoshi from Brahmapur, Bibhudendra Padhi from Chikiti, Aniruddh Mallick from Remuna, Bikash Madi from Malkangiri, Dhanurjya Hantal from Koraput, Pratima Nayak from Cuttack-Choudwar, Laxmidhar Giri from Basta and Narayan Dalua from Bhubaneswar Ekamra.
Among others, AIFB State committee general secretary Jyoti Ranjan Mahapatra, State president Purnachandra Padhy, secretary Jitendra Behera and Ratikant Parida were present.

IN BRIEF

MANAV ADHIKAR LEADER FILES NOMINATIONS FOR B'PUR
Brahmapur: Manav Adhikar Surakshya Manch coordinator Abani Gaya filed his nomination papers as an Independent candidate for the Brahmapur Assembly constituency at the Chhatrapur Sub-Collector office on Wednesday. Congress candidate S Dharma Rao after going in a rally with thousands of supporter filed his nomination papers for the Gopalpur Assembly seat. Independent candidate K Shyambabu Subudhi also filed his papers for the Brahmapur Lok Sabha constituency while Independent candidate Birendra Gauda has filed his papers for the Chhatrapur Assembly constituency.

KALINGA UTKAL EXP CANCELLED FOR 5 DAYS
Bhubaneswar: In view of safety related modernisation work in connection with infrastructure maintenance at different places in northern, north central and west central railway jurisdiction, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) has decided to cancel a few pairs of trains for a few days for better infrastructure development. The 18477/18488 Puri-Haridwar-Puri Kalinga Utkal Express from Puri from March 22 to 26 and from Haridwar from March 24 to 28 would remain cancelled from both the directions. Full refund would be granted in such cases where ticket has been purchased and train cancelled.

AWARENESS RALLY ON HOUSE SPARROW DAY HELD
Brahmapur: The Anchalika Vikash Parishad in association with the DFO, Brahmapur organised an awareness cycle rally on the occasion of World House Sparrow Day here on Wednesday. Brahmapur DFO Suresh Panth attended as guest and flagged off the rally. Among others, Sudheera Rout, Dr Sunil Kumar Kota, Ranger A Raja Rao, sand artist Satya Narayan Moharana, Parishad president Sagar Kumar Patro, secretary Bijendra Majhi, Sibaram Panigrahi, Mamata Choudhury, Rubi Khemani and A Brahmananda Achari were present.

CSPUR DAVIANS CELEBRATE HOLI
Bhubaneswar: DAVians of Chandrasekharpur celebrated the festival of colours Holi spreading the message of fraternity and happiness in the school premises on Wednesday.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY MEET HELD IN CUTTACK
Cuttack: A community consultation was organised by city-based voluntary organisation, Centre for Child and Women Development (CCWD) with the support of the National Foundation for India (NFI) on safe childhood. Everybody should be aware of the laws relating to children and a safety net for children is highly essential at every level, said District Child Protection Officer, Cuttack Pragati Mohanty. Among others, Chairperson of Child Welfare Committee, Cuttack, Mandakini Jerna and former Chairperson of State Commission for Women Namita Panda spoke. The objective of the programme was shared by CCWD secretary Sadasiv Swain. Ashok Gochhi proposed a vote of thanks.

BRAHAMANITARANG PS ASI HELD TAKING BRIBE
Rourkela: The Vigilance police on Wednesday caught Sundargarh district's Brahamanitarang police station ASI Madhusudan Patra red-handed for demanding and accepting illegal gratification of Rs 5,000. Patra was nabbed inside the police station while taking the bribe from complainant Lalu Ram of Sitalapada under the Uditnagar PS of Rourkela not to arrest him in a case in which his brother Prakash Ram was arrested by Patra and forwarded to court on March 15. Patra's residential Government quarter at Rourkela was also searched. He was arrested and forwarded to court.

PALLAHARA MLA PROVIDES SOPS TO HAPLESS
Pallahara: Sukanti Sahu of Namagaon died due to lightning, Ghana Rajhans of Iswarnagar and Sukanta Mahanta of Muniapalpur died in a road accident under Pallahara Sadar recently. Local MLA Mahesh Sahu met kin of three deceased and assured them benefit under Government schemes. MLA Sahu gave Rs 10,000 to each family from his own source and directed to the Sub Collector, Pallahara to provide Rs 10,000 to each from Red Cross fund immediately.

Bamboo Resource Centre to be set up in BBSR

For research, advocacy and project implementation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
A State-level workshop organised by the Sparsh Foundation of JK Papers in collaboration with the Nabard decided to set up an Odisha Bamboo Resource Centre (OBRC) in Bhubaneswar to take up research, advocacy and project implementation initiatives in the bamboo sector of the State.
The deliberations in five intensive sessions focused on understanding the utility of the bamboo in our lives, dissected the opportunities for livelihood promotion and developing a bamboo startup culture and suggested strategies on how best to increase corporate funding into the sector.
CGM, Nabard A Chandrasekhar appreciated the effort of the organisers and announced to work with farmers producing



Mohanty of Auroville Bamboo Centre, Puducherry, Dr N Barathi of Growmore from Hosur, Tamilnadu, Prof Nirakar Bhol of OUAT Bhubaneswar, Dhruba Charan Bal, DGM, Agri Finance, SBI, Bhubaneswar, Dr Ambika Nanda, Head CSR, Tata Steel, Biswajit Dwivedi, VP, JKPM, Basanta Kumar Dash Director, Handicraft and Cottage Industries, Government of Odisha, Prof Binay Jena, Director of NIFT Bhubaneswar, PK Mohapatra, DGM, NABARD, Odisha, Kapil Kaul, Head CSR, JK Group, Prof Srinivas Subbarao of Sri Sri University and Dr Ambika Nanda of Tata Steel argued strongly in favour of bamboo's huge utility as a handy household product having large-scale industrial use as well.

Karttabya Sangathan holds health meet



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Karttabya Swachhasebi Sangathan in association with the Blood Donors Are Life Savers, Lions Club Kendrapada Nilachakra and Mahakalpara Youth Group organised a health awareness programme and blood donation camp at Chhedakani, Mahakalpara and Kendrapada on Wednesday.
More than three hundred people of nearby panchayats were examined by Central Red Cross Blood Bank Medical Officer (MO) Dr Chandrika Prasad Das and Mahakalpara MO Dr Hrushikesh Lenka.
In the blood donation camp about 60 units of blood were collected. Among others, Lions Club, Kendrapada Nilachakra president Deepak Choudhury, Blood Donors are Life Saver founder Laxman Swain, Red Cross life member Arun Das, Naba Diganta Bisoi, Pranay Parida Rajkishore Nayak, Kulamani Choudhury, Ashok Senapati and Badal Senapati were present.

100 AIIMS BBSR students visit NCSCDA

Observe rehabilitation services being given to PwDs

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
As many as 100 MBBS students along with three Assistant Professors, Dr Arvinda Singh, Dr Dibya Jyoti Mohapatra and Dr Sujata, of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar visited the National Career Service Centre for Differently Aabled (NCSCDA) on Wednesday.
The students were divided in two teams lead by J Padmanav Rao, Young Professional and Soumaya Ranjan Padhi, Training Coordinator and Placement Officer under the leadership of Ram Kishor Sharma, Centre



Head. At the end, a motivational session was taken by Sharma. Both the teams visited each and every activity and infrastructure of the NCSCDA and interacted with Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) undergoing training there. Sharma discussed at length about the Government Institutional Rehabilitation Network.

independent by availing rehabilitation services and schemes. The visit of students of AIIMS to NCSCDA Bhubaneswar was first-of-its-kind in the country. Prof Gitanjali Batmanaben played very important role in this unique exposure visit. Dr Vikas Bhatia, Asst Prof Aravinda Singh, Dr Dibya Jyoti Mohapatra, Dr Sujata coordinated the visit.
The young MBBS students took very keen interest in observing rehabilitation services for PwDs particularly barrier-free infrastructure, Braille reading, writing, use of computer by trainees with blindness etc. They asked several interesting questions.
Sharma said that exposure visit of MBBS students definitely would have meaningful outcome particularly in referral services.
He appealed other medical colleges for such exposure visits to the NCSCDA.

'Bank auditors must go by tech changes'

ICAI EIRC holds seminar

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The EIRC, Bhubaneswar Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) conducted a seminar on "Bank Audit 2019" here on Wednesday.
The seminar was inaugurated by Canara Bank GM and Circle Head Shreekanth Mohapatra, seminar chairman CA Prashant Panda, ICAI Bhubaneswar Past Chairman CA Sumit Binani, EIRC Chairman CA Nitesh Kumar More, EIRC Vice Chairman CA Sunil Kumar Sahoo, EIRC Secretary CA Ravi Kumar Patwa, Treasurer CA Debayan Patra, MC Member CA Sugyan Kumar Sahoo and Secretary CA Bisworanjan Sutar.
Newly elected office-bearers and managing-committee members of EIRC of ICAI were felicitated.
Canara Bank GM Mohapatra said that auditors play a major role in detecting frauds and, thus, they should be equipped with latest technolo-



gy changes and manner of conducting the audit. Seminar Chairman Panda emphasised on the importance of conducting audit in CBS environment, importance of LFR compliance, benchmarking standards in audit and identifying critical areas in reporting etc.
In the technical session, CA Niranjan Joshi from Mumbai deliberated on the topic "Overview on Bank Branch Audit, Planning and Documentation" and CS G V

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that our client, M/s. Muthoot Finance Ltd. (GSTIN 32AABCT0343B1Z7), Registered Office: 2nd Floor, Muthoot Chambers, Banerji Road, Kochi - 682018, Kerala, India CIN: L65910KL1997PLC011300, Ph: +91 484-2396478, 2394712, Fax: +91 484-2396506, mails@muthootgroup.com, www.muthootfinance.com is conducting Auction of ornaments (NPA accounts for the period up to 31.12.2017), pledged in its favour, by the defaulting Borrowers, as detailed hereunder. All those interested may participate.
Date of Auction: 25.03.2019
Berhampore - Sales Tax Road: MAL-301, 368, 567, 611, 631, 1090, MBL-1491, 2131, 2362, MGL-448, 576, 595, 720, 729, 735, 765, 806, 819, 829, 882, 900, 920, 929, 993, 1006, 1077, 1108, 1262, 1313, 1349, 1357, 1386, 1387, 1452, 1465, 1476, 1487, 1501, 1507, 1578, 1579, 1607, 1618, 1636, 1672, 1682, 1688, 1749, 1767, 1836, 1851, 1880, 1932, 1950, 1974, MLS-15, MOS-5, MSL-9901, 10427, 10463, 10568, 10604, 10678, 10748, 10853, 10859, 10877, 10902, 10943, 10944, 10946, 10957, 10965, 10968, 10985, 10995, 10995, MTL-4437, MUL-58, 62, 90, 91, 129, 215, 232, 249, 272, 278, 329, 347, 375, 377, 384, 408, 427, 447, 467, 479, 481, 489, 518, 533, 534, 535, 541, 572, 595, 647, 649, 656, 665, 667, 669, 678, 683, 721, 767, 768, 779, 800, 816, 820, 847, 896, 918, 935, 943, 944, 950, 994, 1015, 1019, Berhampore - Hanuman Bazar: MAL-185, 379, 437, 447, 488, 536, 758, MBL-589, 691, 1022, 1542, MGL-628, 631, 1017, 1038, 1039, 1045, 1060, 1064, 1070, 1123, 1150, 1198, 1279, 1285, 1287, 1299, 1325, 1333, 1339, 1354, 1368, 1386, 1390, 1391, 1419, 1451, 1518, 1570, 1582, 1583, 1605, 1670, 1714, 1729, 1734, 1783, 1804, 1819, 1915, 1919, 1964, 2013, 2027, 2028, 2036, 2050, 2067, 2106, 2164, 2182, 2197, 2201, 2208, 2228, 2237, 2252, 2257, 2258, 2315, 2330, 2339, 2355, 2425, MSL-11, 13, 14, MSL-8398, 9523, 9545, 9550, 9578, 9584, 9585, 9613, 9680, 9729, 9812, 9824, 9828, 9829, 9841, 9851, 9864, 9867, 9917, 9949, 9961, 9962, MUL-34, 52, 68, 82, 83, 131, 133, 134, 142, 146, 178, 189, 190, 206, 213, 290, 297, 323, 328, 330, 332, 363, 397, 406, 410, 455, 462, 464, 465, 466, 467, 475, 482, 492, 542, 562, 564, 568, 570, 571, 574, 576, 579, 585, 593, 594, 602, 603, 606, 608, 612, 641, 666, 674, 678, 681, 697, 698, 700, 702, 703, 704, 705, 718, 719, 734, 735, 736, 752, 759, 760, 785, 786, 795, 796, 800, 826, 827, 830, 839, 843, 883, 921, 925, 935, 948, 950, 952, 957, 990, 991, 996, 1003, 1013, 1026, 1027, 1040, 1051, 1076, 1079, 1080, 1088, 1089, 1090, Berhampur - Gusaninuaogaon: MAL-288, 726, MGL-498, 740, 751, 782, 814, 833, 835, 893, 895, 920, 938, 977, 991, 1004, 1028, 1030, 1038, 1039, 1056, 1072, 1128, 1140, 1154, 1165, 1166, 1169, 1209, 1237, 1250, 1352, 1366, 1441, 1470, 1527, 1543, 1581, 1628, 1643, 1657, 1693, 1710, 1806, 1812, 1815, MSL-6063, 6567, 6576, 6585, 6586, 6625, 6680, 6728, 6744, 6756, 6772, 6782, 6825, 6908, 6916, MUL-28, 36, 41, 76, 82, 112, 152, 167, 178, 195, 199, 201, 204, 212, 214, 241, 254, 255, 257, 266, 291, 292, 293, 329, 385, 398, 417, 427, 441, 455, 466, 473, 478, 479, 489, 508, 553, 554, 560, 563, 579, 583, 590, 596, 611, 612, 615, 617, 618, 633, 642, 648, 650, 659, 676, 677, 678, 679, 690, 699, 704, 706, 736, 749, 750, 759, 760, 772, 787, 796, 807, 847, 858, 862
Auction of Spurious/Low purity ornaments, (Accounts for the period up to 30.06.2018)
Date of Auction: 25.03.2019
Berhampore - Sales Tax Road: MUL-776
The auctions in respect of the loan accounts shown under the branch head will be conducted at the respective branches.
However, please note that in case the auction does not get completed on the given date(s), then in that event the auction in respect thereto shall be conducted/continued on 26.03.2019 respectively at Sales Tax Road, Majligouri Tower, 1st floor, Berhampur, Orissa - 760010 and further in case the said ornaments are still not successfully auctioned on these dates then such auction shall be continued on subsequent days thereafter, at this same venue. No further notices shall be issued in this respect.
Kohli & Sobti, Advocates, A 59A, First Floor, Lajpat Nagar-II, New Delhi - 110024
Note: Customers can release their pledged ornaments before the scheduled auction date, against payment of dues of their client. Customer can also contact Email Id: auctiondelhi@muthootgroup.com or Call at 7834886464, 7994452461

Ex-CS Parija's book unveiled

PNS ■ CUTTACK
Former Chief Secretary of Odisha Lalat Indu Parija's book 'Fate Takes A Hand' was unveiled at Cuttack on Wednesday. Former Judge, Supreme Court, Anang Kumar Pattnaik and Orissa High Court Judge Justice M M Dash joined as the chief guest and the guest of honour, respectively, in the programme and unveiled the book.
Anang Pattnaik focused on Parija's 40 long years of work as a public servant. Among other guests, Bijan Ray, Senior Advocate, Amarendra Nath Mishra, former Chairman, Income Tax Settlement Commission of India and Parija's sons Bharatendu Parija and Jagatendu Parija were present. LI Parija is son of Dr Prana Krushna Parija, the world-renowned Botanist.



Congress insulted institutions: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lashing out at the Congress for insulting institutions, including Parliament, judiciary, media and the armed forces, when it was in power, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asked people to make a judicious decision while exercising their franchise during the Lok Sabha poll, beginning next month.

"As you go to vote - remember the past and how one family's desire for power cost the nation so greatly. If they could do it then, they can surely do it now," Modi wrote in his blog.

"Think wisely: From the press to parliament. From soldiers to freespeech. From the constitution to the courts. Institutional insult is the Congress way," he said continuing his attack on the Congress which has challenged his claims on development and national security.

"Everyone is wrong, only the Congress is correct," he said, taking a dig at the principal opposition party.

India has seen that whenever dynastic politics has been powerful, institutions have taken a severe beating, he said.

Referring to parliamentary proceedings, he said, "The nation knows the numerical dynamics of both houses. It is clear that when a non-dynasty-party [has a] higher number, its tendency to work more is vis-

ible... Which were the forces disrupting the House and why?"

His Government has changed things as it puts institutions above everything else, the Prime Minister said.

On the issue of freedom of expression, the Prime Minister alleged that dynastic parties have ever been comfortable with a free and vibrant press.

"No wonder, the very first constitutional amendment brought in by the Congress Government sought to curtail free speech. Speaking truth to power, which is the hallmark of a free press was seen as vulgar and indecent," Modi wrote.

He pointed out that the UPA years saw the bringing of a law that could land you in prison for posting anything "offensive".

"A tweet against the son of a powerful UPA minister could land innocent citizens in jail... The nation watched with horror when a few youngsters were arrested for expressing their true feelings at a programme in Karnataka, where the Congress is sharing power," he said.

Modi said he wants to tell the Congress that "no amount of intimidation" will change the ground realities. "Curbing freedom of expression will not change people's poor impression of the party."

Referring to Emergency, he said it was imposed to "safeguard" the interests of a dynasty.

"The Congress has imposed Article 356 almost a hundred times, with Mrs. Indira Gandhi herself doing so about fifty times. If they did not like a State Government or leader the government was dismissed," he wrote.

Referring to the judiciary, he alleged that Congress' contempt for courts "is anyway legendary".

"It was Mrs. Indira Gandhi who called for a 'committed judiciary', which seeks to make the courts more loyal to a family than to the Constitution," he claimed.

This pursuit of a "committed judiciary", Modi said, made Congress overlook several respected judges while appointing the chief justice of India.

"Congress' modus operandi is simple - reject, discredit and threaten. If a judicial verdict goes against them, they reject it, then they discredit the judge and thereafter, talk about bringing impeachment motions against the judge," he said apparently referring to moves to impeach then CJI Dipak Misra.

He said from CAG to the erstwhile Planning Commission, Congress never respected institutions.

"In a telling comment, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi called the Planning Commission led by Dr Manmohan Singh, 'A bunch of jokers'," he said.

In an oblique reference to Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's

Chowkidar is responsible for stealing jobs, Cong hits back

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking up the issue of jobs, the Congress on Wednesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging that the country's "chowkidar" is responsible for "stealing" jobs with 4.7 crore youth losing employment.

The party's attack on the government came over a media report which claimed that the actual size of India's male workforce, or men who are working, has shrunk for the first time since 1993-94.

"Modi ji has eaten up 4.7 crore jobs of the youth. Due to the BJP's 'pan-pakoda' policy, 4.7 crore youth had to wash their hands of their jobs," Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said.

brother-in-law Robert Vadra's appearance before investigating agencies, he said. "The sense of entitlement can be seen in their conduct towards routine legal processes. At present, their top leadership is on bail vis-a-vis a major scam. When the authorities seek to question them on their dealings, they do not even bother to reply."

"Promise was to give 10 crore jobs, but 4.7 crore jobs have been taken away. The country's chowkidar is responsible for stealing jobs," he said with the hashtag "Chowkidar Chor Hai".

Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal also slammed the government over the unemployment issue. He alleged that about two crore jobs were lost since Modi came to power, citing National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data.

Sibal said the national male workforce had shrunk from 30.4 crore in 2011-12 to 28.6 crore in 2017-18.

In all, since 2011-12, India's national workforce shrunk by 4.7 crore - more than the population of Saudi Arabia, the media report said.

He also accused the Congress of lacking "internal democracy", saying a leader dares to dare to head that party, he or she is shunted out.

Modi's attack against the Congress came on a day its general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also accused him of undermining every institution in the country.

Defence Acquisition Council OK's procurement of 10 lakh grenades

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to modernise the Infantry, the most crucial fighting arm of the army, the Defence Acquisition Council on Wednesday approved the procurement of ten lakh hand grenades worth over ₹500 crore. The grenades will be procured through the Make in India route wherein an Indian company will manufacture the grenades here.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed the prototype of the new grenade and an Indian company most probably in the private sector will manufacture the bombs, sources said here.

The grenades are an important part of the infantry soldier's kit comprising rifles also and the grenades are used to take out enemy bunkers and enemy in close combat. At present, the Indian army uses HE grenades and they will be replaced by the new grenades, officials said.

The nod for the grenades closely on the heels of opening of a factory to manufacture seven lakh AK-203 rifles within the country to replace the currently used INSAS rifles by the soldiers. The new factory in Amethi is a joint ven-

Government clears Ship Building Policy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the aim to give a fillip to the Indian industry to manufacture big ticket items like warships, submarines and helicopters besides fighter jet under the Strategic Partnership policy, the Government also approved new policy guidelines for manufacturing ships, officials said. Tenders worth ₹25,000 crore are likely to be awarded to different yards over the one to two years, officials said.

The main focus of the new guidelines is to give a boost to the Indian medium scale shipyards to build smaller ships within the country after tying up with the original equipment manufacturer to gain access to cutting edge technology.

The government recently okayed a major project worth over ₹50,000 crores under the Strategic Partnership programme to build six conventional submarines in the country and Indian shipyards. The new policy guidelines approved on Wednesday will also see the Indian shipyards manufacturing ships for the Indian Coast Guard, they said.

ture between India and Russia and the total value of the deal is more than ₹12,000 crores. A Major General rank officer will head the factory rifles which will later manufacture the AK series rifles for the paramilitary forces and the state police organizations.

Similarly, the government recently gave the nod for buying more than 12,000 Sig Sauer rifles for the infantry on a fast track basis. These rifles will be used by the soldiers guarding

the Line of Control with Pakistan and the Line of Actual Control with China besides those engaged in counter insurgency operations in the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir.

Since the infantry does the fighting on the ground, it's modernisation is now top priority and the government is also likely to approve procurement of sniper rifles apart from light machine guns and medium machine guns to guard the frontiers.

BJP poll body continues brainstorming over candidates' list for UP, WB

Top leadership is set to drop many veteran MPs to overcome crucial anti-incumbency

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing its unfinished task of finalising the Lok Sabha list of candidates, the BJP Central Election Committee (CEC) again met here on Wednesday and scrutinised the list of candidates for Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

According to sources, the names a major chunk of candidates, particularly those contesting in the first phase, would be out only on Friday (March 22) evening, post-Holi. The party is yet to release its first list of candidates despite three rounds of intensive discussions, virtually burning the midnight oil.

This is the third time since last week that the BJP top leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Party president Amit Shah held a marathon meeting to give a green signal to the list of candidates for various states. The first phase of voting is on April 11 and most of the opposition parties are out with the names of their candidates.

With winnability in mind, the top BJP leadership is set to drop many a veteran MPs to overcome the crucial anti-incumbency factor against them. Constituencies of a number of MPs have also been

changed, factoring new situations, sources said.

BJP has already decided to drop all sitting MPs from Chhattisgarh and sought a fresh list of candidates from the state unit.

The BJP CEC discussed 91 seats going to polls in first phase on April 11 which are spread over 20 states including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Bihar, Odisha and Uttarakhand. The last date of filing nomination is March 25 and the last date withdrawal of nomination is March 28.

Among the constituencies which would vote in the first phase include eight in UP, five in Uttarakhand, four in Bihar, Seven in Maharashtra, five in Assam, four in Odisha and two in West Bengal.

The second phase of poll on April 18 involves 97 Lok Sabha constituencies including 13 states.

Third phase on April 23 (115 constituencies, 14 states), Fourth phase on April 29 (71 constituencies, 9 states), Fifth phase on May 6 (51 constituencies, 7 states), Sixth phase May 12 (59 constituencies, 7 states) and the last Seventh phase on May 19 (59 constituencies, 8 states). The counting of votes would be on May 23 when results would also be announced.

Two of the sitting BJP MPs and party seniors Sushma Swaraj and Uma Bharti have volunteered to not to contest Lok Sabha polls. But BJP is open to field some of the veterans past 75 years if they chose to contest poll.

Free media is a cornerstone of democracy: V-P

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday said free media is the cornerstone of democracy and it can actually be a force multiplier to sustain democracy. Delivering the first Atal Behari Vajpayee Memorial Lecture at Indian Institute of Mass Communication in New Delhi, Naidu said media should play a pivotal role in spreading correct and credible information and the news and views should not be mixed. The Vice President said, an unbiased media ensures that people are well informed and media should take care of facts and the opinion must be expressed without any fear.

Naidu expressed concern over the menace of paid news saying the people should come and vote in large number in the Lok Sabha elections as voting is not just a right, it is about duty and people must perform their duty by casting their vote. He said during elections, political parties tend to make "populist promises" and the media should play the role of questioning the basis of these promises. Terming voting a "national call of duty", he said voting in every election needs to be made a habit.

"The media has an important role in promoting participatory democracy through enhanced voter turnout which in turn broad bases the foundation of democratic governance," Naidu said. The vice president asked

media organisations to devote space and time to report on the antecedents of politicians, their past work, participation in debates in state legislatures and Parliament. "These facts should be reminded to the people so that they can make an informed choice," he said in his lecture on the "Role of Media in Moulding an Enlightened Electorate".

Expressing concern over the "unhealthy" trend of politicians switching from one party to another after being elected, Naidu opined that defections were making a mockery of democracy. Defectors must resign from the post and seek reelection, he said.

Naidu stressed on the need for speedy disposal of election cases pending before various courts and time-bound disposal of cases by presiding officers of legislative bodies. The vice president asked people to elect leaders based on their character, caliber, capacity and conduct, but warned that some people were trying to replace these qualities with cash, community, caste and criminality (4Cs).

Referring to the efforts of the Election Commission to combat fake news, Naidu said the media's role is extremely important during elections as the chances of people propagating fake news increases.

"It is the responsibility of the media to act like myth-busters in such sensitive times, and report the absolute, undiluted truth," he said.

DYNASTIC POLITICS JIBE

'No one in BJP can occupy any public position without support of Sangh Parivar'

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal on Wednesday returned fire at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his "dynastic politics" attack on the Congress, saying the PM himself comes from the Sangh Parivar without whose blessings no one in the country can occupy any public position.

He said the Prime Minister should introspect and instead of talking about dynastic politics, should focus on issues confronting people.

"What is the PM talking about? No one in the BJP can occupy any public position without the support of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). The Sangh Parivar is the biggest parivar in the world. Without

their blessings no one can hold any public position in the country, be it the position of a PM, a minister, Governor or chief ministers," Sibal told PTI.

Sibal's remarks came in response to Prime Minister Modi's attack on the grand old party in a blog published earlier Wednesday.

Modi urged people to think wisely before casting vote, saying that from the press to Parliament, from soldiers to free speech, from the Constitution to the courts, "institutional insult is the Congress way".

"India has seen that whenever dynastic politics has been powerful, institutions have



taken a severe beating," he said.

Reacting to the remarks, Sibal asked the prime minister to look within and focus on addressing the issues concerning the country - such as farm crisis, joblessness, shortage of drinking water, education, health and pollution challenges.

"Is the PM so busy in the campaign that he has forgotten all about the people of India. He's only worried about dynasty," the former HRD minister said.

Sibal added that there is no one in the BJP, barring a few, who have not come from the RSS background. The prime minister, governors, chief ministers and ministers all belong to the RSS.

He also alleged that about 2 crore jobs were lost since Modi came to power, citing a National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data.

He said the national male workforce had shrunk from 30.4 crore in 2011-12 to 28.6 crore in 2017-18.

PC hits back on Jaitley's over 'compulsive contrarians' remark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader P S Chidambaram on Wednesday came out hard against Finance Minister Arun Jaitley asking if a person disagreeing with the Government is a "compulsive contrarian", can someone who always agrees with the government be called "his master's voice"?

As many as 108 economists and social scientists, including Jean Dreze (Allahabad University), Emily Breza (Harvard University), Satish Deshpande (Delhi University), Esther Duflo (MIT, US) and Jayati Ghosh (JNU), had made an appeal last week, expressing their concern over "political interference" in influencing statistical data in India.

Responding to Jaitley, Chidambaram tweeted: "According to Mr Jaitley, one who disagrees with the government is a 'compulsive contrarian'. Can we then say that anyone who always agrees with the government is 'His Master's Voice'?"

The Finance Minister has slammed 108 economists and social scientists as "compulsive contrarians" for raising concern over "political interference" to influence statistical data.

In his blog published on Tuesday, Jaitley had said these "compulsive contrarians" have repeatedly signed memorandums of what he said was manufactured political issues

ED to dispose off Nirav Modi's 173 paintings, 11 vehicles

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate will sell 173 paintings and 11 vehicles "beneficially owned" by Nirav Modi, prime accused in the ₹14,000-crore PNB credit fraud case, after the agency obtained permission from a special PMLA court in Mumbai on Wednesday.

The special PMLA court also issued a non-bailable warrant against his wife Ami Modi after the ED recently filed a supplementary charge sheet underlining her role in the PNB scam.

The ED will put on sale the 173 paintings of Modi which are valued at ₹57.72 crore and eleven vehicles that include Rolls Royce, Porsche, Mercedes and Toyota Fortuner.

Officials said a public auction will be held later this month to monetize the seized items.

The court also allowed the Income Tax Department to sell another 68 paintings seized by it as part of its separate probe against the fugitive diamondaire.

Modi was arrested by the Scotland Yard from the Holborn area of London on Wednesday. PNS

Without precautions colours can harm asthmatic kids

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the revelers gear up to participate in festival of colours, Holi on Thursday, doctors have warned that in absence of proper safeguards, these colors might do more harm than good and dampen the festive mood, particularly those suffering with asthma. Asthmatic children are the worst victims.

Asthma is a chronic reactive airway disease characterized by recurrent symptoms, reversible airway obstruction and bronchospasm.

Dr. Amitabha Ghosh, Columbia Asia Hospital, Gurgaon, said that they receive around 20 to 25 patients in the OPD just before and after the Holi festival with complaints of cough, breathing issues, skin irritations and rashes.

Besides, some also come with complaints of sore or teary eyes after being affected by some of the artificial colors used during Holi.



should take adequate precaution to guard themselves. Asthma patients should follow the medication regime for a week in the run up to the festival. While playing with colors, be careful that you do not inhale it anyway," he said.

Asthma attacks can be triggered by dust, powders, cold air, air pollution, smoke and other allergens. As Holi is nearer, it can be disastrous for the patients with asthma, added Dr. Sandeep Nayyar, Senior Consultant & HOD, Respiratory Medicine, Allergy and Sleep Disorder, BLK Super Speciality Hospital. He suggested the asthmatic

Holi, one should apply mustard oil or lotion all over the body to keep the skin protected which will also ensure removing colours with ease. On hair one should apply plenty of coconut oil to prevent colours from penetrating deep into the roots, he said. "To get rid of hard colours which are prepared from harmful substances like acids, glass and strong chemicals," Dr Chauhan said.

Do's and Don'ts during holi

Use coconut oil on skin before playing Holi; Do proper oiling of hair; Use conditioner on hair after playing colours; Cover yourself as much as possible; Use dry colours; Use colours made from plants; If colour enters eyes, immediately wash it with plain water repeatedly and then take doctor's advice

Don'ts: Avoid sitting in the sun after playing colours; Eat or drink after washing hands or removing colours; Do not play with eggs, mud, black ink.

EC ropes in Manipur LGBT model as State Icon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Transgender model and actress from Manipur Bishesh Huirem has been engaged as "State Icon" by the Election Commission (EC) to inspire voters in Manipur to participate in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls while Mumbai social worker Shree Gauri Sawant, another transgender appointed as 'election ambassador' by the EC. For its part, the Punjab district electoral office also appointed a transgender Preeti Mahant as the district icon to create awareness activities under the Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation Programme (SVEEP).

In another development, transgender leader Rajni Rawat who contested Mayor election of Dehradun as an Aam Admi Party (AAP) candidate last year has been barred from contesting Lok Sabha polls as she had failed to submit election expenditure of 2017 assembly polls in Uttarakhand.



According to EC, Bishesh represented India at the Miss International Queen in Thailand in 2016, has been appointed as one of the "state icons" to motivate the masses, particularly transgender, to participate in the Lok Sabha elections.

Bishesh is the first transgender celebrity in the country to be appointed as a state icon for the parliamentary polls. A graduate in fashion and apparel designing from Bangalore University, she is one of the

highest-paid artistes in Manipuri films and mobile theatres.

According to EC, it's the first time that Shree Gauri Sawant a transgender has been appointed as an election ambassador in India. Born as Ganesh Suresh Sawant, she moved out of her Pune house and shifted to Mumbai.

After years of extensive struggle, Shree Gauri formed an NGO named 'Sakhi Char Chowghi' to provide health care services and create sexu-

al awareness amongst transgender and the MSM community. In another progressive move, in 2001 she adopted a daughter of a sex worker who passed away while fighting HIV.

As per EC, there are 38,328 transgender registered as electorate in the country. Uttar Pradesh has 8374 transgender voters, followed by 5497 in Tamil Nadu; 2700 in Bihar; 2032 in Odisha; 2083 in Maharashtra; 1423 in Madhya Pradesh; 1426 in West Bengal and 1368 in Puducherry. In Delhi, as many as 665 transgender enrolled in the electoral list.

For the first time, transgender were recognised as the third gender by the commission during the 2014 Lok Sabha polls after a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court in this regard.

EC officials said that a large of transgender still prefer to identify themselves as either male or female on the electoral list.

ILLEGAL TELEPHONE EXCHANGE CASE HC rejects Dayanidhi's plea to quash charges

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Dayanidhi Maran, the DMK candidate for Chennai Central Lok Sabha constituency and his elder brother Kalanidhi Maran, suffered a setback on Wednesday as Madras High Court dismissed the petition filed by them asking to quash the charges framed against them by the trial court in the illegal telephone exchange case.



Maran, during his tenure as union minister for communications (2004 to 2007) had set up an illegal telephone exchange at his residence in Chennai misusing his official power.

Dayanidhi Maran had used the network for the commercial telecasting business of Sun Network, owned by his brother Kalanidhi Maran. The investigating agency had told the trial court that exchequer had lost Rs 1.78 crore because of the illegal telephone exchange.

The Special CBI court in Chennai had acquitted all the accused in the month of March 2018 telling there were not enough materials to frame charges. The CBI approached the Madras High Court against the trial court order. Justice G

Jayachandran who heard the appeal by the CBI said, "Error, illegality, and perversity all could be pointed out in the impugned trial court order". Though the Marans rushed to the Supreme Court seeking the quashing of the Madras High Court order, the apex court asked them to stand trial in the case.

Following the dismissal of their petition in the Supreme Court, R Vasanthi, the XIV additional special judge for CBI cases, charged frames against the Maran brothers along with their five associates under Section 120-B of the IPC (Criminal Conspiracy), Criminal Breach of Trust (section 409), Cheating (section 420) and criminal misconduct by public servants (Section 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act).

The trial was to begin on September 14 last year when the Marans in a last-ditch attempt approached the Madras High Court which dismissed their petition on Friday.

The Maran brothers approached the Madras High Court early January with a plea to quash the subsequent charges filed against them by the CBI court and Wednesday's verdict was the fall out of the case.

Leaders kick-start poll campaign in TN



DMK president MK Stalin with his party candidates for Lok Sabha and Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly bypolls take part in an election campaign in Thiruvurur on Wednesday

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

All major players competing in the April 18 phase of the General election from Tamil Nadu launched their campaigns on Wednesday.

While Leader of Opposition and DMK chief MK Stalin began his electioneering from Thiruvurur (the Assembly constituency represented by his late father and former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi) with a heart rending speech pleading with the voters to elect the DMK nominees, his son Udhayanidhi Stalin declared from Saidapet that the DMK president would soon become the Chief Minister of the State to usher in the Karunanidhi rule.

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy chose his home constituency of Salem as the

starting point of his campaign trail. The Chief Minister's speech targeted TTV Dhinakaran and the Mannargudi family for forcing by-election from 18 assembly seats in the State. "The DMK and the Dhinakaran clan has been working over time from day one to pull down the Government formed by Amma," said Palaniswamy.

Two senior politicians in the State, O Panneerselvam m Deputy Chief Minister and Durai Murugan, treasurer of the DMK, hit the campaign trails at Theni and Velloor soliciting votes for their sons. Ravendranatha Kumar, son of Panneerselvam is the AIADMK Lok Sabha candidate from Theni while Kathir Anand, son of Murugan is the DMK candidate from Velloor Lok Sabha constituency.

1 cr jobs lost while Modi was busy marketing himself: RaGa

Imphal/Khumulwng: Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday lacerated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for "destroying" one crore jobs and unleashing "politics of division and hatred", insisting while these were happening the PM was busy "marketing" himself.

Addressing election rallies in Manipur capital Imphal and Khumulwng in Tripura in the Northeast, where his party's last standing citadel fell to rival BJP's ally Mizo National Front in Mizoram in November 2018, Rahul accused the saffron party of abandoning its 'act east policy' and attacking culture and ethos of people of the region.

Unsparring in his assault on Modi, Rahul also wondered whether the PM ever studied at a university, and alleged educational institutions were undergoing saffronisation under his watch.

2019 Elections Battleground LOK SABHA

Attacking Modi over alleged loss of employment opportunities, the Congress leader said the PM had claimed on taking over the reins of the Government that two crore jobs will be created every year, but one crore jobs were lost in 2018 alone. Over 30,000 jobs were lost on an average every day, he claimed.

"In 2018, Prime Minister



Congress president Rahul Gandhi being presented a memento during a public meeting in Imphal on Wednesday

Narendra Modi destroyed one crore jobs. This is the scale of his incompetence. It is absurd and ridiculous that the PM promises giving two crore jobs," Gandhi told the well-attended rally in Imphal.

A Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) report had recently claimed 1.09 crore jobs were lost in the country in the past one year.

The Modi Government is under fire from Opposition parties as also allies like the Shiv Sena over alleged job loss.

"Modi has reduced the Prime Minister's Office to the status of Publicity Minister's Office as he is busy marketing himself," he earlier said during an interaction with students in Imphal, where he also accused the Centre of saffronising educational institutions.

During the interaction, he claimed nobody knew whether Modi ever went to a university. "We still have no access to his university degree. Nobody actually knows if he went to university or not. There is an RTI (application) in Delhi seeking PM's degree but it has not been responded to," Rahul said, adding "the PM is imposing mediocrity on a sophisticated country".

Speaking about unrest at Manipur University last year after students and teachers demanded removal of then vice chancellor AP Pandey over his alleged "anti-academic activities", the Congress president said he was happy people of Manipur succeeded in forcing him out. Protests for ouster of Pandey, who allegedly had RSS links, had led to the closure of university for three months.

Congress is anti-Tripura, party of traitors: Biplab Deb

Agartala: Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb on Wednesday came down heavily on the Congress, dubbing it as a party of "traitors" whose leaders come to the State only to "eat the fruits of success".

Deb also alleged that there existed an "unholy nexus" between the Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) at the Centre, due to which the Left Front Government managed to be in power for 25 years in Tripura.

Addressing a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers meeting at Pratapgah here, Deb said, "They (Congress) are traitors. Nobody from the party earlier came to Tripura-- Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi or Manmohan Singh."

"After we freed the state from the Communists with support from Prime Minister



Narendra Modi, why are they coming here? They are a band of Satans. They have come to eat the fruits of success," he added.

The Chief Minister was referring to Congress president Rahul Gandhi's visit to Khumulwng near Agartala, where he had earlier in the day addressed a public rally.

Dubbing the Congress as "anti Tripura", Deb asserted that people would reject its call to overthrow the Modi Government in the Lok Sabha polls.

Confusion grips WB BJP over ticket distribution

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Confusion prevailed in the Bengal BJP ranks over distribution of nomination tickets even as party sources said though there was no dearth of candidates, there was "dearth of agreement over right candidate for a right constituency."

Sources said a section in the party was not sure about the efficacy of nominating politicians who had migrated from the Trinamool Congress. "There may be rival opinions particularly in a large party but things will be sorted out soon; maybe in a day's time. Soon we will come out with a list for the first two phases," a State-level leader

said discounting Opposition criticism that the party was fishing for Left and TMC dissidents.

In a first time and much to the chagrin of the ruling Trinamool Congress Bengal will have a seven-phased elections.

"Ustaader maar sesh raste (champion strikes in last night)," said Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh over the party's delay in announcing its candidates' list. When asked as to whether all the leaders who had switched sides from the TMC would get tickets, he said the State unit of the party had sent a list of candidates to central election committee. "Now it is up to the higher leadership to decide on the issue."

The State BJP is known to have sent a list of 159 aspirants to the Delhi leaders, sources said. Curiously the new look BJP — which originally had about 5-10 per cent votes in the State — of 2019 has a good number of its probable candidates drawn from the TMC while its mass base has swelled by the erstwhile CPI(M) cadres taking the party's current assumed vote base to about 30 per cent.

While an undercurrent of spite prevailed between the "old BJP" and the "new BJP" — the ones who had crossed over to the party during 2017-2018 — the names of some candidates had almost been finalised, sources said.



Vehicles drive through snowfall in Srinagar on Wednesday

J&K Governor: Raj Bhavan won't celebrate Holi in Pulwama memory

Jammu: As a mark of respect to the CRPF jawans who died in the Pulwama terror attack, the Raj Bhavan here will not celebrate Holi this year, an official said on Wednesday.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) too will not be celebrating the festival of colours this year officially in solidarity with the families of the 44 troopers killed in the February 14 suicide attack in south Kashmir.

A Raj Bhavan spokesperson informed that Governor Satya Pal Malik has decided that there will be no official Holi celebrations at the Raj Bhavan in the state's winter capital of Jammu. Malik said that he will not be celebrating the festival personally as well. The Governor did greet the people and observed that celebrating festivals together strengthens the bond of brotherhood between people.

In his message, Malik said, the celebration of festivals, a valuable part of our rich cultural heritage, strengthens the bonds of brotherhood and amity. I hope that this Holi would spread happiness and joy all around and promote harmony, he added. Wishing a happy Holi to the people, the Governor said further as he prayed for their well-being and prosperity.

At an event to mark the 80th raising day of the force, CRPF Director General (DG) R R Bhatnagar had on Monday said that there will be no "official celebrations" on Holi as a mark of respect to the 40 troops killed in Pulwama. Paying tributes to the slain personnel, the CRPF chief said the force was creating a "mobile app" to provide help to the families of jawans killed in action.

Midnight political drama in Goa: Sena slams BJP

Mumbai: In a scathing attack on the political drama between the BJP and its allies in Goa over the leadership issue, the Shiv Sena on Wednesday dubbed it as a "terrible state of democracy", saying they did not even wait for late chief minister Manohar Parrikar's ashes to cool down.

The "shameless game of power" started even before Parrikar's ashes could merge with the land of Gomantak, the Sena said in an editorial in party mouthpiece 'Saamana'.

It claimed that had the BJP waited till Tuesday, its government in Goa would have fallen and one of the two deputy chief ministers would have joined the Congress and got the desired post, it claimed.

BJP MLA Pramod Sawant

was sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Goa just before 2 am on Tuesday, capping a day of hectic parleys between the saffron party and its allies to put a new Government in place in the State.

After multiple postponements of the oath ceremony on Monday, the day Parrikar was cremated with state honours, 11 other ministers, including those from BJP's allies Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) and Goa Forward Party (GFP), were also sworn in.

As per the power-sharing arrangement reached with allies, an MLA each from two small parties backing the BJP in Goa will be made deputy chief minister, according to sources. They are GFP chief Vijai

Sardesai and MGP legislator Sudin Dhavalikar.

"In the end, those who were eyeing their shares like cats ended the game post Monday midnight with the swearing in of Sawant as the chief minister along with his two deputies," the Udhav Thackeray-led party said.

"This is a terrible state of democracy. They should have waited for Parrikar's ashes to cool down. What would have happened had they waited till Tuesday morning for the oath taking ceremony? it asked.

The pyre was burning while the "power hungry" were catching each other's neck for power. There shouldn't have been a problem in waiting for at least four hours, it opined.

BJP files complaint against TMC leaders for 'threatening' voters

Kolkata: The BJP on Wednesday filed a complaint with the Election Commission against four Trinamool Congress leaders, including two State Cabinet Ministers, for allegedly threatening and intimidating voters.

"We have filed a complaint against ministers Firdah Hakim, Rabindranath Ghosh, and senior TMC leaders Jitendra Tiwari and Anubrata Mondal. They have violated the model code of conduct by trying to threaten and intimidate voters," BJP general secretary Jai Prakash Majumdar said.

"These four leaders should be kept out of election campaign and other poll-related

procedures," he said.

Hakim's comment that "central forces will come and leave after the elections but the voters will stay under the protection of the state police" is a veiled threat to the voters, Majumdar said.

"North Bengal Development Minister Rabindranath Ghosh and Anubrata Mandal's comments are intimidating in nature. This is nothing but violation of the model code of conduct. The Commission should look into it to ensure free and fair polls," he said.

The BJP has also accused Asansol Mayor and TMC MLA Jitendra Tiwari of trying to bribe voters.

'Bengal famine caused by British policy failure, not drought'

Gandhinagar: The 1943 Bengal famine, which is estimated to have caused over three million deaths, resulted not from a drought as is widely thought but from the British government's policy failures, say IIT Gandhinagar scientists who have analysed 150 years of drought data.

Policy lapses such as prioritising distribution of vital supplies to the military, civil services and others as well as storing rice imports and not declaring Bengal famine hit were among the factors that led to the magnitude of the tragedy, historians have maintained.

Now, for the first time, researchers have analysed soil moisture database from 1870 to 2016 to reconstruct agricultural

droughts.

Between 1935-45, the famine-affected region, which was Bengal, had no drought, the team from the Indian Institute of Technology here found. "We are trying to understand the entire history of droughts in India and what is the likelihood they will occur in future," said Vimal Mishra, assistant professor at the institute.

"Famines that occurred during the British period caused the deaths of millions. We investigated the factors behind the causes of these deaths -- droughts or policy failures," he told PTI.

The Bengal famine of 1943 was "completely because of policy failure", he said.

Aside from the 1943

Bengal famine, all other famines during 1870 and 2016, appear to be related, at least in part, to widespread soil moisture droughts, Mishra said.

While historians have documented policy failures that led to the Bengal famine, this is the first time scientists have used soil moisture data to show there was no drought in Bengal during the period preceding the famine.

After analysing over 150 years of data for the study published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters, researchers identified seven major droughts and six major famines in India.

"Out of six major famines (1873-74, 1876, 1877, 1896-97, 1899, and 1943) that occurred

during 1870-2016, five are linked to soil moisture drought, and one (1943) was not," researchers wrote in the study.

"At the time, there was not much irrigation, groundwater pumping was not happening because electricity or mechanical pumps were not available," Mishra said.

The last major famine in the British era occurred in 1943, which is also known as the Bengal famine. The famine resulted in two-three million deaths.

"We identified 1935-45 as a period under drought, but the famine-affected region, which was Bengal, had no drought during this period," said Mishra.

"We find that the Bengal

Tejashwi: All is well in 'grand alliance', candidates to be announced after Holi

Patna: The grand-alliance of opposition parties in Bihar is intact and its candidates for all the 40 Lok Sabha seats in the state will be announced after Holi, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said on Wednesday.

"All is well in 'mahagath-bandhan'. It is intact and strong and we will put up a strong fight at the hustings. All differences have been ironed out. We will announce our candidates after Holi," Yadav told reporters at the Patna airport after arriving from Delhi, where he was over the past several days negotiating the seat-sharing pact.

RJD, he said, would be staying away from Holi celebrations this year as a mark of respect for the jawans killed in the Pulwama attack.

Sharad Yadav, whose Loktantrik Janata Dal (LJD) is one of the constituents of the grand-alliance, was more specific on the date of announcement of candidates. Candidates will be announced at a press meet in Patna on March 22, he told reporters in the national capital.

Meanwhile, a senior Congress leader from Bihar, who is camping in the national capital, told PTI, on condition of anonymity, that reports of his party having agreed to contest only nine seats are "mischievous".

"Our state election committee had met in Patna last week and authorised Rahul Gandhi to take the final decision in the matter. There has been no communication within the party about the number of seats. The media reports are,



at best, speculative," he said.

Asked how many seats the Congress would want to contest, he said, "Initially we wanted 15. Later on it was agreed to scale down. But we do not think a number less than 11 would be acceptable to even Rahul Gandhi."

"Gandhi is likely to kick off his campaign in Bihar with a rally in Purnea on March 23. There is a possibility that former BJP MP Uday Singh, who joined the Congress today, will be fielded from there on a Congress ticket. It is also almost final that actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha will be fielded from his Patna Sahib seat on our ticket. His resignation from the BJP and induction into the Congress will take place in a few days," he said.

The Darbhanga seat has become a bone of contention between the Congress and RJD. While, the Congress wants to field Kirti Azad, who had won the seat five years ago on a BJP ticket, the RJD wants it too.

"The seat is a stronghold of Mohd Ali Ashraf Fatmi of the RJD, who wants a ticket again. That too remains to be sorted out," the Congress leader added.

CONG, NC SEAL DEAL IN J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Worried over the poll outcome in Jammu & Kashmir, former alliance partners — Congress and the National Conference — on Wednesday brokered a final 'poll deal' to ensure victory of their 'joint' candidates 'by hook or by crook' in 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The ice was broken after hectic parleys at the residence of National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah in Jammu.

The Congress team was led by Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ambika Soni, JKPC chief GA Mir and former Minister Rigzin Zora while senior National Conference leaders Mohd Shafiq Uri, Devender Singh Rana and Nasir Aslam Wani accompanied Abdullah during the final round of discussions.

Addressing a joint Press conference in the lawns of his residence, Farooq Abdullah told reporters, "National Conference will contest all three Lok Sabha seats from Kashmir Valley while Congress will field its candidates from two Lok Sabha seats in Jammu province."

However, in order to strengthen the secular front in the State both the alliance partners will enter into a 'friendly



National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah, senior Congress leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and Ambika Soni address a Press conference in Jammu on Wednesday. PTI

contest' on two of the three Lok Sabha seats of Baramulla and Anantnag.

The alliance partners are also expected to go in for a friendly contest from lone Lok Sabha seat of Ladakh.

"Legendary leader Farooq Abdullah will be our joint candidate from Srinagar and together we will campaign to ensure his smooth victory," Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters after thanking top brass of the National Conference. He said, "By going in for a friendly contest both the parties are expected to retain their turf as they both enjoy support base in different pockets of Baramulla and Anantnag." "We are coming together to defeat our rival parties by hook or by crook," announced Abdullah during

the Press briefing.

Reciprocating the gesture, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah urged the Congress leadership to strike alliances with like-minded parties to strengthen the secular front at the national level ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

In 2014, BJP candidates from Jammu-Poonch and Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seats had defeated Congress candidates by huge margins of over 2.5 lakh and 60K votes respectively. So far BJP has not released list of its candidates but inside reports claimed the party may give ticket to both the sitting MPs Jugal Kishore Sharma and Dr Jitendra Singh. Congress is expected to field Vikramaditya Singh, grandson of Maharaja Hari Singh from Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat.

Mayawati not to contest LS polls

Lucknow: Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Wednesday announced she will not contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, but kept open the option of fighting a parliamentary by-election later.

"In view of the present circumstances and the need of the country and the interests of the party, the movement and the public, it is the need of the hour that I do not contest the Lok Sabha polls. And this is the reason that I have decided not to contest the Lok Sabha polls," Mayawati said here.

The former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister asked party workers to not get disheartened with her decision.

"When I became UP Chief Minister first time in 1995, I was not a member of either UP Assembly or council. Similarly, is the provision at the Centre where a person have to be a Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha member within six months of holding office of minister/Prime Minister. Don't get disheartened from my decision of not to contest LS poll now," she clarified in her tweet. The Dalit leader added it would not be a problem if there is a need for her to enter Parliament later.

"If it so happens that I have to get elected to the Lok Sabha later, I can contest from any seat by getting it vacated and



Mayawati claimed that all she has to do is to go and file nomination papers and her party workers will ensure her victory. The BSP chief suggested that if she contests, the party workers will focus on her seat even if she forbids them, affecting the campaign in other constituencies.

"Hence, winning each and every Lok Sabha seat is more important than my personal victory," she added. The BSP, Samajwadi Party and the RLD have entered into an alliance in Uttar Pradesh for the April-May Lok Sabha polls.

The Congress is not part of this pact, but the alliance has said it will not field candidates in Amethi and Raebareilly, the two seats that are now with Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi respectively. PTI

This election is India's new freedom struggle: Priyanka

Varanasi/Mirzapur: Wrapping up her three-day tour of Uttar Pradesh in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi constituency, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra called the coming Lok Sabha elections a "new freedom struggle".

In a blistering attack on Modi on the last day of the trip, by boat on the Ganga, she asked him not to treat people "as fools".

In Varanasi, party workers from the Congress and the BJP confronted each other with slogans, with some of them scuffling with each other.

At a workers meeting later, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary referred to this face-off and said they should stick to non-violence, just as the Congress did during the freedom movement.

She said people were harassed during the British rule as well.

"People were in trouble and there was nobody to listen to them. There was no rule of the people. Today, the country is facing a similar situation. The only difference is that the dictator is a "Hindustani," she said, in a veiled reference to Modi. "We fought for Independence and it was fought on the basis of truth,"



Congress General Secretary UP-East Priyanka Gandhi Vadra arrives at Assi Ghat in Varanasi on Wednesday. PTI

she said. "Yeh naiye aazadi ki ladai hai (This is a new freedom struggle)." She also asked party workers to deal with "short-comings" within the Congress.

"There are some shortcomings in our organisation and we have to mend them. Our ideology is our strength," she said. Literally testing the waters in the politically crucial state, Priyanka Gandhi, who is in charge of eastern UP for the party, travelled about 100 kilometres on the Ganga over three days, ending Wednesday in Varanasi.

Earlier, she accused Modi of targeting the country's institutions.

"The Prime Minister has attacked every institution in this country for the last five years, including the institution of which all of you are a part," she told reporters in Mirzapur, where the day's boat-trip began. "So I think the PM should stop thinking that people are fools and realise that they see through all this," she said. She accused the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government of "harassment". "The more we are harassed, the stronger will be our fight," she said. On reaching Varanasi, she addressed people from the Nishad and the Mallah communities, who are traditionally boatmen, at the Assi ghat. PTI

Cong has surrendered to pro-separatist agenda of NC: BJP

PTI ■ JAMMU

The Jammu & Kashmir BJP on Wednesday alleged that the Congress had conceded to the National Conference's (NC) pro-separatist agenda after the two parties announced a pre-poll alliance in the State.

The Congress and the NC finalised arrangements for the six Lok Sabha seats of the state earlier in the day.

"The NC-Congress alliance is an eye wash and a wake up call for Jammu," BJP spokesperson Brig (ret'd) Anil Gupta told reporters.

"The Congress has not only surrendered to the National Conference but also conceded to the pro-separatist, Kashmir-centric, com-

munal and divisive agenda of that party," he said.

He added that the "opportunistic" alliance was aimed at promoting "Kashmiri hegemony".

With the NC insisting on contesting from all the three seats in Kashmir, the party's couldn't-care-less attitude towards Jammu is obvious, Gupta said.

The BJP spokesperson claimed the Congress, like the NC, will oppose granting citizenship to West Pakistan refugees and inheritance rights to the state's daughters.

The Congress-National Conference combine will put an end to anti terror operations and revive the over ground terror support network, Gupta alleged.



Colour water being sprayed over devotees at Kalpur Swaminarayan Mandir during Holi celebrations in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. PTI

Dharwad building collapse: Toll reaches 7

Bengaluru: The death toll in the building collapse at Dharwad in north Karnataka mounted to seven on Wednesday as rescuers pulled out four more bodies from the debris and one person succumbed to injuries at hospital, police said.

Rescuers had pulled out 55 people from the rubble of the four-storey under construction building, which collapsed on Tuesday evening at Kumarshwaranagar in the heart of Dharwad, about 400 km from here.

"Seven people have lost their lives," Director General of Police (chief of fire and emergency services) MN Reddi told PTI.

Earlier, Hubballi-Dharwad commissioner of police MN Nagaraj said 55 people had been rescued.

He expressed apprehension that about 15 to 20 people were

trapped inside the rubble. No arrests have been made, Nagaraj said.

"We have registered a case. Arrests will also follow but our focus at present is on the rescue operations," he added.

Police said rescue operations had been intensified to extricate people believed to be still trapped beneath the debris.

In addition to 10 ambulances and five fire tenders deployed for relief and rescue operations, three teams of the National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) have been engaged, two from Ghaziabad and one from Bengaluru. "Two more teams of NDRF are being airlifted from Ghaziabad in addition to one team which was moved from Bangalore in connection with Dharwad building collapse," the NDRF tweeted earlier in the day. PTI

Nirav arrest a 'match-fixing' by Modi Govt, says Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has dismissed fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi's arrest in London as a "match-fixing" by the Narendra Modi Government which she said, had kept hidden more such tricks up its sleeves for electoral purposes.

Speaking to the media at the State secretariat at Nabanna Banerjee said "this is a got up match," adding the Modi Government "does not deserve any credit for this. The credit must go to the journalist who exposed Nirav Modi," before that the Government had no clue about where the loan defaulter was holed up in the UK.

Nirav had defaulted on and decamped with a loan ₹14,000 crore loan taken from various banks including the



Punjab National Bank.

Even as the BJP faulted Banerjee for "calling it got-up game and at same time giving the credit of getting him arrested to a journalist," the CM wondered what was behind the whole game. "I wonder pardey ke peche kya hai."

She called it another "strike." She added "like we saw strikes in factories in the past we are seeing new strikes now. This Nirav Modi strike is one of them. Much more strikes will happen during the elections."

Wondering what the

Government was doing with the "other man" presumably Mehul Coksi the uncle of Nirav, Banerjee said "the other man is also there (abroad). They are no longer Indian citizens," wondering how these people would be brought back once they were allowed to go by the BJP Government.

Banerjee said "no amount of trick will impact the people as the expiry date of this Government is over and no amount of medicine will work now," adding how public sector undertakings were suffering at the hand of the BJP Government. "The BSNL employees are not getting their salaries. The Air India is under sale. They are disinvesting everything. One day they will disinvest the entire country. They have ruined the country's economy through demonetization when about 2 crore people lost their jobs."

Nirav's arrest in UK pre-planned drama by Govt, says NCP

Mumbai: The NCP on Wednesday termed fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi's arrest in London as a "pre-planned drama" by the Government to derive a political mileage in view of the next month's Lok Sabha elections.

Maharashtra NCP chief Jayant Patil said it was already known that the economic offender was living in London after fleeing India.

"Nirav Modi's arrest has been timed ahead of Lok Sabha polls...Some channels had showed Modi as being in London, which was known previously," Patil told reporters here.

"It is a pre-planned drama by the Government...To pretend as bringing back those who had fled the country till the Lok Sabha polls (otherwise) the BJP never intended to bring back the economic offenders," he alleged.

Nirav Modi, the main



accused in the \$2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam

case, was arrested in London.

His arrest came days after a London court issued an arrest warrant against him in response to a request by the Enforcement Directorate for his extradition in a money laundering case. PTI

No decision yet on Advani contesting LS polls

Ahmedabad: Suspense remains on whether BJP patriarch LK Advani will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls or hang up his boots.

The 91-year-old, who served as Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of the country, has won the Lok Sabha election from Gandhinagar seat six times.

Advani, credited for creating the BJP's rise to a pre-eminent position in the late 80s and 90s after it won just two Lok Sabha seats in 1984 Lok Sabha polls, has remained on the sidelines since he voiced his reservations on the nomination of Narendra Modi as the



party's prime ministerial candidate in 2014.

Asked whether Advani was keen on contesting the poll considering his age, his personal secretary Deepak Chopra told PTI, "It is not yet decided...He will decide when some-

thing (offer) comes."

Party sources said there is no age bar for candidates and winnability will be the criteria when candidates are finalised by the party's central election committee.

Asked if the party has urged Advani to contest from the Gandhinagar seat, Chopra said, "Neither has the party approached him nor has he approached the party so far."

A section of Gujarat BJP leaders is of the view Advani may himself decide not to contest the elections due to the age factor. Advani did not make any representation to stake claim

for his traditional Gandhinagar seat before the BJP observers here.

"At his level, we do not need to do this," Chopra said.

Advani brought a paradigm shift in Indian politics through his Rath Yatra in 1992 in support of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and played a key role in the BJP's evolution

Bharat Pande BJP spokesperson said the final decision about Gandhinagar will be taken by the party's parliamentary board.

"Only the parliamentary board of the party can decide if Advaniji will fight or not," he said. PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Name of work and its location: Tender No.: 30-ELECT-47-T-18-19-E3. Provision of lift in 15 new patients cabin and separate food lift in Central Hospital, Northern Railway, New Delhi. Approx. cost of the work: Rs. 56.59 lacs. Address of the office: Sr. Divl Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi. Earnest Money: Rs. 1,13,200/- only. Date & time of submission of tender: 12.04.2019, 15:00 Hrs. Opening of tender: 12.04.2019, 15:30 Hrs. Website & notice board: www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect Engineer/General, New Delhi. 877/2019
Serving Customers with a Smile

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED (See Section 82 Cr.PC.)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused persons (1) Soren Singh, S/o Shri Khajan Singh, (2) Krishana, W/o Shri Soren Singh, (3) Gaurav Singh, S/o Shri Soren Singh all R/o H. No. A-11, Gali No. 1, Mandoli, Delhi has committed (or are suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 573/18 dated 16.11.18 U/S 498A/304B/34 IPC PS Harsh Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused (1) Soren Singh, (2) Krishana, (3) Gaurav Singh can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused (1) Soren Singh, (2) Krishana, (3) Gaurav Singh have absconded (or are concealing themselves to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused persons (1) Soren Singh, (2) Krishana, (3) Gaurav Singh of FIR No. 573/18 dated 16.11.18 U/S 498A/304B/34 IPC PS Harsh Vihar, Delhi are required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 22.04.19.
By Order
Shri Prayank Nayak
Metropolitan Magistrate
Karkardooma Court, Delhi
DP/6935/NE/19

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION
General public is here by informed that an unidentified person (depicted in the photo) name: **unknown**, residence and family is **unknown** about 40 years of age was found dead at in front of Chetna Mandir, Near Azad Market Chowk, Delhi on 15.03.2019. In this regard a DD No. 21-A, dated 15.03.2019 has been registered at Police Station **Baba Hindu Rao, Delhi**.
His physical description is as under:-
Sex: Male, Age: 40 years, Height : 5'7" ft., Complexion: Shallow, Wearing: White Colour Shirt & Blue Colour Jeans Pant.
Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or Telephone Numbers.
SHO P.S. Bara Hindu Rao, Delhi Ph. No. - 011-23528060 Mob. No. - 8750870125
DP/9786/N/19

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE (through e-tendering)
Name of work with its location: Cable laying between THJ to SRE in GZB-MUT-SRE section due to DFCC work.
App. Cost of the work (₹): ₹ 91,52,489.31/- only
Tender Document Fee (₹): ₹ 5,900/- only
Earnest Money Deposit (₹): ₹ 1,83,100/- only
Address of the office: Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender/closing of tender: Tender uploading / closing date & time- 24.04.2019 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.: See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T Branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-Tele-OT-894 Dated: 19.03.2019 879/2019
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
Invitation of tender through E-tendering (E-Procurement Systems)
S.N. N.I.T. No. 128-W-260-TN-84-18-19-W-2
1. Name of work with its location: Replacement of old worn out AC shed with non Asbestos shed of PF shed at NOLI, BPM & BTU & Repair of old worn out PF No. 1 surface with CC Paver at NOLI, BPM & BTU with s/o SSE/W/SMQL under ADEEN/SMQL
2. Approx. Cost of work: Rs. 3513429.23
3. Earnest Money: Rs. 70300/- (It should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. Note:- FDR will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on as per Railway Boards letter No. 2015/CE-1/CT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016)
4. Completion Period: 04 Months
5. Cost of tender on Cash/by post: Rs. 3600/- (It should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. Note:- FDR will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS Railway Boards letter No. 2015/CE-1/CT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016)
6. Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender: 02.04.2019 to 16.04.2019 upto 15:00 hrs Opening of tender 16.04.2019 at 15:00 hrs. on
7. Similar Nature of Work: NA
8. Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.: Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
No. 128-W-260-TN-84-18-19-W-2 Dated: 19.03.2019 882/19
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PAPER WITH PASSION

Why single out Bengal?

The EC should assess the plea for declaring Bengal a super-sensitive State on merit than bias



Is the whole of Bengal a conflict zone or disturbed area? Is it like militancy-hit Kashmir or a Naxal-infested Chhattisgarh where democratic processes have been undermined and elections have posed a consistent challenge? Has there been a breakdown of the law and order machinery? Or is it the only State in the country where election-related violence has been reported? Considering there are no clear answers to the above, the BJP's plea to the Election Commission (EC), urging it to declare West Bengal a "super sensitive state"

to ensure Lok Sabha polls are conducted in a free and fair manner, is not only presumptuous but facile. In other words, what the BJP essentially wants is that special Central security be provided at all polling booths and specific observers be posted there to ensure there is no wrongdoing, coercion or violence. It even wants local police off the roster, alleging they are in sympathy with the State Government. In other words, ensure a mini emergency situation under Central vigilance of some sort and hold a controlled election, which it believes will otherwise slip away from its grasp and go to the Trinamool Congress (TMC). The BJP's angst is understandable, considering it is desperately trying to add up the numbers for a Lok Sabha victory and zeroing in on new States, particularly those belonging to the Opposition, to make good the deficit. But Bengal is the last vanguard against its politics and turf of the chief architect of the Opposition front, Mamata Banerjee. And she has steadfastly halted the party from either polarising or consolidating the votebase. Besides, while the BJP has made inroads in the Northeast and even busted the Left citadel of the other Bengali-dominated State of Tripura, it is still hard-pressed in Bengal and despite being the party with the second highest voteshare, is finding it difficult to convert it to seats. So this petition to the EC clearly reeks of political vendetta and is tantamount to abusing its Central authority to control the verdict, one that has returned Banerjee convincingly and not narrowly. The BJP has also sought the EC's strictures in Kerala, particularly in the politically volatile Kannur and Pathanamthitta seats, given the backdrop of the Sabarimala controversy, one that the party hopes to use as an electoral plank. And the EC has already taken a policy decision to assign special observers here. This trend is worrying, therefore.

Coercion, violence or booth management, which the Left parties in Bengal had perfected into what is called "scientific rigging," became part of a machinery that no party in Bengal has been immune to but that in no way could effect a tidal change. One must remember that Banerjee uprooted the Left giants operating within that hostile system. Of course, critics may argue that the panchayat polls in May last year were violent but the TMC's tally proved that it had the grassroots support and most importantly an organisational strength. Besides, would that imply that all booths are compromised in Bengal? Or the heartland states, where booth-capturing proliferated down the years, have had a sudden change of heart? Or is it that the BJP doesn't want to touch friendly States? In fact, going by counter-complaints, the BJP itself has allegedly got in men from Bihar and Jharkhand into Bengal for "electoral management." Booth capturing took place way back in 1957 in Bihar's Begusarai district, when some goons belonging to one political party blocked supporters from a rival party to cast their votes. Subsequently, politicians hired criminals to do the job for a fee or with the assurance of immunity from police action. They grew in stature and contested elections on their own that led to the dreaded criminalisation of politics. Compared to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the malaise affected Bengal much later. But the EC has steadfastly worked over the years towards overcoming challenges and retaining the integrity of the democratic process. It is important that no ground arises to doubt its credibility or its ability to provide a level-playing field.

Clipped wings

With Jet Airways suffering serious financial trouble, is this the end of the road for the quarter-century old airline?



A few short months ago, Naresh Goyal, the Chairman of Jet Airways, was proudly celebrating the silver jubilee of the founding of his airline. Jet Airways had survived through thick and thin in that period. It was the only private airline in India that survived the free-for-all that started when Indian skies were finally liberalised. So many other entrants, notably East-West and Damania, had failed. When the second wave of private airlines started, Goyal saw off his biggest challenger till date, Vijay Mallya, who was

brought down by a combination of his ego and crushing debts acquired in the haste to buy Air Deccan to add to the Kingfisher Airlines fleet. But Goyal had to battle off significant headwinds back then, and only an emergency cash infusion by the Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, which bought a quarter of Jet Airways, saved the airline.

But now, Jet Airways finds itself in a financial bind again and like a train wreck, this has been a long time coming. Its financial troubles have mounted partially because of the reluctance of Indian banks, particularly public sector banks, to forward more loans often to meet basic working capital requirements. At the same time, the sheer obstinance of Goyal, who refuses to resign and lose control of his airline although that may be the only way to save it, is only making matters worse. Etihad Airways has always been spoken of as a white knight for Jet Airways but built as it is on the ego of Abu Dhabi's rulers with oil money in an attempt to rival Dubai's Emirates, is in a deep financial hole itself and has been ditching several other airlines it had invested in such as Germany's Air Berlin and Italy's Alitalia. And now Etihad, which came in with several provisos to invest in Jet Airways, is willing to wash its hands off the entire deal, leaving Jet Airways stuck at the altar but broke and Indian public sector banks with another non-performing headache. Should the government offer to bail out Jet Airways is the question on everyone's lips. In a time of a jobs crisis, the loss of 27,000 jobs is not something that can be defended but the growing aviation sector means that many of the jobs lost will be absorbed by the market rather rapidly, which is what happened in the case of Kingfisher. That said, Jet Airways is a national asset. If it is allowed to fail, not only will over 100 aircraft leave the Indian register, thousands of Indians will find themselves stranded across the world. However, if Indian banks do decide to save Jet Airways, they should ideally take it down the bankruptcy route, effectively invalidating all the company's shares and completely changing the management and putting the airline on a crash diet. Flights will still be cancelled and flyers will be stranded but if Jet Airways is to have a Golden Jubilee, this is the only way ahead. Goyal could have saved his airline if he was less obstinate, but if his airline is to be saved, he must go.

Paradox of gender gap

The will to dominate does not lend itself to team spirit. Perhaps women have the potential to exude greater team spirit, a *sine qua non* for group sports



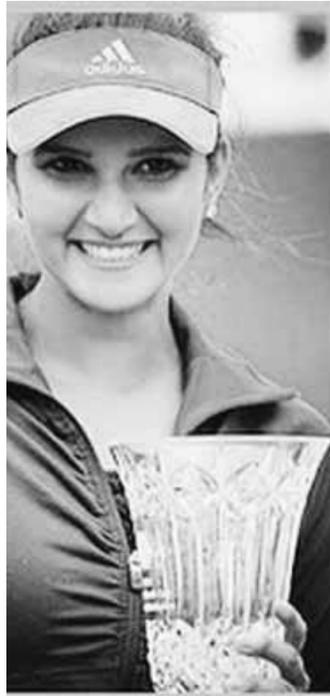
PRAFUL GORADIA

Say if Saina Nehwal or PV Sindhu is one of the best badminton players in India at present, why should both not play for the country even in the men's singles or doubles if there be any? The same should apply to Sania Mirza if she is the best in tennis. This logic should also extend to hockey and cricket. If a girl or two or more are better than any male player in their positions, surely they could replace them. Strictly, the concept of separate men's and women's teams and tournaments reflects an old mindset based on the women being weaker, less skilled and, therefore, not able to play in the same teams.

Yes, women were much weaker physically than they are today. In the old days, their diet was inferior in all respects, except in wealthy families. Then there were the issues of early marriage and reproduction. Because of high infant mortality, women became even weaker in the days of low technology. Shah Jahan was arguably the wealthiest man in the world in his day. Yet, of his 14 children born, he could save only seven of them — Dara, Shuja Aurangzeb, Murad, Jahanara, Roshanara and Gauhar. Inevitably, women were considered weak, for childbirth took a heavy toll on their systems. They were deemed virtually a different species.

In older times, bodily strength was placed at a great premium. Often, the king was the strongest man in his court. Weapons were comparatively crude, so fighting or defending fell on the man's body with the weapon serving as an aid. Whereas since then, revolutions have taken place, not to speak of missiles and nuclear arms. The balance of strength began to shift with the advent of the musket being invented in the 16th century. Its use reduced the importance of the user's personal strength. As more sophisticated guns replaced the musket, they also became lighter in weight, enabling women to use them with as much facility as men. In the Iraq wars, women fought as frontline soldiers. Their relative or presumed weakness did not prove any handicap. If on a battlefield women can prove equal to men, why not also on the tennis or badminton court or the cricket field? Strangely enough, even chess and carrom tournaments are played generally by men or women but separately. What else is the explanation than a sexist bias?

It was not so long ago, only a matter of decades, when on the Indian stage, whether in Kolkata or Mumbai, even the heroine, the obvious role of a woman, was played by a man; and not necessarily an effeminate one, but by whoever was available and, therefore, pressed into service. All other female characters were enacted by men. This experiment, of course, was not the choice of the director of the play but the reluctance of families to allow their daughters to participate in performing arts that



were considered not such a respectable profession. For a woman to flirt with a stranger on a public stage, to hold his hands, to embrace him or even kiss was considered more immoral than moral. However, in the case of tennis, badminton, table tennis or hockey, no comparable intermingling with men is entailed. In this context evidently, the stage, as well as the celluloid, has gone ahead; whereas sports have marked time.

Referring back to the Iraq wars, we need to make it clear that deploying women on the frontline, whether in the infantry, cavalry with tanks or in the air force as pilots of fighter aircraft, come with the risk of an assault on their chastity if they are taken as prisoners of war. But that is an extreme case. If the world, not only on the stage but also on the battlefield, has travelled so far, why does the world of sport observe what the Islamic world calls *taqlid* or orthodoxy? Our own Sania Mirza was upbraided by the clergy for wearing functional shorts while playing tennis. Sportswomen from such orthodox countries insist upon their women participants wearing *salwar kameez* as well as donning the *hijab*.

It is true that men and women are temperamentally different. The former can see far as well as wide. They can

look into the future with more perceptiveness; whereas women are more committed to their survival and observe the immediate practicalities in time and distance more accurately. Many of them are also credited with greater intuition. They should be more successful than men at obtaining immediate results.

Of late, this female strength is being repeatedly demonstrated in school board examinations, where girl students score higher mark percentages. Surely, this asset can be utilised on the sports field as well?

It is true that the male, whether in the animal or human world, is tempted to dominate; whereas the corresponding female is able to function comfortably in a position of subordination. This may be a reasoning of nature in order to enable the female to carry the responsibilities of child-bearing and breeding. In this regard, nature has been partial; if we notice, the male elephant has tusks, the lion has the mane, the peacock has feathers, the cock the red plume. The will or desire to dominate does not lend itself to team spirit as much as less of such desire. Stretching this reasoning forward should lead one to conclude that perhaps women have the potential to exude greater team spirit, a *sine*

qua non of group sports like hockey or cricket. It is just possible that the readiness to be subordinate might have been cultivated over centuries by a hierarchical society to denude the role of the wife to the normally patrician husband.

The tea gardens the world over are an interesting instance of an old mindset. The managers, their assistants, as well as their subordinate staff have been male through decades, whereas two-thirds of the workers in labour-intensive enterprises have been female. What a paradox! This oddity did not even attract the attention of either experts or tea board members, except some 15 years ago when fewer and fewer young men were applying for garden assignments. Yet, compared to men, very few women are deployed in the factories. They are just sent out to pluck the green leaves from the bushes and occasionally do other agricultural work. This man-woman inequality, unfortunately, continues in all corners of the globe. Despite progress, women are scarce among senior leaders. Very few women are CEOs of the world's largest corporations. As of the 2018 *Fortune* list, only 24 women (4.8 per cent) were CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. This needs to change, now. (The writer is a well-known columnist and an author)

“ IF ON A BATTLEFIELD WOMEN CAN PROVE EQUAL TO MEN, WHY NOT ALSO ON THE TENNIS OR BADMINTON COURT OR THE CRICKET FIELD? STRANGELY ENOUGH, EVEN CHESS AND CARROM TOURNAMENTS ARE PLAYED GENERALLY BY MEN OR WOMEN BUT SEPARATELY. WHAT ELSE IS THE EXPLANATION THAN A SEXIST BIAS? ”

SOUNDBITE

No one in the BJP can occupy any public position without the RSS's support. It is the biggest *parivar* in the world.

Senior Congress leader —Kapil Sibal



I am a very balanced person. So I respect the *bhaktis* and also respect the critics of Modi. I look at him as an inspiration.

Actor —Vivek Oberoi



No country can participate in an initiative that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity.

India's Ambassador to China —Vikram Misri



The General Assembly must take the lead in setting a global agenda and restoring the centrality of the UN to resolve transnational issues.

Indian representative —K Nagaraj Naidu



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Make Lokpal a reality

Sir — After all the din and hullabaloo, we finally have the beginnings of an operational Lokpal. It took a long time but augurs well for the protection of our democratic institutions. The expected announcement of Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose as the first Lokpal will, hopefully, set to rest all earlier controversies and delays. It's a heavy cross that Justice Ghose will have to bear. He certainly has all the right credentials but can there be any ducking of the question if the 'system' will enable him to deliver what he might seek to achieve? Let us hope that the Lokpal will at least partially achieve the potential of its creators. In my opinion, it would depend entirely on the personality, evolution, conduct and leadership of its founder chairman.

Justice Ghose has had a non-controversial tenure in the judiciary and is blessed with both talent and temperament. I am sure he realises that the post of Lokpal chair is much more than the judicial roles he has satisfactorily fulfilled thus far.

J Akshay Bengaluru

Parrikar has orphaned Goa

This refers to the editorial, "Death of an icon" (March 19). Some people are born simple and do not subscribe to the view that power is a potent weapon that needs to be brandished with gusto. For them, people are not mere numbers. They enjoy referring to people by their first names. Simplicity, honesty and integrity are imbibed in their psyche. Manohar Parrikar was one of those rare politicians who was simple and honest. He looked too undecorated to be a powerful leader. Not for nothing was he termed one of Goa's favourite sons. People reciprocated his simplicity in kind and considered him their friend, philosopher and guide. And it was a tribute to Parrikar's qualities of head and heart that Prime Minister Modi handpicked him to be the Defence Minister at a time when the Modi Cabinet was talent-starved. Parrikar gave a different look to the Defence Ministry with his straightforwardness. His candid remarks often dragged him into controversies but he always spoke his mind unmindful of the consequences. Again, the troubleshooter of Modi was asked to steer the party in disarray in Goa and



Parrikar found himself back as the Chief Minister for the fourth time. But ever since he was diagnosed with cancer in 2017, Goans were in a state of shock. However, Parrikar was his usual self — discharging his duty till his last breath. No one disliked the man who, by his love, warmth, affection and unique mannerisms, endeared himself to every section and religion.

Ganapathi Bhat Akola

An able leader

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Death of an icon" (March 19). One of the characteristic features about Manohar Parrikar was that he enjoyed a man-next-door image. The reason for his meteoric rise from being an RSS *parcharak* to becoming the Defence Minister and then the

Chief Minister of Goa was his wide acceptance from all sections of the BJP and beyond. He played a key role in making the BJP a force to reckon with in Goa, which remained a Congress bastion for long. Truly, Parrikar was a great leader who could lead Goa towards the path of progress.

TK Anandan Chennai

Serving till last breath

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Death of an icon" (March 19). In the death of Manohar Parrikar, not only Goa but the entire nation has lost a leading politician, who had a rare quality of austerity and simplicity rarely seen in leaders of the present era.

Parrikar's respect for duty and responsibility was evident from his whole-hearted style of working. Even when he was diagnosed with cancer, he used to perform his tasks as the Chief Minister of Goa with medical tubes fitted on his nose. Even the Opposition could not raise a voice for the fall of his Government because of his unique personality.

Madhu Agrawal Delhi

Service before self

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Death of an icon" (March 19). In the passing of Manohar Parrikar, the nation has lost a fine politician, an excellent Chief Minister and one of the best Defence Ministers. He was also a politician noted for his integrity, dedication and commitment to work. Known for his simplicity and geniality, he adhered to the principle of service before self. Even when his health deteriorated, he was committed to his work.

M Pradyu Kannur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Mass murder most foul

New Zealand is exemplarily coping with a time of trouble but firm and deterrent measures against violence and terrorism are the need of the hour



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The mass shootings in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15 have caused 50 deaths. Understandably, these have left the world shocked, grieving and angry. New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Arderne, rightly said, "What has happened here is an extraordinary and unprecedented act of violence." Her country has seen nothing like the March 15 massacre.

Horrific savagery accompanied the crime. The gunman, Brenton Harrison Tarrant, killed in cold blood not just men but fleeing women and girls, besides shooting at piles of motionless men and boys. What explains such utter savagery? The obvious answer is hatred for Muslims arising from a White supremacist Christian fundamentalist-racist worldview steeped in Islamophobia. In the 74-page manifesto issued by him, the mass murderer described himself as a "regular White man," and wrote that his attack was intended to "directly reduce immigration rates to European lands by intimidating and physically removing the invaders themselves."

The manifesto reflects an obsession with White supremacy and discusses the battle of Vienna in 1683 in which a coalition of European armies, led by King John Sobieski of Poland as the supreme commander, routed an army of Ottoman Turks. To White supremacists, the battle was the juncture when Europe finally turned back the Ottoman empire's advance and stemmed the tide of Islam. Writings on the killer's weapons mentioned battles like the successful siege of Acre (1189) by crusaders seeking to capture Jerusalem from Muslims. It also reflects a deep interest in American politics and admiration for US President Donald Trump, who it hails as "a symbol of renewed White identity and common purpose". There is lament over the "decaying" culture of the White, European, Western world and indignation over immigration and multiculturalism.

The growing spread of Islamophobia, a key component of the killer's brand of inchoate extremism, has resulted from a multiplicity of factors. These include the rise of the obscurantist ideology of the Taliban as applied in Afghanistan, where it imposed a medieval social order that consigned women to virtual invisibility in public and domestic slavery, horrible terrorist acts by the Taliban and the Al Qaeda; and the perceived drift towards Wahhabism among Muslims worldwide. Its spread has been facilitated by the internet and social media.

The killer's manifesto indicates that he drew deeply from White supremacist internet fora. Worse, he video-recorded his massacre through a head-mounted camera and circulated it through the social media for full 17 minutes before Facebook authorities, alerted by New Zealand police, stopped it. Safeguards, devised to prevent the circulation of such sordid material, could not stop the video and the killer's statement from being transmitted not only on Facebook but on YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. While Facebook and Twitter took down pages thought to be linked to him, the matter posted by him continued to circulate through other channels.

Efforts to prevent the misuse of the internet and social media for spreading poisonous doctrines and videos need to be accelerated. Simultaneously, one must examine as to why — and what kind of — people subscribe to violent and bigoted extremist thought. They ate the disaffected and alienated. Eric Hoffer writes in *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, the disaffected "are most frequent in the following categories: (a) the poor, (b) misfits, (c) outcasts, (d) minorities, (e) adolescent youth, (f) the ambitious (whether facing insurmountable opportunities or unlimited opportunities), (g) those in the grip of some vice or obsession, (h) the impotent (in body or mind), (i) the inordinately selfish, (j) the bored, (k) the sinners."

One does not yet know to which category Christchurch's killer belongs. Meanwhile, one has to examine the psychological process that leads people to extremist ideologies and violence. Erich Fromm shows in *The Fear of Freedom* that children, enveloped in the security of their mothers' world, become aware of their separateness from their respective mothers and others as they grow to become individuals. One aspect of the process, which Fromm calls individuation, is the growth of self-strength; the other is an increasing feeling of aloneness leading to a growing feeling of insecurity given the dangers the world poses.

According to Fromm, the way to overcoming a feeling of aloneness and insecurity is "to relate spontaneously to the world in love and work..." Many, unable to do so, lapse into masochistic submission to a "bigger and more powerful whole", an individual or an entity, and deriving a sense of strength from it. The other is sadism, the essence of which is "to have complete mastery over another person, to make him a helpless object of our will, to become the absolute ruler over him..." The ultimate form of mastery is that over life and death and mass murder is the most horrendous manifestation of it.

The circumstances leading to sadism are a part of the eternal human condition and cannot be changed in the foreseeable future. Firm deterrent measures against violence and terrorism, sensitive handling of critical situations and an ideological war against all forms of extremism can help. New Zealand's immediate response to the March 15 killings, particularly the firm, sensitive and compassionate approach displayed by Prime Minister Jacinda Arderne, has been exemplary.

(The writer is Consultant Editor, The Pioneer, and an author)

WHY IS IT THAT NEW POLITICAL PARTIES ARE LAUNCHED ONLY IN KASHMIR? DOESN'T IT CLEARLY INDICATE A PLOY AIMED AT DIVIDING US FURTHER?

—NATIONAL CONFERENCE LEADER

OMAR ABDULLAH

POINT COUNTERPOINT



WHEN THE PDP WAS FORMED, THEY (NC) ALLEGED THE SAME. TODAY WHEN SHAH FASEAL FORMED A NEW OUTFIT, OMAR SAYS THE SAME THING.

—PDP CHIEF
MEHBOOBA MUFTI

Become leaders of change

Self-help groups not only empower women but also increase their confidence and help them build social capital while creating an inclusive banking network



MOIN QAZI

The concept of self-help groups (SHG) or women's collectives has been the most powerful and successful tool to empower women in rural India. Over a span of 25 years, the movement has registered a tremendous growth. As on March 31, 2018, the total number of SHG savings linked with banks stood at 87.44 lakh and the total number of SHGs having loans was 50.20 lakh with an outstanding loan of ₹75,598 crore. A typical Indian SHG consists of 10-20 poor women from similar socio-economic backgrounds, who meet once a month to pool savings and discuss issues of mutual importance. One of the key objectives of SHGs is to provide financial access to women through a system in which they cross guarantee each other's debts. With help to start businesses, impoverished women can earn money and support their communities as well as their families.

The great authority on microfinance, Malcolm, described Indian SHGs as "on-lending groups, which collect their own equity capital and savings deposit from their owners, who are also members and customers. They lend their money to the members at interest rates, which they decide, and accumulate profits, which they choose either to distribute to the owners or to add to the fund at their joint disposal." Indeed, there needs to be a great emotional intensity to break through age-old barriers. This is possible only through groups, who share same emotional values and are driven by strong impulse of mutual goals. One of the primary objectives is to avail loans, which the women access by cross guaranteeing each other's liability. These loans are part of a financial philosophy called microfinance. Members take loans for a variety of reasons: To buy medicine, start a business, purchase animals, pay school fees, buy clothing and food during the lean season and invest in agriculture.

Once the groups have mastered the mechanics of savings and lending, they begin to ask: What's next? When groups have a fair amount of capital, they can start lending portions of the money back to individual group members — at an interest. Through the group mechanism, funds become a collective asset, enabling uplift of the community. They dispense small and unsecured loans at varying costs to group members as per their need. The most significant aspect of these collectives — and which makes them innovative and durable — is that they are wholly managed by the women. They themselves plan the design, implementation and trajectory of this model. Each group has a constitution or a list of rules, created and accepted by the members themselves. The rules pertain to selecting members, electing office bearers, creating their own loan fund, deciding on the recipient of a loan, ensuring repayment of the loan and the like. Regular meetings are the enabling forces, giving women the courage to lean into multiple household and community settings.

When a collective has a fair amount of capital, the group starts giving small loans to its members. It is astonishing that hardly any of these women default. Although financial aspect is not the only benefit for members, credit remains an important element. Disciplined efforts involved in running a group make the women efficient money managers. As the women do the work that



is normally done by the bankers, banks' administration costs have come down drastically. It is true that social dynamics cannot be changed without women's involvement in the economy.

The formation and nurturing of SHGs is an onerous process and unless a good foundation is laid, there will be a lack of solidity. If there is any disequilibrium, the default starts and there is a domino effect. It soon becomes a contagion sweeping like an epidemic. The groups need to be economically, socially and educationally homogenous. In the absence of healthy group dynamics, there are a lot of conflicts and frictions with the group leader trying to impose personal views on the group and executing decisions in an autocratic way.

These groups are obviously formed for financial support but that is not an end in itself. They soon become a platform for education, health information and training, savings, business development, technical and marketing assistance. The mere act of leaving the isolation of family compounds and joining the periodical peer group discussions increases women's confidence and motivation. SHGs become a comprehensive ladder of support and opportunity. They conceptually address issues that had made them non-bankable. They create a collective identity for the women in the group and give transaction aggregation. Since it was a savings-led model, it also created a transaction trail, which could be used for establishing a financial history for the bankers. This was important in the absence of bankable collateral. SHGs are also an instrument for the empowerment of the poor and marginalised. They have proved to be an effective instrument for changing oppressive relationships at home (gender and tradition-related) and in society. This is especially true for those relationships arising from caste, class and political power, which have made it difficult for the poor to build a sustainable base for their livelihood and to grow historically.

The hierarchical pyramid of SHGs supports three tiers of institutions in a typical district: SHGs, village-level committees and federations.

THE FORMATION AND NURTURING OF SHGs IS AN ONEROUS PROCESS AND UNLESS A GOOD FOUNDATION IS LAID, THERE WILL BE A LACK OF SOLIDITY. IF THERE IS ANY DISEQUILIBRIUM, THE DEFAULT STARTS AND THERE IS A DOMINO EFFECT. IT SOON BECOMES A CONTAGION SWEEPING LIKE AN EPIDEMIC

Initiatives taken by these organisations have been diverse: Some have helped women consolidate their savings, others have addressed domestic violence, alcoholism and caste-related issues in the public sphere. They are seen as more than just a conduit for credit — they are the biggest generators of social capital in rural India and also act as a delivery mechanism for various other services ranging from entrepreneurial training, preventive health education, food security, livelihood promotion activity and community development programmes. They serve to provide formal channels for social and financial support.

This model generates a unique stock of social capital through the process of regular group meetings and it is this social capital that has been instrumental in transforming the status of these women, both within the home and community.

SHGs influence those oppressive relationships arising from caste, class and political power, which have made it difficult for the poor people to build a sustainable base for their livelihood. As with any single strategy, SHGs alone cannot put an end to poverty. How much the plan is simple, low-cost, resilient and can be carried out by non-governmental organisations, what is most important is that development can happen only when the people really want to change.

Refuting village hierarchies, women in many places hoisted the national flag in their villages, despite opposition from men. Women's collectives have put an end to the brewing of liquor in some villages. SHG women have enhanced their economic position in numerous ways, such as successfully bidding for contracts to fish in village ponds and developing wastelands to grow fruits and vegetables.

These women are not just achieving the Gandhian ideal of self-sufficiency but also advancing modern ambitions. For poor women, empowerment is a journey towards the second freedom or real freedom, as Mahatma Gandhi said.

(The writer is Member, NITI Aayog's National Committee on Financial Literacy and Inclusion for Women)

Dim prospect for India's solar energy story

Anti-dumping duty and the non-functioning of a working comprehensive strategy can severely stall India's move to add a record level of solar power capacity by 2019. The Government must pay heed and adopt an ear-to-the-ground approach



KOTA SRIRAJ

India's ambitious plans to add 100 gigawatts (GW) of solar energy capacity by 2022 seem to be running aground. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the target year set for its completion is just round the corner. According to a latest report by global analytics firm Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited (CRISIL), India would be able to manage only 60 GW capacity by 2022. The turn of events may have triggered a spike in costs thanks to the anti-dumping duty on imported solar panels that are currently widely used in our country.

The prospect of India not being able to meet its 2022 commitments of installing 100 GW of solar power is a cause of serious concern consid-

ering the fact that the country is being edged by the international community to scale down its carbon footprint and green house gas emissions arising out of fossil fuel usage.

The report further states that India crossed 25 GW of installed capacity during the end of December 2018 and may only be able to add another 44 to 46 GW in the next five years. The slowdown is yet another pointer as to why India needs to get its renewable energy strategy in order.

One of the reasons for the solar slowdown is an anti-dumping measure imposed in July 2018, called the safeguard tax on imported solar cells, which are widely used all across the country. This tax was 25 per cent for the first year, 20 per cent for the next six months and 15 per cent for the following six months. The tax was imposed as a safeguard measure for the domestic solar module industry, which is unable to sell panels due to lower priced imports from China and Malaysia.

Coupled with this, there was a lack of clarity on Goods and Services Tax for the solar sector for over a year. All of this meant that capacity addition in



2018 was much below the achievements of 2017. In 2017-18, 9,000 megawatts (MW) of solar capacity were added, which slowed down to less than 7,000 MW in 2018-2019.

The interesting part, however, is how the Government and expert committees could not predict the consequence of such duties on the domestic renewable energy sector. It is developments such as these that are leading to the renewable sector in India moving one step forward and two steps backward.

The report also states that installation rate will climb in the coming years as safeguard duties are brought down incrementally. The impact of the duty increased the cost of installation

by 10-15 per cent, even though module prices fell from \$0.30 per watt, peak in March 2018 to \$0.24 per watt, peak in December 2018. In 2017, the lowest bid tariff was ₹2.44 per unit, which could not be reached in 2018. The report says that this year, 9,000 MW of solar capacity will be installed, which will rise to 10,000 and 12,000 MW in the following years. By 2023, India's solar capacity could go up to 70 GW.

But the anti-dumping duty should be of least concern for the renewable energy industry amid talks doing the rounds about the stalling of a comprehensive strategy. This is plaguing this sector. Renewable energy, undoubtedly, is the future, but the question is: How will this country achieve the target? This

is where ambiguity comes in. As energy production gets ramped up with solar technology, the role of distribution companies might be impacted and the current strategy does not have any specific clarity regarding the same. In addition to this, as the transition takes place, the country needs to give a proper thought about the coal geography, existing coal stocks and those who will be directly affected. Since the projected domestic social costs of power generation from coal by 2024-25 will be too high, there would be of no use in building new coal power plants.

Earlier, there were many plans to build more coal power plants but that bubble has burst. The Government needs to take policy decision to replace fossil fuel, especially coal with renewable energy installations. But this needs to get decisively reflected in the renewable energy strategy of India.

The urgency of a plan that on the one hand allows for a conducive solar energy growth and at the same time scales down the fossil fuel powered energy sources is very important. In addition to this, there is also the criticality of ensuring that an effective

equilibrium is maintained between imported products, technology and domestic industry products.

An effective combination of the above will ensure that renewable energy targets are met on a timely manner. Then there is also a pertinent need to increase the daily use applicability of solar technology, which in turn will promote usage and indirectly push production. The Government must also focus on increasing awareness levels, bring solar energy technology and usage closer to the common man. In order to ensure this, stress must be put on plug and play systems that are based on solar energy technology. These systems must also clearly spell out a cost benefit analysis over conventional non-renewable energy sources. A combination of a comprehensive future proof solar strategy that accounts for scaling down of fossil fuel usage along with increasing common man awareness will alone prevent the slowdown of solar energy progress in India.

(The author is an environmental journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



WE NEED THE BIGGER PICTURE

In order to prevent disaster, governments must commit to changes far more drastic than anything agreed at the UN so far. Past experience suggests this will not happen unless public pressure is brought to bear with unprecedented force. A shake-up of weather forecasts might sound tame. But they could play a vital role if they helped convince a majority of voters that climate change can no longer be ignored.

(The Guardian editorial)

Govt may give Jet Airways' slots to other airlines



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government plans to provide unused airport slots of Jet Airways to other domestic airlines on an interim basis, a senior official said Wednesday, amid efforts to minimise flight disruptions.

Cash-strapped Jet Airways, which is looking to raise fresh funds, has grounded at least 47 planes due to non-payment of lease rentals. Besides, many aircraft are on the ground due to other reasons.

Against this backdrop, the civil Aviation Ministry officials on Wednesday held a meeting with representatives of various domestic airlines.

Civil Aviation Secretary Pradip Singh Kharola said the ministry would discuss with Jet Airways about its requirements, including how many slots are being used.

As an "interim arrangement", the unused slots of Jet Airways at congested airports would be given for operations to other domestic airlines, he said.

Among others, representatives of Air India, SpiceJet, GoAir and IndiGo attended the meeting on Wednesday.

According to Kharola, domestic carriers would add around 20-25 more planes in by April end.

Augmentation of fleet and utilisation of existing planes were among the issues discussed during the meeting.

"Our concern is about operations (of flights), safety and comfort of passengers," Kharola told reporters.

Jet Airways shares tumble nearly 5% as crisis deepens

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of crisis-hit Jet Airways plunged nearly 5 per cent on Wednesday after the company grounded six more planes due to non-payment of lease rentals.

The stock tumbled 4.82 per cent to close at ₹218 on the BSE. During the day, it plunged 6.59 per cent to ₹213.95.

On the NSE, shares cracked 4.89 per cent to close at ₹218.05.

In terms of volume, 11.73 lakh shares were traded on the BSE and over 1.33 crore on the NSE.

The shares of Jet Airways had declined by nearly 4 per cent on Tuesday also.

As many as 47 aircraft of the full service carrier are on the ground now as the company failed to pay rentals to lessors.

"... An additional six aircraft (include one aircraft of Jet Lite (India) Ltd) have been grounded due to non-payment of amounts outstanding to lessors under their respective lease agreements," the airline said in a filing to the stock exchanges on Tuesday.



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Wednesday asked the exchanges dealing with agri-commodity derivatives to create a fund for farmers and FPOs in which the regulatory fee forgone by the regulator would be deposited.

Besides, it has issued framework including action plan and guiding principles for the utilisation of fund.

In September last year, the regulator had decided to levy a nominal fee of Rs 1 lakh per exchange instead of levying charges based on turnover slab rates and proposed to set up a fund with the fee foregone by it.

Sebi asks exchanges dealing in agri-commodity derivatives to create fund for farmers, FPOs



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi Wednesday said, "it has been decided that the stock exchanges dealing with agricultural commodity derivatives shall create a separate fund earmarked for the benefit of farmers/FPOs (farmers producer organisations) in which the regulatory fee forgone by Sebi shall be deposited."

For the fund, Sebi said the exchange needs to draw an action plan for full utilisation of foregone fee in any financial year to be utilised during the succeeding financial year.

Such action plan shall be drawn up by the 10th of April of the year in which the fund has to be utilised, it added.

The exchanges would be required to disseminate the details of the action plan on their websites under intimation to Sebi.

The earmarked fund shall not be clubbed with any other funds such as Investor Protection Fund, Investor Services Fund, and Corporate Social Responsibility Funds, Sebi said.

Factors like waiver or subsidy in warehousing charges, reimbursement of cost of bags provided to farmers and FPOs for deposits on exchange platform, and subsidising of broker fee for farmers, among others, should be considered by exchanges for preparing action plan.

BMW plans massive cost cuts to keep profits above water

AFP ■ MUNICH

German high-end carmaker BMW warned on Wednesday it expects pre-tax profits "well below" 2018 levels this year as it announced a massive cost-cutting scheme aimed at saving 12 billion euros (\$13.6 billion) in total by 2022.

A spokesman said that "well below" could indicate a tumble of more than 10 per cent.

The Munich-based group's 2019 result will be burdened with massive investments needed for the transition to electric cars, exchange rate headwinds and rising raw materials prices, it said in a statement.

Meanwhile it must pump more cash into measures to meet strict European carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions limits set to bite from next year.

And a one-off windfall in 2018's results will create a negative comparison, even though pre-tax profits already fell 8.1 per cent last year.

Bosses expect a "slight increase" in sales of BMW and Mini cars, with a slightly fatter operating margin that will nevertheless fall short of their 8.0 per cent target.

"We will continue to imple-

ment forcefully the necessary measures for growth, continuing performance increases and efficiency," finance director Nicolas Peter said at the group's annual press conference.

BMW aims to achieve 12 billion euros of savings in the coming years through "efficiency improvements" including reducing the complexity of its range.

"Our business model must remain a profitable one in the digital era," chief executive Harald Krueger said.

This year, most new recruits at the group will be IT specialists, while the total number of employees is set to remain flat at around 135,000 worldwide.

Departures from the sizeable fraction of the workforce



born during the post-World War II baby boom and now reaching retirement age "will allow us to adapt the business even more to future topics," BMW said.

All the firm's forecasts are based on London and Brussels reaching a deal for an orderly Brexit and the United States foregoing new import taxes on European cars.

"Developments in tariffs" remain "a significant factor of uncertainty" in looking to the future, finance chief Peter said, adding that "the preparations for the UK's exit from the EU will weigh on 2019's results as well."

In annual results released ahead of schedule last Friday, BMW blamed trade headwinds and new EU emissions tests for net profits tumbling 16.9 per cent in 2018, to 7.2 billion euros.

BMW shares were down 4.6 per cent in midday trading while Frankfurt's blue-chip DAX 30 index was 1.2 per cent lower.

Sensex rises for 8th session, ends marginally higher

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Continuing its upward journey for the eighth consecutive session, market benchmark BSE Sensex ended marginally higher on Wednesday, following gains in Infosys, HDFC twins and L&T amid uninterrupted capital inflows by foreign funds.

Gains were, however, capped tracking Asian shares that slipped from six-month highs after a lackluster session as investors booked profits ahead of a policy decision by the US Federal Reserve, experts said.

The 30-share index began the session on a firm note at 38,433.86 and hit the session's high of 38,489.81 on steady inflow of buying by foreign funds as well as retail investors.

However, after emergence of profit-booking and losses in select heavy weight stocks, the index turned negative and hit a low of 38,316.21 before returning in positive terrain to close the day higher by 23.28 points, or 0.06 per cent, to 38,386.75.

The barometer had rallied about 1,500 points in the previous seven sessions.

The broader NSE Nifty, however, ended 11.35 points, or 0.10 per cent, lower at 11,521.05 after shuttling between 11,556.10 and

11,503.10 during the session on expiry of March series derivative contracts.

Market will remain closed on Thursday on account of Holi.

Infosys was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 2.36 per cent, followed by HDFC Bank up 1.39 per cent.

Other gainers included Yes Bank, 1.27 per cent, L&T 1.19 per cent, Sun Pharma 1.07 per cent, HDFC 0.98 per cent, Vedanta 0.84 per cent, SBI 0.23 per cent, HCL Tech 0.23 per cent, Kotak Bank 0.20 per cent, Asian Paints 0.07 per cent and RIL 0.03 per cent.

Among laggards, NTPC suffered the most, cracking 4.29 per cent and ONGC plunged 3.28 per cent.

Other losers were Coal India, Tata Steel, Maruti Suzuki, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Auto, Tata Motors, ICICI Bank, M&M, Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank, HUL, IndusInd Bank, PowerGrid, TCS, ITC Ltd and Hero MotoCorp, falling up to 2.43 per cent.

Stocks of oil marketing companies like BPCL, HPCL and IOC, however, faced selling pressure and lost up to 5.32 per cent after global crude prices soared.

Sector-wise, the BSE realty index gained the most by rising 2.21 per cent, followed by IT index up 0.93 per cent, teck

index 0.55 per cent, capital goods 0.48 per cent, healthcare 0.08 per cent and consumer durables 0.02 per cent.

However, oil and gas index emerged worst performer by falling 2.26 per cent and PSU index lost 1.75 per cent. Power, metal, auto, FMCG and banking indices too ended in the red.

The broader markets ended in a negative terrain with the BSE mid-cap index falling 0.38 per cent and small-cap index shedding 0.33 per cent.

Shares of Reliance Communications further zoomed 10 per cent to hit the highest trading permissible limit for the second day in a row Wednesday after the company cleared dues of Swedish service provider Ericsson.

The scrip rose sharply by 10 per cent to ₹4.84 — its upper circuit limit — on the BSE.

Stocks of software exporters were centre of brisk activity after the rupee slipped below the 69 mark against the dollar. Software exporters' majority of revenues come in dollar.

"Global stocks were mixed as investors remained on the sidelines ahead of the Federal Reserve policy meet," said Sunil Sharma, Chief Investment Officer, Sanctum Wealth Management, adding that data suggests that the strength in

foreign investment flows was overwhelmed significant amounts of domestic selling, and FIIs have now taken back control of the market from domestic investors.

"We have witnessed an 8.6 per cent return off the lows in February, which makes the current market rise the sharpest since March 2016.

"Heading into a holiday-shortened week, traders likely took money off the table. The Indian rupee recovered marginally to 68.83 to retain the top spot as the best performing emerging market currency over the last one month," he said.

On a net basis, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought shares worth ₹2,132.36 crore Tuesday, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) sold shares worth ₹1,253.67 crore, provisional data showed.

Most Asian markets ended lower, and European shares were also weak form in early deals.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.31 per cent, Shanghai Composite Index shed 0.01 per cent, Korea's Kospi fell 0.02 per cent, while Japan's Nikkei ended 0.20 per cent higher.

In Europe, Frankfurt's DAX fell 0.87 per cent, and Paris CAC 40 shed 0.05 per cent. London's FTSE was down 0.01 per cent.

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Corrigendum & Date Extension Notice - 2

Due to amendment in the tender invited for "Procurement of TMT steel bar of various dia Fe-500 grade conforming to IS:1786 for Tracy of Vyasi HEP in District-Dehradun (Uttarakhand)" at Hathari Power House of Vyasi HEP (120 MW) in District Dehradun (Uttarakhand)" against NIT No. 12/UJVN/03/EE(Civil)/VP/2018-19, the dates for submission and opening of bid are hereby extended as follows:

- Last Date/Time for submission of bid on the portal: 15-04-2019 up to 17:00 Hrs.
- Last date & Address for Submission of original documents: 16.04.2019 up to 17:00 Hrs in Office of the Executive Engineer (Civil-1), Vyasi Project, Lakhwar Bhawan, Dakpathar (Distt-Dehradun).
- Date and time of opening of bid on the website: 18-04-2019 at 15:30 Hrs.

Addendum in tender document has been uploaded on e-procurement portal. All other terms & conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged. Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in"

Executive Engineer (Civil-I)
Vyasi Project, Lakhwar Bhawan, Dakpathar

201 यूजीवन लि. / विज्ञापन / दिनांक : 19.03.2019
"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/Coaching, Northern Railway, Delhi division, New Delhi invites e-tender for the following work.

1	Name of work with its location	Parking cum Access Control Rights at New Delhi Railway Station (Ajmeri Gate Side) for general car parking area (4903.16 M ²) and premium car parking area (2900 M ²) approx. (total Area 7803.16 M ²) along with the access control rights for pickup/Drop lanes for a period of 3 years.
2	Approximate cost of work	As per NIT
3	Date and Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender	11.00 hrs on 12.04.2019
4	Cost of Tender document & 18% GST	Rs. 11,800/-
5	Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 30,65,900/-
6	Website particulars where complete details of tender document can be seen	https://reps.gov.in

No.: 23AC/393/New Proposal Parking/2018 Dated: 16.03.2019 874/2019
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED PERSON

General public is hereby informed that this person namely **Rahul S/o Nilam Kumar R/o K-23, Bhagat Singh Park, Sirapur, Delhi Age : 28 years, Complexion : Sallow, Height : 5'4", Face : Round, Build : Medium, wearing sky blue colour shirt, blue colour pant, khaki colour jacket and blue colour shoes in feet, has been missing/kidnapped since 26.02.2019 from the area of P.S. Samaypur Badli, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 63-A dated 28.02.2019 has been lodged at P.S. Samaypur Badli, Delhi.**

Any person having any information or clue about this missing/kidnapped person may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail: cic@cbl.gov.in Website: <http://cbl.nic.in> Ph: 011-27854757, 27854799

SHO : P.S. Samaypur Badli, Delhi Ph: 011-27854757, 27854799

DP/123/2019

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Priya, D/O Surender Singh, R/O H. NO. 1128/75, Deva Ram Park, Near Old Post Office, Tri Nagar, Delhi. The girl has been missing since 02.03.2019 from the area of P.S. Keshav Puram, Delhi.**

In this regard **FIR No. 85/19 u/s 363 IPC dated 02.03.2019** has been lodged at P.S. Keshav Puram, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far.

The description of the missing girl is as under:
Name: Priya, Age: 17 Years, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, Built: Normal, Wearing: Black Jacket, Blue Jeans and White Jutti in Feet.

If anyone has any information regarding this missing girl, kindly inform SHO/P.S. Keshav Puram, Delhi.

Email: cic@cbl.gov.in, Website: <http://cbl.nic.in> Ph: 011-23015229, 23015218

SHO P.S. Keshav Puram, Delhi Ph. No. 011-27181325, 08750870223

DP/9779/NW/19

India loses 7 spots in global list of happiest nations, ranks 140th

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

Indians are not as happy in 2019 as they were in 2018 and the country figures at 140th place, seven spots down from last year, on this year's UN World Happiness Report released Wednesday which is topped by Finland for the second year in a row.

The report was released by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the United Nations on March 20 which has been declared as World Happiness Day by the UN General Assembly in 2012.

The report ranks countries on six key variables that support well-being: income, freedom, trust, healthy life expectancy, social support and generosity.

According to the report, the overall world happiness has fallen over the past few years, which has mostly been fuelled by a sustained drop in India, which came in 140th place this year compared with 133rd place in 2018.

The UN's seventh annual World Happiness Report,

which ranks the world's 156 countries on "how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be", also noted that there has been an increase in negative emotions, including worry, sadness and anger.

Finland has been ranked as the happiest country in the world for the second year in succession. The Nordic nation is followed by Denmark, Norway, Iceland and The Netherlands.

Pakistan is ranked 67th, Bangladesh 125th and China is place at 93rd, according to the report. People in war-torn South Sudan are the most unhappy with their lives, followed by Central African Republic (155), Afghanistan (154), Tanzania (153) and Rwanda (152).

The happiness study ranks the countries of the world on the basis of questions from the Gallup World Poll. The results are then correlated with other factors, including GDP and social security.

The United States ranks at 19th place for happiness, despite being one of the richest countries in the world.

Over 80% Indian engineers unemployable, lack new-age skills: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The employability of Indian engineers continues to be low as over 80 per cent of them are unemployable for any job in the knowledge economy, says a report.

According to a report by employability assessment company Aspiring Minds, only 3.84 per cent of engineers in the country have the technical, cognitive and linguistic skills required for software-related jobs in start-ups.

Moreover, only 3 per cent of engineers have new-age technological skills in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, data science and mobile development.

The report said the reasons for low employability and states that only 40 per cent engineering graduates do an internship, while a mere 7 per cent students do multiple internships. Also, only 36 per cent do projects beyond their curriculum.

It added that engineering discipline in India is very theoretical as 60 per cent faculty

doesn't talk about application of concepts in the industry and only 47 per cent of the engineers attend any industry talk.

"We find that a low proportion of engineers take up projects beyond curriculum and do internships. Further, there is a lack of faculty talking about industry application of concepts in class or students getting exposure through industry talks.

"These need to be remedied by aligning incentives of all stakeholder, building capacity and gamification," Aspiring Minds Chief Technology Officer and co-founder Varun Aggarwal said.

The report, which is based on a research conducted on engineering students from India, the US and China, found that the number of engineers in the US who know how to code is almost four times than Indian engineers.

Though Indian engineers show better potential than Chinese engineers in writing correct code, the proportion of engineers who cannot write compilable code in India is almost three times the Chinese engineers who cannot do so, according to the report.

EU fines Google \$1.7 bn for abusing online ads market



AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union regulators have hit Google with a 1.49 billion euro (\$1.68 billion) fine for abusing its dominant role in online advertising. It's the third time the commission has slapped Google with an antitrust penalty, following multi-billion-dollar fines resulting from separate probes into two other parts of the Silicon Valley giant's business. The EU's competition commissioner, Margrethe Vestager, announced the results of the long-running probe of Google's AdSense advertising business at a news conference in Brussels on Wednesday. "Today's decision is about how Google abused its domi-

nance to stop websites using brokers other than the AdSense platform," Vestager said. The commission found that Google and its parent company, Alphabet, breached EU antitrust rules by imposing restrictive clauses in contracts with websites that used AdSense, preventing Google rivals from placing their ads on these sites. Google "prevented its rivals from having a chance to innovate and to compete in the market on their merits," Vestager said. "Advertisers and website owners, they had less choice and likely faced higher prices that would be passed on to consumers." AdSense is an older Google product that lets web publish-

ers such as bloggers place text ads on their websites, with the content of the ads based on results from search functions on their sites. Microsoft filed an EU antitrust complaint about the service in 2009 and the EU Commission formally launched its probe in 2016, although it said at the time that Google had already made some changes to avoid affected customers more freedom to show competing ads. Last year, Vestager hit the company with a record 4.34 billion euro (\$5 billion) fine following an investigation into its Android operating system. In 2017, she slapped Google with a 2.42 billion euro fine in a case involving its online shopping search results.

₹ recovers 13 paise against dollar



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee on Wednesday recovered by 13 paise to close at 68.83 against the US dollar amid sustained buying by foreign investors in domestic equity markets and lower crude prices. However, the local currency remained cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve policy decision on Wednesday. Brokers said foreign fund inflows in the debt and equity markets helped the rupee recover. However, the dollar's strength overseas capped the gain, they added. At the Interbank Foreign Exchange (forex), the domestic currency opened lower at 69.11 a dollar and gained to touch the day's high of 68.72. It finally settled at 68.83 per dollar, up 13 paise over its previous close. Last year, Vestager hit the company with a record 4.34 billion euro (\$5 billion) fine following an investigation into its Android operating system. In 2017, she slapped Google with a 2.42 billion euro fine in a case involving its online shopping search results.

Investors (DIIs) were net sellers to the tune of Rs 1,323.17 crore, provisional data available with BSE showed. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, surged 0.07 per cent to 96.44, ahead of the outcome of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading at \$67.39 per barrel, lower by 0.33 per cent. On the equity front, the 30-share Sensex continued its winning run for the eighth consecutive session Wednesday. The 30-share index closed at 38,386.75, registering a rise of 23.28 points, or 0.06 per cent. However, the 50-share Nifty ended 11.35 points, or 0.10 per cent, lower at 11,521.05. Meanwhile, Financial Benchmark India Private Ltd (FBIL) set the reference rate for the rupee/dollar at 68.8604 and for rupee/euro at 78.1446. The reference rate for rupee/British pound was fixed at 91.2846 and for rupee/100 Japanese yen at 61.72.

Statutory dues of companies are operational debt: NCLAT



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The NCLAT on Wednesday held that statutory liability, including income tax and value added tax dues, of debt-ridden companies are 'operational debt', which will now allow the concerned revenue departments to be treated as operational creditors. A two-member NCLAT bench headed by Chairman Justice S J Mukhopadhyaya held that Central or State Tax Departments such as Income Tax Department, Sales Tax Departments and Local Authority, entitled for dues are 'operational creditors' under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code. "We hold that all statutory dues including income tax, Value Added Tax etc come within the meaning of Operational Debt. "For the said very reason, we also hold that income tax department of the central government and the sales tax

Departments of the state Governments and local authority, which are entitled for dues arising out of the existing law are 'Operational Creditor' within the meaning of Section 5(20) of the I&B Code," said the appellate tribunal. The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order came over a four petitions filed by the Income Tax department, Sales Tax Department, Maharashtra, where question as whether statutory dues come under the definition of the operational debt and if yes, then can they be treated as operational creditors of the company. Counsel appearing for respective companies has contended before the NCLAT that Income Tax cannot be in the nature of operational debt as it refers to the claim in respect of goods or services, including employment or a debt in respect of repayment of dues of the central, state govern-

ment or local authorities. However, Income Tax Department, Maharashtra contended that operational debt also included debts arising under any law payable to the central and State Government. Consenting to it, the NCLAT said that goods and services including employment are required to keep a company, a corporate debtor, operational as a going concern. "If the Company (Corporate Debtor) is operational and remains a going concern, only in such case, the statutory liability, such as payment of Income Tax, Value Added Tax etc, will arise," the NCLAT said. "As the 'Income Tax', 'Value Added Tax' and other statutory dues arising out of the existing law, arises when the Company is operational, we hold such statutory dues has direct nexus with operation of the Company," it added.

Working with all airlines to provide sufficient capacity, says Civil Aviation Ministry



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Civil Aviation Ministry on Wednesday said it is working with all airlines to provide sufficient capacity and is monitoring safety as well as compliance levels on a daily basis, amid concerns over flight cancellations and rise in airfares. The grounding of aircraft by crisis-hit Jet Airways, grounding of Boeing MAX 737 planes by SpiceJet and curtailed schedule of IndiGo, among other factors, have

impacted flight schedules. "To ensure passenger convenience, stable operations and affordable fares, MOCA (Ministry of Civil Aviation) is working with all airlines to provide sufficient capacity across the entire network. We continue to monitor safety and compliance on a daily basis," the Ministry said in a tweet. All airlines are required to follow Passenger Charter requirements fully and comprehensively. Any complaints may be registered with the AirSewa portal, it added.

Telecom subscriber base crosses 120 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's telecom subscriber base for the third time crossed 120-crore mark with Reliance Jio, BSNL and Airtel adding new customers in January, according to a report released by telecom regulator Trai. "The number of telephone subscribers in India increased from 1,197.87 million at the end of December 2018 to 1,203.77 million at the end of January 2019, thereby showing a monthly growth rate of 0.49 per cent," the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India said in monthly subscriber report for January 2019. Earlier, the subscriber base crossed the 120-crore mark in July 2017 and May 2018. The mobile customer base grew to 118 crore in January from 117 crore in December. The wireline connection in the country slid to 2.17 crore in January from 2.18 crore in December. Reliance Jio dominated growth by adding over 93 lakh new mobile customers. State-run telecom firm BSNL followed Jio by adding 9.82 lakh mobile subscribers. Bharti Airtel returned to growth track, after losing mobile customer in December, by adding over 1 lakh new customers.



The net increase of telecom subscriber in January was 59 lakh, compared to over 1 crore subscribers added by the three players. However, Vodafone Idea and Tata Teleservices jointly lost close to 44 lakh mobile customers. The country's biggest telecom operator Vodafone Idea lost 35.8 lakh mobile customers, Tata Teleservices 8.4 lakh and state-run MTNL 4,927 mobile customers. The wireline connections declined mainly because of BSNL losing 90 thousand con-

nections. Private operators Bharti Airtel and Vodafone added 29,930 and 6,386 connections. Broadband connections in the country grew 4.15 per cent to 54 crore in January from 51.8 crore in December. The mobile devices-based broadband connections accounted for over 96 per cent of total base with over 52.1 crore subscribers while wireline connections reached 1.82 crore. Top-five service providers constituted 98.63 per cent market share of the total broadband subscribers at the end of

January. Reliance Jio led the market with 28.94 crore broadband subscribers. It was followed by Bharti Airtel with 11 crore connections, Vodafone Idea 10.98 crore, BSNL 2 crore and Tata Teleservices Group 22.6 lakh connections. BSNL maintained lead in the wireline broadband segment with 91.7 lakh connection. It was followed by Airtel with 23 lakh connections, Atria Convergence 14 lakh, Hathway Cable & Datacom 7.9 connection and MTNL 7.7 lakh connections.

Singapore rejects Sri Lankan leader's allegation on trading scam suspect

AFP ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore rejected Wednesday Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena's allegation it was sheltering a former central bank chief wanted for fraud, saying Colombo failed to provide documents to support its extradition request. Sirisena on Monday accused Singapore of sheltering Arjuna Mahendran, one of his country's former central bank chiefs wanted in connection with a high-profile \$74 million insider trading scam. Sirisena said he appealed to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in January to return Mahendran, who is believed to be in Singapore, but claimed nothing had been done. Mahendran, a Singapore national of Sri Lankan origin, was accused in 2015 of passing sensitive information to his bond-dealer son-in-law to make millions. The pair are accused of manipulating bond auctions in 2015 and 2016, causing losses of over \$11 million to the state. A spokesperson for Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said authorities in the

city-state have been cooperating with their Sri Lankan counterparts on the case since January. However, Sri Lanka's request to return Mahendran "lacked certain information required under Singapore's extradition laws" and the city-state has requested Colombo to provide them, the spokesperson told AFP. "To date, Singapore has not yet received the requested supporting information and documents," the spokesperson said. "We look forward to receiving the requested information from Sri Lanka, so that we can consider the request further in accordance with our laws." Singapore can extradite fugitives to declared Commonwealth countries, which include Sri Lanka. In February last year, Mahendran was named a key suspect in the multi-million dollar bond scam in Sri Lanka. He fled abroad, failing to appear in court to respond to charges. A damning presidential report into the scandal accused Mahendran of insider trading and recommended the state recover its losses from Mahendran and his son-in-law.

India expresses concern over trade deficit with China

PTI ■ BEIJING

India on Wednesday expressed concern over the widening trade deficit with China which has ballooned to over \$58 billion, with the country's new envoy here saying that addressing the issue would be his top priority. India's Ambassador to China Vikram Misri, who assumed charge on January 8 at a time when the two Asian giants were trying to boost their bilateral ties, told the state-run Global Times that India is working with the Chinese side for ensuring greater market access to the Indian agricultural products. He expressed concern over the growing trade deficit, which has now crossed over \$58 billion in over \$80 billion trade. The bilateral trade will cross the \$100 billion mark this year, he said. "However, this figure includes a deficit of \$58 billion for India and this deficit has been increasing over the years. Addressing this trade deficit would be one of my priorities because it is not really sustainable in the long term," Misri

said. India is working with the Chinese side for ensuring greater market access to the Indian agricultural products such as sugar and rice, as well as various fruits and vegetables, besides pharmaceuticals and IT, which are India's strengths, he said. The Indian envoy's interview was carried by the daily on Wednesday. "Progress has been made in some of these areas, but translating this progress into actual and sustained exports is important. We hope that in this regard, we will receive support from the Chinese side and expand our trade basket. "In addition, we also need to address the barriers for greater access to the Indian pharmaceuticals and IT products and services in the Chinese market," Misri said. He said that the growth in bilateral investments has not kept pace with the expanding trade volume between the two countries. While both countries have emerged as the top investment destinations for the rest of the world, mutual investment growth is yet to catch up. "Many of the Chinese com-

panies are doing good business in India. Xiaomi and other Chinese companies are among the largest distributors of mobile phones in India. We welcome these companies to set up their manufacturing bases in India, which would contribute to lowering the trade deficit. "We would also like to see more Chinese investment in infrastructure, such as roads and railways, industrial parks and in the food processing sector," Misri said. The India-China bilateral trade reached \$84.44 billion in 2017. According to India's trade figures, the bilateral trade deficit crossed \$52 billion in 2017. India has been pressing China to open the IT and Pharmaceutical sectors for the Indian firms to reduce the massive trade deficit. Misri said that another welcome area for the Chinese investment would be the hospitality sector, such as restaurants that cater to the Chinese palate, which in turn would be an attractive factor for Chinese tourists. He said that enhancing people-to-people and cultural

contacts would be another focus area. "In 2018, the total number of travellers from China to India and vice versa added up to just one million, which is a minuscule number when we consider that our combined population is 2.6 billion," he said. "We need to change these figures and promote our countries as preferred tourist destinations for each other. This would be the best way to enhance trust and understanding between our two peoples and further strengthen our overall bilateral relationship," he said, adding that 2020 will mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China and people's exchanges would be an important component of the celebrations. Misri said that one of the main reasons for the low number of Chinese tourists visiting India could simply be lack of information. "We are taking energetic steps to bridge this information gap and China has been identified by us as a priority market for India's tourism promotion," he added.

KM MAMMEN, ANSHUMAN SINGHANIA ELECTED AS NEW ATMA OFFICE BEARERS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

KM Mammen, Chairman & Managing Director, MRF Ltd has been unanimously elected as Chairman of Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA), the national industry body for automotive tyre sector in India. Anshuman Singhania, whole-time Director of JK Tyre & Industries Ltd has been elected as Vice Chairman of ATMA. Set up in 1975, ATMA is amongst the most active national industry bodies in the country representing Rs 60000 crore (\$8.5 bn) automotive tyre industry. Eleven large tyre companies comprising mix of Indian and International tyre majors and representing over 95% of production of tyres in India are members of the Association. ATMA members include Apollo Tyres, Birla Tyres, Bridgestone India, Ceat, Continental India, Goodyear India, JK Tyre & Industries, Michelin, MRF, TVS Tyres and Yokohama.

India, Peru hold 4th round of FTA talks in Lima

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and Peru have concluded a fourth round of negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) in the South American nation last week, the Department of Commerce said. The agreement is aimed at boosting the two-way commerce between the countries. "India and Peru are negotiating a trade agreement covering goods, services and investment. The fourth round of negotiations was held from March 11-15 in Lima, Peru," the department said in a series of tweets. The main chapters of the trade agreement include market access for goods, trade in services, movement of professionals, investments, dispute settlement, technical barriers to trade, trade remedies, rules of origin of goods, customs procedures and trade facilitation. In an FTA, two countries significantly reduce or eliminate duties on most of the goods traded between them besides relaxing norms and

Peru ranked third among export destinations for India in the Latin America and Caribbean region

rules to promote trade in services and increase bilateral investments. With growing uncertainties in its traditional markets, including the US and Europe, India is looking to enhance engagements with other regions such as Africa, South America and Central Asia. The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said Peru holds huge potential for exports and investments for domestic exporters and businesses. "The agreement would boost bilateral trade. Peru holds huge export potential for Indian exporters," FIEO

President Ganesh Kumar Gupta said. Peru ranked third among export destinations for India in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. The bilateral trade between the nations increased to \$3.13 billion in 2017-18 from \$1.77 billion in the previous fiscal. Among the top-10 commodities that India exports to Peru are motor vehicles, cars, auto components, tyres, dyes, products of iron and steel, cotton yarn and fabrics. While the imports include bulk minerals and ores, gold, fertilisers, aluminium, coffee, crude oil and zinc.

Britain requests EU to delay Brexit until June

AFP ■ LONDON

Britain has asked EU leaders to delay Brexit until June 30, Prime Minister Theresa May told parliament on Wednesday, on the eve of an EU summit in Brussels.

May said she had written to EU President Donald Tusk "informing him that the UK seeks an extension to the Article 50 period to June 30".

"I don't want a long extension," she said, warning that a longer delay would mean Britain having to hold European Parliament elections at the end of May.

"The idea that three years after voting to leave the EU, the people of this country should be asked to elect a new set of MEPs is, I believe, unacceptable," she said.

"As Prime Minister, I am not prepared to delay Brexit



any further than June 30," she said. In the letter to Tusk released by Downing Street, May said she intended to bring the Brexit deal she has negotiated with the EU back to parliament even though MPs have rejected it twice by overwhelming margins.

"If the motion is passed, I am confident that parliament will proceed to ratify the deal

India signals to boycott China's Belt and Road

PTI ■ BEIJING

India on Wednesday signalled that it will boycott China's second Belt and Road Forum for a second time, saying no country can participate in an initiative that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity.



belief that connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognised international norms, good governance and rule of law. They must emphasise social stability and environmental protection and preservation, promote skill and technology transfers and follow principles of openness, transparency and financial sustainability," the Indian envoy said.

India boycotted the first Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in 2017 after protesting to Beijing over the controversial China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is being laid through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) overriding New Delhi's sovereignty concerns.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently said next month China plans to hold a much bigger, second BRF which will also be attended by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.

"above all, connectivity initiatives must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of nations".

"No country can participate in an initiative that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity," he replied to a question about India's concerns over the BRI and whether India would take part in the second BRF meet.

India along with the US and several other countries have been highlighting the concerns over the BRI projects, leaving a number of smaller countries in debt traps.

Pound slides after UK requests Brexit delay

London: The British pound fell on Wednesday on simmering Brexit tensions after Prime Minister Theresa May asked EU leaders to delay the nation's departure until June 30. On the eve of an EU summit in Brussels, May told parliament that she has written to EU President Donald Tusk to ask for the withdrawal date to be moved from March 29.

The European Commission warned in an internal briefing note that delaying Brexit to June 30 would bring "serious legal and political risks".

The EU's executive arm instead urged leaders to choose instead a short delay to May 23 or a longer one at least until the end of this year. Around 1300 GMT, sterling was down almost one per cent in value, sliding to USD 1.3149, while the euro rose to 86.40 pence. The unit was already in negative territory prior to May's announcement. **PTI**

Expect 'no decision' on Brexit at this week's EU summit: Juncker



European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, left, speaks with European Council President Donald Tusk in Brussels on Wednesday. **AP**

Berlin: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said on Wednesday it was unlikely the EU would reach any decision on Brexit at this week's summit, adding that another gathering in Brussels may be necessary next week.

With just nine days left until Britain's scheduled exit from the EU, Juncker said the remaining 27 members states' hands were tied until the political indecision in London was resolved.

"As long as we don't know what Britain could say yes to, no decision can be taken on our side either," he said.

Exasperated European leaders are demanding London tell them clearly what it wants, warning that the risk remains that Britain could crash out of the bloc on March 29, ending its 46-year membership without formal arrangements.

Juncker insisted the deal negotiated over two years with Brussels was remaining members states' final offer. **AFP**

Speculation is rife whether India would attend the second BRF as China has deepened its commitment to expand the USD 60 billion CPEC, which aims to connect China's Xinjiang province with Pakistan's Gwadar port with a host of road, rail, gas and oil pipelines.

China has also undertaken a host of energy projects under the aegis of the CPEC.

India's Ambassador to China Vikram Misri told the state-run *Global Times* that

"However, it is also our view and our position on the BRI is clear and consistent and one that we have conveyed to the authorities concerned."

"India shares the global aspiration to strengthen connectivity and it is an integral part of our economic and diplomatic initiatives. We ourselves are working with many countries and international institutions in our region and beyond on a range of connectivity initiatives," Misri said.

Italy to join China's Belt and Road initiative over US worry

PTI ■ MILAN

Premier Giuseppe Conte pledged to make Italy the first Group of Seven nation to join China's ambitious Belt and Road initiative, despite objections from the United States and concerns within his governing coalition.

Speaking to parliament, Conte said that Italy's signing of a memorandum of understanding for the infrastructure-building venture, which is due to happen during the Chinese premier's visit this week, would not "in the least" put into question Italy's position within the strategic trans-Atlantic alliance or with European partners. Italy's signature would be considered a major legitimization of the project that envisions overland and maritime routes connecting China with Europe.

Pak SC Chief Justice constitutes larger bench to define 'terrorism'

Islamabad: Pakistan will soon have a definition to the word 'terrorism'. This was decided by Supreme Court Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa on Wednesday when he constituted a seven-member bench to determine the definition of 'terrorism' and the cases that fall within the category, Pakistani media reported.

The apex court's decision comes amid intense pressure on Pakistan Government to rein in terror groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which claimed responsibility

for the Pulwama terror attack that killed 44 CRPF soldiers.

Pakistan has witnessed a number of major terror attacks in the past. At least 595 people, including Pakistani security officials, have been killed and 1,030 others injured in 262 terror attacks in Pakistan during 2018, the Pak Institute for Peace Studies, an Islamabad-based independent think tank said in January. Pakistani media reported that since 1997, it is not determined which case comes in ambit of terrorism, Chief Justice Khosa said. **PTI**

Kartarpur Corridor: Villagers demand compensation for their land

Lahore: As Pakistan and India discuss the alignment of the Kartarpur Corridor, some 600 villagers who are facing "forcible eviction" due to the project say they will block the development work if denied compensation of their land on commercial rates.

The entire population (600) of village Kothay Khurd, where Gurdwara Dera Sahib Kartarpur is located (some 125-km from Lahore), has been ordered by the district administration to vacate their

houses immediately for the development of the Kartarpur Corridor to facilitate the Sikh pilgrims from India.

"My ancestors had settled in the village even before the partition and now our fifth generation is living here. Some officials came here and told the residents that the government was planning to build Kartarpur Corridor on our land, therefore we will have to vacate the land," Mohammad Arshad of Kothay Khurd told reporters.

"We are living in the area for centuries and it was not possible for us to leave the area and the graves of our ancestors," another villager Zaeem Hussain said, adding that the government officials had only told them that they would be compensated after their land and houses had been acquired.

Hussain said there has been consensus among the villagers to sacrifice their agricultural land but none of them is ready to leave their ancestral houses. **PTI**

Kazakhstan renames capital 'Nursultan' after ex-Prez



Almaty (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan's Parliament on Wednesday voted to rename the country's capital in honour of long-time ruler Nursultan Nazarbayev, a day after he resigned as President.

"Astana is now officially renamed Nursultan," the state-owned Kazinform news agency said after a parliamentary vote.

Kazakhstan's new interim President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed renaming the capital after he was sworn in following Nazarbayev's shock resignation on Tuesday. In his first official act,

Drought wipes popular Chilean lake from the map

Paine (Chile): The cows and horses would have come for the last blades of grass. Now their bones are scattered on the cracked earth, victims of drought that wiped Santiago's weekend playground Lake Aculeo from the map.

Lake Aculeo's demise is so sudden and complete it seems as if someone had pulled a giant plug and let all the water out. So sudden was it that as recently as 2011 the 4.6 square-mile lagoon was a thriving weekend getaway for people from the Chilean capital an hour away.

Thousands came here to swim, water-ski, sail or simply cool off in the long austral summer. They camped along its shores and lined up for tables at busy lakeside restaurants.

Now, water and cooling summers on Lake Aculeo are a fast receding memory. "We have been suffering drought for 10 years, and now the lake has disappeared, with tourism, camping, business, everything," laments Marcos Contreras, a campsite employee. **AFP**



Before After

Cyclone Idai deaths exceed 300 as UN boosts aid



Beira (Mozambique): The death toll from a cyclone that smashed into Mozambique and Zimbabwe rose to more than 300 as rescuers raced against the clock to help survivors and the UN led the charge to provide aid.

"We already have more than 200 dead, and nearly 350,000 people are at risk," Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi announced on Tuesday, while the Government in Zimbabwe said around 100 people had died but the toll could be three times that figure.

The UN, meanwhile, said that one of the worst storms to hit southern Africa in decades had also unleashed a humanitarian crisis in Malawi, affecting nearly a million people and



A family dig for their son who got buried in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe. **AP**

forcing more than 80,000 from their homes.

Four days after Tropical Cyclone Idai made landfall, emergency teams in central Mozambique fanned out in boats and helicopters, seeking to pluck survivors from roofs and treetops in an inland sea of floodwater, sometimes in the dead of night.

Air force personnel from Mozambique and South Africa were drafted in to fly rescue missions, while an NGO called Rescue South Africa said it had picked up 34 people since Friday night, using three helicopters. "It is the only way to access the people that are stranded," Rescue SA's Abrie Senekal told *AFP*, saying the NGO was trying to hire more helicopters. **AFP**

DO ME A FAVOUR LETS PLAY HOLI!



Revelers dance as they celebrate Holi organised by the Hindu community at a park in Myanmar on Wednesday. **AP**

Pak PM Imran wishes Hindus on 'happy, peaceful' Holi

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday extended his greeting to the country's Hindu community on the occasion of Holi. Prime Minister Khan was joined by other Pakistani political leaders in wishing the minority community on Holi.

"Wishing our Hindu community a very happy and peaceful Holi, the festival of colours," Khan said in a tweet.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairperson of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), took to twitter to wish people on Holi. "Happy Holi to all my Hindu brothers and sisters. On the happy occasion of Holi, let us spread the wonderful message of peace and happiness," he wrote. **PTI**



Nepalese play with colours during celebrations marking Holi in Patan, Nepal, on Wednesday. **AP**

GLOBE TROTTING

TRUMP TO MEET NETANYAHU NEXT WEEK
Washington: US President Donald Trump will meet his ally Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House next week, an official announcement said on Wednesday. Trump will welcome Netanyahu to the White House from March 25 to 26, presidential spokesperson Sarah Sanders said.

AF PREZ ELECTION DELAYED TO SEPT 28
Kabul: War-torn Afghanistan has delayed its presidential election until September 28, officials announced on Wednesday, the second time the ballot has been put back and five months later than it was originally scheduled to be held.

EATING FISH MAY HELP REDUCE ASTHMA RISK
Sydney: Eating fish oil, rich in omega 3 fatty acids, can help reduce the risk of asthma by nearly 70 per cent, finds a study. Fish oil is known to be rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) or n-3 and contains omega fatty acids 3 and 6, which play a central role in the normal development and functioning of the brain and central nervous system.

INDONESIA'S ACEH WHIPS AMOROUS COUPLES
Banda Aceh (Indonesia): A group of unmarried couples were whipped in Indonesia's Aceh province on Thursday after they were caught behaving amorously — a crime under the conservative region's Islamic law.



Trend Blazer

'Inshallah will be magical'

Actress **ALIA BHATT**, who is going to collaborate with filmmaker **Sanay Leela Bhansali** and actor **Salman Khan** for *Inshallah* feels the epic romance drama will be quite a magical journey. She said, "The film has been announced and as I mentioned in my tweet, it's a big dream come true to work with Sanjay sir and Salman. They are like a magical combination together. I can't wait to get on the journey. It's going to be quite magical." The film will also mark Salman-Bhansali reunion after 19 years since *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*. Talking about a new released song from her forthcoming film *Kalank*, Alia said, "I have worked very hard on this song. I am very happy that more and more people are loving it."



'It's important for the youth to be part of movements or things which bring about changes since the future is in our hands. We are responsible for shaping the way the film industry moves forward. Because I think Indian cinema is at the brink of beautiful global recognition. If it hasn't happened, we will just take it to an all new level.'

—Deepika Padukone

Actor **RANVEER SINGH** has created his own special GIFs and stickers for his fans across the globe to use.

Keeping with the surprises that he dishes out with each new performance, the actor is going to bring his signature style on to a GIF. The actor's new GIFs and stickers are now active for use on social media.

With this innovation, users can share varied emotions and moments of the actor Ranveer Singh across different social media platforms to communicate.



Cage to star in martial arts film

Actor **NICOLAS CAGE** will star in the forthcoming martial arts actioner *Jiu Jitsu*, based on the eponymously-named comic book.

The cast will also include **Alain Moussi**, who stars in the *Kickboxer* franchise.

Dimriti Logothetis is producing with Martin Barab and directing from a script he wrote with Jim McGrath.

Jiu Jitsu centres on an ancient order of expert Jiu Jitsu fighters facing fearsome alien invaders in a battle for Earth every six years. Cage's character and his team of Jiu Jitsu fighters band together with Moussi's character to defeat the Brax.



Colour burst of ideas

Make sure that you have all the essentials in place to enjoy Holi better.

By TEAM VIVA

A pinch of *gulaal*, an abundance of colour and a stir of *bhang* — Holi means all that and more. The day means that there are a plethora of activities to do and celebrations to be a part of. But before stepping into this world of revelry and non-stop fun, here are a few things that need to be taken care of to make sure that the celebrations continue, even post the festival.

THE PERFECT CHECKLIST

Wearing old, retired clothes on Holi? Not done. It is a festival after all. The idea is to look vibrant, vivacious festive and fashion-trendy rather than tacky and worn-out.

Sandhya Sakhuja, business head, personal care at India's largest private platform for products that are made from traditional techniques, skills and hand-based processes and Soumya Kant, founding member at an online lingerie brand suggest a few clothing essentials:

□ **Go bright in white:** White is unofficially the colour of the day. Women can opt for a white *Chikankari kurta* paired with a vibrant *bandhani*-printed dupatta and/or a coloured *churidar* or *patiala*. Men, can utilise one of their crisp cotton white shirts as a canvas for the day.

□ **Cool cottons:** Summers have just begun and choosing the right kind of fabric in this heat means half the battle won. Opt for a cotton *kurta* as it will absorb the sweat. It will also dry up faster after Holi celebrations. Pair it up with the right-sized lingerie so that it's not too tight or loose to avoid feeling sticky and uncomfortable.

□ **Nude innerwear all the way:** Always opt for nude lingerie instead of white. Most people make the mistake of wearing white lingerie underneath white garments, which is more visible. Nude-coloured undergarments blend well with the skin, provide a no-show underneath your sparkling whites, offer the best cover and are your safest bet to wear under the sheer *kurtas*.

HOLI PROOF YOUR HAIR

With *gulaal* and colours, come traces of synthetic pigments which could potentially harm your hair and skin. The first suggestion from experts is oiling hair with coconut, castor or jojoba oil before you go out in the sun and your hair gets doused with colours. It is the most popular, traditional and convenient way to reduce hair damage caused by toxic colours. It greases the hair strands and helps in removing the colour later. The oil puts a coating that shields and protects hair from the chemicals and the harsh, direct sunrays. It also avoids colour deposition on the scalp.

They also suggest that split ends



should be chopped off before Holi as artificial colours can make the hair drier and cause further split ends. Apart from that, one of the easiest ways to protect the hair from damage is to use a headscarf or a *bandana*. Tie up your hair into a bun or make a ponytail. Ensure that the scalp is secured, and colours don't get absorbed easily.

Well, there are a few things that your hair needs post-Holi as well. After playing with colours, washing your hair correctly helps. Apply a mild shampoo on the hair, gently massage the scalp and leave it for 10 to 15 minutes. This will help in removing and softening all the dust, artificial pigments and colours that get stuck on the scalp. Following that, apply a rich conditioner to reload the oil and moisture that have been taken away by the chemicals.

SAFE-GUARD YOUR BELONGINGS

It's important to remember some

safety rules amidst the swirl of colourful madness. This list from an Indian e-commerce brand has a few must-haves to protect your belongings and tech gadgets from water splash and harmful chemicals in colours.

□ **Rubber mobile pouch:** Be prepared for water splashes and colours with a waterproof mobile phone cover. The pouch is made up of silicon which will seal the gadget and make sure it is safe from every possible damage.

□ **Waterproof speakers:** Soundbot SB518 is a compact waterproof bluetooth speaker which comes with a suction cup at its back. With this, one can place the speaker even on the wall to enjoy the party. These come with a warranty period of one year and have a playback time of six hours with a good battery backup.

□ **Aviator sunglasses:** Do not forget to accessorise your look with a pair of trendy sunglasses. They will not only protect your eyes from the

scorching heat and colours, but add to the festive swag and keep up your style quotient.

□ **Power bank:** A power bank is a must-have for people who can't resist clicking pictures until their battery dies. Keep your electronic gadgets going and capture the lovely memories for a lifetime.

GO HERBAL, PLAY PHOOLON WALI/HOLI

Keeping in mind the increasing awareness about the toxic impact of commercial colours available in the market, why not go herbal and natural this time?

Without having to worry about allergies, blotches of colour that refuse to be washed away and other long-term health implications, this time, play Holi with flowers. There are also options in the market where colours made of flowers and other natural ingredients are used. Go natural and have a holi that is happy, colourful and safe.



Passion drove legendary Pandvani artist TEEJAN BAI to defy social norms

which dictated that women could not perform on stage, says AYUSHI SHARMA

Speekhe ki jab lalok aati hai toh aage Speekhe kuch nahi dikhta hai (If you have the passion to learn, all the hurdles become immaterial), says Padma awardee Teejan Bai and a renowned exponent of *Pandvani* — a folk art from Chhattisgarh which involves narrations and performances from the Indian epic *Mahabharata*.

Teejan Bai started performing since she was 13. Her journey was full of struggles yet she chose not to stop singing, which eventually paid off for her. She says, "I am the only source of this art because I have been strong throughout my journey."

What makes her journey special is that she pursued her passion against all odds. Teejan Bai narrates the struggles of her life and says, "I hail from Ganiyari (Chhattisgarh). I used to hear my *nana* (maternal grandfather) sing and I learnt the art from him. It came naturally to me. *Mujhe bola jata tha Pandvani gana ladkon ka kaam hai, ladkiyon ka nahi. Sab mujhe mana karte they* (I was told that only men could sing *Pandvani*, everyone forbade me from singing it.)" The mores of the time dictated that women shouldn't perform on stage. "My



mother used to punish me for singing because it was considered a taboo at that time. I never understood the actual reason behind it. Why can't a woman perform on stage? Just because of her gender or caste? I used to think, does all this really matter? I was told that if I continued doing it, we would be excommunicated by the society. *Uss*

zamaney mein aisa samajha jata tha ki jinke gharaana acha nahi hai, wahi aurtein gaati or nachti hai. But I felt, *bhagwaan ki katha to koi bhi gaa sakta hai, chahe chote ghar se ho yaa ladki jaat* (During that time, it was believed that women from good households do not sing or dance. But I felt that since it was the story about God, anyone could sing

Against all odds

it.) So I continued it. I didn't listen to my mother so I was thrown out of my house. I was very young then. My parents loved me, but they wanted me to give up on *Pandvani*, which I didn't do. I got married thrice. Even my in-laws used to say, *humein gaana gaanewali nahi, khaana bananewali chahiye* (we would want someone who could cook, rather than sing)," says she.

Recently Aaliya Nawazuddin Siddiqui (wife of Nawazuddin Siddiqui) and producer Manju Garhwal announced a biopic on the legendary artist.

Aaliya narrates that she came upon the idea as she always wants to make the biopic on her life. She says, "I have habit of listening to music on YouTube. And one day I was scrolling down and I came across *amma's* performance. It been almost five years now. I instantly got attracted towards her music and the way she was performing. It blew my mind. Through this movie I want to pay homage to her. *Amma* crossed so many hurdles in her life and here she is now as she kept her eyes on the stars and her feet on the ground. She is a true legend, everyone must know the story of her life. It will be inspiring."

Aaliya feels that there are many facets in her life that can be written about and that is why she wants Teejan

Bai's life to be immortalised lyrically by Gulzar *Sahab*. She strongly feels that this can be a story of every Indian woman.

She says that they are trying to approach Amitabh Bachchan for the role of her *nana* and probably Vidya Balan for the role of Teejan Bai.

"It is heartwarming to see her simplicity and honesty," adds Aaliya since Teejan Bai continues to enthral audiences, the world over, with her unique folk singing and her powerful voice.

But the legendary singer does not want the art to pass into oblivion with her so she is passing on her singing to the younger generation. "It is stalwarts like her who have kept our country's culture and art alive. You need to conserve what is yours. It hurts to see that today's generation might not even know about her," says Aaliya.

The recipient of many awards like the Padma Shri in 1987, Padma Bhushan in 2003, and Padma Vibhushan in 2019 by Government of India, besides 1995 Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Teejan naively admitted, "I didn't have the knowledge about these awards. They make me feel that I have been strong. (Padma Awards) until people told me what they meant."

Refusing to give in to tradition, Teejan Bai fought all the norms created by the society at a time when women barely had the right to speak up.



THANDAI PANNA COTTA

WHAT YOU NEED

- Heavy cream: 1 cup
- Whole milk: 1/2 cups
- Bay leaf: 1
- Pistachios: 2 tbsp
- Peeled almonds: 2 tbsp
- Fennel seeds powder: 1 tsp
- Large pinch freshly ground nutmeg
- Powdered gelatine: 2 tsp
- Salt: 1.2 tsp
- Freshly ground pepper

METHOD

- Combine cream, 1/2 cup milk and bring to a boil over medium low heat.
- When it starts to simmer, turn off the heat and let it infuse for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Combine 3/4 cup milk, pistachio, almonds and fennel powder in a blender and blitz until smooth. Put the remaining 1/4 cup milk in a small bowl, sprinkle the gelatine over the top and let it soften for about five minutes.
- Stir the gelatine and milk into the infused cream and gently reheat over at low flame, stirring continuously, until the gelatine is dissolved. Stir in the mixture and add salt and ground pepper to taste.
- Strain through a fine mesh sieve, pressing on the solids to get all the liquid, and pour into four ramekins.
- Refrigerate for a few hours until set. To unmold, dip the ramekins in a bowl of hot water for about 10 seconds and turn each *panna cotta* onto its own plate.

Courtesy: Chef Kayzad Sadri, Mahindra Holidays and Resort



ALMOND AND CHOCOLATE CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Sugar: 250 gm
- Almond slivers: 100 gm
- Butter: 400 gm
- Vanilla essence: 20 gm
- Almond powder: 200 gm
- Vanilla pod: 1 gm
- Salt: 10 gm
- Star anise, cinnamon powder: 20 gm
- Milk: 500 gm
- Cream: 300 gm
- Icing sugar: 400 gm
- Baking powder: 20 gm
- Brown sugar: 50 gm

METHOD

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Melt the butter to make it easier to break down. Place it in a mixing bowl of the food processor alongwith the sugar.
- Process until the mixture is combined smoothly. Add vanilla extract, process again, then break the eggs one at a time, processing again each time.
- Mix the almond slivers, baking powder, almond flour and process again.
- Add the remaining ingredients. Mix well and pour the mixture into the prepared pan, scraping the sides and bottom of the bowl with a rubber spatula.
- Bake for 50 minutes but start checking from 40.
- When the cake looks golden and a fine skewer comes out clean, remove from the oven and leave it on a cooling rack before turning it out.
- Serve with ice cream and chocolate sauce.

Courtesy: Alila Fort Bishangarh

MORE AVENUES FOR COMPANY SECRETARIES

The Officiating Secretary of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, **ASHOK KUMAR DIXIT**, believes that the company secretaries of today are multi-faceted, key managerial personnel. In an interview with **ANKITA SAXENA**, he shares how CS professionals are responsible for upholding good practices in an organisation

The profession of Company Secretaries (CS) has been seen as an important part of any organisation. **ASHOK KUMAR DIXIT** shares his views on the future of one of the most prestigious and sought after professions of the nation and the role of company secretaries in shaping the governance culture of the corporates of the country. Edited excerpts from the interview:

What does it take to be a company secretary?

There are two entry points into the profession — Foundation Programme for 10+2 pass students and the Executive Programme, wherein a graduate (except fine arts) is directly admitted to the Company Secretaryship Course of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI). The Foundation Programme is like a filter to determine the students who have the acumen to pursue the profession.

What is the reason for the low pass percentage in the Executive Programme?

It is important to understand that the role of a company secretary has evolved over the years and it is important to align the curriculum with the contemporary developments and the demands of the corporate. Today the CS is a key managerial personnel in an organisation and his/her role is no longer limited to taking minutes of a meeting or acting as an interface between the board and its stakeholders. Our focus is on raising the standard and benchmarks for the profession. Thus, this course requires rigorous efforts to meet the tough standards which act as the litmus test to determine the deserving candidates for the high-stake and responsible role that the CS has to play in an organisation. The students need to understand that analysis and application skills, as envisaged in the curriculum and evaluation methodology, is the way forward.

What other courses are available apart from the Foundation and the Executive Programme?

We have a host of Certification and Post Membership Qualification (PMQ) courses. Those persons who are already company secretaries can enroll for the PMQ course in Corporate Governance. The Certificate Courses have been launched on varied topics such as GST, Internal Audit and CSR. The response to the Certificate Courses has been



quite encouraging. We also have memorandum of understanding (MOU) with universities which recognise CS qualification to pursue Ph.D or post-graduation after the students become a member of the ICSI.

What are the initiatives taken by the ICSI to regulate and develop the profession?

The Company Secretaries Act, 1980 and the Regulations framed thereunder, lay down a strong foundation for the regulation and development of the profession. The Council of the Institute from time to time is issuing various guidelines to regulate the members and build their capacities in the profession. The guidelines provide for mandatory attendance at learning programmes, dress code to be followed by company secretaries, peer review by fellow professionals, advertising of professional services, and so on. There are three entities working within ICSI which regulate and carry out activities towards development of the profession of company secretaries.

The ICSI has formed a Section 8 (Companies Act, 2013) company, ICSI Institute of Insolvency Professional (ICSI IIP), which is registered as an Insolvency Professional Agency with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), which has around 800

WE HONOUR THE CONTRIBUTION OF OUR GUESTS BY PRESENTING THEM WITH 'SHAHEED KI BETI' CERTIFICATE. THE AMOUNT SAVED BY ICSI ON ACCOUNT OF A MEMENTO IS GIVEN TO THE DEFENCE MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION OF DAUGHTERS OF MARTYRS

members on its roll. The ICSI IIP educates, develops, trains and monitors the insolvency professionals enrolled with it and has disciplinary mechanism to regulate them. The portfolio of members enrolled with ICSI IIP include, company secretaries, chartered accountants, advocates, cost accountants, bankers, management professionals among others. The members enrolled with ICSI IIP are handling corporate insolvency resolution process, liquidation, voluntary liquidations under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

ICSI also has another Section 8 (Companies Act, 2013) company, called ICSI Registered Valuers Organisation (ICSI RVO), registered with the IBBI, with the objective of educating, regulating and monitoring the discipline of Registered Valuers. Any professional possessing the qualification of CS/CA/CMA/MBA, with three years of post-qualification experience, is eligible to conduct the valuation of 'Securities or Financial Assets'. The requirement of Registered Valuers has enhanced professional opportunities for both the company secretaries and other professionals as well. In terms of the provisions of Section 247 of the Companies Act, 2013, where a valuation is required to be made in respect of any property, stocks, shares, debentures, securities or goodwill or any other assets or net worth of a company or its liabilities under the provision of this Act, it shall be valued by a Registered Valuer. The ICSI RVO conducts 50 hours' Educational Course according to the syllabus notified by the IBBI, which is a pre-requisite for appearing in the entrance examination conducted by IBBI.

Apart from this, the ICSI has set up the Governance Research and Knowledge Foundation (GRKF), which undertakes research and development activities. There is another entity known as the ICSI Centre for Corporate Governance, Research and Training (CCGRT) at Navi Mumbai, which is dedicated to research and training in the field of economics, taxation, capital markets and so on. The Institute has recently set up a Centre of Excellence in Hyderabad.

How the Regional Councils and Chapters contributing to the growth of ICSI?

Under the Company Secretaries Act, 1980, the ICSI has been mandated with the development and growth of the profession of company secretaries. The chapters are playing a major role in achieving this objective. As of now, we have 70 chapters in almost all major cities and state capitals and four Regional Councils in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. Though it is a distance learning course, the chapters are providing class room teaching, library facilities, personality development and grooming workshops, on-spot career counselling and other training facilities to the students, to help them in their studies at a subsidised or

minimal cost. The chapters work to facilitate the students and the members across the country and function as an interface between them and the Headquarter. They are responsible for conducting seminars and training programmes at the city and district levels to make education more inclusive. It is important to note that we have a scheme for the students in Jammu and Kashmir and the North East region, where a concession in fee is permissible in comparison to other cities, to facilitate students of these places to pursue this course.

What are the international recognition programmes available for the members of ICSI?

We have an MOU with ICSA-UK which works on a reciprocal arrangement. The company secretaries, after passing few of the papers of ICSA-UK, become eligible to obtain the membership of ICSA-UK. The arrangement enhances overseas employability of the members and reciprocally opens the gates for professionals who are members of the UK counterpart for employment in India. UK-NARIC or the National Recognition and Information Centre of UK has now recognised members of ICSI in UK and Dubai. The CS Executive Programme pass candidate of ICSI is equivalent to the graduate in UK and Dubai and the CS Professional Programme pass candidate of ICSI is equivalent to the post graduate in UK and Dubai, according to this recognition programme.

What according to you are the best practices in corporate governance that India should follow?

I believe that absolute disclosure, transparency and ethical business practices should be the key focus for any organisation. I feel that out of these, transparency is the prerequisite.

What are some of the CSR initiatives?

We have taken an innovative initiative called 'Shaheed Ki Beti'. When we invite dignitaries or guests to address the students or the members for seminars or to take an industry relevant lecture, rather than presenting them a memento, we honour their contribution by presenting them a 'Shaheed Ki Beti' Certificate. The amount saved by the institute on account of the memento is given to the Defence Ministry for education of daughters of the martyrs.

Reproductive rights need to be prioritised

Timely investments in family planning would better equip women to study, work and plan better families, eventually benefiting the nation and economy, believes Poonam Muttreja

A confident Nirma Devi from Gaya, Bihar, says "We use condoms in our house." Her transformation from a diminutive girl, married off early, to the present, fervent advocate of family planning (FP), is exemplary. She represents women of today, ready to break away from societal pressures.



Indian women have had a metamorphic journey since independence, with transformative improvements in education and employment. Challenges, however, persist, a number of which can be overcome by giving women control over their own bodies and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) decisions. India's complex social fabric gives women little freedom over fertility decisions. There is a clear disconnect between the desired fertility rate among women (1.8 as per the fourth National Family Health Survey), as against the total fertility rate (TFR) of 2.2. Furthermore, there are wide disparities in TFR across the nation, ranging from 3.4 in Bihar to 1.2 in Sikkim.

Family planning (FP) has proven to impact all Sustainable Development Goals. Timely investments in FP would allow women to complete their education, enter the workforce and plan families—eventually benefiting the nation and the economy. While FP programmes must ensure women have access to SRH services, their success depends on several factors like quality of care, adequate infrastructure, counseling services, positive provider attitudes and so on.

Elucidating the potential benefits of investing in FP, findings from a study by the Population Foundation of India titled 'Cost of Inaction in Family Planning in India: An Analysis of Health and Economic Implications', states that India can prevent up to 2.9 million infant deaths, 1.2 million maternal deaths, 206 million unsafe abortions, and 69

million additional births by 2031 if FP programmes are prioritised. There can also be an additional 13 per cent increase in India's per capita GDP. These findings echo a 2013-14 estimate by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), which stated that if unmet need for FP is addressed in the next five years, India could avert 35,000 maternal and 12 lakh infant deaths. The provision of safe abortion services, together with FP services, could save the economy approximately ₹6,500 crore during this period.

There are 80 million teenage girls in India today and the country's progress rests as much on its young girls as on its young boys. With 65 per cent of the population under the age of 35, policymakers must view this population momentum as an asset. Strong social commitment and political will are needed to overcome structural barriers impeding the progress of women and girls. The national population debate needs to relocate its emphasis from only reducing numbers to empowering people, especially women. The ambitious Ayushman Bharat programme aims to leave no one behind and the government must ensure that SRH of women and girls are put on priority.

(The author is executive director of the Population Foundation of India.)

Leadership styles between genders

As an employee of a bank in The Netherlands where, within the department of building Credit Risk Models, the pressure to work with regulatory banking deadline is immense. With a high-powered set up, there is a constant need to be on one's toes, be high paced, extremely driven and sometimes willing to put in more number of hours than stipulated in the employment contract.

Within this setup, I have observed differences in the management and leadership styles of men and women. I have noticed that men, on an average, showcase more confidence on taking

studies to show that a woman who explains why she is qualified or mentions previous successes in a job interview, can lower her chances of getting hired. The studies showcase that they generally come across as being more arrogant for taking claim of their successes. From personal experience, I was able to identify these differences in behaviours and perceptions. This kind of 'owning of successes' was typical of the male lead consultant on our project, despite him having fewer numbers of years of experience than anyone on the team. However, it was interesting to note that when his counterpart, a female lead who had more years of experience than him was leaving the project with a higher contribution from her end and a lesser display of her contributions, she gave more credit to the team for contributing in her success than she gave herself.

I feel that it is commonplace to notice that women are not so 'out there' as men are. Part of the reason for this behavioural difference is the way boys and girls are raised. In a study conducted by Duke University, it was seen that parents usually instructed their daughters to be careful, 'not do this or that', imploring them to be safe and not be adventurous. In contrast, from a very early age, boys are encouraged to take charge and offer their opinions. They are told to be adventurous and raised to be 'go-getters.' This is how young women internalise societal cues about what defines 'appropriate' behaviour and in turn silence themselves. This is palpable in meetings and discussions and can negatively or adversely affect their careers.

(The author is Malika Davar. The views expressed are personal)

Sheryl Sandberg in her book 'Lean In', suggests that owning one's success is the key to achieving more success. Professional advancement depends upon people believing that an employee is contributing to good results. Men can comfortably claim credit for what they do as long as they don't veer into arrogance. For women, taking credit comes at a real social and professional cost. In fact, there have been



The National Physique Committee (NPC) USA and the All India Bodybuilding and Fitness Sports Federation (AIBF), organised the first AIBF-NPC Shawn Ray India Classic Bodybuilding and Fitness Championship 2019 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi, recently. The AIBF is working persistently for the upliftment of the standards in the sport in India.



A 13-floor Hostel Block named after the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and a 5-floor Administrative Block named in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, was recently inaugurated by the MD and CEO of Indian Bank, Padmaja Chunduru, at the Vellore Institute of Technology, in the presence of the founder and chancellor of VIT, Dr G Viswanathan.

IoT ENABLED GARBAGE BINS



The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), has launched Smart Garbage Bins made of SALEM stainless steel in Delhi, which will be able to send signals to the collection vehicle about the 'fill-up' position. A Smart Garbage Station will be set up at Bhikaji Cama Place in Delhi, which is being developed by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC).

The smart stations will be equipped with a RCC pit in which the environment friendly stainless steel bins will be placed. There will be separate bins for recyclable and non-

recyclable wastes. Since the bins will be placed under ground, the pit will be covered with a cover, fabricated out of stainless steel, slip free sheets. Suitable openings will be kept on the pit cover through which the sanitation crew can dump the collected garbage into the stainless steel bins. It is planned to have IOT (Internet of Things) enabled Gazelle sensors on the pit cover which will transmit the signals to the collection vehicle about the 'fill-up' position. The compactor will lift the stainless steel bins from the underground pits and empty the garbage into the compactor vehicle.

AAHAR concludes on a high note

After drawing over 43,000 business visitors and delegates from India and abroad, the 34th edition of AAHAR, a specialised international food and hospitality event of India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) and apex industry bodies concluded on a successful note at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, recently. Almost all 560 participants from India and abroad expressed their satisfaction over the business response, tie-ups, networking and joint ventures in the fair. Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Joint Secretary and Pravin Bonigala, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India and Deepak Kumar, Executive Director, ITPO, jointly presented the Awards for Excellence in display in different categories which included F&B Equipment, Food and Processed Food, Hospitality and Décor Solutions and Foreign sector.

NBT- CUJ to organise book publishing course from March 25-31

The National Book Trust (NBT) India is organising a job-oriented book publishing course in association with the Central University of Jammu at Samba, from March 25-31, under the skill development initiatives. Graduates in any discipline are eligible to register for the course. The details of the course are available on NBT's website-www.nbtindia.gov.in. The chairman of NBT India, Prof Govind Prasad Sharma, and the vice chancellor of the Central University of Jammu, Prof Ashok Aima, will grace the inaugural function on March 25.

TOXIC FUNGI DETECTED IN CEREALS

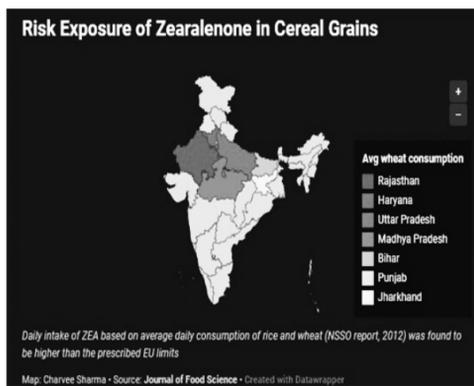
Researchers from the Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (IITR) have detected the presence of a toxin—'zearalenone' in 84 per cent of the cereals tested in Uttar Pradesh, says **CHARVEE SHARMA**

Zearalenone is a toxin produced by soil fungi which behaves like an endocrine disruptor in humans. This means that this fungus can possibly lead to hormonal imbalances, birth defects and other developmental disorders. Various studies have also indicated signs of early puberty in girls on exposure to high intake of this toxin.

The findings of this research published in the 'Journal of Food Science' present a quantitative assessment of zearalenone contamination in cereals based on their daily consumption values. The experiment was carried on 117 unbranded samples of corn, wheat, rice and oats in Uttar Pradesh. After analysing the average cereal consumed, the daily intake of zearalenone in rice was found to be 17 times higher than the prescribed limit by the European Food Safety Authority Standards (EFSA). In case of wheat samples, the daily intake of zearalenone was seven times higher than EFSA limits.

In India, regulatory mechanisms are in place to control the contamination of fungal toxins which have previously led to disease outbreaks in humans and animals, including aflatoxins, which affects nuts, deoxynivalenol and ergot, which infests cereal grains. Last year, 56 cows were found dead after grazing on post harvest cuttings of maize, which was later found to be contaminated by aflatoxins in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

Being a tropical country, the warm and humid climate of India inherently provides favourable conditions for mould infestation to develop in food crops. Hot weather also complements the nature of zearalenone, which can endure very high tem-



THE SPORES OF ZEARELENONE ARE PERMEATING, WHICH MAKES ALL CEREALS VULNERABLE TO THE INVASION AND INFESTATION

peratures. Zearalenone starts to accumulate as storage protein in the cereal grains during the storing, milling and other high temperature processing.

The important fact to note about zearalenone is that the spores of this fungus are permeating, which makes all cereal grain vulnerable to invasion and infestation. Geographical factors and environmental conditions such as erratic rain and high moisture makes fungal infection thrive in standing crops as well as stored food grains in warehouses, after harvest. "In the absence of any regulatory limits,

the Indian population is at a greater risk of zearalenone exposure by consuming highly contaminated cereals," says Mukul Das, a senior toxicologist who designed the study. When asked about the presence of zearalenone in food grain, consumers in local market of Delhi said that they were now simply apprehensive about the food they are consuming.

While the research was conducted on cereal samples in Uttar Pradesh, the presence of this toxic fungus has indicated a potential risk for the Indian population. However, there is a need of further examination and quantitative analysis at the national level.

Considering the fact that about 80 per cent of the Indian population consumes wheat and rice as their staple food, the exposure risk assessment of zearalenone serves as an important revelation for ensuring food safety. This also calls for immediate regulatory framework by the FSSAI to prescribe limits for zearalenone.

(The author is an engineer.)

INDIA MAUL B'DESH 4-0

Indumathi's brace and injury-time strike by Manisha help India to secure a resounding win

PTI ■ BIRATNAGAR

Four-time defending champions India stormed into the final of the SAFF Women's football championship with a resounding 4-0 win over Bangladesh here on Wednesday. Dalima Chhibber opened the scoring for India, which was followed by a brace from Indumathi Kathiresan and an injury-time strike by Manisha as the defending champions took their tally to 15 goals in three matches in the tournament at the Sahid Rangashala Stadium.

The match began with both teams going hard from the first whistle as Bangladesh looked to make the most of their physical prowess and pressed the Indian defenders with rigorous pace.

The Indian centre-back duo of Ashalata and Sweeti Devi, however, stood tall and denied the opposition forwards any sniff at goal.

After a tense start, the Indians found their foothold and in the 18th minute, Sanju curled in an excellent delivery from the left that fell to Dalima inside the box and the right-back made no mistake as she placed the ball into the back of the net.

The tempo of the match went up a notch after the opener, with both sides creating good scoring



Indian players celebrate after winning the match 4-0, (right) Indian players in action during the match



IndianFootballTeam

chances.

Bangladesh centre-back Mosammat Khatun skied an effort from close range while Sanju was

denied by the rival custodian in a one-on-one situation in quick succession. India scored their second goal

in the 23rd minute through midfielder Indumathi, who showed excellent composure to slot the ball past the keeper after being played

through with a delightful reverse through-ball from Sanju. Bangladesh then looked to hit back, trying their luck from dis-

tance, only to be denied by a confident Aditi Chauhan in goal.

India, who scored 11 goals in their first two matches of the tournament, showed their prowess with a classic counter-attack goal in the 37th minute to triple their lead.

Dalima played the ball out from the right after an attack from Bangladesh and in no time, Sanju and Sandhiya combined well to put through Indumathi once again, who found the net with a well-placed finish for her second strike of the day.

After the change of ends, it was India that started out stronger and controlled most of the possession.

Sanju and Dangmei Grace

were a handful for the Bangladesh defence down the flanks and it was the latter who came close to scoring at the hour mark but saw her shot sail past across the goal.

Coach Maymol Rocky brought on Anju Tamang and Manisha in place of Ratanbala Devi and Grace respectively, and both substitutes produced impactful performances as soon as they came on.

In the dying minutes of the game, Manisha pounced on a loose ball inside the box, rounded the keeper and scored her first goal.

It was her first goal of the tournament which helped in making the scoreline 4-0 and in favour of India.

India will take on hosts Nepal in the summit clash on Friday.

SINGLES

KYNAN, PRITHVIRAJ FAIL TO QUALIFY FOR FINAL

ACAPULCO: Kyan Chenai and Prithviraj Tondaiman shot 123 and 121 respectively out of a possible 125 but failed to make it to the final round of the men's trap event at the Shotgun World Cup. Australian James Willet won Gold in the event. Kyan shot 24 in the last qualification round, which put him in a six-way shoot-off for the sixth and final qualification spot. He became the second to bow out in the shoot-off finishing 10th while teammate Prithviraj despite three rounds of a perfect 25, finished 35th.

INDIA LOSE 2-3 TO SINGAPORE

HONG KONG: HS Pranroy and men's doubles pair of MR Arjun and Shlok Ramchandran put up superb performances but couldn't stop Singapore from eking out a narrow 3-2 win over India in a group B match of the Asia Mixed Team Championships here on Wednesday. India didn't have a good start to the five-match tie as mixed doubles pair of MR Arjun and Rutaparna Panda lost 16-21, 13-21 to Singapore's Danny Bawa Chrisnanta and Tan Wei Han in the opening match. However, 2018 Asian Championships Bronze medallist Pranroy brought India back in the contest, securing a 21-8, 12-21, 21-17 win over Thailand Masters champion Kean Yew Loh in the men's singles. After Pranroy levelled the tie, Arjun and Shlok put India ahead with a strong 21-16, 21-18 victory over Loh Kean Hean and Chrisnanta. The onus to wrap up the tie then fall on the young shoulders of Assamese wonderkid Ashmita Chaliha. The National Championships Bronze medallist fought bravely before going down 21-17, 12-21, 16-21 to World No 32 Yeo Jia Min in a thrilling women's singles match.

TOKYO UNVEILS OLYMPIC TORCH

TOKYO: Organisers of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics on Wednesday unveiled a cherry-blossom shaped torch for the Games as the city prepares for the famed flower season to begin in coming days. The top part of the torch is shaped in the traditional emblem of the sakura, or cherry blossom using the same cutting-edge technology as in production of Japan's bullet trains, the organisers said. The shiny rose-gold torch, which is 71 centimetres (28 inches) long and weighs 1.2 kilograms (2 pounds 10 ounces), uses aluminium construction waste from temporary housing built for victims of the 2011 quake and tsunami. "Cherry blossoms drawn by kids in the disaster-hit area (in Fukushima) inspired me," designer Tokujin Yoshioka, whose works are known internationally, told reporters. Fukushima was chosen as the starting point for the Olympic torch relay. The passing of the flame is scheduled to start on March 26, 2020, and the torch will head south to the sub-tropical island of Okinawa — the starting point for the 1964 Tokyo Games relay — before returning north and arriving in the Japanese capital on July 10.

REUS TO END HIS CAREER AT DORTMUND

DORTMUND: Borussia Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc has said that talisman Marco Reus will stay at the club until the end of his career. "Marco is someone who identifies with the club and has strong roots in Dortmund," Zorc told *Sport Bild* on Wednesday. "I can't imagine that he will ever play for another club." Reus, 29, scored a late winner against Hertha Berlin last Saturday to keep Dortmund level on points with Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich. One of the more experienced players in Dortmund's young squad, the Germany international is set to play a key role as the title race enters the decisive phase. On Wednesday, *Bild* reported that Reus had delivered a rousing speech to the team in the wake of Dortmund's Champions League defeat to Tottenham Hotspur, and Zorc lavished praise on his captain's leadership qualities.

CASILLAS PROLONGS PORTO STAY

LISBON: Spain's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Iker Casillas has extended his contract with Porto to 2020, the Portuguese champions announced on Wednesday. The prolonged deal for Casillas, who turns 38 in May, also includes an option for a further year, according to club president Jorge Pinto da Costa. "It's not easy to count on someone who's almost 38 years old," said Casillas. "I'm grateful for the confidence shown in me and hope to finish my career at a club where I feel at home." Earlier in the week Casillas, who also captained Spain to European Championship titles in 2008 and 2012, said he would like to keep on playing until he is 40. Pinto da Costa hinted that could be a possibility, telling reporters: "I'm convinced that it's not the last contract for Casillas with us." The former Real Madrid star has made 149 appearances for Porto since arriving at the club in 2015, and helped Porto end Benfica's four-year title reign last season.

Agencies

India hope to break qualification jinx in Tashkent



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will aim for a maiden appearance in the final round of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers when they begin their campaign at the continental football tournament, starting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on March 22.

India have never made it to the final round of the AFC U23 Championship until now and in Tashkent too, the road looks tough as they have been clubbed along side defending champions Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

India U-23 team head coach Derrick Pereira named 10 19-year-olds and even a 16-year-old in the squad.

"We should be excited about the possibility of making history," quipped Pereira.

"We need to find the right combination and fight with the correct spirit."

Pereira further went on to stress the importance of the friendly that India played against Qatar.

"This is why the friendly against Qatar was so helpful. They are a technically accomplished side, and we showed that we can perform well against such teams," he said.

"In our group, Uzbekistan is the team that has the acumen for such style of football, and judging by our last game, I think we can stand our ground against them."

India had controlled large share of possession against Qatar, whose senior team had clinched the AFC Asian Cup title, earlier this year.

Although the Blue Colts created a lot of opportunities, they failed to utilise their chances, which is something that Pereira has been working on.

However, the 57-year-old believes

that finishing is not the sole responsibility of his attackers.

"Scoring is not the only responsibility of my strikers. The whole team should work together to create opportunities. Whoever gets the chance, in the end, needs to keep calm and finish it, but the main emphasis is on teamwork," he said.

India U-23 squad:
Goalkeepers: Dheeraj Singh, Prabhsukhan Gill, Md Nawaz.

Defenders: Narendar, Nishu Kumar, Sarthak Golui, Gaurav Bora, Mehtab Singh, Anwar Ali, Asish Rai.

Midfielders: Jerry Mawihmingthanga, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Vinit Rai, Sahal Abdul, Amarjit Singh, Rohit Kumar, Anirudh Thapa, Komal Thatal, Rahul KP.

Forwards: Liston Coloco, Daniel Lalhlimpua, Rahim Ali, Rohit Danu.

Neeraj, Hima named in Asian C'ships team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra was on Wednesday named to lead a 39-member Indian athletics team for next month's Asian Championships in Doha, with sprint sensation Hima Das also making the cut in 400m despite her recent below-par show.

National record holders, Mohd. Anas (400m), Jinson Johnson (800m and 1500m), Dharun Ayyasamy (400m hurdles), Avinash Sable (3000m steeple-chase), Tajinder Pal Singh Toor (shot put), Dutte Chand (200m) and Annu Rani (javelin throw) were also among those named in the team.

Tejaswin Shankar (high jump) and M Shreshankar (long jump) — both national record holders — were left out of the team for different reasons while seasoned campaigners Seema Antil (discus throw) and Arpinder Singh (triple jump) opted out of the continental showpiece to focus on the World Championships later this year.

Sanjivani Jadhav, who recently returned positive for a specified substance, was also named in the team for 10,000m race subject to clearance by the NADA.

The 22-year-old Jadhav was not handed a provisional suspension by the NADA and she won the 10,000m Gold in the just-concluded Federation Cup which served as the selection trials for the April 19-24 continental showpiece.

The 21-year-old Neeraj, who won Gold in 2017 edition, was given exemption by the Athletics Federation of India from taking part in the Federation Cup. He is currently training in South Africa.

Hima, on the other hand, took a break of one month from training at the national camp to appear for her 12th class examinations in Assam and that



showed in her performance in the Indian Grand Prix series and the Federation Cup in Patiala.

In the third leg of the Indian GP in Sangrur on March 2, Hima finished fourth in the quartermile event with a time of 55.19 seconds, the worst of her nascent career.

The 19-year-old reigning world junior champion, who holds the national record of 50.79, won the Gold in the Federation Cup on March 18 but with a modest time of 52.88 seconds. She ran below the Asian Championships qualifying standard of 52.75 set by the AFI.

"She had a break as she had her exams. She is young and what is crucial at this stage is to conserve her. The biggest stress for Galina (400m coach) is how to conserve Hima so that she can do some great stuff in 2024 Olympics," AFI President Adille Sumariwalla said on the inclusion of Hima in the team.

SAINA WITHDRAWS FROM INDIAN OPEN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Acute shuttler Saina Nehwal Wednesday pulled out of the Indian Open BWF World Tour Super 500 which begins here on Tuesday, after failing to recover from an acute gastroenteritis problem.

Saina, who turned 29 last Monday, had played through pain during the All England Championships after suffering from an acute gastroenteritis and mild pancreatitis ahead of the tournament.

She was forced to withdraw from Swiss Open last week and was admitted to hospital for treatment.

On Wednesday, Saina informed Badminton Association of India (BAI) about her decision to withdraw from the USD 350,000 tournament on medical grounds.

"She has not been well since the All England Championship. She sent the letter to withdraw citing stomach pain," a BAI official told PTI on condition of anonymity.

Last week, Saina, who had reached the quarter-finals of the All England Championship, had broken the news that she was advised to get admitted to get treated for her illness.

"So some sad news was really going through acute stomach pain from last Monday... Managed to play few matches in All England with lot of pain ... Decided to skip Swiss open and come back to India and find out the issue," she had written in her social media account.



"... And I found out it's acute gastroenteritis with mild pancreatitis and the doctors have recommended me to get admitted and hopefully I recover soon out of it."

Saina had won the India Open women's singles title in 2015. Olympic silver medallist and former champion P V Sindhu will now be India's only title contender in women's singles.

Amit Panghal in boxing team for Asian C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian Games Gold-medallist Amit Panghal will be making his competitive debut in the 52kg category while Shiva Thapa (60kg) will eye a record-breaking fourth successive medal after the duo found a place in the Indian men's boxing team for the Asian Championships, next month.

The Asian Championships are scheduled to be held in the Thai capital of Bangkok from April 19 to 28.

Panghal won a second successive 49kg category Gold medal at the prestigious Strandja Memorial Tournament in Bulgaria last month and trained in his new weight division in Germany earlier this month.

The Haryana-boxer has been forced to shift divisions after the 49kg category was dropped from the 2020 Olympic programme.

Thapa also started the new season on a positive note with a Silver medal at the GeeBee Tournament in Finland this month.

The former world championship Bronze-medallist from Assam has won medals in three previous editions of the Asian showpiece event — Gold in 2013,



Bronze in 2015 and Silver in 2017.

"The boxers who win Gold or Silver medals at the Asian Championships in the Olympic weight categories will be our automatic choices for the world championships later this year," national coach C A Kuttappa told PTI.

The 49kg category will be represented by national champion Deepak Singh, who clinched a Gold medal in the Makran Cup in Iran earlier this month.

Kavinder Singh Bisht, the Gold-winner in the GeeBee

Tournament, has been picked for the 56kg category, while Commonwealth Games Silver-medallist and Satish Kumar was expectedly the choice for the +91kg division. Satish won a Bronze medal at the 2015 Asian Championships.

The World Championships, to be held from September 7 to 21 in Yekaterinburg, Russia in September, will be conducted in the new Olympic weight categories as the event will double up as a qualifier for the 2020 Games in Tokyo.

The other weights to have been dropped from the Olympic roster, apart from the 49kg division, are 56kg, 60kg and 64kg. In their place, the International Boxing Association (AIBA) has brought back 57kg and introduced the 63kg division.

Due to the re-jigging, the 60kg category boxers such as Thapa and Commonwealth Games Silver-medallist Manish Kumar will be moving to the 63kg division.

"That is why, the world championship selection in the 63kg category will be done on the basis of probably trials and an assessment of their sparring performance in the camp," Kuttappa said.

'INDIA IS AMONG THE FAVOURITES FOR WC'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former captain and India A team coach Rahul Dravid Wednesday said there cannot be a one-size-fits-all policy on workload management and players are smart enough to know where to draw the line.

Wading into the ongoing debate on how the players should manage their workload in the IPL, starting March 23, followed by the ODI World Cup in England in May, Dravid said in most cases cricketers know how to handle themselves.

"Most players are smart about these things. They know how to handle their body. I don't think the players would put their body on the line. I was reading Patrick Cummins (Australia pacer) saying that he feels better bowling when he is constantly playing rather than resting and coming back," Dravid said.

"So to each player, it's different. There cannot be a blanket case that all should be rested. We have to just trust the players. They know what needs to be done," he added.

He was speaking at the launch of ESPN Cricinfo's new metrics, Superstats, along with former India teammate Sanjay Manjrekar here.

Manjrekar was even more forthright in his views on the matter and said the Cricket Board should not put pressure on IPL franchises to rest players in view of the World Cup, starting May 30.

"My views won't be appreciated. This is free enterprise. IPL is capitalism at its best. I don't think there should be any outside interference. It should be up to the franchises.

"Don't think there should be pressure (on IPL franchises) from the Cricket Board (BCCI) (to rest some players)," the former Test batsman-turned-commentator remarked.

Reflecting on India's World Cup chances, Dravid said the 2-3 home ODI



series loss to Australia recently could end up helping the cause of Virat Kohli and his men when they play in the World Cup.

"I think there was a bit of notion that we are going walk there and win

the World Cup easily. So it's a good thing that has happened. What it has (the outcome against Australia) has reminded us is that we have to play the World Cup very, very well," said Dravid.



India has performed well in the last couple of years. There was a little bit of talk that we are almost going to win the World Cup very easily because we are the No 1 team

— Rahul Dravid

last couple of years. There was a little bit of talk that we are almost going to walk in there and win the World Cup very easily because we are the No 1 team and we have been dominating one-day cricket for the last couple of years.

"But I don't find anything strange, from my perspective, watching the series. I still feel that we are going to be one of the favourites. But it's going to be tough. It's going to be competitive," the batting stalwart explained.



Dhoni will mostly bat at No 4, says Fleming

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Indian team management has slotted Mahendra Singh Dhoni as a potential number five in their line-up moving into the World Cup but at Chennai Super Kings, their skipper will be batting a notch higher at No 4, said coach Stephen Fleming.

Dhoni, who will be leading the defending champions for the 10th year, would be used as a floater if required but Kedar Jadhav's presence makes it easier to fix the slots.

"Dhoni batted pretty much (at) No. 4 last year but we do use him in a little bit of a flexible role, so that won't change," Fleming said at the media conference organised by CSK.

"His (Dhoni's) form has been outstanding in the past 10 months. We have a new player as well (Kedar Jadhav) which is great. So, we're really happy with the (batting) order and the thoughts around that," Fleming told reporters at an event to launch CSK merchandise here.

Kedar played the first match of the last season before a hamstring tear kept him out for nearly six months.

CSK is a team that's core is formed with players in their mid or late 30's but Fleming

points out at the mindset, which made all the difference.

He alluded the team's memorable triumph on the comeback last year to mindset, (team) environment and culture apart from winning the big moments to a question on CSK's balance compared to other teams.

"We tend not to do it (compare). Because if you start looking at other teams, you're trapped away from what's good or bad of your own. There's enough great players with each side, so it comes down to mindset, team environment and culture and winning big moments," Fleming said.

He spoke about how the team won the crucial moments which proved to be decisive in the end.

"Last year, we just won big moments. We're just big on team culture and empowering the players to make decisions and win big moments. And last year was a snapshot of that."

"Even though the 'young' man (34-year-old Kedar Jadhav) was only with us for one game, he played a huge part in winning that game with Bravo. And Faf du Plessis and Watson at the end. And the usual suspects like Dhoni and Raina."

My workload is all about managing my bowling: Jadhav

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India all-rounder Kedar Jadhav on Wednesday said he will have to manage his bowling to remain fit during the two-month long Indian Premier League, amid concerns around players' workload ahead of the upcoming World Cup.

"My workload, I think, is about managing my bowling. In Chennai Super Kings, I don't think I need to bowl as much as I do in the Indian team," said Jadhav, who is expected to share the responsibility of the fifth bowler during the World Cup starting on May 30.

"We all are professional cricketers and we know how to manage our bodies. How you recover after every IPL game really matters during this two-month period. You can't just improve in one training session."

Jadhav said it was up to individuals to handle the situation and the players need to work in tandem with the Indian team's trainers and physios as well as that of IPL franchises.

"Obviously, it's up to the individuals and we are smart enough to handle the situation. We will work in tandem with trainers and physios of Indian team as well as the franchisees," he said.



"We have got some notes (from the Indian trainers and physios) and we have to follow them."

Jadhav, who was ruled out of last year's IPL after the opening match owing to a hamstring injury, said it is every cricketer's dream to play in a World Cup, but for now his focus will be on giving his best for the Chennai outfit.

"Basically every cricketer who plays for India it's a dream for him to feature in a World Cup team, and I'm no different to that," Jadhav said.

Dhoni understands match situations better: Kuldeep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian spinner Kuldeep Yadav says Mahendra Singh Dhoni's understanding of match situations beats that of the bowlers and the former captain's presence behind the stumps makes his job easy.

Yadav, who is quite vocal in his admiration for Dhoni, said he feels lucky to play alongside the iconic keeper-batsman, who led India to two world titles.

"He always guides us bowlers, whenever he feels the need to get his message across he does

it. When the wicketkeeper supports you like that, it becomes easier for the bowler," Yadav was quoted as saying by India Today's YouTube channel 'Sports Tak'.

"A lot of times, the bowler is not able to understand the situation but the wicketkeeper understands it better. Mahi bhai is just like that."

"He has so much experience. He tells gives us small details and even when he doesn't, I make sure to ask him for guidance. Chahal and I feel very lucky to be playing with him. Bowling becomes easier with Mahi bhai behind the stumps," he added.

Speaking on India's chances at the World Cup in England, starting May 30, Yadav said the 2011 champions are in with a great opportunity but he also expects teams like England and Pakistan to do well.

"We definitely have the chance to bring the World Cup home. But I feel England has a strong batting line-up as compared to the other teams. They will be playing in home conditions."

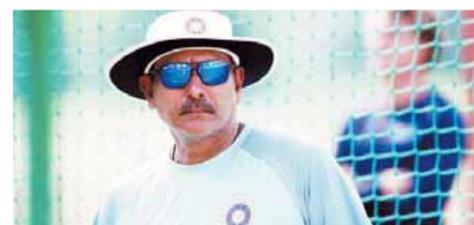
"I think Pakistan will also perform well in the World Cup looking at the way they have been performing. So I think England and Pakistan will be the ones to watch out for," Yadav said.

The left-arm spinner also lauded India's pace attack.

"We have a very good combination of bowlers in the side now. We train together and back each other which is the biggest plus point," Yadav said.

On current captain Virat Kohli, Yadav said, "Virat bhai always backs us. He understands our bowling styles be it spinners or fast bowlers. He is a very attacking captain."

"It feels good as a spinner because then we get to take wickets regularly. He supports not only me and Chahal but all the other youngsters in the team," he added.



Shastri's contract doesn't have extension clause: BCCI official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ravi Shastri remains favourite to continue as the Indian cricket team's head coach after the World Cup but the BCCI will be forced to restart the process as the former India all-rounder's service contract doesn't have an extension or renewal clause.

Unlike most of the big football or NBA clubs, who have a renewal or an extension clause for their coaches, the BCCI, from Anil Kumble's time as chief coach, never had that particular clause.

"From Anil Kumble's time, the service contract of the coaches and support staff doesn't have an extension or renewal clause. Therefore, even if India win the World Cup under Shastri's coaching, he will have to come through the fresh recruitment process even though he will be a direct entry into the shortlisted panel as current coach," a senior BCCI official, privy to the development, told PTI on condition of anonymity.

The official said that the BCCI needs to follow the due process of putting up an advertisement on its website for filling up the various positions of support staff in the senior India line-up.

"Shastri, Sanjay Bangar (batting coach), Bharat Arun (bowling coach) and R Sridhar (fielding coach), their contracts will end with India's last match in the World Cup. With only 14 days left for the inaugural World Test Championship matches against the West Indies, we need to complete the process in due time. But everything will happen after the World Cup," he said.

The official also indicated that there is very little chance of Shastri being replaced if the team reaches at least the semi-final since under his tutelage, India have beaten Australia in a Test series Down Under for the first time in 71 years and also won ODI series in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

It has also been learnt that this year, the mini-IPL for women will role with three teams and four games on a round-robin basis. Last year, one exhibition match was held.

"The Indian women's coach WV Raman and the national selectors have given 30 names and there will be 12 foreign players. So there will be three teams of 14 players each and they will play once against each other and then the final," the official said.

Delhi has one of the best bowling attacks in IPL: Ishant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India speedster Ishant Sharma believes his IPL franchise Delhi Capitals has one of the best bowling attacks for the upcoming edition of the event.

The Delhi Capitals boast of a perfect combination of fast and spin bowlers with the likes of New Zealand pacer Trent Boult and Kagiso Rabada in their side, according to Ishant.

"Our team has picked up some great bowling options in the squad and with the likes of Trent Boult and Kagiso Rabada also in the team. I think we have one of the best bowling line-ups this time. We have some very good all-rounders along with great spinners, which shall help us in restricting teams from scoring freely," Ishant said.

Talking about his goals, the Indian pacer said he is eager to take more wickets in the IPL, starting on March 23.

"I feel there is a huge ambition for me this season. I am very focused on taking more wickets throughout the tournament instead of just bowling well."

"Of course, taking wickets depends on how well you bowl, but the most important thing is that you use your good performance by helping the team in taking important wickets," said the 30-year-old.

Speaking on his return to Delhi, Ishant said he is extremely happy to represent his home city in the IPL.





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