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Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 155 Issue 133  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY MAY 16, 2019; PAGES 16 ₹3



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## Violence robs Bengal a day's campaign

After BJP, TMC complain, EC orders end of canvassing on May 16 instead of 17, shifts out ADG, Principal Secy

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Wednesday took an unprecedented decision to end campaigning in nine parliamentary constituencies in West Bengal on Thursday night (10 pm) a day before its scheduled deadline for the last phase of the election on May 19, in the wake of violence between the BJP and Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers in Kolkata.

Workers of the BJP and the TMC on Tuesday fought pitched battles on the streets of Kolkata during a massive roadshow by BJP chief Amit Shah. In a separate order, the EC also shunted out top bureaucrats ADG (CID) Rajeev Kumar and State Principal Secretary (Home) Atteya Bhattacharya with immediate effect. Kumar has been directed to report to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Both the TMC and the BJP approached the EC accusing

each other of causing disruption and violence during political campaigns in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

A TMC delegation comprising Derek O'Brien, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Manish Gupta, Nadimul Haque met the EC accusing the BJP of desecration of statue of social reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar during the violence in Kolkata. TMC leaders also released videos to claim "BJP goons" damaged the statue and submitted "proof" in support of their claim to the poll body.

Earlier, a BJP delegation urged the EC to bar West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from campaigning in the State and alleged "constitutional machinery" has collapsed there.

In its order, the EC said it has been brought to the notice of the EC that there have been growing incidents of disruption and violence during political campaigns/processions in the

State of West Bengal during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

As per the EC order, the prohibition will come into effect from 10 pm on May 16 and will continue till the conclusion of voting. The nine affected constituencies include Dum Dum, Barasat, Basirghat, Jaynagar, Mathurapur, Diamond Harbour, Jadavpur, Kolkata Dakshin and Kolkata Uttar. "During last 24 hours, representatives of various political parties have met the Commission and expressed their concerns on the prevailing conditions of law and orders. These campaign related incidents are creating an atmosphere of fear and hatred in the polling areas which is affecting the overall electoral environment," the EC said in the order.

"Therefore the EC in exercise of its powers under Article 324 of the Constitution to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections in the larger interest,

hereby directs that no person shall convene, hold, attend, join or address any public meeting or propagate any election matter," the order read.

Earlier, intensifying its attack on the BJP over the desecration of Vidyasagar's bust, O'Brien said, "The video not only clearly establishes what the BJP did, but proves that its chief Amit Shah is a liar and dhokebaaz (betrayer)".

"The streets of Kolkata are tinged with shock and anger. What happened yesterday (Tuesday) hurt Bengali pride," the TMC leader said.

The reaction from the TMC came close on the heels of Shah accusing TMC of indulging in violence in the State and alleged that the poll panel has been a "mute spectator".

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West Bengal CM and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee in a protest rally on Wednesday against the clashes that broke out on Tuesday during BJP president Amit Shah's election roadshow for Lok Sabha polls in Kolkata

## Didi took revenge in 24 hrs, says PM

'TMC framing BJP for their goons' act of vandalism'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after the City of Joy saw alleged BJP supporters vandalising Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Statue inside a North Kolkata college, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah on Wednesday insisted that the whole episode was a handiwork of TMC goons, who committed the sin and were now framing the BJP workers.

In an attempt to turn the responsibility of the Tuesday's bedlam on the TMC chief, the Prime Minister, who was speaking at an election rally at Taki in Basirhat, said, "Mamata Didi had declared publicly two days ago that she will take revenge. She fulfilled her agenda within 24 hours, BJP president Amit Shah's roadshow was attacked."

Referring to how a woman was jailed in Bengal for sharing a meme on Mamata, Modi said, "Didi, you get so much angry for a mere picture! But I call you upon to make an obscene picture of me and present it at my residence in Delhi after I come to power again. I promise not to file any FIR against you."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses an election campaign rally in support of BJP candidate Nilanjan Roy for Diamond Harbour constituency seat in South 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal on Wednesday

Saying that by jailing the daughters "you are only provoking them to rise up in revolt against you", he said, "I am sure they will rise up and throw you out of power."

The people had voted Didi to power with love but she is misusing that power and treating the people as her servants. They will surely punish you for this, Modi said.

Ridiculing Mamata for getting angry out of frustration

and nervousness, Modi said, "This anger will fetch us more and more seats, perhaps we will cross 300 seats this time round."

In Delhi, accusing Trinamool Congress of inciting violence during his roadshow in Kolkata on Wednesday, BJP president Amit Shah alleged that the Election Commission was biased and silent spectators to the State ruling party's misdeeds.

Continued on Page 7

## Mamata raises 'saffron holocaust'

TMC chief attacks Modi, Shah for insulting Bengal's icon

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ AGARPARA

A day after BJP workers taking part in Amit Shah's roadshow allegedly stoned Calcutta University and ransacked the Vidyasagar College vandalising his statue, West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee held a mega roadshow and launched a vitriolic attack on the "saffron gang".

Mamata accused the BJP of planning Tuesday's skirmish that apart from "destroying the State's rich politico-cultural heritage" left many people injured.

In a smart political move, Mamata on Wednesday raised the issue of "Bengali pride" and attacked the BJP leaders for insulting the State's pioneer renaissance personalities like Vidyasagar.

Addressing a huge election rally at Agarpara under Dum Dum parliamentary constituency, the TMC chief said, "Yesterday's attack was a well-planned criminal conspiracy hatched by the BJP" reminding the people would see a "saffron holocaust" if they brought the BJP to power again.

Referring to a video footage of a local BJP leader — in which he is shown directing his people to attack the TMC and police — going viral, she said, "I am sure that the entire BJP leadership, including its president and those below him, was involved in the criminal conspiracy to malign and terrorise Bengal. But I am also sure that the people of the State will never tolerate this."

It was an "irony that a tall icon like Vidyasagar, who was responsible for the women's



emancipation in India should have been insulted like this on his 200th anniversary," she said, reminding how the pio-

neer of the Bengal renaissance had fought for women's education, widow remarriage, getting the British to enact laws on the subjects.

Soon after the Agarpara rally, the Chief Minister walked a 6-km mega roadshow with several thousand supporters chanting anti-Modi slogans and sporting masks of Bengali cultural icons like Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Kazi Najrul Islam and others.

On the BJP's chances of coming back to power, Mamata said, "They are spending cash like anything to win the elections but one is sure they will not return to power because they will get zero seats in Tamil Nadu, Kerala Andhra Pradesh, some parts of Maharashtra. They will fare poorly in Gujarat, MP,

Telangana, Odisha and Bihar. In UP which used to be their mainstay, they will not get more than 17 seats. So their chances of returning to power are almost nil."

Accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of peddling lies, Mamata said, "I have seen many Prime Ministers but I have never seen a liar PM like this man who talks big but reneges on his promises."

On the NRC, she said, "He is talking about invoking NRC in Bengal but I dare him do so. Touch the Bengalis and then see what happens. You like already thrown 20 lakh Hindu Bengalis and 22 lakh Muslim Bengalis apart from many Biharis and UP wallas out of the citizenship list. I am told that this is one reason that your party will not do well even in Assam."

## Sonia invites Opp parties for post-poll meet

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With the possibility of a fractured mandate looming large, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi has started calling up Opposition leaders requesting their "availability" and "accessibility" in Delhi post the last phase of Lok Sabha polls on May 19.

AICC sources confirmed the former Congress chief who had taken the lead in the formation of UPA in 2004 has been active from the confines of her 10 Janpath to bring all UPA allies, even regional heavyweights and neutral players like BJD, TRS, on board with a clear motive to block the Modi juggernaut from return-



ing to power at the Centre. Congress leaders recalled as how Sonia had reached out to Left and rushed to Chennai

to meet DMK chief M Karunanidhi once the results suggested that Atal Bihari Vajpayee could not form the Government in 2004.

"While she reached to Harkishen Singh Surjit in a hospital, she rushed to DMK even after having long-time differences with them," said a senior leader.

The entire exercise is being done to get the first invite from President Ram Nath Kovind to form the Government. Sources said the Congress has taken the initiative in calling for this meeting as it does not want to lose any time in case the BJP does not get a majority.

"All have a common agen-

da, be it BJD, TRS or any other as they would never like to be part of the arrogant BJP-led Modi Government. Some of them already in NDA and feeling suffocated for long may switch over sides post May 23 afternoon," said a top Congress leader.

Sonia due to ill health had not been quite active in this Lok Sabha polls leaving the entire campaign on her children — party chief Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi.

Soon after the third phase of polls, select group of Congress leaders picked by Sonia had been making efforts to reach out to regional parties.

Continued on Page 7

### CAPSULE

**56L SWACHCHH TOILETS BUILT TILL FEB: RTI**

**New Delhi:** Over 56.6 lakh individual household toilets have been constructed till February this year and another 6.33 lakh toilets were under construction under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U), the Government has said in an RTI reply.

**DELHI METRO HIT BY TECHNICAL SNAGS**

**New Delhi:** Services were delayed due to technical snags on sections of different corridors of the Delhi Metro Rail on Wednesday, officials said. There was slow movement of trains between Tis Hazari and Shastri Park and later also on Pitampura-Keshav Puram section of the Red Line in the morning.

## Priyanka's roadshow gathers huge crowds

PNS ■ VARANASI

In a big show of strength in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra started her roadshow here on Wednesday evening.

A respectable crowd was also seen on the roads flooding the entire five kilometre stretch parallel to river Ganga during the roadshow in which people were seen welcoming the Congress icon with tri-colours and Congress flags.

After garlanding the statue of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya at Lanka, she responded to people who had assembled there in thousands. She was accompanied by Congress candidate Ajay Rai and other

senior leaders. Later, the Priyanka convoy moved ahead and it took almost half an hour to reach the other corner of Lanka market near Sant Ravidas Gate. Then the road-show wheeled through narrow packed lanes to reach Assi crossing where a large number of people had gathered to just have a glance of Priyanka.

In Lanka, there was a huge crowd of BHU students and youths but when it passed through Brahmin-dominated Assi, which is famous for its political consciousness, the scene was different. When passing through South Indian and Bengali-dominated areas of Shivala and Sonarpura, the road show wheeled through Muslim-dominated



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra along with the party candidate Ajay Rai and Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Singh Baghel waves at supporters during a roadshow for the Lok Sabha polls in Varanasi on Wednesday

Madanpura. After Janghambadi, the roadshow reached the soul of the city at Godowlia which was cordoned off to stop the stream of people who had thronged there from all the corners. Later, Priyanka reached Kashi Vishwanath temple to offer prayers.

Through the roadshow, the Congress hopes to give a tough fight to Modi in Varanasi and send a message to entire Purvanchal where 13 parliamentary seats go to the polls in the last phase on May 19.

The Congress show of strength in the temple town comes nearly three weeks after Modi held his own roadshow here, a day before filing his nomination papers.

## Monsoon to delay further, says IMD

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday said the southwest monsoon will be "slightly delayed" and arrive in Kerala on June 6. The normal onset date is June 1.

Expected to be sluggish in its progression this season, it will be third such instance since 2014 when monsoon is set to miss the usual date of arrival. In 2014, it arrived on June 5, followed by June 6 in 2015, and June 8 in 2016. However, monsoon arrived in Kerala on May 29 last year, three days ahead of the normal onset date.



The prediction of delay by IMD and private weather forecaster Skymet has worried investors. Shares of several agriculture sector and consumer goods companies collapsed in the stock market on Wednesday.

The IMD forecast is in line with that of Skymet, which on Tuesday said the monsoon would hit Kerala on June 4.

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# Absconding history-sheeter runs out of luck

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Four persons, including a history-sheeter, were arrested from different places of the state capital in the last 24 hours. Haroon, a 28-year-old history-sheeter of Malihabad, was arrested near a bus stand on Hardoi road under Malihabad police station on Wednesday morning. Police said the chief judicial magistrate issued a fresh warrant for his arrest as he was not appearing at the local police station. Police station incharge Siya Ram Verma had moved a petition in the CJM court stating that Haroon was absconding as he had not turned up for the past six months.

On Friday, Haroon reaches his house and an informer tipped off the police. A police team was formed and Haroon was spotted in the main market. A trap was laid but he managed to deceive the police. However, he ran out of his luck and nabbed when he was about to board a bus to leave the city.

Meanwhile, Beenu, who is a resident of Majra Gaura village under Malihabad police station, was arrested from this house in the afternoon. Police said he had been booked under the Gangster Act earlier. Other members of his gang had been arrested but he was able to evade arrest. On Friday, the police were tipped off that he was present in his house. A raid was conducted and he was picked up and sent to jail.

Meanwhile, two persons, identified as Harsh Verma and Madhav Vishwakarma, were arrested for their involvement in mobile theft. Four stolen smartphones were recovered from their possession. Two days ago, the mobile of Ashley Morent, a resident of Aliganj, was snatched near LDA building in Abhiranpur area under Aliganj police station. Harsh and Madhav were nabbed after Ashley's mobile phone set was put on surveillance. They reportedly confessed to their crime.

# Oppn need 'political tonic' to stay in contest: DyCM



Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma addressing mediapersons at the BJP office in Lucknow on Wednesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh unit of BJP said that the opposition parties like SP, BSP and Congress now need 'political tonic' to stay in contest in the Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh as the six phase of polling show that they have been overshadowed by Modi magic. "The personal attacks by

Mayawati on the Prime Minister and allegations of tampering with the EVMs during polls shows their frustration and it also proves that they have concede defeat," said Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, Sharma said that Congress had turned into a B team of the SP-BSP alliance and it too was con-

testing election just to save its face. "The opposition parties in UP have lost their sheen in this elections and they require tonic to fight against BJP," he said.

Condemning the attack on BJP president Amit Shah's roadshow in Kolkata on Tuesday, Sharma said that democracy had ceased to exist in West Bengal in the Mamata Banerjee rule. He said the Election Commission should take stern steps to ensure a free and fair polls in West Bengal.

"Mamata Didi is only interested in promoting Bangladeshi intruders to influence the election," he said. The Deputy Chief Minister also took strong exception to denial of permission for election meetings of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Kolkata on Wednesday. "There is no rule of law in West Bengal," he said. The BJP state unit also took out a silent march from party office to Gandhi statue in the state capital on Wednesday afternoon in protest against the violence in Kolkata on Tuesday. The party workers sat before the Gandhi statue silently and prayed that "God give 'sabbuddhi' to Mamata Banerjee".



Women devotees offering namaz at Janana Park in Aminabad on the ninth day of Ramadan on Wednesday, and little girls praying for peace in the country

# Label approval delays due to LS polls hit beer stock

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The five percent 'cow protection' cess imposed by the Yogi Adityanath government on alcohol and the ongoing Lok Sabha elections have resulted in unintended consequence - shortage of popular brands of beer in the market. Uttar Pradesh, which is the biggest market of beer, is fast running out of stock of the beverage.

The UP government in January this year decided to impose 5 percent cess on alcohol to fund the cow protection programme. Every time there is a change in taxation, the retail price changes, and so does the label on the product. Every brand has to get an approval for these changes from the state's Excise department before releasing the product in the market.

"Every April, new policy comes into force. Every time you get into it, there is a delay of about a month because they re-register all the labels. The bureaucratic procedure is long and cumbersome as the files are pushed at different levels. It is an annual process and the distillery owners and liquor vendors know about it, so they keep extra stock for these situations. This year that process has got further delayed due to Lok Sabha elections," said owner of a beer bar.

"The approval process is



common to every state in India, but the delay is the longest in Uttar Pradesh. In UP, the delay has been thrice as long this time as the Excise department officials were busy with election duties and this delayed approval of new labels. So, if you walk into a bar or a wine shop anywhere in Uttar Pradesh today, very few brands are available, and most of them are strong beers," said another bar owner. This is an additional blow for bar owners because most people in India who drink at bars prefer milder beers. "Sales dropped by nearly 40 per cent in April 2019, compared to March," the owner of the beer bar said.

This is a cumulative effect of a price hike, supply crunch in beer as a whole, and the non-availability of mild beer brands. "The new Gau Raksha cess

is Rs 5 per bottle of beer. It is quite severe considering beer is 95% water," the bar owner added. In India, beer consumed outside home costs three and a half times more than the beer consumed at home. What is worse for suppliers in UP, nearly one lakh litres of expired beer worth Rs 3 crore was destroyed in April this year. "Beer is the only perishable liquor. By law, you have to quarantine it and the Excise department officers come and destroy it," the bar owner added. The wait to bring new stocks to shelves could be longer as Excise officials will only get back to their usual drill after the election, the results of which will be announced on May 23. If you are in UP, you are likely to get more stressed finding the beer of your choice before you get happy high.

# Cong leader wants Sikh to head state minority panel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Data analytics department chairman of Uttar Pradesh Congress, Captain SJS Makkad, on Wednesday urged Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to set an example by appointing a Sikh to head the State Minority Commission.

Raising question over why member of only one particular community is always made chairman of Uttar Pradesh Minority Commission, Makkad, who also holds the post of UPCC general secretary, said it was an irony of all previous governments that whenever they started hunt for some capable person to head the State Minority Commission, they always found member of one community to head the panel when minorities also included Sikhs, Christians, Jains and others.

In a letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday, Makkad demanded that the BJP government set an example by appointing some capable Sikh having excellent track record to head the State Minority Commission this time. He said the government should give every community a chance to head the panel so that no one felt deprived or that



step-motherly treatment was meted out to them. It may be mentioned that the UP government has till now always appointed some Muslim to head the State Minority Commission and at present, as the post is lying vacant, names of members of only one community are doing the round though Yogi has to take a final call in this regard.

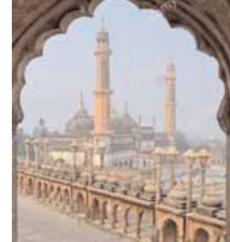
# ASI buildings will soon have certified guides: Official

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Archaeological Survey of India monuments will be having certified guides soon since it has a policy for recruiting them. Confirming this, an ASI official said that guiding involves disseminating knowledge about the cultural heritage among the common masses such as tourists, students or common art lovers who require varying nature of information before and while visiting any place of their choice.

"The experience acquired with the help of received or gathered information, enriches the knowledge of the individual, helps one to plan things in advance and eases out one's stay at tourists' destinations which make the tour memorable as a whole," said the official. He said that the tourists may need simple information on subjects like accommodation, transportation, places of interest, market, medical aid, helpline, other offices, etc, besides detailed and authentic information about national monuments and signages.

"Published literature, electronic media, web world etc are flooded with information on varied subjects but ultimately have their own limitations. In spite of having information through various resources everybody wants to visit his or her place of interest once in a



lifetime. While visiting the heritage site, a tourist requires authentic information and for that purpose a guide appears to be the best medium of communication for providing information on the spot to the tourists as per their interest and requirement and oriented according to their queries," he said. He further said that personal interaction was the best medium to disseminate information. "So far as centrally-protected monuments are concerned the guide would play a vital role in disseminating correct and factual information with his knowledge and experience so that the visitor is enriched and enjoys his experience during his visit to the monument in the larger context," he added.

He said there would be only one category of guides known as 'ASI monument guide' who would be authorised to work in the centrally-protected monuments or those managed by the

Archaeological Survey of India for which he is licensed. "The policy will be applicable only to such guides who are allowed to work in the centrally-protected monuments or those buildings and sites maintained, administered and managed by the Archaeological Survey of India having a valid licence granted by the specified authority. The assessment of the number of tourist guides for each monument or group of monuments would be determined by the footfall, growth potential, extent and size of the monuments/group of monuments," he added.

He further said that the process would be carried out every five years by the Archaeological Survey of India. The policy states that a licence would be granted to individuals only and not to any firm or association or company or other corporate body, after following the due selection process. "The Archaeological Survey of India will be responsible for conducting the tests and would evolve a mechanism for granting such licences. In so far as monument guides operating within the centrally-protected monuments are concerned their various categories who have qualified the test to be conducted under this policy will only be entitled to operate within the centrally-protected monuments," he said.

# Bid to nip dengue menace in the bud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The CMO office is organising the National Dengue Day on Thursday with an awareness rally to be flagged off from 1090 crossing. Additional CMO SK Saxena said as monsoons would arrive in about a month or so, people should be made aware that prevention was better than cure.

He said they had already started a campaign called



'Machhar Par Vaar Har Ravivar'. "We go and check for larvae in all the residences, offices. It is important for people to not let water collect at any point in their houses and deny breeding grounds for the mosquitoes," he said. "Studies have shown that even plastic cups strewn on railway stations with small amounts of water can be the breeding ground for mosquitoes," he added.

As per World Health Organization, dengue flourishes in urban poor areas, suburbs and the countryside but

also affects more affluent neighbourhoods in tropical and subtropical countries.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral infection causing a severe flu-like illness and sometimes causing a potentially lethal complication called severe dengue. As per WHO, the incidence of dengue has increased 30-fold over the last 50 years. Up to 50-100 million infections are now estimated to occur annually in over 100

endemic countries, putting almost half of the world's population at risk. Once infected, humans become the main carriers and multipliers of the virus, serving as a source of the virus for uninfected mosquitoes. The virus circulates in the blood of an infected person for 2-7 days, at approximately the same time that the person develops a fever. Patients who are already infected with the dengue virus can transmit the infection via Aedes mosquitoes after the first symptoms appear.

# 3-year-old girl 'raped'

Lucknow: A three-year-old girl was allegedly raped in her village in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district Wednesday, police said. The incident occurred in Kalwari area, they said. A villager allegedly abducted the girl from her home in the early hours, took her to a secluded place and allegedly raped her, police said.

When the girl's family members woke up, they found her missing and started searching for her, they said. She was later found writhing in pain at a place away from her house in the village, police said. The family informed the police about the incident and rushed her to a hospital where her condition was stated to be serious, they said. The accused was arrested and further investigation is underway, police said.

Meanwhile, more than a month after a 23-year-old Dalit woman was allegedly gang-raped in Muzaffarnagar, a case has been registered against the two accused, police said on Wednesday. The action came on the directive of the senior superintendent of police following protests. According to the complaint, the woman was raped on April 8 at a village in Purkazi area by the accused, who also recorded a video of the incident to blackmail her, the police said.

# 'Hat-trick' to protect traffic cops from scorching heat



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The constables manning traffic at various signals across the city will be seen donning new hats to protect themselves from scorching heat.

According to SP, Traffic, Purnendra Singh, 400 rexine hats have been ordered for the constables from Bengaluru on a trial basis. He said that the traffic constables were feeling the heat with the woollen berets which wear as it is a part of their uniform. "When we received a feedback to this effect, we decided to search

the internet as to what the traffic constables in the other parts of the country wear. Our research revealed that constables wear rexine hats in Bengaluru and Visakhapatnam and it helps them while they are on duty during summers," the SP, Traffic, said.

He said they had ordered 400 hats from a manufacturer in Bengaluru. "These hats are made of rexine which is a synthetic material but these hats have islets which will help in ventilation and keep the heads cool. During rains too, these

hats can be useful as they can prevent water trickling down on the faces of constables," he said. He said they would carry out a trial with the constables and if they approved the hats, permission would be sought from the police headquarters to make them a permanent part of their uniform. Asked whether high temperatures had taken a toll on the traffic constables, Singh said no complaints of that sort had been received. "The cops are used to standing in the heat and performing their duties in all weather conditions," he added.

# Archaeology dept seeks to conserve boat unearthed at Chhattar Manzil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The State Archaeology Department has written to several government departments with a view to ensuring conservation and protection of the gondola unearthed at Chhattar Manzil. Director of State Archaeology Department AK Singh said they had written letters to NRIC, FRI Dehradun and Botanical Society of Palaeosciences (BSIP) to visit the site. He said the boat needed to be shifted for the purpose of conservation and talks were on for the same as well.

It may be noted that the boat, which is said to be over a century old, has aroused a lot of curiosity since it belongs to the bygone era. According to Lucknow chronicler Yogesh Praveen, boats such as the one unearthed at Chhattar Manzil were used to ferry the women of the families of Nawabs.

"The boats had several pictures embossed on them, including pictures of fish and flowers," he pointed out. About the history of Chhattar Manzil, Praveen said it was a symbol of Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb since it was made in the name of Chhattar Kunwar, who was a Hindu and the mother of Nawab Saadat Ali Khan.

"The construction was started by Nawab Asaf-ud-



Daula when he shifted his capital from Faizabad to Lucknow. Most of the monuments built during that time were made by Claude Martin, who had settled in Lucknow. This is the reason why so many monuments have western features," he explained. After Asaf-ud-Daula, it was Nawab Saadat Ali Khan who got this monument built and it was completed by the first king of Awadh Ghaziuddin Haider. Nasiruddin Haider made it more beautiful.

Praveen said that the palace was used by women. "The women lived and spent their time there. Just adjacent to Chhattar Manzil palace is Farhat Baksh Kothi where the Nawabs received British residents. Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab, built a different place called Qaiserbagh Complex, where he stayed," he added.

# 2 bodies recovered in last 24 hours

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW**  
Two unidentified bodies were recovered from different areas of the state capital in the past 24 hours. In the first incident, highly decomposed body of a man was recovered from the pond near Bibi Kheda behind Awas Vikas Parishad Colony under Para police station on Wednesday morning. Police said the body appeared to be 20 days old.



Senior sub-inspector Subhash Chandra called locals to identify the deceased but to no avail. Meanwhile, another body was found close to a public toilet near Chinhat crossing in the afternoon. The deceased was said to be aged around 50. Considering the man to be ill, locals informed the police after which he was taken to Ram Manohar Lohiya Hospital where doctors declared him brought dead.

Meanwhile, a theft was committed in the house of Manju Sarkar, a resident of Paper Mill Colony under Mahanagar police station. She alleged that imported sanitary fittings were stolen from her washrooms by plumber Salman with the help of sweepers Vijay and an unidentified person. She said the plumber came to the house on her call for some repair work on Thursday evening. She said she surprised to see her expensive sanitary fittings replaced by cheap ones. A case of theft was registered in this connection at Mahanagar police station.

**COMPREHENSIVE OPERATION AND AMC OF ETP**  
E-Tender Notice No. 06/Mech/AMC/ETP/ROH/NJP/19 Dated: 14-05-2019; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work. Name of work: Comprehensive operation and AMC of ETP with capacity 50 KLD at Roha/New Jaipalpur for a period of 02 (two) years. Tender Value: ₹13,85,360/- Earnest Money: ₹27,700/- Date & time of Closing of tender: 10-06-2019 at 15:00 hrs. Date & time of Opening of tender: 10-06-2019 at 15:30 hrs. Detailed tender notice can be seen in website https://www.ireps.gov.in. Sr. DME (IC), Katihar NORTH EAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

**U.P. POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD.**  
E-Tender Notice No. 01/ETDR/2019-20 Sealed e-tenders in two separate parts on prescribed tender forms are hereby invited from the experienced Firms/contractors in this office as well as on U.P. Govt. website 'www.tender.up.nic.in' for execution of following works as follows- Short term E-Tender No. 01-ETDR/2019-20 work of Lopping & Chopping of Trees/Trees Branches Lying in the Corridor of 132 KV Sareni-Bachhravan DC Line & 132 KV Bachhravan-Bachhravan Interconnector DC Line under ETD Raebareli Earnest Money Rs. 1,000/- Cost of Tender document Rs. 118/- (Non refundable including GST). Sale of Tender Document up to 13:00 on 06.06.2019 submission of tender up to 17:00 on 06.06.2019. Receipt of tender hard copy (if any) up to 13:00 on 07.06.2019. Opening of Tender Bid Part-I at 15:30 on 07.06.2019. E-Tender No. For Receipt of tender document and earnest money said amount is to be deposited through RTGS in the current account (Punjab National Bank, Civil Line Raebareli, A/C No: 4655005800000018, IFSC Code: PUNB0465500) to the undersigned in official capacity. Part-I of the tender will contain the RTGS receipt of earnest money deposit, photocopies of GST Registration, PAN, Income Tax Clearance Certificate, proper experience for execution of similar works in UPPTCL and part II will contain rates, terms and conditions and other relevant details. Opening date of Part 2 shall be intimated on e-website. In case of holiday/undesignated is out of station on notified opening day, the tender will be opened on the next working day. Undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason therefor. Executing Engineer Electricity Transmission Division, Raebareli No. 191 Date 15-05-2019 "SAVE ELECTRICITY FOR NATION"

**उप प्रदेश पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड**  
आमंत्रण सूचना अधोस्ताहक-कर्ता द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु अनुभवी ठेकेदारों/फर्मों से मोडरन बन्ध निविदा की जागी है। निविदा संख्या - 33 से 35, दिनांक 10.06.2019 को 14.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती है, जो उसी दिन 15.00 बजे सार्वजनिक रूप से उपस्थित इच्छुक निविदा-दाताओं अथवा उनके प्रतिनिधियों की उपस्थिति में अधोस्ताहकरी अथवा अधिकृत प्रतिनिधि द्वारा खोली जायेगी। निविदा के प्रथम भाग में धरोहर धनराशि, अनुभव का विवरण, व्यापार कर/आयकर/सेवाकर का रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रमाणक तथा दूसरे भाग में दरे एवं वाणिज्यिक नियम व शर्तें होगी। निविदा की केता खुलने की तिथि से 90 दिन होगी। धरोहर राशि भी प्रत्येक निविदा के अनुसार होगी, जो बैंक ड्राफ्ट/सीडी/आधार/पंफोडी/आधार के रूप में अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारंपण खण्ड, गोण्डा के पदनाम में बचक होगी अथवा निविदा प्रथम सूचक एवं ईएफओडी अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारंपण खण्ड, गोण्डा के बैंक खाते में (बैंक का नाम - पंजाब नेशनल बैंक, आर्टा सं - 0181002100120697, आईएफएससी कोड - PUNB0018100) आरटीडीपीएस/एनईएफटी के माध्यम से जमा कराई जा सकती है तथा बैंक में जमा किये जाने का साक्ष्य यथा योग्य बूटीआर संख्या, खाते का नाम, निवेदनकर्ता बैंक अधिकारी द्वारा हस्ताक्षरित एवं निवेदादाता द्वारा प्रतिलिखित-सहित ये-द्वारा लिखित की स्कैन कॉपी, धरोहर की बैंक गारंटी की स्कैन कॉपी, जारीकर्ता बैंक के कम्प्यूटेशन मेन की प्रिंटेड प्रतियों के साथ जमा किये जाने अनिवार्य है। धरोहर धनराशि के किना एवं सरतः निविदाएं स्वीकार नहीं की जायेगी। निविदा प्रथम नमद या बैंक ड्राफ्ट अथवा आरटीडीपी.एस. द्वारा सुगमता कर निविदा खुलने की तिथि को 12.00 बजे तक अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारंपण खण्ड, गोण्डा के कार्यालय से क्य/प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं। निविदा का मूल्य रु 236/- (कर सहित) निविदा खुलने की तिथि को अवकाश की स्थिति में, निविदा अगले कार्य दिवस में निर्धारित समय तक प्राप्त कर खोली जायेगी। अधोस्ताहकरी को किसी या समस्त निविदाओं को निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। विस्तृत विवरण www.upptcl.org वेबसाइट पर भी देखा जा सकता है एवं निविदायें आउनलोड करके उसके साथ निविदा मूल्य का ड्राफ्ट संलग्न कर भी स्वीकार्य है। 1. निविदा सं-33/विपामो/गो/2019-20: विद्युत पारंपण खण्ड गोण्डा के अन्तर्गत अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारंपण खण्ड, गोण्डा हेतु 01 अदद वाहन उपलब्ध कराने सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रु 2,000/- मात्र। 2. निविदा सं-34/विपामो/गो/2019-20: विद्युत पारंपण खण्ड गोण्डा के अन्तर्गत उपखण्ड अधिकारी, विद्युत पारंपण उपखण्ड-प्रथम, गोण्डा हेतु 01 अदद वाहन उपलब्ध कराने सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रु 2,000/- मात्र। 3. निविदा सं-35/विपामो/गो/2019-20: विद्युत पारंपण खण्ड गोण्डा के अन्तर्गत उपखण्ड अधिकारी, विद्युत पारंपण उपखण्ड-द्वितीय, बलरामपुर हेतु 01 अदद वाहन उपलब्ध कराने सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रु 2,000/- मात्र। 4. अधिशास्य अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारंपण मण्डल, 220 केवीओ उपकेंद्र परिसर जेल रोड, गोण्डा। संख्या-412/विपामो/गो/2019-20 टेंडर सं-33 से 35 ईएफओडी/गो/2019-20 दिनांक - 14.05.2019. "राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचाये साधारण बल के स्थान पर एनईएफटी बल का प्रयोग करें"

# All-women startup to organise health programmes

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW**  
An all-women startup which includes the former CDRI scientist, Nuzhat Kaushal, will be holding a series of health programmes in the city which will focus on sharing of experiences with organic and Ayurvedic healthy lifestyle. An organic healthy food competition will also be organised which will be judged by chef Pankaj Bhadouria. Kaushal said their initiative was to focus on principles of preventive healthcare elaborated in Ayurveda through wholesome and healthy diet, exercise and yoga. Sessions will also be attended by KGMU V-C Dr MLB Bhatt and doctors from All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). "Stressing on the principles

of 'food is medicine' as against the unfortunate reality of 'medicine is food', we work extensively to educate and sensitise people on the ancient Ayurveda dictums to reduce people's curative healthcare cost while improving their daily quality of life," she said. She pointed out that the first interactive session would be on May 19 on 'Diet, Health and Wellness in Grishma Ritu', where IITR director Alok Dhawan would be the chief guest and it would be chaired by director of Biotech Park PK Seth. Ayurveda experts such as Dr Anurag Dixit, MD Ayurveda, Senior Vaidya, Sahara Hospital, and Dr Yashwant Juneja, MD, Panchkarma, Founder, SS Panchkarma Centre, would be the key speakers, she added.

The interactive discussion will be followed by the first of its kind storytelling by the Centre members who will share their experiences with the organic and the Ayurvedic healthy lifestyles. On May 20 an interactive session on 'Organic Food and Cancer-free life' headed by Dr ML Bhatt, Vice-Chancellor, KGMU, and Dr Sandeep Kumar, Senior Oncologist, former Director, AIIMS, will be held at the Centre. "This will be followed by the first of its kind in Lucknow city a 'Healthy, Organic Cooking Competition' at the Centre with home-cooked and healthy dishes made from organic ingredients. This competition will be judged by chef Pankaj Bhadouria, who will also hold an interactive session

on healthy and traditional cooking methods with the audience. Deepthi Mehrotra from the same entrepreneurs' group said that they wanted to bring back the discussion around Ayurvedic principles of 'Ahara' (diet) and 'Anna' (food) which were a key to good life, health and wellness and necessary for a nourished mind, body and soul. "Contrary to western notions of food and diet on calorific intake and breakdown into carbohydrate, protein, etc traditional Indian systems understand food and nutrition in a holistic context to the person's body temperament, his, her metabolism, daily and seasonal regimen and other natural and environmental factors which surround the individual. According to

Ayurveda, diseases are a cause of disharmony between these factors and when people alter the natural principles of diet and food. This disharmony has removed 'health' as an everyday resource in the hands of healthy humans to a service purchased through doctors, food and diet fads, clinics, diagnostic centres," she said. She said that the public health research indicated that over 65 per cent of the hospital visits in India involved health concerns which could be handled by the people at home. "And more than ever today over 60 per cent deaths in India are occurring due to lifestyle diseases. It becomes very important to address principles of diet and nutrition, increased intake of processed foods and degraded nutrition-

al quality of food. Also, the rampant use of pesticides, chemicals and pollutants have not only led to several thousand crores of crop and soil loss and farmer's distress but also to the increasing incidence of chronic ailments such as obesity, diabetes, hormonal disorders, infertility, musculoskeletal disorders, cancers and cardiovascular disorders," she said. She pointed out that they were creating awareness around the excessive use of such pollutants and how to lead a chemical-free lifestyle. "We emphasise on Ayush principles of preventive and promotive healthcare through a wholesome and healthy diet, exercise according to body temperaments and seasons and successfully helped in restoring people's health," she added.

# TSA workshop to train modern snake rescuers

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW**  
The Turtle Surveillance Alliance (TSA) along with the Forest Department is organising a workshop to train modern snake rescuers in the technique of handling snakes. It will kick off on June 3 at the Lucknow Zoological Gardens. The Turtle Surveillance Alliance Director, Shailendra Singh, while talking to 'The Pioneer' said that the monsoon season was arriving and they would receive several calls in connection with the rescue of the snakes from residential areas and hence such a workshop would be a useful step in that direction.

the snake rescuers and try to collate the information which we get about the various snakes we will be able to establish a count of the kind of snakes, their number as well as species. This is also one of the agenda of the programme," he said. He said that most of the phone calls in the city regarding the rescue of snakes come from the Alambagh, Kukrail and the PGI areas and many others were from outside the city. "We thought that it was difficult to reach all these places and hence it was important to create some master trainers who can help in the rescue of the snakes," he said. He said that most of the sightings which took place were of the non-venomous snakes. "The people do not recognise this and feel that they are venomous snakes and they thus get panicky and kill the reptiles. With these workshops we will be able to spread and sensitise these people about the fact that there are some species which are non-venomous. The Indian rat snake and the Indian wolf snake are mostly seen in the houses and the people have no information about the fact that these are non-venomous snakes," he added. On being asked about the pythons, he said that they

normally come out on the outskirts of the city. He said that it was also important to study that when these snakes are released- whether they try to come back to their original areas or not. "There have been instances which have been studied in the Bangladesh Snake Project in which the python which was released several kilometres away from where it was caught returned to its original place crossing 12 villages and thus creating conflict on the route," he said. Singh said that it was important to have a cadre which had a licence from the Chief Wildlife Warden and who could go about rescuing the snakes. "If we look at the nearby states then we realise that there are cadres which have been created which get proper licence for carrying out the work of modern snake rescuers. With the help of these cadres we can also create a data base about the snakes," he said. The target group for the workshop will be researchers, students, snake charmers and any snake lover with limited seats. The idea behind the workshop is to modernise streamline rescues and create awareness targeting different groups of societies and defaming the myths.

He said that the target of this workshop was to help the urban dwellers where snakes suddenly make an appearance in residential houses during torrential rainfall. "We start getting so many phone calls which we can't handle. If we create a force which could help people then it would prove beneficial." On being asked if there was any count of the number of snakes which were dwelling in the city, he said that there was no count as such. "There is no such figure and we are trying to streamline all this through such workshops. Once we make a network of



Students being taught self-defence techniques at MKSD Inter College on Wednesday

**WORLD ORTHODONTIST HEALTH DAY AT MU**  
King George's Medical University's dental department celebrated World Orthodontist Health Day on Wednesday. Head of the department Dr Pradeep Tandon said deformed teeth could be given proper shape with the help of a procedure. Flagging off rally, KGMU Vice-Chancellor MLB Bhatt also gave tips to maintain dental hygiene. An essay competition on 'Braces for health and braces for beauty' was also held on the occasion. Other contests related to 'smile' and 'oral hygiene' besides painting and slogan were also organised.

(Rb) is a rare form of cancer that rapidly develops from the immature cells of a retina, the light-detecting tissue of the eye. It is the most common primary malignant intraocular cancer in children, and it is almost exclusively found in young children. Dr Sandeep and Dr Nishant said the disease could be cured if detected in time, but patients could lose their vision otherwise. They pointed out that 96 per cent of the patients were completely cured. Dr Sanjeev stated that the symptoms were squint, redness and swelling and pupil turning white.

activities, including their patents and the companies which he has established with research and innovation.

**MoU SIGNED**  
A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Faculty of Architecture (AKTU) and Centre for Green Building Materials and Technology (Bengaluru) on Wednesday. The aim is ensure integrated sustainable environment-friendly buildings and development and generation of employment opportunities for the masses in UP. AKTU's Faculty of Architecture runs BArch for 80 students, MArch for 20 students and is starting Masters in Urban and Regional Planning in the coming semester.

**IGNOU PROGRAMME**  
Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is offering 'Certificate in First Aid' programme aimed at enabling learners to become first aid providers in emergency situations. Assistant director Kirti Vikram said under director Manorama Singh, they had been organising awareness camps regarding promotion of first aid knowledge in the community. The programme is open to varied target groups with minimum qualification of Class X with a view to generating first aid providers.

**ROAD SHOW**  
Tamil Nadu Chambers Foundation, in association with Tamil Nadu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tamil Nadu Food Grains marketing Yard, partnering with Young Entrepreneur School and Export Promotion Centre in order to promote 'Vibrant Tamil Nadu' programme to be held in their state, organised a road show in Lucknow on Wednesday in partnership with ASSOCHAM-UP. President of ASSOCHAM-UP Vijay Acharya assured all possible support to Tamil Nadu Foundation for working in food processing area. "UP is a major agro-business area and there are ample opportunities in the food processing sector. UP is the most populated state of the country and is a very big market as it is growing at a fast pace," Acharya said while proposing bilateral cooperation in trade and business. Secretary general, ASSOCHAM-UP, Virendra Nath Gupta spoke on the need of working in partnership in a fast-changing technological, economical and global business prospects. IITR director Alok Dhawan presented details of the support of CSIR in economic and industrial development of the country. Dhawan said CSIR was basically translating science into technology for improving human life and nation building.

# 2 aides of Atique among 12 caught in Nepal for fraud

**PNS ■ ALLAHABAD**  
Twelve persons, including two close aides of the former MP, Atique Ahmed, were arrested in Nepal for duping people of crores of rupees through the networking business. These arrests were made by Nepal's investigation agency and the police. Several electronic devices, including laptops, mobile phones and iPads among others had been recovered from their possession. According to reports received here, the Nepal police had come to know through its sources that some Indian nationals were working illegally with the people there. When the investigation was conducted it came to the light that large sums of money were

being invested by the people in the garb of networking business. They were duping gullible citizens through Foreign Currency Exchange Company. The police of Nepal, Central Bureau of Investigation and the officials of the National Bank conducted raids at several locations of the forgers, including the hotel. In all 12 persons were caught belonging to Lucknow, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Bengaluru, including two close aides of Atique, who lived in Kareli area of Allahabad. During investigation, the accused divulged that the company's headquarters were in Dubai. Its branch offices were in Lucknow, Singapore and

Mauritius, they added. Here the account was opened in the company on the basis of e-mail ID through networking. After this the money was invested. There was also a game of commissioning up to 15 per cent on making people members of the company. All the youths had opened fake companies and their offices to commit the fraud. As per the police here a close aide of Atique had duped all the people through several projects including a one in Kareli area here. He was caught in Nepal. Additional SP of Special Task Force (STF) Neeraj Pandey said that he had received information about the fraudsters duping people in many districts, including Allahabad, being caught by the Nepal police.



Ad hoc employees staging a sit-in at Transport department headquarters in Lucknow on Wednesday. These employees have been protesting for nearly three months to press their demands

**AWAWARENESS**  
"Retinoblastoma Awareness Week" was at KGMU's Ophthalmology department on Wednesday. Retinoblastoma

# SCHOOLSCAN

**AWARDED**  
Principal of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus I, Abha Anant, has been honoured with 'Vanyajeev Dronacharya Award' by the Indian Centre for Wildlife and Environmental Studies in South Asia Region (ICWESSAR). The award has been given to her for her efforts in encouraging, sensitising and guiding students to safeguard wildlife. Anant has been working hard in motivating her students to take up social utility services other than academics, and she makes them conscious towards environmental protection.

**ANNUAL PRIZE DAY**  
Unity College organised 'Annual Prize Day' to honour the outstanding students who excelled in studies and co-curricular activities. Justice Shabihul Hasnain of Allahabad High Court was the chief guest on the occasion while additional director (Education) Lalita Pandey the guest of honour. Principal Francis Castellan welcomed the guests and apprised them of the college's accomplishments. Founder-president Dr Kalbe Sadiq, who has not been keeping well, also attend the function to bless the students.

# Tri-services unit all ready to smoke out terrorists

## Major General AK Dhingra appointed as the first Special Operations Division Commander

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The newly-created Armed Forces Special Operations Division, responsible for targeting enemy's strategic installations and high-value terrorists besides crippling adversary's war fighting capabilities, will have its first chief Major General AK Dhingra.

The tri-service unit will have elite drawn commandos drawn from the Special Forces of the Army, Marine Commandos (MARCOS) of the Navy and the Garuda commando force of the IAF. It will be on the lines of the US Special Operations Command, which was responsible for taking out Osama Bin Laden.

The proposal for setting up of the tri-service division was first mooted by the Naresh Chandra committee in 2012. The panel was asked to suggest ways to fine tune the higher defence management to fight



modern and fast evolving war scenario in the backdrop of terrorism, cyber warfare and use

of space to enhance military might. Besides the Special

Operations unit, the panel had also proposed formation of Defence Cyber Agency and



As first reported by *The Pioneer* on January 18 this year, the Armed Forces Special Operations Division (AFSOD) will formally start functioning from November 1 this year initially with a small team of commandos selected from Special Forces of the Army, MARCOS

and Garud force. The division will finally have 3,000 commandos. Besides having commandos from the three Services with the Army playing an eminent role as it has the most experienced professionals for such missions, the unit will have its own dedicated helicopters, transport planes and specialised weaponry besides surveillance equipment for carrying out strategic missions. Elaborating upon the nature of the Division, officials said here on Wednesday the specialised teams will be responsible for conducting missions within and outside the country. The missions include targeting strategic installations, high value targets in terms of terrorists and cripple the war fighting capabilities of the enemy. The missions no doubt will be high risk given the strategic importance. Once the Division becomes functional in November, plans are already in place to bring

together the commandos from the three Services to a central place or station for joint training to conduct special missions during peacetime and war, they said.

Explaining the objective of the Division, officials said the stress is on synergising special operations amongst the three forces. At present, the Special Forces of the Army, MARCOS and Garuds function separately. Once the Division comes into being, the special talents and assets of the three Services will be pooled. Similarly, experts from the Army, Navy and IAF will work together in the Cyber Agency and the Space Agency. The main aim is to exploit the resources of all the three Services for the three specialized agencies in a joint manner to achieve the objective besides reducing expenditure on administration and training, they said.

## SHOOTING DOWN OF PAK'S F-16 Abhinandan's squadron gets special patches

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

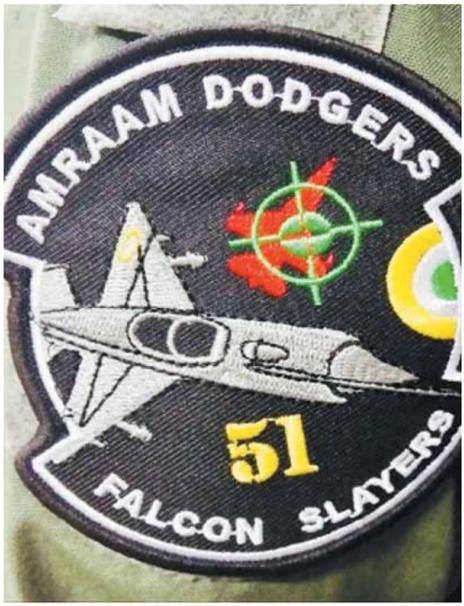
After Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, flying a MIG-21 Bison, shot down an F-16 of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on February 27 when the intruding jets tried to target Indian military installations in Rajouri, the pilot's unit 51 Squadron has taken on the sobriquet 'Falcons Slayers' and 'AMRAAM Dodgers' and have got special uniform patches made to commemorate the dogfight.

Besides, the MIG-21 squadron having special uniform patches made for their flying overalls, the Sukhoi-30 squadron, whose aircraft also thwarted the Pakistani air attack and successfully evaded the AMRAAM missiles of the PAF F-16s, have also named themselves the 'AMRAAM Dodger' in new patches.

Patches are cloth badges that depict the squadron's role and often identify itself with an important engagement in which the squadron took part. It also reflects the type of aircraft the squadron flies and is worn on flying overalls.

The 51 Squadron patch depicts a MIG-21 Bison in the foreground and a red-coloured F-16 in the background under crosshairs. The other squadron's patch shows a SU-30MKI with an AMRAAM missile going past after narrowly missing it.

Varthaman chased and shot



down the intruding F-16 but his aircraft was hit by Pakistan air defence and he had to eject. The pilot landed in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) after his parachute strayed across the Line of Control (LoC) and was captured by the Pakistan Army. He returned to India two days later.

Pakistani jets had carried out the attack as retaliation to

the IAF air strikes against terror camps in Balakot in Pakistan on February 26. The strikes were carried out as a punitive measure after 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in a suicide attack in Pulwama, Kashmir on February 13. Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) had claimed responsibility for the act.

## Mansarovar Yatra: 1st-time pilgrims get preference in computerised draw of lots

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Computerised draw of lots for selecting pilgrims for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra was held here on Wednesday, in which for the first time, preference for fresh applicants or route choice of senior citizens was incorporated into the software, MEA officials said.

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale presided over the draw of lots held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, and also urged pilgrims to help "protect and preserve" the fragile environment in the Himalayas.

The Ministry's consistent effort has been to get as many applications, because it thinks this Yatra is important not only for those going for spiritual or religious purposes, but also to build relations between India and China, he said.

Ministry of External Affairs organises the Yatra during June to September each year through two different routes — Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand), and Nathu La Pass (Sikkim). Known for its religious value and cultural significance, it is undertaken by hundreds of people every year.

For Kailash Mansarovar Yatra 2019, the ministry received 2,996 applications, out of which 2,256 are male applicants, and 740 females. As many as 624 senior citizens had applied for the yatra.

For Lipulekh route, there

are 18 batches with 60 pilgrims per batch and for Nathu La, 10 batches with 50 yatis per batch. Two liaison officers will assist each batch of yatis.

"It is our hope and endeavour that we provide the first chance to those who did not get the chance to go to the Yatra, the first-time applicants and we give priority to them. And, of course, to senior citizens as well," Gokhale said.

He said, consistent efforts have been made to make the Yatra website as pilgrim-friendly as possible.

"We also have a helpline now for applicant yatis. And, emails received from them are regularly monitored and applicants are suitably advised in a time-bound way," he added.

A senior official said, the Nathu La route is less arduous compared to Lipulekh and so preferred by senior citizens.

"Earlier they would tell us their route choice while applying for the Yatra, and we would try to accommodate their request in the overall process. This year, we have incorporate the preferences of first-time yatis and the senior citizens in the algorithm of the software used for the draw of lots, which is for the first time," he said.

The selection is a fair computer-generated, random gender-balanced selection process, the MEA said in a statement, adding, the selected yatis are informed through mobile text messages and email.

## Apex court pulls up Bengal Govt over arrest of BJP leader

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday termed as "prima facie arbitrary" the arrest of BJP's youth wing leader for allegedly posting morphed image of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on social media and pulled up the West Bengal Government for the delay in releasing her.

A vacation Bench comprising justices Indira Banerjee and Sanjiv Khanna was informed by the counsel of activist Priyanka Sharma's brother that she was not released from jail on Tuesday despite the apex court's order granting her bail and ordering her immediate release.

However, the counsel for West Bengal Government informed the bench that she has been released from jail at 9:40 am today.

"Why 9:40 am today? The order was passed in your presence," the Bench told the state counsel.

When the State's counsel referred to the jail manual, the bench shot back, "Jail manual can't have precedence over an order of the Supreme Court."

"No. This is not done. First of all the arrest was prima facie arbitrary," the bench said.

Senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul, appearing for Priyanka's brother Rajib Sharma who filed the plea in the apex court, told the bench that despite the apex court's Tuesday order granting her bail she had to spend another night behind the bars.

## Won't apologise for sharing Mamata's photo: Priyanka

Kolkata: BJP youth wing activist Priyanka Sharma, who walked out of jail on Wednesday after being arrested for posting a morphed picture of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Facebook, said jail authorities pressured her and extracted an apology for the post. Sharma, however, asserted she had no regrets for sharing the post for which she had to spend five days behind bars. She claimed she was "mentally tortured" in jail and was not even given enough water to drink. Sharma was released from jail at 9:40 am after the Supreme Court on Wednesday called her arrest "prima facie arbitrary" and pulled up the West Bengal Government for the delay in releasing her. PTI



Sharma was released from jail on Wednesday after being arrested for posting a morphed picture of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Facebook, said jail authorities pressured her and extracted an apology for the post. Sharma, however, asserted she had no regrets for sharing the post for which she had to spend five days behind bars. She claimed she was "mentally tortured" in jail and was not even given enough water to drink. Sharma was released from jail at 9:40 am after the Supreme Court on Wednesday called her arrest "prima facie arbitrary" and pulled up the West Bengal Government for the delay in releasing her. PTI

Kaul told the bench that jail authorities Tuesday told them that they have to either bring certified copies of the apex court's order or approach the court of the chief judicial magistrate concerned for her release.

"If she is not released, the consequences will follow," the bench said and warned it will issue contempt to officials concerned if Sharma was not released from jail immediately.

"She should be released from jail within half an hour," the bench said.

The bench asked Kaul to get instructions whether she

## Chanda Kochhar, husband appear before ED for third consecutive day

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday questioned former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak for the third consecutive day in connection with a money laundering case relating to the ICICI-Videocon loan fraud case.

The agency is grilling the

duo for their alleged role in irregular sanction and disbursement of ₹1,875 crore loan to Videocon Group in 2009 and 2011 by the ICICI Bank then headed by Chanda Kochhar.

On Tuesday, Kochhars were questioned for over eight hours by the ED.

In March, the agency had

conducted searches at locations linked to the Kochhars. They were earlier questioned by the ED in Mumbai.

Deepak's brother Rajiv Kochhar and Videocon Group promoter Venugopal Dhoot have also been quizzed by the agency in connection with the case. PNS

## Rahul takes fresh swipe at Modi, coins new word 'Modilie'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday took a fresh swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying there's a new word in the English dictionary — "Modilie".

Rahul has been accusing Modi of speaking "lies" on various issues, including on the Rafale jet deal. "There's a new

word in the English Dictionary. Attached is a snapshot of the entry," he tweeted, ending his sentence with a smiley.

He also put up a picture of a screenshot of a photo-shopped page of an English dictionary explaining the meaning of "Modilie".

In the fabricated page, "Modilie" is described as a "mass noun".

## Over 56L household toilets constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission till Feb this year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 56.6 lakh individual household toilets have been constructed till February this year and another 6.33 lakh toilets were under construction under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U).

In an RTI reply, the Ministry of Housing and Urban

Affairs (HUA) said that SBM-U aims at making urban India free from open defecation and achieving 100 per cent scientific management of municipal solid waste in all the 4,041 statutory towns of the country. The Ministry said in Uttar Pradesh, as many as 7.53 lakh individual household toilets have been constructed while in Maharashtra, 682,812 units

have been built under the Mission till February this year. According to the reply, only 480 such units have been constructed in Delhi and 336 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The ministry said 3,57,767 individual household toilets have been constructed in Rajasthan and added that 293,614 units have been constructed in Bihar.

# Medical body develops affordable test kit to diagnose blood disorders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major breakthrough which would go a long way in cutting down medical costs of the patients with severe Hemophilia A and von Willebrand Disease (vWD), the ICMR-National Institute of Immunohaematology (NIIH), Mumbai has developed a cost-effective point-of-care (POC) rapid diagnostic test for the blood disorders.

This would cost a patient less than ₹50 in comparison to existing conventional test for the diseases that cost around ₹4,000 to ₹10,000. India has become the world's first country to develop POC test for specific diagnosis of any common bleeding disorder, the ICMR has claimed.

Haemophilia A and vWD are the commonest among bleeding disorders. As per the Western data, the incidence of

Haemophilia A is 1 per 10,000 male births and that of vWD is around 1 per cent of the general population.

"In India, there is no epidemiological data and with translation of this data with respect to the population, the country may have roughly 80,000-1,00,000 severe haemophilia cases, but the total number registered with Haemophilia Federation India (HFI) is only around 19,000," a senior official from the ICMR said.

At present, lack of awareness, lack of diagnostic facilities, high cost of tests are some of the factors for the under-diagnosis of bleeding disorders in the country.

"Both Haemophilia A and vWD are underdiagnosed disorders in our country and there are only a handful of comprehensive diagnostic centres for bleeding disorders,"

## Know about vWD, Haemophilia A

- People with vWD have a problem with a protein in their blood called von Willebrand factor (VWF) that helps control bleeding. When a blood vessel is injured and bleeding occurs, VWF helps cells in the blood, called platelets, mesh together and form a clot to stop the bleeding. People with vWD do not have enough VWF, or it does not work the way it should. It takes longer for blood to clot and for bleeding to stop. Research has shown that as many as 9 out of 10 people with vWD have not been diagnosed
- Haemophilia A, also known as classical hemophilia, is a genetic bleeding disorder caused by insufficient levels of a blood protein called factor VIII, a clotting factor. Individuals with haemophilia A do not bleed faster or more profusely than healthy individuals, but, because their blood clots poorly, they have difficulty stopping the flow of blood from a wound

the official said. "The newly developed rapid test kit could be used for the diagnosis of undiagnosed patients/menorrhagia cases/ post-partum haemorrhage (PPH), gynaeco-

logical complications with bleeding history, recovery of factors in the transfused Haemophilia A patients and also for differential diagnosis of both the diseases," the official said.



# BJP neta's inciting violence video viral

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In what could give the Bengal BJP leadership some sleepless nights ahead of the final phase of polling, a video footage of a local BJP leader Rakesh Singh — in which he is shown directing his people to attack the TMC and police — went viral on Wednesday.

Singh, who subsequently made conflicting statements — first telling that it was a doctored video and then "it is not the full video" — is seen in the footage directing the "members of the Fata Fati (breakers) gang" to "come prepared with rods and sticks and other

**THE MESSAGE THAT WAS WHATTSAPPED TO THE "GANG" MEMBERS SUBSEQUENTLY WENT VIRAL**

things necessary for what you have been asked to do during the rally."

He was telling the "Fata Fati gang" to take on the Trinamool men that "those

who do not come prepared will be thrown out of the unit." The gang has been raised as a combative unit of the BJP. He also reminded them repeatedly that the rally was meant for Amit Shah and we would like to make it a successful one at any cost. So, you have to take on the TMC goons and the police. Come prepared.

The message that was Whatsapp to the "gang" members subsequently went viral.

Incidentally, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday showed the footage in a rally at Agartala telling to decide as to "who is the culprit"

# Not an outsider; have come here to campaign for BJP: Shah

**Kolkata:** BJP national president Amit Shah has rebutted Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's charge that he is an "outsider" in West Bengal and said he has come to the state to campaign for his party.

Shah wondered if he is called an outsider for coming to West Bengal, "which is very much a part of India", then why not Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee be labelled as an "outsider" when she visits New Delhi?

The BJP leader was addressing a meet of intellectuals in the city on Tuesday. "I am president of a national party and I am here to campaign for my party."

"I am being called an outsider for coming to West Bengal. What kind of statement is this? If a person from West



Bengal goes to Mumbai or Bengaluru, will he be called an outsider? When Mamata didi goes to Delhi will she be called an outsider?" Shah asked.

Shah's remarks came fol-

lowing Banerjee's repeated allegations about Shah being an "outsider" who comes to the state to "create division" among the people.

"If the BJP wins the assem-

bly polls in West Bengal, a Bengali will be the chief minister. Neither I nor Kailash Vijayvargia will be the CM," Shah said.

Vijayvargiya, who hails

from Madhya Pradesh, is the BJP's national general secretary, who is in charge of the saffron party in West Bengal.

Shah also criticized a section of the media for blaming BJP workers for Tuesday's violence during his roadshow in north Kolkata.

"A section of media is presenting it in such a way as if we started the clash. The news should be that TMC goons attacked the convoy. But a section of news organisations are trying to paint it in a different way," Shah said.

BJP and TMC supporters Tuesday fought pitched battles on the streets of Kolkata during a massive roadshow by Shah, who escaped unhurt but was forced to cut short the jamboree and had to be escorted to safety by police. **PTI**

## TMC workers broke Vidyasagar's bust, Mamata trying to divert attention: Yogi

**Kolkata:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday accused TMC of breaking the bust of social reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and said his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee is trying to divert attention by spreading canards against BJP.

"We condemn the incident that happened yesterday. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was one of greatest sons of India and a social reformer. It was the TMC which broke his bust and it now blaming BJP to divert the attention," Adityanath said at a press conference here.

The TMC and Mamata Banerjee Government are trying to divert attention from her wrong doings by using this incident, he said.

Asked whether President's Rule should be imposed in Bengal, Adityanath said the situation in the state is moving in the direction where there has to be central intervention.

He also urged the EC to take stern action against violence in the ongoing poll and said it should not remain a mute spectator. **PTI**

## Mamata, TMC leaders change Twitter, Fb DP with Vidyasagar's photo

**Kolkata:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and several top TMC leaders have changed their Facebook and Twitter display picture (DP) with photo of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar on Wednesday to protest the desecration of the bust of the noted reformer and key figure of the Bengal Renaissance.

Trinamool Congress's official profile on Twitter and Facebook was also changed with a picture of Vidyasagar.

Banerjee is scheduled to take out a protest rally on Wednesday to protest the smashing of the bust of the social reformer by alleged BJP activists in north Kolkata on Tuesday.

Launching a scathing attack on BJP president Amit Shah on Tuesday, Banerjee had said, "What does Amit Shah think of himself? Is he above everything? Is he God that no one can protest against him?"

Banerjee said this after supporters of the BJP and the TMC fought pitched battles on the streets of Kolkata during a roadshow by Shah.

A college named after Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, a key figure in the Bengal Renaissance, was ransacked and a bust of the 19th century social reformer shattered allegedly by BJP workers during the clashes.

The CPI(M) has also called for protest rallies against the incident.

The intellectuals of the city will take out a protest march from College street on Wednesday evening. **PTI**

## Neither BJP nor NDA will form govt at Centre: Azad

PTI ■ PATNA

Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Wednesday claimed that neither BJP nor NDA would form the government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections. Narendra Modi will not become prime minister for second time after the election as a non-NDA, non-BJP government will be formed at the Centre, he claimed.

"We are in the last phase of elections and I can say on the basis of my experience during campaigning across the country that neither BJP nor NDA is going to return to power at the Centre."

"Narendra Modi is also not going to become the prime minister for the second time... Non-NDA non-BJP government will be installed at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections," he told reporters here.

Azad said it will be good if there is a consensus on Congress leader's name for heading the government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha election results are out but "we are not going to make it an issue that we (Cong) will not let any other (leader) to become the PM, if it is not offered to us (Cong)."

The leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha said the sole objective of the Congress is to stop the NDA from forming the government at the Centre and installing a non-NDA government. BJP

would be reduced to 125 Lok Sabha seats, he claimed while refusing to divulge as how many seats Congress will win in the elections. Azad said the BJP has been "thoroughly exposed" after coming to power at the Centre in 2014 as it has fol-

lowed its ideology of "creating hatred and divide" in the society. He said the BJP government's policy and principle have been exposed as the party of "capitalists and industrialists". Azad alleged that the BJP government has followed a "pro-rich" policy. All the major sections of the society — farmers, youths, women and labourers are a depressed lot today because of the "wrong" policy of the Central government, he said, adding that youths were "promised" 10 crore jobs by Narendra Modi in five years but it instead snatched 4.73 crore jobs due to demonetisation and faulty implementation of GST.

Taking a swipe at PM's statement on science related issues, he said that "After seeing the PM's statement relating to science, I think I should commit suicide."

Azad condemned the smashing of the bust of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a noted philosopher and a key figure of Bengal Renaissance, during the clash between BJP and TMC supporters during Amit Shah's roadshow in Kolkata on Tuesday and said stern action should be taken against those responsible for it.



## Kamal Haasan seeks anticipatory bail in HC over 'Hindu extremist' remark

**Madurai (TN):** Makkal Needhi Maiam president and actor Kamal Haasan on Wednesday filed an anticipatory bail petition before the Madras High Court here, saying his speech was about Nathuram Godse only and not about Hindus as a whole.

Haasan moved the plea after the court earlier refused to quash an FIR against him, saying such pleas cannot be taken up as emergent petitions during the vacation and that if an anticipatory bail application was filed it could be taken up for hearing.

The FIR registered was against him over his "free India's first extremist was a Hindu" remark made during an election meeting in the Aravakurichi Assembly constituency on Sunday last.

In his plea, he said the offence quoted in the first information report (FIR) under Sections 153(A) and 295(A) of the Indian Penal Code required procedural safety under CrPC and the same had been overlooked.

Haasan said the complainant had not personally

witnessed his election campaign meeting and it had been clearly stated in the FIR.

Earlier, the High Court Bench here refused to entertain the MNM chief's petition seeking to quash the FIR registered against him.

Justice B Pugalendhi of the Madurai Bench said such pleas cannot be taken up as emergent petitions during the vacation.

"It is only based on hearsay and the source of information of the content of the FIR was not disclosed and the apprehensions expressed in the FIR were ill-founded. The FIR instead of establishing communal harmony had only created a life threat to the petitioner personally," the MNM chief submitted in his anticipatory bail application.

Haasan also submitted that a state minister had made a public statement about his speech and made a political issue out of it.

The actor-turned-politician contended that attempts were being made to malign his good name among the public. The petitioner submitted his statement about Nathuram Godse was not a distorted one. **PTI**

## 'BJP won't be able to prove majority after forming Govt'



**Mumbai:** NCP chief Sharad Pawar has predicted a 13-day Vajpayee regime-like fate for the BJP if it tries to form the next Government after the Lok Sabha poll results are announced on May 23.

Pawar also said he does not think the BJP will be able to prove majority in Lok Sabha even if invited to form the new Government.

Speaking to a Marathi TV channel, he said opposition leaders will come together in Delhi a day or two before the counting of votes and discuss giving a stable government at the Centre.

The BJP had emerged as the single largest party in 1996 general polls. On May 16, 1996 Atal Bihari Vajpayee took oath as the prime minister, only to resign 13 days later after he failed to get the majority on the floor of the House. **PTI**



College students raise slogans during a protest against the alleged rape of a three-year-old girl by a local in Bandipora, Jammu on Wednesday

## Violence during Shah's roadshow unfortunate: Raut

**Mumbai:** Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Wednesday slammed the West Bengal Government over the attack on BJP president Amit Shah's roadshow in Kolkata, describing the incident as "unfortunate" for the country's democracy.

Talking to reporters here, Raut, who is the Rajya Sabha MP, said there can be no restrictions on anyone to campaign anywhere in the country.

"West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee did not want Narendra Modi and Amit Shah in Bengal. Did anyone stop Mamata from campaigning in Gujarat?" Raut asked.

It is unfortunate that the statue of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a noted philosopher and a key figure of Bengal Renaissance, was desecrated, he said. **PTI**

## Cong rebel MLA's meeting with colleague fuels speculation in K'taka about desertion

**Bengaluru:** A meeting between rebel Congress legislator Ramesh Jarkiholi and his close confidant and law maker Mahesh Kumathalli on Wednesday created flutters within the grand old party with speculation about them quitting the party once again coming to the fore.

Ramesh Jarkiholi, who has been hobnobbing with the BJP for some time now, has threatened that he along with other MLAs would soon resign en masse from the Congress, which had caused fear among the ruling coalition leaders as it would trigger the numbers game in the assembly.

However, there were reports about Ramesh being deserted in his attempt to mobilise Congress MLAs to resign, as several legislators considered

close to him like Shrimant Patil of Kagawad and Mahesh Kumathalli and B Nagendra of Bellary have pledged their loyalty to the party.

But the Wednesday meeting between Jarkiholi and Kumathalli has rekindled the speculation that the MLAs are still together and working out a strategy post the Lok Sabha election results on May 23.

It is still not clear how many MLAs are in touch with Jarkiholi.

However, speaking to reporters after the meeting, Kumathalli said he had met Jarkiholi to discuss about water scarcity in the region and would remain in the party.

"There is no other meaning to this meeting... You please ask him (about him quitting Congress). As far as I'm concerned, neither me nor him

(Jarkiholi) will quit. All our decisions are one and will be the same even after the May 23 Lok Sabha poll results," he said.

Jarkiholi had on Tuesday held discussions with BJP leader and former MLA CP Yogeshwar.

Meanwhile, Congress Legislature Party leader Siddaramaiah opined that Ramesh Jarkiholi would not quit the Congress.

"According to me Ramesh Jarkiholi will not quit Congress..." he said. Jarkiholi and Kumathalli are among the MLAs against whom Congress has moved a petition, seeking disqualification under the anti-defection law to the Speaker for not attending crucial CLP meetings amid BJP's alleged attempts to topple the government and not attending the budget session of the assembly initially. **PTI**

## Arrest over Mamata meme latest in long line of similar rows

**Mumbai:** The arrest of BJP youth wing activist Priyanka Sharma for posting a morphed picture of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Facebook, is the latest in a series of such arrests in India.

Sharma was arrested for having shared a meme which had a morphed image of Banerjee's face on Priyanka Chopra's look at the recent Met Gala.

In 2012, a professor from Kolkata learnt the hard way that sharing TMC or Mamata Banerjee cartoons on social media can land one in jail.

Prof Ambikesh Mahapatra was arrested for forwarding a cartoon of Banerjee to his friends. A professor of chemistry, he was jailed for one night and assaulted by alleged TMC workers later while he was on his way back from work.

In Maharashtra, cartoonist Aseem Trivedi Trivedi was arrested in 2012 for depicting the national emblem and Parliament in "bad light" in his cartoons, triggering a public outcry.



emblem with lions replaced by blood-thirsty wolves, and another depicting the Parliament building in New Delhi as a huge toilet bowl.

He was charged with sedition and spent four days in jail. This triggered outrage from freedom of expression campaigners. His arrest sparked protests against the government, which was accused of using British colonial-era sedition laws to crack down on dissent.

Also in 2012, two girls

were arrested in Maharashtra over their Facebook post questioning the shutdown in Mumbai for Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray's funeral with the comment also leading to an attack on the clinic of an uncle of one of them by Sena activists.

The girls - Shaheen Dhada and Renu - were sent to 14-day judicial custody but granted bail within hours after they furnished personal bonds.

Dhada was arrested after she posted comments on the

social networking site opposing the shutdown in Mumbai, saying one should not observe bandh for Thackeray's funeral. Renu, Dhada's friend, was arrested for 'liking' the post.

In Tamil Nadu, folk singer and anti-alcohol campaigner Shiva Rajakoma Comrade Kovan was arrested in 2015 and charged with sedition for allegedly criticising then chief minister J Jayalalitha on the issue of prohibition in one of his songs. **PTI**

## Kharge should have been made CM long time ago: HDK

**Bengaluru:** Amid the 'Siddaramaiah for CM' clamour in Karnataka, Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy has said Congress veteran M Mallikarjun Kharge should have been given the position a long time ago and "injustice" was done to the leader.

His remarks come amid a bitter spat between the leaders of the ruling coalition partners Congress and JD(S) to make Siddaramaiah the State Chief Minister once again.

But the comments gave fresh ammunition to the BJP to target the alliance government. BJP state unit chief B S Yeddyurappa asked Kumaraswamy of the JD(S) to immediately vacate the post for Kharge, the leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha.

Kharge, a nine-time MLA and two-term Lok Sabha member who has never tasted electoral defeat, termed Kumaraswamy's remarks as "election-time statement."

Addressing a meeting in Chincholi assembly segment for a by-election attended by Kharge on Tuesday,



Kumaraswamy said the Congress leader should have become chief minister long ago.

"Mallikarjun Kharge should have become the chief minister long ago. I feel injustice has been done to him. I would like to clearly say Kharge has not been given recognition for the work he has done (for his party)," Kumaraswamy said, adding there has been a "fault somewhere".

Kharge could have become the CM in the current coalition government but he said he will abide by the Congress leadership's decision. Kumaraswamy revealed. Latching onto the remarks,

Yeddyurappa asked Kumaraswamy to resign and make Kharge CM.

"He (Kumaraswamy) has said he (Kharge) should have become CM long ago. To make his dream come true, let him resign tomorrow itself and make Kharge the chief minister," the BJP leader told reporters in Kalaburagi Wednesday.

Senior BJP legislator Basanagouda Patil Yatnal termed Kumaraswamy's remarks a conspiracy aimed at creating a rift between Siddaramaiah and Kharge to continue in power.

"If he wants to make Kharge (CM), he can give up

the seat for him. It is kind of a drama (by Kumaraswamy)," he said, adding no one, even in Congress, was interested in making Kharge CM.

Yeddyurappa, however, claimed the Congress-JD(S) government would fall due to a rift between both parties.

"I have never said we will topple the government. We are not making attempts. JD(S) and Congress are fighting each other and because of their differences, the government will collapse," he said.

Siddaramaiah, the coalition coordination committee chairman, has termed the growing clamour within Congress to make him the chief minister as an expression of supporters' affection, but said he still stands by his word to not contest the next assembly election.

Chincholi assembly seat will go to bypolls on May 19. Subhash Rathod is the Congress candidate there.

Kharge has been elected twice from Gulbarga Lok Sabha constituency and has been a central cabinet minister during Congress rule in the past. **PTI**

IN TALKS WITH BJP

# Stalin denies TN BJP chief's claim

Says, will quit politics if true

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The BJP in Tamil Nadu seems to have played into the hands of the DMK by entering into a wordy duel with the DMK chief MK Stalin. A statement by Tamilisai Sounderajan, the State unit chief of the BJP, has put the Hindutwa party in Tamil Nadu in an unenviable position vis-a-vis the DMK.

Speaking to media at Thoothukudi on Tuesday, said that the DMK was in talks with the BJP leadership for a possible post-poll alliance. She was referring to a statement made by Tamil Nadu Minister D Jayakumar about Stalin's Monday meeting with Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao at Chennai. Jayakumar had alleged that the DMK and Stalin were 'well known for their political opportunism'. The Tamil Nadu BJP chief took over from where Jayakumar left and made the 'startling disclosure' which offended the DMK chief. "I

will quit politics if Sounderajan proves that I held discussions with the BJP. Is she ready to quit politics if she fails to prove her claim?" challenged the DMK president. Stalin made it known on Wednesday too that he was committed to form a 'secular Government at the Centre' under the able leadership of Rahul Gandhi and there is no change in the stance of the DMK. A senior BJP leader in Tamil Nadu feigned ignorance when asked about the statement made by Sounderajan. Stalin has been vitriolic in his attacks on the Prime Minister

and the BJP since he took over as party president in August 2018 after the demise of his father M Krunaidhi. Tamil Nadu is witnessing a crucial round of by election to four assembly constituencies on May 19. The DMK is hoping that it may be able to pull down the Edappadi Palaniswamy-led AIADMK government if it manages to win at least 20 of the assembly seats out of the 22 where by polls are being held. The BJP leaders and the Hindu activists in Tamil Nadu earned the wrath of the film fraternity in the State for their reported charges against film

actor Kamal Haasan who alleged the other day that Nathuram Godse was the first Hindu terrorist in the country. The actor who heads the outfit Makkal Neethi Mayam has been provided with additional police security by the State government to prevent any kind of attack on him by Hindu elements. "The statement, which would have gone unnoticed by the general public, was given the pride of place by the Hindutwa forces because of their over zealous reaction," said Manikombu Gopalakrishnan, film lyricist and script writer.

# No cognisable offence against Rahul Gandhi, court told

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Wednesday submitted its report in a Delhi Court in which they said that Congress president Rahul Gandhi did not commit any cognisable offence. Earlier a complaint was filed against Rahul for using derogatory remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In an action taken report (ATR) which was submitted before Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Samar Vishal, the police said Gandhi allegedly made the defamatory statement against the Prime Minister for which a suit may be filed. It told the court that "no police action was made out." "As per the contents of the complaint no cognisable offence is made out. Rahul Gandhi made the defamatory statement against PM Narendra Modi for which a defamatory suit may be

filed by the individual against whom the statement was made," the police said in the action taken report. The court had on April 26 directed the police to file an ATR on a plea seeking registration of FIR against the Congress president. The complaint, filed by advocate Joginder Tuli, has sought direction to the police to register an FIR against Gandhi for allegedly making derogatory remarks in 2016 against PM Modi, accusing him of hiding behind the blood of soldiers and cashing in on their sacrifice.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**VIOLENCE ROBS...** O'Brien also accused Central forces in Bengal of supporting the BJP in the national elections. "Central forces in Bengal have started a whisper campaign asking people to vote for BJP," alleged O'Brien. One of the videos shows a group of men purportedly trying to break down the gate of the Vidya Sagar college and enter the campus by jumping over its walls. "It is a childish argument to ask who had the keys to the gate? The video establishes beyond doubt who desecrated the statue," Derek O'Brien said, claiming his party has as many as 44 videos to support its claims. The party also showed a video and WhatsApp message allegedly sent by a BJP supporter asking people to come to Shah's roadshow with rods and arms to fight the TMC and police.

chairperson on May 23 or May 24," added the AICC source. **MONSOON TO DELAY...** "This year, the statistical model forecast suggests that the monsoon onset over Kerala is likely to be slightly delayed," the IMD said. "The southwest monsoon onset is likely to set over Kerala on June 6 with a model error of plus or minus 4 days. Conditions are becoming favourable for advance of southwest monsoon over the southern part of Andaman Sea, Nicobar Islands and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal during May 18-19," it added. The delay in the arrival of monsoon may not necessarily have an impact on the overall amount of rainfall. Last year, monsoon came early but the rain was "below-normal". Similarly, in 2017, the monsoon arrived in Kerala on May 30, but the overall rainfall was 95 per cent of the long period average (LPA), which falls under the below normal category. To forecast the monsoon arrival, the IMD uses a customised weather model which, it stated, had been wrong only once in 2015 since 2014. This model crunches 6 meteorological parameters: the minimum temperatures over northwest India; the pre-monsoon rainfall peak over south Peninsula; the outgoing long-wave radiation (OLR) over the South China Sea; the lower tropospheric zonal wind over southeast Indian Ocean; the upper tropospheric zonal wind over the east equatorial Indian Ocean; and the outgoing long-wave radiation (OLR) over the southwest Pacific region. The model has a built-in error margin of four days --- a June 6 onset can mean any day from June 2-10. According to IMD, the onset is announced when certain criteria is fulfilled anytime after May 10. If at least 60 per cent of the 14 designated meteorological stations in Kerala and Lakshadweep report at least 2.5 mm of rain for two consecutive days after May 10 - and a few other conditions relating to wind and temperature are also fulfilled - the onset of monsoon is said to have taken place.

getting monsoon rainfall between May 15 and May 20, and the Kerala coast generally begins to have monsoon rainfall sometime in the last week of May. However, if the prescribed conditions are not met, the onset is not declared. The northward progression of monsoon, after reaching the Kerala coast, depends on a lot of local factors, including the creation of low pressure areas. It is possible, therefore, that despite the onset happening late, other parts of the country start getting rains on time. Generally, the monsoon reaches Kerala within 10 days of reaching the Andamans. After its onset over Kerala, the monsoon spreads over the entire country by July 15. In its initial forecast released in April, the IMD had predicted a near-normal rainfall with an LPA of 96 per cent, which falls on the border of 'below-normal' and 'normal' rainfall category. On the other hand, the Skymet has predicted a 'below-normal' rainfall with an LPA of 93 per cent.

**SONIA INVITES...** Besides Chandrababu Naidu, who has expressed his keenness in Congress-led Government after leaving Modi Government two years ago, other definite parties are NCP (Sharad Pawar), DMK (MK Stalin), TMC and RJD. Chandrababu Naidu had last week met Rahul Gandhi, asking him to call a meeting of all Opposition parties two days before the result is announced so that all Opposition leaders can regroup and discuss strategy. While KCR has been making moves for a non-BJP, non-Congress third front, recently he indicated that he would be open to joining the grand alliance, but would not give the drivers' seat to the grand old party. "Sonia Gandhi has been in regular touch with Pawar, have called Mamata, Stalin, Left leaders personally during the last couple of days while party senior leaders are in touch with BSP-SP alliance leaderships, TRS, BJD and even Jagannathan Reddy's YSRCP," said the party leader. UPA allies will begin meeting informally post the last phase of polling on May 19. "There will be several meetings conducted between different regional players to discuss possibilities post May 19. And then, once the result comes in, a joint meeting will be chaired by UPA

**DIDI TOOK REVENGE...** A BJP delegation led by senior Ministers Prakash Javadekar, Nirmala Sitharaman, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and BJP media head and RS member Anil Baluni met vice-president M Venkaiah Naidu to register their protest against incidents of violence in Bengal. Hitting out at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Shah sought to ask as why Bengal alone was witnessing violence and not other States in the rest of the India where he had travelled for his campaigning and alleged that it was because of the TMC. "If BJP were to inspire violence all States would have been affected by it, it is because of the TMC that Bengal experiencing violence," he said. He alleged that stature of Vidyasagar was broken by TMC workers inside the college compound. Shah said BJP workers were on the road and gate of the college was intact suggesting that gate would have broken if BJP had attacked from outside. "How can BJP get the key of the room?, all evidence point that TMC goondas broke the stature to save party from its poll defeat," the BJP president claimed.

# BSP will join hands with BJP after results: Ex-Mayawati aide

**Ballia (UP):** Congress leader Naseemuddin Siddiqui, who was with the BSP until last year, claimed on Wednesday that Mayawati will be under so much pressure after the election results that she will join hands with the BJP. Once the Bahujan Samaj Party chief goes with the Bharatiya Janata Party, Siddiqui said the Samajwadi Party would be left with no other option but to come along with the Congress in the interest of country and Uttar Pradesh. "The BSP supremo had joined hands with the BJP in the past. And after May 23, there will be such pressure on her that she will become a part of the BJP," Siddiqui, who had revolted against Mayawati and joined the Congress last year,

told reporters here. "There is nothing impossible in politics, I have known her for 33 years. I know her more than she knows herself," the Congress leader said. The former minister in the Mayawati government said he still respects her a lot, but there was no possibility of returning to the BSP. On the chances of Mayawati becoming the prime minister, Siddiqui said no such announcement had been made by anyone. "Even alliance partner Samajwadi Party and the RLD had not said anything on this. Akhlesh Yadav has only said that the next prime minister will be from Uttar Pradesh. Then where is the question of her becoming the Prime Minister?" he asked. PTI

# Guj promises action over blocking of Dalit wedding processions

**Ahmedabad:** In the wake of some incidents of Dalit wedding processions being stopped by some groups in parts of Gujarat recently, the BJP government in the state Wednesday assured to take stern action against such elements. The Congress, however, said that such "hollow promises" by the government fails to provide "justice" to the Dalits. Talking to reporters in Gandhinagar, Minister of State for Home, Pradeepsinh Jadeja, accused the Congress of creating a rift between Dalits and other communities. He was referring to an incident in Lhor village in Mehsana, where some local leaders, including the sarpanch, gave a call of social boycott after a Dalit groom took out his procession riding on a horse two weeks ago. "The Gujarat government is always with the Dalits. They

also have the right to take out wedding processions like others. Our government is also concerned about some recent incidents. I want to assure you that stern action will be taken against those who were behind these incidents," Jadeja said. "Some people are trying to create a rift between communities for their political gains. In Lhor village, we have already arrested five persons, including the sarpanch, for announcing social boycott of Dalits. Notably, the sarpanch is a Congress supporter. Another accused is a local Congress delegate," the minister added. Jadeja also urged people from all walks of life to work with the government to establish and preserve social harmony in the society. Slamming the BJP government over this issue, Gujarat Congress in-charge, Rajeev Satav, claimed that the govern-

ment only gives hollow promises instead of taking action. "Atrocities on Dalits in Gujarat have increased in recent years. After every incident, the state government gives hollow promises of stern action. However, Dalits never get justice," Satav told reporters. "This government has failed to maintain law and order. The administration is being run through remote control from Delhi. This is the reason why such atrocities are on the rise," he said. Meanwhile, BJP's Dalit MLA and film actor, Hitu Kanodia, appealed to the people to treat everyone equally. "Though this is the 21st century, we are still stuck in such issues. This is matter of shame and pain. We all need to change our mindset to establish harmony and a sense of brotherhood. I request all to treat everyone equally," Kanodia said. PTI

# Will make sedition law more stringent, says Rajnath

**Mirzapur (UP):** Hitting out at the Congress for promising to abolish sedition law in its poll manifesto, Union Minister Rajnath Singh has said the BJP will make it more stringent. "Congress talks about abolishing sedition law but on coming back to power, the BJP will make it so stringent that no one would dare to act against it," the Home Minister said addressing an election rally at BLJ ground here in favour of alliance partner Apna Dal's Anupriya Patel on Tuesday. "Our forces finished off terrorists in air strikes after the Pulwama attack but the Congress people are asking for the number of those killed. Braves do not count bodies, vultures do," he said. PTI



Police personnel inspect the site of a suspected grenade blast that took place near the Assam State Zoo in Guwahati on Wednesday

# Rajasthan politicians spar on Twitter over revision in school textbooks

**Jaipur:** The ruling Congress and the BJP on Wednesday sparred on Twitter over the changes in school textbooks, including the removal of a picture suggesting self-immolation under the practices of Sati and Jauhar. The Congress Government led by Ashok Gehlot has tasked a committee to make changes in the textbooks introduced by the previous BJP Government. The prefix "veer" has now been removed from Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's name in Class 10 social science books. He has now been described as someone who "plotted" the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and furnished an apology for clemency from the British. Similarly, a picture suggesting self-immolation under Sati or Jauhar was replaced with that of a hill fort in a Class 8 English textbook. "The practice of Sati is banned and Jauhar has no connection with chapters of English. It wasn't clarified if the picture was related to Sati or Jauhar," School Education Minister Govind Singh Dotsara told PTI. On Tuesday, BJP leader and member of the erstwhile Jaipur royal family, Diya Kumari, had entered into a war of words on

**THE PREFIX "VEER" HAS NOW BEEN REMOVED FROM VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR'S NAME IN CLASS 10 SOCIAL SCIENCE BOOKS**

Twitter on the issue. "As far as the matter of 'Rani Sati' is concerned, we cannot tell our girls to do Jauhar. The custom is banned in the country," Dotsara wrote on Twitter. "The history of Rajasthan was golden and will remain the same. The only difference is that we are correcting the changes made by the previous BJP government, which treated the Education Department an experimental laboratory," Dotsara added. Reacting sharply to it, Diya Kumari tweeted Wednesday, "You are saying that we cannot teach girls about Jauhar. I wish you could understand the difference between Sati and Jauhar." She accused the government of covering up the Alwar

gang rape while expressing concern about women by "changing the history of heroic personalities". The former BJP MLA also accused the minister of disrespecting Maharana Pratap and Savarkar. "Maharana Pratap was great and will remain so. We have described his valour in a better way. As far as the question with regard to Sarvarkarji pertains, the change has been made based on evidences by the committee of educationists," Dotsara tweeted. On speculation about the removal of a reference to demonetisation from a Class 12 textbook, he said it is up to the committee of educationists to decide. "We had wanted its removal but it is for the panel to decide. It is my personal view, why to mention a scheme that has failed," Dotsara said. The previous BJP government had introduced the reference to demonetisation in the political science book of Class 12, terming it a historic step against black money. Meanwhile, the Sri Rajput Karni Sena and the Sri Rashtriya Rajput Karni Sena have threatened to protest if any changes are to "historical facts". PTI

# Shut since Kumbh, Kanpur tannery owners await orders to reopen

**Kanpur:** Qazi Nayyer Jamal rides his motorcycle to Jajmau, an industrial suburb of Kanpur along the Ganges, from his home in the city area, passing through several old tanneries, to reach the leather factory his father started about 50 years ago. It's closed for three months, still he goes there often. Jamal's Makhdoom Enterprises is among several tanneries in Jajmau which were shut for the Kumbh Mela, and he fears they are likely to remain so. "We were ordered to shut our tanneries for three months --- from December to March --- for Kumbh. We did it out of respect for the Hindu festival. But we never thought we would be left in the lurch after the Mela, since no order has come to reopen the units," the 60-year-old said. Tanneries pump out highly polluted water into the Ganga river and this was a major reason they were ordered to close ahead of the Mela. But many families are dependent on the local industry that earned Kanpur the moniker of "Leather City". "We have followed all

norms for discharge of effluent into the river but authorities made a scapegoat out of us, portraying us as the main reason behind the pollution of the river," Jamal said. The leather industry in Kanpur began about 150 years ago under the British Raj. Later, Indians entered the trade and it flourished, drawing buyers from far away places, including Europe and the United States. Mohammed Arshi, 38 and vice-president of city-based Leather Industries Welfare Association (LIWA) of about 125 small and big tanneries, said Kanpur is a famed leather city and India exports leather products --- like belts, shoes and horse saddles --- to Europe and the US, besides domestic consumption by the armed forces and civilians. All that is likely to stop soon, he said. Arshi said the industry has been "targeted" as tannery-owners are not really seen as a vote bank by the ruling or other parties, adding the uncertainty has led to importers moving to other markets in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Vietnam. PTI

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 IBRD Loan no. 8725-IN  
 No: 2849/IV/T-30

**Abridged Version**  
 Invitation for Bids (IFB)  
 (Goods and Related Services)  
 01/NHP/UP/SW/RTD/AS/CE (BETWA) 2019-20  
 Package No. NHP-2019-2019-UPSW-320396-GO-NCB-DE  
 (E-Procurement)

**Subject:** for supply, installation, testing, commissioning, operation and maintenance of real time data acquisition system (RTDAS) for selected reservoirs and rivers/ streams for surface water sector in Bundelkhand and integrate with data center located at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh UNDER NATIONAL HYDROLOGY PROJECT(NHP)  
 (Two-Envelope Bidding Process with e-Procurement)

Date of Issue/Publishing	24-05-2019
Last Date and Time for Uploading of IFB	24-06-2019 Upto 15.00 Hours
Date and Time of Opening of IFB	24-06-2019 from 15.30 Hours
Bid document fee	Rs. 1,000.00 + 18% GST (Rupees One Thousand one hundred eighty only)
Bid Security. (Earnest Money Deposit)	Rs. 19,81,000.00 (Rupees Nineteen Lacs Eighty One Thousand only)
Period of Completion (from the date of signing of contract)	9 Months + 5 years

Interested parties may view and download the IFB with Bidding Document containing the detailed terms and condition free of cost from the website http://etender.up.nic.in  
 (K. B. Lal)  
 Superintending Engineer,  
 IV Circle Irrigation Works, Jhansi.  
 Office phone number-0510-233358

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, ALLAHABAD**  
**Public Notification**

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of North Central Railway, that the 132 KV, 50HZ, AC Over Head Traction Wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date, the over head traction line shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said over head line.

S.N.	Section	KM/Location/Chainage	Date of Energization
1.	Shifting of 132KV Railway Transmission line in connection with construction of ROB between CNB-TDL section over Allahabad Division of N.C. Railway	1199/21-23, LC no. 46 C Tower no. 548 to 561 Village- Nagal Kehari, Karauna Distt.-Firozabad (U.P.)	30.05.2019

65019 (R)  
 North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPNRCR

## Ocean of darkness

The vandalism of Vidyasagar's bust is way beyond political point-scoring, it is a demolition of the idea of India



Had revival of the true Hindu consciousness been the real intention and the mind had indeed perceived its sacredness, then nobody would have smashed the statue of Bengal's Renaissance man, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, in a seat of learning and knowledge. Perhaps the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad students, who represent the youth wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), had not been schooled in what he stood for as they rampaged the Vidyasagar College in Kolkata during inter-party campaign clashes. For far

from being a polymath, he was a Hindu first whose mastery of Sanskrit texts and Oriental philosophy is probably still unsurpassed. It was because of his deep-rooted understanding that he could respond to the need of adapting tradition to evolving times and ensure its continuity, one where religion could be lived seamlessly rather than seeming like an imposition, particularly in the colonial era when Western thought and scientific temperament were making inroads. His liberalism was home-grown, applicable and relevant to society. He gave Bengalis a reason for being, simplifying the language and preparing a primer that is still followed in all homes, revamped the education system, avidly coopted girls and the most backward into the school system and was the foremost champion of women's empowerment by advocating widow remarriage. A reformist, who remained till the end a crusader of Indic civilisational values and died working among Santhal tribals, he was *the man* among men as Rabindranath Tagore put it. Vidyasagar College, which he founded in 1872, was India's first private college run by Indians, taught by Indians and financed by Indians. If the idea of India is what we need to be reminded about, then no claimant to that legacy would destroy his statue or attack a centre of learning professing his values.

That said, there's no excuse for vandalising any public property for something as routine as electioneering. On this count, both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress, which has grown out of a deeply entrenched confrontational politics in Bengal, are guilty of crossing the line. In a democracy, all kinds of voices have a right to present their argument without going to extremes of posturing. BJP president Amit Shah, whose roadshow was allegedly spoilt and violence provoked by sloganeering Trinamool Congress activists, must realise that dissenters are always there in a public rally and a sentiment cannot be manufactured. Haven't we heard shouts of "Modi, Modi" at many rallies addressed by Congress and Opposition leaders without descending into chaos? Why single out Bengal then? And to assign the blame to the ruling Trinamool itself, saying it hired goons, is preposterous to say the least. Even the Trinamool's arch rival, the Left, didn't buy into this argument and lambasted the BJP. Finally, College Street is not just a shrine to education, it is the efflorescence of a cultural movement. College Square has provided a platform for every school of thought ever since it developed as a hallowed centre of learning with a cluster of Bengal's most prestigious colleges and universities. It took off with the Young Bengal movement under Henry Derozio, a free-thinking radicalism that laid the template of the Bengal Renaissance. Many of India's icons, whose legacies all parties love to appropriate — Swami Vivekananda and Subhas Chandra Bose in particular — were shaped here. It was the unacknowledged forum for dissent and anti-establishment thought from which the Left movement took off. Of course, the Left did try to damage the spirit of College Square by unionising and indoctrinating the entire body of students at these institutions. The Trinamool inherited this heavily politicised legacy and tried to poach on the autonomy of thought, too, but never went overboard. It did stop rallies at College Square, saying it hurt students' schedule, while critics saw it as a way of muzzling dissent. Still, it allowed a silent protest movement against this declaration and reeled in its adventurism. But the ignorant will always be blissfully unaware and consider an educated mind its biggest enemy.

## Slipping on oil

India has bought some time on volume of imports from Iran but is caught between it and the US



Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif may have looked for some middle ground on India's oil purchases from his country despite US sanctions but we are in no position to commit. Although External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj conveniently bought some time, saying a decision would be taken by the new government, fact is the oil crisis is staring at us. And we are yet to draw up a strategy to counter the Trump administration's decision to cancel waivers from Iran sanctions to countries doing business with it. Given the

volume of trade, not one but a multi-pronged solution is the need of the hour. India imports over three-quarters of the oil it consumes, much of it from Iran, even after decreasing its imports from that country. India was the second biggest buyer of Iranian crude oil after China. Which is why Zarif, by reiterating that India was a key strategic partner for his country, hoped that we would give a commitment on continuing to source at least a small part of our oil imports. We may not have committed to zero import but the fact is we have to factor the worst possibility considering even marginal business could bring our banking, insurance and shipping sectors under sanction. Besides, India would have to demonstrably humour the US in return for its strategic support during the Balakot airstrikes and the UN listing of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. The US is already cornering us on trade tariffs, though not as bludgeoningly as it does with China.

Keeping both sides happy while getting a practicable deal is a tough sell. Workarounds like the one many European nations have proposed of a barter arrangement that doesn't involve dollar payments or making payment in rupees via escrow accounts are on the table. The US, meanwhile, has upped the ante saying it can't ensure the sale of its oil to India at cheaper rates as the commodity is controlled by private companies. This will have a cascading effect on the oil bill as Iran was giving us a discount. And though the US has assured that it is working with countries like Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) as alternate supply sources for affected countries, there is no guarantee that those deals will come with the same benefits. Of course, both Saudi Arabia and UAE have warmed up to India significantly now and could accommodate some of our interests. However, following the attacks on Saudi oil carriers and the US implying Tehran's hand in them, a confrontational scenario is rapidly building up in the Middle East which could impact prices. Securing ties with Iran vis-a-vis the US is a delicate issue though India has walked that path already, managing to get the Chabahar port project outside the purview of sanctions. But now it needs to fork out a solution where it doesn't look like giving in to the Americans or alienating friendly Iranians. That tightrope walk is an unenviable task but one that will test our new leadership.

## Widen judicial access

For the court processes to be more meaningful, effective and credible, the idea of setting up both regional and functional Benches must be explored



ADITYA MANUBARWALA

The Congress, in its manifesto for the 2019 general elections, proposed the setting up of a National Court of Appeals (NCA), which would act as an intermediary body between the Supreme Court and the various High Courts in the country to hear routine appeals in civil and criminal matters from the latter. The NCA, as proposed by the Congress, will sit in multiple Benches of three judges each in six locations. Further, the party also proposed to move a Constitutional amendment to restrict the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to only those cases that involve interpretation of the Constitution and adjudication of cases of national importance. This article aims to interpret the legal matrix surrounding the Congress' proposal of the NCA.

The setting up of a National Court of Appeal will require an amendment to Article 130 of the Constitution of India, which would, in fact, be tantamount to tampering with the basic Constitutional framework of the Supreme Court. Such an amendment would also divest the apex court of its extraordinary powers with regard to hearing appeals. The same was also stated by the Ministry of Law and Justice while rejecting the aforementioned request way back in 2014. As such, the issue of whether or not such a court should be established shall remain outside the purview of this article. Nevertheless, the Congress' manifesto has opened up the larger issue of whether or not decentralising the Supreme Court is Constitutionally feasible and practically desirable.

In 1950, when the Supreme Court came into being, it consisted of the Chief Justice and seven judges. It worked for four hours a day, 28 days a year. Today, with tremendous growth in population and increase in demand, the top court has a sanctioned strength of 31 judges but pendency of cases has increased from 690 in 1950 to a staggering 61,300 cases as of March 2015. This has made it one of the most overburdened Constitutional courts in the world.

This situation may be attributed in no small part to the Supreme Court itself as it deviated from its primary function of adjudicating cases of Constitutional significance and, thus, converted itself into a regular court of appeals. The apex court was never intended to be a regular court of appeal and the extraordinary jurisdiction for granting special leave was conferred upon it so that it could interfere whenever it felt that the law had not been enunciated properly by the High Courts or lower judiciary and where it was necessary to correct the position of the law.

This conversion had a cataclysmic impact on the justice delivery system, owing to excessive backlog of cases.



Frequent adjournments due to the geographical concentration of the Supreme Court in the capital city has only added to the pre-existing backlog of cases.

Pendency apart, the Law Commission, in its 229th report, also pointed out the logistical difficulties poor litigants have to face while travelling all the way to Delhi to appear for their respective cases. Further, litigants regularly request their advocates in the High Courts to appear in the Supreme Court, resulting in multiplication of costs in terms of hotel and travel expenses. To quote the Law Commission's report, "...huge amount is spent on travel; bringing one's own lawyer, who has handled the matter in the High Court, adds to the cost; adjournment becomes prohibitive, costs get multiplied..."

Article 130 of the Constitution of India states, "The Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places as the Chief Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time, appoint."

A bare reading of the aforementioned article will make it clear that the Supreme

“  
**THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA HAS BEEN A ROBUST INSTITUTION, WHICH REMAINS UNPARALLELED IN THE SERVICE THAT IT HAS RENDERED TO THE NATION. THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE CONSTITUTION NEVER ENVISAGED THE SUPREME COURT TO BE GEOGRAPHICALLY CONCENTRATED IN DELHI**  
 ”

Court can sit not only in Delhi but also in any other place. Moreover, this view was also endorsed by Justice PN Bhagwati in a 1986 judgement. The Law Commission itself had stated, "If Article 130 is liberally interpreted, no Constitutional amendment may be required for setting up Cassation Benches in four regions and a Constitution Bench at Delhi. Action by the Chief Justice of India with the President's approval may be enough. It may also be noted that under Article 130, the Chief Justice of India acts as a *persona designata* and is not required to consult any other authority/person. Only presidential approval is necessary. However, in case this liberal interpretation of Article 130 is not feasible, suitable legislation/Constitutional amendment may be enacted to do the needful."

Thus, the Constitutional scheme of things provides for the setting up of Benches on both a geographical and functional basis. Moreover, a liberal interpretation of Article 130 makes it clear that no Constitutional amendment would be required in order to set up such Benches. As such, setting up regional benches of

the Supreme Court, which may deal with appeals with a Constitutional Bench in Delhi, is the best way forward.

Many legal experts feel that the setting up of regional Benches will dilute the apex court's Constitutional superiority. However, decentralisation — being both functional and structural in nature — with only one Bench in Delhi dealing with Constitutional matters must put to rest all such concerns.

Thus, the setting up of regional benches will in no way dilute the finality or superiority of the apex court's decisions. The Supreme Court of India has been a robust institution, which remains unparalleled in the service that it has rendered to the nation. The founding fathers of the Constitution never envisaged the Supreme Court to be geographically concentrated in Delhi. With the rising number of cases and practical difficulties being faced by poor litigants, it is about time that the idea of setting up both regional and functional Benches be explored in earnest.

(The writer is serving as law clerk-cum-research assistant at the Supreme Court of India)

## SOUNDBITE

Mallikarjun Kharge should have become the chief minister long ago. I feel injustice has been done to him.



Karnataka Chief Minister —HD Kumaraswamy

I am not going to get into politics. It doesn't seem like a very logical place for me to be able to apply what skills I have.



Actor —George Clooney

It is foolish to believe in superiority of civilisations as countries cannot go into isolation and close their doors from the rest of the world.



Chinese President —Xi Jinping

Don't you know there is a person in India, Narendra Modi? Go and ask him questions. No, he doesn't talk to you (media) as he is a coward.



Congress leader —Mani Shankar Aiyar

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Western bias

Sir — This refers to the article, "The intolerance of Time" by Sandhya Jain (May 14). As long as one can remember, the Western media, particularly British and American, has always been biased towards India. Earlier, they had the Kashmir issue to present our country in poor light. However, with changing times, it was hoped that the Western media would have looked at Modi's performance objectively but some leading magazines like *The Economist* of London and *Time* of New York have not lagged behind in picking holes.

M Ratan  
Via email

### Prepare for next game

Sir — This refers to the report, "Mumbai pulls IPL off in cliffhanger" (May 13). Frankly speaking, the annual summer *tamasha* got a thrilling end as the 12th edition of the Indian Premier League concluded with a last-ball finish. Mumbai Indians (MI) defeated Chennai Super

### Dark clouds hover over airstrikes

Coined by the United States Navy way back in 1940, RADAR — an acronym for "radio detection and ranging" — uses radio waves to detect range, angle, or velocity of objects. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently claimed that he had forced the Air Force commanders to revisit their apprehensions about the heavy rain and dark clouds hampering the air strike by advancing the idea that the very rain clouds could be used as a cover against detection. He was seemingly convinced about the inherent "stealth" feature of the clouds that could deflect or absorb signals from RADAR.

It seems the Indian Air Force, which is all set to fly the modern Rafale jets shortly, agreed to his suggestion readily — despite the bad weather and visibility — and the factors that could have actually helped it register success faded into the background. Interestingly, the damage caused from the air strikes still remains a mystery. According to the Constitution, the President is the supreme commander of the armed forces. Bombing a



target deep inside an enemy territory couldn't have happened without his knowledge and approval. It is unclear if the President had been briefed adequately about the risk of flying through the dark rain clouds and if he knew about the possibility of poor visibility affecting the operation and the climacteric suggestions of the Prime Minister.

Haridasan Rajan  
Kozhikode

dramas, musicals and comedies made her a top star in the 1950s and 60s. Day will be best remembered as one of the world's most loved and honoured women, who was a true voice of the voiceless. She championed the cause of animal welfare vigorously.

Ramesh G Jethwani  
Bangalore

### End trade standoff

Sir — The trade war between the US and China has been escalating and will only bring the world economy down. The end result will be that neither of the players will stand to gain and the world will be staring at another recession. US' new-found love for protectionism is a direct blow to others. Redefining trade relations, bilateral and multilateral, among nations should take place with an effective overseeing body. Streaks of unilateralism and protectionism must be discouraged in the larger interest of the world economy.

Shivansh  
Via email

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

**FIRST COLUMN**

## Happy ending to a war? No chance

Trump must realise that an attack on Iran will bring huge death and destruction not only to Iranians but neighbouring areas as well



GWYNNE DYER

US President Donald Trump is well-known for his desire to cut American military commitments overseas. Indeed, it is one of his most attractive characteristics. But his attention span is short, he plays a lot of golf and he does not have the knack for choosing good advisors. His main domestic advisors on the Middle East are Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton — all hawks on Iran. His closest allies in the region itself are Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, both of whom can wrap him around their little fingers. And they both want the United States to attack Iran for them.

Trump doesn't want a war with Iran. He has an extra-strength version of the usual Washington obsession with Iran, as irrational and ineradicable as the parallel obsession with Cuba — the US will forgive and forget anything except humiliation — but he imagines Iran can be bullied and bluffed into submission. His 'advisors' are not that naive. This is not to say that Pence, Pompeo or even Bolton prefers war to any other outcome of the current confrontation. They would rather see the sanctions they have imposed on Iran, which are strangling the economy and causing great hardship, lead to a popular uprising and regime change. Fat chance.

It's the ever-popular moral mistake. We would never yield to such blackmail because our cause is just and our will is strong. They will crumble before the same threats because they are weak and they must secretly know they are in the wrong. But if the Iranians perversely refuse to overthrow their Government, then PP&B would accept war as the next-best outcome. Bolton might actually welcome it and may already be involved in manipulating the intelligence to justify such a war in the same way he did in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. (He called a rather peculiar early-morning meeting at CIA headquarters last week.)

Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, some players in Iran now appear to be pushing back against American pressure. They are probably hardliners associated with the not-so-loyal Opposition to President Hassan Rouhani's "moderate" Government (moderate in the sense that he doesn't want nukes and does want trade with the West) and they may just have given the American war hawks something to work with. If push came to shove, Iran's one available counter-weight to overwhelming US military strength would be to threaten the tanker traffic that carries 20 per cent of the world's crude oil and LNG out of the Gulf. The 'choke point' is the Strait of Hormuz, between Iran's south coast and the United Arab Emirates, where the navigation channels narrow to three nautical miles wide in each direction.

Last week, there was a 'sabotage attack' on four merchant ships at anchor off the UAE port of Fujairah, just outside the Strait of Hormuz, where tankers often wait to be refuelled. Two at least were Saudi tankers. Something holed all four ships at the waterline and the instant suspicion was that some Iranian group is reminding everybody that Iran can close down the Strait if it is attacked. Or at least that it could do enough damage to drive insurance rates on cargoes transiting the Strait into the stratosphere. But it might not be an Iranian group at all. It could be an American or Israeli or Saudi intelligence operation seeking to create a pretext for a US attack on Iran (like the 'Gulf of Tonkin incident' created a pretext for the US to start bombing North Vietnam in 1964). You have to keep an open mind on these things, unless you believe that intelligence agencies never lie.

At any rate, an actual war against Iran now seems much closer than it did last week. The long-planned transfer of another American aircraft carrier into the Gulf is now being re-framed as an emergency response to a new (but unspecified) Iranian threat. B-52 bombers that could easily reach Iran from their current bases are being ostentatiously flown into the Gulf. Pompeo makes an unscheduled four-hour visit to Iraq.

If the US does attack, nobody will help Iran, even though every other signatory to the no-nukes treaty that Trump trashed knows (and says) that Iran has complied with its terms. And the US would only bomb Iran, not invade it on the ground, so the only people who got hurt in the initial round would be Iranians. But then it would spread: Mines in the Strait of Hormuz, missile attacks on Israel by Hezbollah, maybe an uprising by the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia. Lots of death and destruction, and no possibility of a happy outcome. I really don't think this is what Trump wants. Maybe somebody should tell him.

(The writer's new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work*)

ALL EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT TMC GOONS WERE BEHIND IT (DESECRATION OF BUST OF VIDYASAGAR). IT HAS DONE THIS TO TURN AROUND A LOSING BATTLE.  
 —BJP CHIEF AMIT SHAH

**POINTCOUNTERPOINT**



THE VIDEO NOT ONLY CLEARLY ESTABLISHES WHAT THE BJP DID BUT PROVES THAT ITS CHIEF AMIT SHAH IS A LIAR AND *DHOKEBAAZ* (BETRAYER).  
 —TRINAMOL CONGRESS MP DEREK O' BRIEN

# Locate the trigger, now

The summer has just begun and divisive forces will make every effort to bring the Valley to the boil. Our forces will have to remain not only vigilant but on high alert



ANIL GUPTA

Every summer, which coincides with the 'Durbar' move, it almost becomes a routine affair for elements inimical to the return of normalcy and peace in Kashmir to set the Valley on fire. Continued conflicts and the disturbed law and order situation suit vested interests for whom militancy has become a necessity so that they can enjoy power as well as extract financial benefits, status and perks from emerging situations. Excuse or 'trigger', as referred in the parlance of security forces, is what allows them to set the Valley in turmoil and, thus, gives them a green signal for the commencement of *hartal/bandh* politics, *intifada*-style agitations, anti-India sloganeering and separatist politics.

The media, too, gets attracted and Kashmir hogs the limelight as prime-time debates are held over this issue. Not sensitive to the adverse effect such portrayal of Kashmir can have on the livelihood of the locals — who eagerly wait for the onset of this season to make good as this is a favourable tourist season — the fourth estate, too, willy-nilly contributes to the deepening of resentment in the Valley. The entire ecosystem gets affected with a few benefitting out of this situation even as a vast majority of the people suffer silently.

The summer of 2019 has been no different. Fortunately, parliamentary elections were conducted peacefully except for the targeted killing of one senior political leader and a *sarpanch*, who belonged to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a couple of days before the polling for final phase of the Anantnag parliamentary constituency. The successful conduct of the elections has rattled the divisive forces to such an extent that they appeared disheartened and demoralised. The relentless pressure put by the security forces, particularly post-Pulwama, has broken the backbone of a Pakistan-sponsored proxy war with the top leadership of both the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) virtually made extinct. More than 50 terrorists have been killed since February this year.

Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), though having the largest cadre, suffers from lack of leadership, arms and ammunition supply, training and motivation. The strict action taken by the Government against terror funding has stopped the free flow of foreign funds, thus leading to a cash crunch. Hence, the outfit has been on the back foot since long and has mainly involved itself in providing logistics and local knowledge support to foreign or foreign-affiliated groups.

Under such circumstances, the story of the horrific rape of a three-year-old girl in Bandipora area went viral and proved to be a boon for anti-national forces active in Kashmir. While everybody condemned the heinous act and demanded quick justice, the police acted promptly by arresting the culprit. Inimical elements saw in it a ray of hope for the trigger they were looking for this summer. Initially, the principal of the school, where the culprit studied, gave him an age certificate, declaring him a juvenile for reasons best known to him. A medical exam by the police, however, proved that he was an adult. Then the entire episode was given a sectarian touch by leaking out information that the victim child was a Shia. Protest marches were taken out, which raised

SOME EVENTS IN THE RECENT PAST DO NOT AUGUR WELL FOR THE EMERGING SECURITY SCENARIO IN KASHMIR. PAKISTAN HAS SUCCEEDED IN GETTING LOAN FROM THE IMF, WHICH WILL HELP IT TO BOLSTER ITS FAILING ECONOMY. BUT THE STRICT CONDITIONS IMPOSED BY IMF AND THE FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE WILL FORCE PAKISTAN TO NOT BE SEEN AS AN EXECUTOR OF CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM



tempers and brought the Valley on an edge of sectarian clashes.

Surprisingly, mainstream leaders in Kashmir and several civil society groups have remained ambivalent to the situation. Nobody visited the victim's house. There were no candle marches as were witnessed during the infamous Rasana case of January 2018, which was used by the same elements to defame the Dogras of Jammu and create a communal rift between the local Dogras and Gujjars, who enjoyed centuries of bonhomie and co-existence.

As all this was happening, another rape case was reported in the Valley. It happened on the evening of May 12 in Ganderbal. This incident triggered further outrage. Something familiar happened then and it bore resemblance to the spontaneous violence that erupted after the killing of Burhan Wani, though not to that extent or scale but the *modus operandi* appeared familiar. The students assumed control of the protests and they appeared in large numbers on the streets, pelting stones and targeting security forces as well as the local police.

Interestingly, neither the security personnel nor the policemen were in any way involved in the horrendous crimes. Such organised stone-pelting had diminished to quite an extent after the imposition of Governor's rule in the State. This week saw violent clashes. Over 50 people, including 47 security personnel, were injured in the clashes that broke out on the Srinagar-Baramulla highway. A large number of vehicles were also damaged and the highway was kept blocked for hours together. Every effort was made by the

protesters to provoke the security forces to retaliate with force. Some hidden hand was guiding them to do that.

Having failed in their design to achieve the desired result, the protesters shifted their focus to the capital town of Srinagar, the seat of power, with hopes that the security forces will brook no nonsense here. Protesters clashed with the security forces outside all major schools and colleges, including the University of Kashmir. The focus was lost from providing justice to the rape victim to somehow provoking the security forces to open fire in retaliation. The security forces so far have not obliged them.

The attempt of the inimical forces to turn the table by using the rape cases as an excuse to create a trigger seems to be failing this time but the security forces have to remain alive to their design. Credit also goes to the local police, which successfully apprehended both the culprits without losing much time and forming Special Investigation Teams to enquire into the episodes.

Former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti tried to add fuel to fire by suggesting that the accused should be stoned to death. She wanted to create a controversy that might also provide an opportunity to set the Valley on fire. But fortunately for Kashmir, she failed in her attempt as nobody took her seriously and treated her tweet as yet another desperate attempt to remain politically relevant in the vast canvas of Kashmiri politics.

The attempt of the inimical forces may have ebbed temporarily but they will not give up so easily. Pakistan will

try all the tricks to ensure that not only Kashmir remains on the boil but the arc of insurgency spreads south of Pir Panjal. Some events in the recent past do not augur well for the emerging security scenario in Kashmir. Pakistan has succeeded in getting loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that will help it to bolster its failing economy. But the strict conditions imposed by IMF and the Financial Action Task Force will force Pakistan to not be seen as an executor of cross-border terrorism.

Nevertheless, it will also not let the investments made by it to keep Kashmir as a dispute with India go waste so easily. Pakistan will try to keep the militancy alive in Kashmir to project it as a home-grown resistance movement.

The recent meeting organised by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) between the Islamic State and HM indicates the change in the *modus operandi*. IS supreme Al-Baghdadi has also shown renewed interest in India and Gajawa-i-Hind. IS has also claimed that it has set up new branch 'Wilayah of Hind' (India Province) after the multiple attacks in Sri Lanka with the help of a local affiliate. The presence of IS/K in Kashmir, which police claims to have totally wiped out, is a worrying development and will have to be carefully monitored.

Thus, the search for trigger by anti-national elements will continue. It remains to be seen when and who provides the trigger. The security forces cannot afford to lower their guard. Or on scenting out the unusual.

(The writer is a Jammu-based political commentator, columnist and strategic analyst)

# Tiny particles making a big impact

As we continue to battle air pollution, one lesser known contributor to it, apart from industrial and vehicular pollution, is the presence of aerosol in the atmosphere, which has reached concerning levels. This new-found threat deserves attention



KOTA SRIRAJ

The issue of air pollution has always been visualised in the classical sense with an obvious reference made to industrial and vehicular pollution. But of late, the subject of aerosol pollution has been garnering quite a lot of attention. While most air quality bulletins revolve around usual suspects such as particulate matter and other air-borne pollutants, the subject of aerosol build-up has managed to stay out of attention of weather as well as environmental experts.

In fact, recently, air pollution monitoring stations were able to study and observe the dust storm that hit Delhi, which resulted in a

severe dip in air quality levels. But aerosol build-up is neither being studiously documented nor is the subject being viewed as a significant threat.

Mankind has made a significant leap in atmospheric monitoring and modelling and thankfully the same has been able to detect the growing problem of aerosol build-up in the atmosphere. Recent images put out by the Copernicus Atmospheric Monitoring Service (CAMS) paint a very intriguing story, which introduces us to the emerging threat posed by aerosol pollution. CAMS, which is operated by the European Commission, puts out daily forecasts of aerosol build-up across the globe. It is important to understand that this data is not directly observed satellite data, but re-analysis data — or in other words simulated or modelled data.

The data provided by satellites is spatially continuous but not temporally continuous. Moreover, failed instruments or clouds obstructing the view of the satellite affect the

accuracy of satellite observations.

Aerosol re-analysis helps eliminate these inconsistencies by generating a consistent, spatially and temporally continuous dataset. Re-analysis takes into account past and present satellite observations, meteorology and global emissions. This service also puts out forecasts of aerosol speciated products, including dust aerosol, sulfate aerosol, biomass-burning aerosol and sea-salt aerosol. Again, these forecasts are based on re-analysis data.

India still lags behind in developing this expertise to track and analyse the aerosol data in its atmosphere. Currently, there are only 167 continuous monitoring stations in our country and most of them are located in the northern part. This is one of the primary reasons for the lack of information on this type of air pollution in other parts of the country.

In the absence of ground-based observations of particulate matter (PM) concentrations, scientists have often resorted to near-real time satellite data to arrive at ground-

level particulate concentration from satellite observed aerosol optical depth (AOD).

Aerosol optical depth is a measure of aerosols like urban haze, smoke particles, desert dust and sea salt distributed within a column of air from the earth's surface to the top of the atmosphere. Post application of empirical correction factors, a scaling factor is used to convert the AOD to PM concentration.

Aerosol buildup over India is now reaching concerning levels. According to images retrieved from CAMS, the aerosol database indicates significant build-up of aerosols across the country, more so over the national capital. While along the northwestern part of the country the depth of dust aerosol seems to be significantly high, in the south-eastern coast, the aerosol concentration seems to be primarily driven by sulfates.

While the correlation between AOD and PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels depends upon background particulate concentration, meteorology-depth of

the boundary layer being most important and local emission strength, in most cases, high aerosol optical depths correlate with high particulate levels.

If one goes by the number of real-time stations in the country, continuous monitoring of pollution is still in the nascent stage. In the absence of real time data, taking responsive pollution control measures becomes almost impossible. Under such circumstances, harnessing satellite-derived air pollution data can be a game-changer. Satellite derived air pollution data has already found an application in national-level health studies and can potentially be used in local assessments.

Sulfate aerosol levels in particular have been increasing rapidly. For instance, images taken by the CAMS showed sulfate aerosol maps. A careful study of the same will make it apparent that the States of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are exposed to a cloud of sulfate aerosol. Sulfate aerosols are a result of chemical transformation of

Sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) — exceeding levels of which are rarely reported.

Given that SO<sub>2</sub> is toxic for humans, exposure to sulfate aerosols can also have harmful human health implications. Given this, it is crucial for India to start developing state-of-the-art weather monitoring stations that are specially equipped to deal with aerosol pollution.

India must focus on using latest technology to control the increasing problem of aerosol pollution. It is essential for policy planners and climate scientists to take immediate action so that one is able to control the problem while it is still manageable.

The very first is to cover the geographic extent of the country and ensure that enough monitoring stations are relaying sufficient and credible data pertaining to the presence of aerosol so that proper planning and action are visualised to effectively neutralise the growing problem.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



## A DANGEROUS ARMS TRADE

The NSO malware targeting WhatsApp is different in that it could install itself without the victim doing anything at all. To discover and exploit the programming mistakes that opened this vulnerability would take years and cost millions of dollars. That is why it's assumed that only states, or state-backed actors, have the resources to produce them.  
 (The Guardian Editorial)

Markets resume downward spiral as bulls lose nerve

Nifty cracks below 11,200

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices resumed their downward trend on Wednesday as investors took money off the table amid global trade jitters and election-related uncertainty.

After gyrating over 500 points intra-day, the BSE Sensex closed 203.65 points, or 0.55 per cent, lower at 37,114.88.

Markets had snapped their nine-session losing streak on Tuesday. However, investors are still skittish about expanding their portfolio and every upmove is being used as an opportunity to book profits, experts said.

Yes Bank and Tata Motors were the biggest losers in the Sensex pack, slumping 8 per cent. IndusInd Bank, Coal India, Sun Pharma, PowerGrid, Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, HUL, Maruti, L&T, M&M, ICICI Bank, HDFC and RIL too ended in the red, shedding up to 3.66 per cent.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finance was the top gainer, spurring 4.11 per cent, followed by ITC, Kotak Bank, Infosys and

TCS, ending up to 1.05 per cent higher.

"Investors continue to be plagued by doubts surrounding global growth and US-China trade relations. Global market sentiments too remained subdued with European stocks edging lower amid US-China trade escalations.

"Brent crude continues to trade above the USD 70-mark. Higher oil prices could impact fiscal deficit and may force the new government to cut back infra spending," said Hemang Jani, head of advisory, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Sectorally, BSE metal, telecom, utilities, power, auto and banking indices lost up to 2.08 per cent lower. Realty, FMCG and IT logged modest gains.

In the broader markets, the BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices followed the benchmarks, falling up to 0.67 per cent. Sustained foreign fund outflows too weighed on investor sentiment.

Foreign institutional investors net sold equities worth ₹2,011.85 crore on Tuesday, while domestic institutional investors purchased shares to the tune of ₹2,242.91 crore, provisional data available with stock exchanges showed.

On the global front, markets were mixed as softer comments from US President Donald Trump regarding the trade talks with China were offset by weak Chinese retail sales data. Bourses in China,

Japan and Korea ended in the green, while European stocks opened on a weak note.

RUPEE RISES FOR 2ND STRAIGHT DAY

Meanwhile, the Indian rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 10 paise to close at 70.34 against the US dollar, marking the second straight session of gain driven by easing crude prices, while the Reserve Bank's plan to conduct open market operation also buoyed investor sentiment.

The rupee opened strong at 70.32 and later rose to the day's high of 70.17 at the interbank foreign market. During the day the local unit touched an intra-day low of 70.39 against the US dollar.

The domestic currency finally settled at 70.34, higher by 10 paise from the previous close. The rupee on Tuesday had recovered 7 paise to close at 70.44 to the US dollar.

Forex traders said the rupee strengthened after the RBI announced a plan to conduct the open market operation. On the other hand, heavy selling in domestic equities and foreign fund outflows restricted its gains.

The Dollar Index which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.04 per cent to 97.56.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.66 per cent lower at USD 70.77 per barrel.

Govt plans to sell 15% stake in RITES via OFS; to fetch about ₹700 cr

New Delhi (PTI): The government is planning to divest up to 15 per cent stake in railway PSU RITES through an offer for sale (OFS), which could fetch around ₹700 crore to the exchequer. Railways consultancy firm RITES got listed on the bourse in July 2018 after it raised about ₹466 crore through an initial public offering (IPO), which got subscribed 67 times. The stock got listed at ₹190 on the bourses, according to the issue price of ₹185.

"The Government of India is considering to divest 15 per cent paid up equity share capital of RITES out of its shareholding of 87.40 per cent in the domestic market through OFS of shares by promoters through stock exchanges," the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said.

The DIPAM also invited Expression of Interest (Eoi) from merchant bankers by June 6, to assist and advise the government in the sale process. At the current market price, sale of 15 per cent stake in RITES would fetch around ₹700 crore to the government.

The government has budgeted to raise ₹90,000 crore from CPSE divestment in current fiscal. It has so far raised ₹2,350 crore from IPO of Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd (RVNL) and sale of 'enemy property'. Enemy property refers to the assets left behind by people who migrated to Pakistan or China and are no longer citizens of India.

Greenlam acquires Decolan SA

New Delhi (PTI): Greenlam Industries on Wednesday said it has acquired Europe-based leading supplier of decorative surfaces Decolan SA for an undisclosed amount. The acquisition is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2019-20 and will further strengthen the company's position in the European market. "This strategic business deal marks the first European acquisition by Greenlam and will allow Greenlam to serve the European market with greater business efficiency," Greenlam Industries MD and CEO Saurabh Mittal said in a statement.

Tata to transfer food biz from TCL to TGBL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata group on Wednesday announced the transfer of its branded food business from Tata Chemicals Ltd to Tata Global Beverages Ltd in an all shares deal that will create an ₹9,000 crore giant.

Tata Global Beverages Ltd (TGBL) will buy the business of selling edible salt, spices, and lentils and give shares in return to Tata Chemicals Ltd (TCL).

TGBL will rename itself after the deal as Tata Consumer Products Ltd.

The Boards of Directors of TGBL and TCL, at their respective meetings on Wednesday, approved the de-merger of the consumer products business of TCL into TGBL, the company said in a statement.

Each shareholder of TCL will get 1.14 new equity shares of TGBL for every one equity share held.

The proposed transaction will create a focused consumer products company with a combined turnover of ₹9,099 crore and an EBIDTA of ₹1,154 crore.

"The combination of the two consumer-focused businesses will benefit both sets of shareholders who will be able to participate in a larger business poised to grow their share

of the foods and beverages market with a broader exposure to the attractive and fast growing FMCG sector," the statement said.

TGBL sells tea under Tetley and Tata Tea brands as also coffee under Eight O'Clock brand and bottled water. TCL, the world's third-largest producer of soda ash, will focus on its core chemicals business after this deal.

The transaction is subject to necessary statutory and regulatory approvals including those of National Company Law Tribunal, stock exchanges, SEBI, and respective shareholders.

Commenting on the announcement, N Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons, said: "Tata Consumer Products consolidates our current presence in food and beverages in the fast-growing consumer sector. Through this combination, we have created a strong growth platform to meet the growing aspirations of Indian con-

sumers." TGBL Managing Director and CEO Ajoy Misra said the transaction is consistent with the strategy to deepen the firm's India presence and transform into a broader FMCG player.

"Existing TGBL shareholders will benefit significantly as the consumer products business increases our exposure to high growth product categories and provides a strong platform to seize new opportunities in this sector. We will also continue to nurture and grow our global brands," he said.

R Mukundan, Managing Director and CEO, TCL said: "This combination provides significant benefits to our shareholders by unlocking the value of our consumer products business. In line with its strategy to be a leading science-based solutions company, Tata Chemicals will aggressively grow its specialty chemistry business in the areas of agro-science, nutrition science, material science and energy storage science.

"In addition, the basic chemistry business of Tata Chemicals will be the global partner of choice for soda ash, salt and bicarbonate to leading brands of food, pharma, detergents and glass."

NIFTY 50

Table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, High, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stocks and their price movements.

BSE 500

Table with columns: Script, Open, High, Low, LTP, PEEL. Lists various stocks and their price movements.



Table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, High, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stocks and their price movements.

NIFTY NEXT 50

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# UNSC sanctions ISIS' S Asia Branch

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN has sanctioned ISIS' South Asia Branch, a terrorist group formed in 2015 by a Pakistani national and a former commander of the TTP, for its links with al-Qaeda and involvement in several deadly attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan that killed over 150 people.

The United Nations Security Council's 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee on Tuesday sanctioned Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan (ISIL-K), which is also known as 'ISIS' South Asia Branch, ISIL Khorasan, Islamic State's Khorasan Province' and 'South Asian Chapter of ISIL'.

The listing comes two weeks after the Sanctions Committee designated Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as 'global terrorist' on May 1, capping a decade-long effort by India and its allies including the

US, the UK, France to sanction the mastermind of several attacks in India, including the 2001 Parliament attack and the February 14 Pulwama terror attack which killed 40 CRPF soldiers. The group is now subject to assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo.

The Sanctions Committee said in a statement that ISIS-K was formed on January 10, 2015 by a former Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commander and was established by former Taliban faction commanders 'who swore an oath of allegiance' to ISIS and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Sanctions Committee said the group was listed as being associated with ISIS or al-Qaeda for "participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating" acts or activities by supplying, selling or transferring arms and related

material. It said the group engaged in "other acts or activities indicating association with al-Qaeda, ISIS, or any cell, affiliate, splinter group of al-Qaeda in Iraq".

The group had announced its formation in an online video in January 2015.

ISIS spokesman Abu Mohamed al Adnani had announced its expansion into the area historically known as Khorasan, by acknowledging ISIS-K leader's pledge of allegiance to al-Baghdadi and claiming the leader of the Islamic State had accepted his pledge and appointed him as governor of the Khorasan Province.

The Sanctions Committee said ISIS-K had carried out numerous attacks since its formation that have killed more than 150 people.

In November 2016, the group carried out a suicide bombing at a Sufi shrine in Quetta, Pakistan that killed at

least 50 people and injured over 100 people, it said.

In December 2017, the outfit claimed multiple suicide bombings at a Shia cultural center and news agency in Kabul, Afghanistan that killed more than 41 people, including women and children, and injured over 84 people, it added.

In July 2018, the group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing outside a polling station in Quetta, Pakistan that killed at least 31 people and injured over 24 people.

According to leading Washington-based think tank for defense and national security Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), in 2014, Pakistani national Hafiz Saeed Khan was chosen to spearhead ISIL-K province as its first "emir".

Khan, a senior TTP commander, "brought along other prominent TTP members — including the group's spokesman

Sheikh Maqbool and many district chiefs - when he initially pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi in October 2014," the CSIS, a nonprofit policy research organization, noted on its website.

The website said the group's "early membership included a contingent of Pakistani militants who emerged in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province around 2010, just across the border from the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan".

It also said many of these militants were "estranged members" of TTP and Lashkar-e-Islam, who had fled Pakistan to escape from the security forces.

According to Combating Terrorism Center, academic institution at US Military Academy in New York, as of 2017, some members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the Haqqani Network and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had also "defected" to ISIS-K.

# Hafiz Saeed's brother-in-law arrested in Pakistan

PTI ■ LAHORE

The brother-in-law of Mumbai terror attack mastermind and proscribed Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed has been arrested for hate speech and criticising the Pakistan government, police said on Wednesday.

Abdul Rehman Makki, head of JuD's political and international affairs wing and in-charge of its charity Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF), was arrested during a government crackdown against the outlawed organisations, Geo News reported, quoting an Interior Ministry source.

Makki has been arrested under the Maintenance of Public Order Act, Punjab Police said.

He is accused of hate speech against the crackdown and criticising steps taken by the government under the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) guidelines, the report said.

The US Department of the Treasury has designated Saeed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and the US, since 2012, has offered a USD 10 million reward for information that brings him to justice.

In February, Paris-based international terror financing watchdog FATF decided to continue the 'Grey' listing of Pakistan for its failure to stop funding of terrorist groups such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the JuD.

The Pakistan government has launched a crackdown against the outlawed organisations under the National Action Plan 2015 to eliminate militancy and extremism from the country's soil.

The Imran Khan-led government has also announced the freezing of accounts and seizure of assets linked to

# US put visa curbs on three senior Pakistani officials

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The US has imposed visa sanctions on three senior Pakistani interior ministry officials following a row between the two countries over deportation of dozens of Pakistanis in America for their visa overstays and other allegations, it said.

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Tuesday informed the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs about that visa curbs by the US.

The officials who are facing the visa restrictions are an additional secretary and a joint secretary of the interior ministry as well as the director general passports, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The sanctions on the officials have been put in place after a row between Pakistan and America over deportation of dozens of Pakistanis, currently in the US, because of

visa overstay and other allegations, it said.

Qureshi said the US authorities intended to deport more than 70 Pakistanis, but the government had asked them to fulfil the legal requirements.

The US put the restrictions on three officials that are said to be overseeing the country's policy on accepting back nationals deported from other countries.

The US has over the past 18 months deported over 100 Pakistanis, all of whom were accepted back.

It is the first time that Pakistani authorities have insisted on a verification of the credentials of the deportees.

The foreign minister, however, clarified that there were no visa restrictions by the US government on Pakistani citizens in general. He said consular operations of the US embassy in Islamabad were continuing and are granting visas to the eligible applicants.

# US, Russia share same objective' on NKorea: Pompeo

AFP ■ SOCHI (RUSSIA)

The United States and Russia share the same goals on North Korea as Washington tries to negotiate a nuclear deal, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said after talks with President Vladimir Putin. "I think we share the same objective and I hope that we can find ways that we can work together," Pompeo told reporters after the talks late Tuesday in the Russian resort of Sochi.

"He understands that the US is going to be in the lead, but I think there are places we can work together," Pompeo said.

During their nearly two-hour talk in Putin's summer home, Pompeo said they spoke

at length about North Korea, weeks after Putin held a summit with leader Kim Jong Un in the Far Eastern port city of Vladivostok. Kim used the occasion to accuse the United States of acting in "bad faith" after his second summit with President Donald Trump ended in stalemate in Hanoi.

Pompeo, who visited Pyongyang four times last year, has taken a leading role in seeking to negotiate an accord with North Korea under which the authoritarian state will give up its nuclear arsenal. In a key point of contention, Pompeo has rebuffed demands from North Korea, which has the backing of Russia and China, for an early lifting of sanctions before a final deal.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo shake hands prior to their talks in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi

# British govt likely to put forward Brexit bill in June

AFP ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Theresa May's government will publish draft legislation in the first week of June that would allow Brexit to proceed if approved by parliament, a Downing Street spokesman announced on Tuesday.

The statement came after talks between May and opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn on a possible compromise that would end a deadlock on Brexit in parliament.

May met with Corbyn "to make clear our determination to bring the talks to a conclusion and deliver on the referendum result to leave the EU".

"We will therefore be bringing forward the Withdrawal Agreement Bill in the week beginning June 3," the spokesman said, referring to a draft law based on the divorce deal agreed with EU leaders.

May was seeking a "stable majority in parliament that will ensure the safe passage of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill and the UK's swift exit from the EU", the spokesman said.

For the past six weeks, ministers and their Labour counterparts have been discussing how parliament might accept the agreement May struck with the European Union (EU) last year.

Progress has been painfully slow, and there are growing calls in May's Conservative party to

abandon the process. But her ministers discussed at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday "the compromises which the government was prepared to consider" and agreed to keep talking, May's spokesman said.

They also said it was "imperative" that any exit plan be approved by parliament before MPs go on their summer holiday, which normally begins at the end of July.

"What she (May) is working to do is to get a deal passed as soon as possible," the spokesman said.

MPs have already rejected May's Brexit deal three times.

She turned to Labour last month in the hope of finding a way through, but the party is insisting on a close trading relationship with the EU that many Conservative MPs reject.

A Labour party spokesperson said Corbyn had raised "concerns about the prime minister's ability to deliver on any compromise agreement".

"He raised doubts over the credibility of government commitments," the spokesperson said, following statements by Conservative MPs seeking to replace May.

After twice delaying Brexit, Britain is reluctantly taking part in European Parliament elections on May 23, almost three years after the referendum vote to leave the bloc.

# Visas of 90 Pak brides withheld by China

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Amidst a raging controversy over Pakistani girls being trafficked to China after fake marriages, the Chinese embassy here has withheld visas of 90 Pakistani brides, according to a media report. China's Deputy Chief of Mission in Pakistan Lijian Zhao said on Tuesday that 140 applications have been received this year from Chinese nationals, seeking visas for their Pakistani brides.

Only 50 visas were granted, while the remaining requests were withheld, he said, adding that the embassy had received 142 such applications in 2018, The Express Tribune reported.

The Pakistan Government has recently ordered the Federal Investigating Agency (FIA) to take action against the gangs involved in smuggling of Pakistani girls to China on the pretext of contracting marriage.

According to the local media reports, poor Christians girls, are lured, with money and promises of 'good life', by the illegal matchmaking centres to marry Chinese men who are either visiting or working in Pakistan.

These centres produce fake documents of Chinese men showing them either as Christians or Muslims. Most of the girls reportedly became victims of human trafficking and are forced into prostitution.

"This sudden spike in number of transnational marriages alerted the officials and we approached our Pakistani counterparts who have launched an investigation into the matter," the Chinese diplomat said.

However, Zhao said that the media reports twisted the facts as there was no evidence to prove that the women were forced into prostitution and subjected to heinous crime of organ harvesting.

The diplomat denied that all marriages were fake, saying the Chinese nationals, who applied for visas of their Pakistani spouses last year, have completed all the legal formalities before moving the application, the report said.

He said that there were few complaints of Pakistani women being tortured by their husbands in China, which would be addressed accordingly.

He asked the Pakistani authorities to review the on-arrival visa policy for Chinese businessmen as some marriage bureaus in Pakistan were misusing it.

The FIA has already launched a crackdown against fake marriages and human trafficking operations by the Chinese. The FIA Lahore Zone-I busted a Chinese gang from Johar Town in Punjab province and arrested 11 Chinese nationals and their two Pakistani facilitators.

# Facebook tightens live-streaming in bid to check violence

AFP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

Facebook announced Wednesday it is tightening access to livestreaming to prevent the rampant sharing of graphic video as took place with the Christchurch massacre.

People who have broken certain rules, including those against "dangerous organisations and individuals", will be restricted from using the Facebook Live streaming feature, said vice president of integrity Guy Rosen.

"Following the horrific recent terrorist attacks in New Zealand, we've been reviewing what more we can do to limit our services from being used to cause harm or spread hate," Rosen said in a statement.

A "one-strike" policy at Facebook Live will be applied to a broader range of offenses, with those who violate serious policies suspended from using the feature after a single offence.

Such offenses would include sharing a link to a statement from a terrorist group with no context, according to Rosen.

"We plan on extending these restrictions to other areas over the coming weeks, beginning with preventing those same people from creating ads on Facebook," Rosen said.

He added that technical

innovation is needed to get ahead of the kind of "adversarial media manipulation" seen after the New Zealand mosque massacre, such as users modifying videos in order to slip past filters.

"One of the challenges we faced in the days after the attack was a proliferation of many different variants of the video of the attack," Rosen said. "People — not always intentionally — shared edited versions of the video which made it hard for our systems to detect."

Facebook announced that it was putting USD 7.5 million into research partnerships with three US universities to improve image and video analysis technology.

"This work will be critical for our broader efforts against manipulated media, including deepfakes," Rosen said, a reference to videos altered using artificial intelligence.

"We hope it will also help us to more effectively fight organised bad actors who try to outwit our systems as we saw happen after the Christchurch attack."

The news came as New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was set to join other world leaders in launching a "Christchurch call" to curb online extremism at an international meeting in Paris on Wednesday.

# 'India had world's highest child mortality rate in 2015'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India had more deaths among children under five than any other country in 2015, with large disparities in the child mortality rate between richer and poorer states, a Lancet study has found.

The researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the US analysed state-level Indian data on the causes of death among children under five for the years 2000-2015.

They found that India made great progress during the period, reducing annual mortality among children under five from 2.5 million in 2000 to 1.2 million in 2015 — which was still the highest in the world. However, among India's states, great disparities remained: The highest mortality rate in Assam was more than seven times that in Goa.

Although most under-five deaths were due to preterm complications, preventable infectious diseases featured

prominently as causes of death in higher-mortality states.

"India can accelerate its reduction of under-five mortality rates by scaling up vaccine coverage and improving childbirth and neonatal care, especially in states where mortality rates remain high," said Li Liu, PhD, assistant professor at the Bloomberg School.

Using data sources from Indian government health surveys, the team assessed total mortality, mortality rates and causes of mortality for children

under five in 25 states.

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set in the year 2000 was to reduce the under-five mortality rate in 2015 to one-third of the 1990 figure.

For India that would have meant reducing the under-five mortality rate to 39 deaths per 1,000 live births.

The analysis showed, however, that despite great progress since 1990 — and even since 2000 when the under-five mortality rate was 90.5 deaths per

1,000 live births — India in 2015 was still well above the MDG target, at 47.8 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Most (57.9 per cent) of deaths among Indian children under five in 2015 occurred in the first four weeks of life — the neonatal period.

Countrywide, the leading cause of death for children under five was preterm birth complications, which accounted for 27.5 per cent of the mortality total.

However, second on the list for cause-of-death was pneumonia (15.9 per cent of deaths), and infectious illnesses were more often among the top causes in the poorer, high-mortality states.

"Noncommunicable diseases such as preterm birth complications and congenital abnormalities were usually the leading causes in states with low under-five mortality," Liu said. Although progress in reducing the under-five mortality rate has been occurring throughout India, the period

from 2000 to 2015 saw widening disparities among richer and poorer states — ranging from Goa's 9.7 under-five deaths per 1,000 live births to Assam's 73.1.

Liu used as a basic indicator of overall disparity the ratio of the highest regional mortality rate (Northeast region) vs the lowest (South region), and found that that ratio increased from 1.4 in 2000 to 2.1 in 2015.

To accelerate India's progress against child mortal-

ity, the team recommends more extensive use of childhood vaccines, particularly against pneumonia- and meningitis-causing Streptococcus and H influenzae bacteria.

They also advocate — especially for higher-mortality regions — a scaling up of standard care strategies for newborns, including "kangaroo care" in which the baby rests against the mother's skin, thermal care to reduce hypothermia and early initiation of breastfeeding.

# Pakistan's airspace to remain shut for Indian flights till May 30

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan on Wednesday decided not to lift its airspace ban for Indian flights till May 30, as Islamabad is awaiting the outcome of the Lok Sabha polls in India.

Pakistan fully closed its airspace after an Indian Air Force strike on a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror camp in Balakot on February 26. However, Pakistan opened its airspace for all flights except for New Delhi, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur on March 27.

"The top officials of defence and aviation ministries held a meeting on Wednesday to reconsider opening its air-

space for Indian flights. They decided that Pakistan's airspace will remain banned for the Indian flights till May 30," a senior government official told PTI after the meeting.

He said the Civil Aviation Authority has also notified the decision to the airmen. The authority issued a notification (Notam) after the meeting to pilots, advising them of circumstances relating to the state of flying.

The official said the government will now consider lifting of the ban on Pakistan's airspace for Indian flights on May 30.

Pakistan's Science and Technology Minister Fawad

Chaudhry early this week said that the status quo will remain till the conclusion of elections in India.

"Status quo will remain till the elections are over in India. I don't see any improvement in relations between Pakistan and India till the elections are over and a new government is installed. The ban on airspace by each other I think will also continue till Indian polls," Chaudhry told PTI.

Owing to the flight ban on its airspace by India, Pakistan has suspended its operation for Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur which is causing a loss of millions of rupees per day. Pakistan

International Airlines (PIA) used to operate four flights to Kuala Lumpur, two to Bangkok and two to New Delhi.

A senior PIA official told PTI that the national flag carrier's loss is running into billions of rupees because of suspension of the flights especially to Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

"We are not only facing the huge financial loss but also losing our passengers to other airlines," he said, adding that this matter should now be resolved. "If land and rail routes are operational between Pakistan and India, what's wrong with the air route," the official questioned.

# Lanka police lifts nationwide curfew, arrests 60 people for anti-Muslim riots

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan authorities said they have arrested 60 people linked to the communal riots as a nationwide curfew was lifted on Wednesday in the island nation, which witnessed Sinhalese mob attacks on Muslim-owned shops and businesses in the aftermath of the deadly Easter blasts.

The government imposed the island-wide curfew on Monday after the violence against the Muslim community, who account for 10 per cent of the country's population. The curfew was briefly lifted on Tuesday before being reimposed for a second straight

night following reports of fresh violence in some parts of the country.

"The curfew imposed in the North-western Province and Gampaha Police division was removed at 6 am Wednesday while the curfew in the other areas of the island ended at 4 am," police media spokesman's office stated.

The situation in the province is returning to normalcy, authorities said.

There were no incidents of violence overnight and groups of people responsible for taking part in mob attacks have been arrested, they said.

"Thirty-three suspects arrested in connection with the

anti-Muslim riots have been remanded and over 60 people have been arrested. The suspects can be sentenced to 10 years in prison under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekara said.

The police media spokesman said the illegal activities committed by the persons engaged in violence will be noted in their police certificates.

The academic activities of all schools and all the state institutions in the province were resumed on Wednesday, the Wayamba Province Governor Peshala Jayaratne

said.

The recent violence is a fresh backlash from the Easter attacks where nine suicide bombers, including a woman, carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three churches and three luxury hotels, killing 258 people and injuring over 500 others.

Muslims said that rioters went about destroying their properties and setting fire to them even after curfew hours. They accused the security forces and the police for becoming silent watchers to the rioting.

Muslim political parties said at least one person was killed in the riots.

# US orders some embassy staff to leave Baghdad

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

The US State Department on Wednesday ordered all non-emergency staff to leave its embassy in Baghdad and consulate in Erbil, as tensions mount between the United States and Iraq's neighbour Iran.

Washington has ramped up pressure on Tehran in recent days, accusing Iran of planning "imminent" attacks in the region, and bolstering the American military presence in the Gulf.

"Numerous terrorist and insurgent groups are active in Iraq and regularly attack both Iraqi security forces and civilians," a travel advisory warned.

"Anti-US sectarian militias may also threaten US citizens and Western companies throughout Iraq."

The US last year shut its consulate in the protest-hit

southern Iraqi city of Basra, blaming "indirect fire" by Iran-backed forces and warning its rival of retaliation for any damage.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last week paid a surprise trip to Baghdad in a move to bolster ties with Iraq as it pushes ahead with its "maximum pressure" against Tehran — a US arch-rival, but an ally of Iraq.

He told reporters he had made the trip because Iranian forces are "escalating their activity" and said the threat of attacks were "very specific."

Pompeo met with Iraq President Barham Saleh and Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, and spoke to them "about the importance of Iraq ensuring that it's able to adequately protect Americans in their country."

The Pentagon said it was sending several massive,

nuclear-capable B-52s to the region in response to "recent and clear indications that Iranian and Iranian proxy forces were making preparations to possibly attack US forces."

Both Pompeo and Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have this week played down fears that their countries were seeking conflict.

But National Security Advisor John Bolton warned Iran that Washington would respond with "unrelenting force" to any attack by Tehran, including by its regional allies.

Blasts involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) occur in many areas of Iraq, including the capital Baghdad, the advisory added.

Erbil is the Iraqi Kurdish regional capital, in northern Iraq.



Venezuela's opposition leader and interim president Juan Guaido speaks during a press conference at his campaign office in Caracas (Venezuela) since declaring Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro as illegitimate, Guaid has been in the midst of a power struggle with Maduro

# Guaido blasts regime after security forces block Congress

AFP ■ CARACAS

Juan Guaido accused the Venezuelan government of trying to "gag" congress after security forces prevented opposition lawmakers from entering the National Assembly on Tuesday, two weeks after the opposition leader's failed uprising against President Nicolas Maduro.

Deputies said members of the National Guard, who provide security for the building, along with police and SEBIN intelligence agents, blocked access to the opposition-controlled National Assembly.

The move came as Amnesty International said it believes the Venezuelan authorities have committed crimes against humanity in their crackdown on anti-government protests, and urged the International Criminal Court to investigate.

"SEBIN agents, using the excuse that there's an explosive device within the facilities, took over the federal palace. We're surrounded by intelligence agents," lawmaker Manuela Bolivar told AFP.

Guaido said the security forces used "brute force", adding that congress was "occupied militarily."

He tried to incite an uprising against Maduro on April 30 but only around 30 members of the armed forces joined him, and the revolt quickly petered out. It did however spark two days of deadly clashes between protesters and security forces.

Since then, the Maduro regime has ramped up pressure on Guaido's allies and supporters.

The Constituent Assembly, a rival legislative body that was created by the Maduro government and is packed with people who support him, voted Tuesday to strip immunity from five more opposition lawmakers in the National Assembly. That brings to 14 the number who

will presumably go to trial for backing the failed insurrection. The charges include treason.

One of them, deputy assembly speaker Edgar Zambrano, was arrested by SEBIN agents last week. Another fled to neighbouring Colombia while three others sought refuge in diplomatic compounds.

Guaido — the National Assembly president — has accused Maduro of trying to dismantle the legislature.

"They're trying to hold the legislative power hostage while the dictator entrenches himself alone in a palace where he shouldn't be," Guaido said on Twitter.

He has previously accused the socialist leader of terrorism for his heavy-handed response to demonstrations.

Amnesty said Maduro's government responded with "a systematic and widespread policy of repression" in late January, when anti-government protests swept the country after Guaido declared himself acting president. The London-based rights group said at least 47 people were killed during the protests from January 21 to 25. At least 33 were shot dead by the security forces and six by government supporters.

"Eleven of these deaths were extrajudicial executions," said Erika Guevara, Americas director for Amnesty International, who presented a report in Mexico City, following February's fact-finding mission to Venezuela. Some Maduro opponents were tortured while 900 people, including children, were arbitrarily detained, Amnesty said.

"The nature of the attacks... the level of coordination by the security forces, as well as the signs of similar patterns in 2014 and 2017, leads Amnesty International to believe that the Venezuelan authorities committed crimes against humanity."

# Iran leader makes uranium enrichment threat

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's supreme leader issued a veiled threat in the same speech in which he stated that "no one is seeking war," saying it wouldn't be difficult for the Islamic Republic to enrich uranium to weapons-grade levels amid rising tensions with the US, state media reported Wednesday.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments late Tuesday came after Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a coordinated drone attack on a critical oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia. A satellite image obtained by The Associated Press shows one of the two pumping stations attacked by the drones apparently intact.

The drone assault is just the latest incident in the Mideast to shake global energy markets, as

authorities allege oil tankers anchored off the coast of the United Arab Emirates were targeted by sabotage. Benchmark Brent crude prices remained around \$71 a barrel in early trading Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the US is deploying an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 bombers into the region in response to a still-unspecified threat from Iran, further ramping up tensions a year after President Donald Trump withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Speaking Tuesday night in Tehran at an iftar, the traditional dinner Muslims have when breaking their daylong fast during the holy month of Ramadan, Khamenei's reported comments first focused on him downplaying the chances of a wider conflict in the

Mideast with America.

He reportedly told senior officials that his country won't negotiate with the United States, calling such talks "poison." But he also said, "Neither we, nor them is seeking war. They know that it is not to their benefit." In Wednesday's edition, the state-run IRAN newspaper carried his comments on the nuclear program, his first since Iran announced it would begin backing away from the accord itself.

Tehran is threatening to resume higher enrichment in 60 days if no new nuclear deal is in place, beyond the 3.67 per cent permitted by the current deal between Tehran and world powers.

Iranian officials have said that they could reach 20% enrichment within four days. Though Iran maintains its

nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, scientists say the time needed to reach the 90 per cent threshold for weapons-grade uranium is halved once uranium is enriched to around 20 per cent.

"Achieving 20 per cent enrichment is the most difficult part," Khamenei said, according to the newspaper. "The next steps are easier than this step." It was a telling remark from the supreme leader. Iran is not known to have enriched beyond 20 per cent previously and it's unclear how far Tehran is willing to go in this process.

Khamenei spoke just after Yemen's Houthi rebels, who are at war with Saudi Arabia and are believed by the West to receive weapons from Iran, said earlier Tuesday that they launched seven drones targeting vital Saudi installations.

That included two pumping stations along its critical East-West Pipeline, which can carry nearly 5 million barrels of crude a day to the Red Sea.

Saudi Aramco, the government-controlled oil company, said that as a precaution, it temporarily shut down the pipeline and contained a fire, which caused minor damage to one pumping station. It added that Saudi Aramco's oil and gas supplies were not affected.

An image from San Francisco-based Planet Labs Inc. that the AP examined on Wednesday shows Saudi Aramco's Pumping Station No. 8 outside of the town of al-Duadmi, 330 kilometers west of the kingdom's capital, Riyadh.

The photo, taken Tuesday after the attack, shows two black marks near where the East-West Pipeline passes by

the facility. Those marks weren't there in images taken Monday. The facility otherwise appeared intact, corroborating in part Saudi Arabia's earlier comments.

Details around alleged acts of sabotage to four oil tankers, including two belonging to Saudi Arabia, off the coast of the UAE's port of Fujairah remain unclear. Satellite images obtained Tuesday by the AP from Colorado-based Maxar Technologies showed no visible damage to the vessels, and Gulf officials have refused to say who they suspected was responsible.

The MT Andrea Victory, one of the alleged targets, sustained a hole in its hull just above its waterline from "an unknown object," its owner Thome Ship Management said in a statement.

# San Francisco bans police use of face recognition technology

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco supervisors voted Tuesday to ban the use of facial recognition software by police and other city departments, becoming the first US city to outlaw a rapidly developing technology that has alarmed privacy and civil liberties advocates.

The ban is part of broader legislation that requires city departments to establish use policies and obtain board approval for surveillance technology they want to purchase or are using at present. Several other local governments require departments to disclose and seek approval for surveillance technology.

"This is really about saying: 'We can have security without being a security state. We can have good policing without being a police state. And part of that is building trust with the community based on good community information, not on Big Brother technology,'" said Supervisor Aaron Peskin, who championed the legislation.

The ban applies to San Francisco police and other municipal departments. It does not affect use of the technol-

ogy by the federal government at airports and ports, nor does it limit personal or business use. The San Francisco board did not spend time Tuesday debating the outright ban on facial recognition technology, focusing instead on the possible burdens placed on police, the transit system and other city agencies that need to maintain public safety.

"I worry about politicizing these decisions," said Supervisor Catherine Stefani, a former prosecutor who was the sole no vote. The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a nonprofit think tank based in Washington, D.C., issued a statement chiding San Francisco for considering the facial recognition ban. It said advanced technology makes it cheaper and faster for police to find suspects and identify missing people.

Critics were silly to compare surveillance usage in the United States with China, given that one country has strong constitutional protections and the other does not, said Daniel Castro, the foundation's vice president.

"In reality, San Francisco is more at risk of becoming Cuba than China\_a ban on facial

recognition will make it frozen in time with outdated technology," he said.

It's unclear how many San Francisco departments are using surveillance and for what purposes, said Peskin. There are valid reasons for license-plate readers, body cameras, and security cameras, he said, but the public should know how the tools are being used or if they are being abused.

San Francisco's police department stopped testing face ID technology in 2017. A representative at Tuesday's board meeting said the department would need two to four additional employees to comply with the legislation.

Privacy advocates have squared off with public safety proponents at several heated hearings in San Francisco, a city teeming with tech innovation and the home of Twitter, Airbnb and Uber.

Those who support the ban say the technology is flawed and a serious threat to civil liberties, especially in a city that cherishes public protest and privacy. They worry people will one day not be able to go to a mall, the park or a school without being identified and tracked.



# Sudan army, protesters agree 3 year transition

AFP ■ KHARTOUM

Sudanese army rulers and protest leaders Wednesday agreed on a three-year transition period for transferring power to a full civilian administration, a general announced.

"We agreed on a transitional period of three years," Lieutenant General Yasser al-Atta, a member of the military council that took power after the ouster of longtime leader Omar al-Bashir, told reporters.

Atta said a final agreement on the sharing of power, including the forming of the next ruling body — the sovereign council — will be signed with the protest movement, the Alliance for Freedom and Change, within 24 hours.

"We vow to our people that the agreement will be completed fully within 24 hours in a way that it meets the people's aspirations," Atta said.

He said of the three-year transitional period, the first six months will be allocated to signing peace accords with rebels in the country's war zones.

The army generals had initially insisted on a two-year transition period, while the protest leaders wanted four years. Atta also said that during the transitional period, the parliament will be composed of 300 members, of which 67 per cent will be from the Alliance for Freedom and Change and the rest will be from other political groups.

# Bill brought to ban Chinese military scientists from American labs

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A bipartisan group of lawmakers has introduced identical resolutions in both the US House of Representatives and the Senate that would require the US government to develop a list of scientific and engineering institutions affiliated with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The bill seeks to prohibit individuals employed or sponsored by these Chinese military institutions from receiving student or research visas to the United States.

Senators Tom Cotton, Chuck Grassley, Ted Cruz, Marsha Blackburn, Josh Hawley and Marco Rubio have introduced the legislation in the Senate. Congressmen Mike Gallagher and Vicky Hartzler have introduced the bill in the House.

The lawmakers alleged that Chinese military scientists continue to research advanced dual-use technology in the US and other western countries.

According to some estimates, over the past decade, the PLA has sent over 2,500 military engineers and scientists to study abroad. At times, these scientists have not disclosed their connection to the Chinese military, they alleged.

"In recent years, the PLA has

sponsored thousands of scientists and engineers to conduct sensitive research abroad, including in the United States," Congressman Gallagher said.

"The PLA openly admits that it leverages these efforts to support the development of new military technologies and we cannot ignore the threat this poses to our national security," he added.

This is a common-sense bill that will help ensure China's military arm is not collaborating with US universities and researchers on sensitive information, said Congressman Hartzler. Many of these individuals often mask their PLA and Chinese Communist Party ties, allowing them to work at top universities without the schools' knowledge of their military affiliation.

"This legislation takes an important step to protect our universities from China's efforts to exploit our free and open society," Hartzler said.

The PLA is being armed with help from American colleges and tech companies. Keeping PLA scientists out of US research laboratories is a basic act of self-defence. It is stunning that this practice is not already prohibited, said Senator Cotton.

"Student and research visas

ought to be reserved for those foreign nationals who want to contribute to our universities and research institutions, not for our foreign adversaries and spies that wish to do us harm. China has taken advantage of us for too long," said Grassley.

America must be vigilant in protecting the research, training, expertise and innovation that the Chinese Communist Party has been stealing and exploiting for military and industrial purposes, Senator Cruz said.

"We cannot allow Chinese military institutions to obtain visas that give them a technological advantage," said Blackburn.

"Permitting PLA members to access and research dual-use technologies in our universities and labs is damaging to our national security. We can no longer provide them access to the same research opportunities afforded to Americans," he added. For too long, China's communist government has been exploiting the US student visa system to spy on American universities and steal its technology. This bill will keep the Chinese military away from critical research on American college campuses and curb China's economic espionage activities in the US, said Hawley.

# A SKILLFUL COMMUNICATION

Sir William Mark Tully launched PRSI, Delhi Chapter's *Samvad Series*

PRSI, Delhi Chapter, in the presence of Sir William Mark Tully, launched the *Samvad Series* for the fraternity of fellow professionals on Friday at the SCOPE Convention Centre. The launch ceremony included a lecture about 'creative listening' and a 'question and answer' session by Tully, who received a standing ovation. There were huge rounds of applause in the hall for him.

Taking references from the Indian mythology and scriptures, Tully began with emphasising on how India and its people are known for skillful communication and is the foundation of good public relations. He emphasised on how listening is crucial to understand a person's intent as it could make or break a relationship. He added that it is also associated with the development of self as it connects one with one's intellect and soul. Emphasising on how creative and



effective listening has been adopted by Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and other great leaders of the world in bringing together the masses and build nations, he said, "Listening gives one an opportunity to draw inferences from what great speakers talk about and draw own imagination about certain sit-

uations and individuals. It inspires an individual to follow his creative pursuits."

Giving the reference of radio, he said it is one of the media that inculcates habit of listening. He highlighted the development of radio in the post independence era. He gave the analogy of fad for trav-

el by air and how people choose to travel through flights even to destinations which could be covered by train or road. This case, he said is similar to the fad for television, which is working against radio.

Touching upon the *Samvad* in today's society both in general and political contexts, Tully highlight-

ed how over a period of time it has been dominated by acquisitions and cross-acquisitions rather than constructive, convincing and cross arguments. He once again drew the attention of PR professionals towards understanding deeply the professional intent of developing and communicating their message to the masses in a more efficient and effective manner.

The lecture was followed by the unveiling of the *Samvad* logo by Tully, which was earlier done by chairman, PRSI, Delhi Chapter, Naresh Kumar. Pallab Bhattacharya, executive director (CC), ONGC, introduced Tully to the audience. GS Bawa introduced the *Samvad Series* and gave the punch line as 'Productivity through Effective *Samvad*.' The program was summed up with the felicitation of the dignitaries on the dais and a vote of thanks by SS Rao, secretary, PRSI.

## Rediscover majestic Jammu

To promote and keep up the adventure tourism quotient in Jammu, the Directorate of Tourism, Jammu conducted a three-day trekking expedition from Sanasar to Shankpal for adventure enthusiasts. The group, comprising thirty participants from the state and other cities like Delhi and Hyderabad, made their 14 kilometre-long journey to Shankpal and back. The Shankpal Temple is located at the highest point on the Shankpal ridge at an altitude of 2897 metres.



Om Prakash Bhagat, the director of tourism, Jammu, said that the participation of trekkers from other states is a welcome step as they would spread the word about the place. He said, "These events promote lesser-known beauty spots, historical and religious places of Jammu."

Activities like rock climbing/raping and ground running with paraglides were also conducted for the trekkers. On the second day, the trekkers were flagged off by Nagendra Singh Jamwal (KAS), chief executive officer, Mansar Surinsar Development Authority, and the trekking was conducted under the supervision of Anusya Jamwal (KAS), deputy director of tourism, Publicity and Adventure Tourism, Jammu. The Himalayan Bagpipers group accompanied the

trekkers adding to the liveliness and vibrancy of the surroundings.

They also experienced cultural programs during a bonfire evening depicting local folk culture of Sanasar and Ramban. The varied dance forms like *Kud*, *Thali* dance, *Flute* dance among others were performed. It was a reflection of enthusiasm and gaiety associated with the social events and sense of celebration together.

The program culminated with a certificate distribution ceremony. Other officers who were present at the occasion were Ambika Bali (KAS), assistant director tourism, NHW Batote, Sheena Sahni (KAS), assistant director tourism, Jammu, among others.

The initiative by the Jammu Tourism Department is being regarded as a big step towards promotion of adventure tourism in the region and in bringing these places on the tourist map of Jammu and Kashmir.

## BIS signs 2 MoUs

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) signed two separate Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with Harcourt Butler Technical University (HBTU), Kanpur and Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur on Monday.

The MoU with HBTU involves cooperation and development of international level standards in the field of paint, soap, detergent, oil, plastic, fragrance and food technology. The MoU was signed by Surina Rajan, director general, BIS, and N B Singh, vice chancellor, HBTU.

Rajan stated that creating synergy among premier educational institutions with the involvement of young minds in the area of standardisation process would highly benefit the country. Registrar Manoj Shukla, dean and various other faculty members along with Dr R K Bajaj, deputy director general, BIS were also present during the programme.



The partnership with IIT Kanpur will help in concurrently establishing standards on important subjects like block chain applications of e-governance developed by IIT. It will also provide support of their technical expertise for the formulation of standards in the field of cyber security, IoT, artificial intelligence (AI) and flexible electronics. As per the MoU, a joint initiative is underway for standardisation to find a place in education curriculum and offering short-term courses to businesses as well.

Both organisations,

HBTU and IIT-K agreed for taking up R&D projects wherever required along with the exchange of information on research and educational programmes. BIS will provide inputs on topic such as 'Standardisation and Conformity Assessment' that will be incorporated in the academics.

The MoU with IIT, Kanpur was signed by director Abhay Karandikar and Rajan. S Ganesh, dean, Research and Development and other senior faculty members of IIT Kanpur attended the programme.



## VIT addresses students on their annual summer camp

Through dedication, hard work and perseverance, one can achieve their goals not only in sports but also in their life pursuits," said Dr Sekar Viswanathan, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) vice president, on Monday, as he addressed school students who took part in the annual summer camp conducted by VIT.

He said that youngsters need to practice their sports daily and follow the instructions given by their coach to excel. He added, "It is because of the hard work that several youngsters had put in through the years that they were able to

get sponsorships."

Viswanathan made youngsters want to not follow any bad habits rather inculcate meaningful lessons and lead a clean life. He said, "At this summer camp, I request you all to wake up early, exercise regularly and study everyday."

Dr S Narayanan, pro vice chancellor, VIT, flagged off a mini marathon from Chittoor bus stand to college.

Director of Physical Education department Dr Thyaga Chandan and deputy director Dr Mangaiyarkarasi were also present.

## POWERGRID restores vital link in Odisha

As the Odisha coast was hit by Cyclone Fani, Power Grid Corporation of India (POWERGRID) played a major role in quick restoration of power supply in the state.

Reportedly, the strongest tropical cyclone to hit an Indian coast in last 20 years devastated the coastal areas of Odisha, causing massive damage to the power supply infrastructure uprooting lakhs of electric poles, transformers and collapse of towers. Hot and humid weather added to the problems of the cyclone-affected people in the state, with the government facing a gigantic task of restoring power to houses.

Restoring towards normalcy POWERGRID has helped to restore power through the use of state-of-the-art techniques like ERS

(Emergency Restoration System), swift operation management and by pooling about 1,000 of its specialised manpower from neighbouring states like Bengal and Andhra Pradesh.

**Timely Action** As part of mitigation management and measures, POWERGRID arranged three high capacity DG sets, large number of electric line poles, conductors and insulators for Bhubaneswar, Puri, Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur stores of CESU. Transformer oil and filtration units were arranged at its Pandiabili and Angul sub-stations.

**Continuous development** The organisation is also helping OPTCL in restoration of 132 kV line to Puri over ERS which is expected to be charged in a day or two.

## Adani Group's tribute to Karmabhoomi Kutch



Nearly a decade before the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog envisaged private partnership in rural healthcare, a PPP-run hospital in Gujarat's Kutch district has transformed hundreds of lives. The Adani Foundation-run Gujarat Adani Institute of Medical Sciences (GAIMS) in Bhuj was ostensibly India's maiden successfully operating PPP model in the healthcare sector.

Over the years, it has contributed in creating confidence which led to roll-out plans of six brownfield self-financed medical colleges in Tapi, Dahod, Panchmahals, Banaskantha, Bharuch and Amreli districts by upgrading the government hospitals through PPP. Its healthy ripple effects can now be felt at the national level.

### Beginning

The government approached many corporates such as Narayana Hrudalaya and Manipal Education to adopt the hospital on PPP basis. However, many challenges such as feasibility and disapproval of grants up to ₹12 crore became bottlenecks.

### Adani enters fray to give back to the Karmabhoomi

After most corporates did not invest in the well-being of people surviving without proper healthcare, the proposal came to the Adani Group. Dr Malay Mahadevia, wholetime director, APSEZ and head of group, Adani Group, said, "Kutch is our Karmabhoomi and we have to make life-defining contributions towards giving back to its people."

Since 2009, when the partnership formally came into effect, the group invested a Capex of around ₹100 crore in ramping up infrastructure and top-

line human resources among other things. A decade since then the cumulative operating deficit stands at ₹25 crore.

### Sea change in hospital infrastructure

From outdoor patient wards, operation theatres and labour rooms to intensive care units, every critical aspect of the hospital infrastructure grew manifold. Likewise, every specialised treatment such as dermatology, psychiatry, pediatrics, surgery, orthopedic, ophthalmology and ENT, among others recorded rapid augmentation from time to time.

### Establishment of GAIMS medical college

While the pillars of the hospital facilities became stronger, GAIMS medical was established college in 2009. The college offers 150 seats for under-graduate courses and 51 seats for post-graduate courses and various specialisations.

### Improving health indicators

The number of OPDs have nearly tripled from 1, 39,199 in 2014-15 to 3,17,361 in 2017-18. Likewise, there has been a steady rise in child births. From catering to just over 2,000 deliveries in 2014-15, the number rose by nearly 35 per cent in 2017-18.

### Vision for a healthier future

The G K General Hospital is in the process of filing for National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers. The GAIMS medical college will be acquiring simulation models for medical students to sharpen their skills and thus impart education at par with global standards.



PC Sharma, GM/Metro Railway and CLW paid a visit at the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) on Monday. He inspected various manufacturing shops especially, Electric Loco Assembly and TM shop of CLW. Among others, principal chief mechanical engineer DK Mondal, principal chief electrical engineer Ram Prakash and Nitin Dhimole, principal chief material manager along with other senior officers were present. Sharma also held detailed discussions during the meeting regarding the production target of this fiscal. He appreciated the work being done by CLW.



## IGNCA celebrates Bharatnatyam dancer Balasaraswati's birth centenary

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), under its *Sanskriti Samvaad Shrinkhala* series celebrated the birth centenary of the Bharatnatyam legend Thanjavur Balasaraswati, whose dance was a rendering of a classical dance style from her home state, Tamil Nadu. She has been instrumental in popularising this style of dancing not only in India but also abroad.

The two-day celebrations, ended on Tuesday, included a panel discussion, film screening, lecture demonstration, dance homage and provided an opportunity to the audience to interact with the gurus and exponents from the field of dance.

The panel saw a discussion about the legendary dancer and her art,

which was chaired by Ram Bahadur Rai, president, IGNCA and moderated by Dr Sachchidanad Joshi, member secretary. Among others, eminent artists like Dr Sonal Mansingh, Dr Padma Subramaniam, Dr Saroja Vaidyanathan and Pt Birju Maharaj were a part of the panel. The session was followed by a performance by Nandini Ramani, who paid a dance homage *Padmanjari* to her guru Balasaraswati with Sushama Ranganathan, Roja V, Lavanya Ananth and Divyaseena Haribabu.

The second day of the celebration saw the screening of Satyajit Ray's film, *Bala*. The day concluded with a talk *Bala: The consummate musician*, on Bala's contributions in music by musician Charumati Ramchandran.

## Maximise root rhizosphere efficiency for higher yields

The rhizosphere in the soil zone is directly influenced by the plant roots. Plant roots can also effect rhizosphere solution composition through their effect on rhizosphere microorganisms. The chemical composition of rhizosphere can be very different from those of bulk soil due to root exudation and microbial activity, which has been observed significantly.

A higher microbial population can increase decomposition of organic matter and therefore increase nutrient transformation in the rhizosphere. Root-induced changes in the rhizosphere may affect mineral nutrition of plants in various ways. Soil nutrients are taken up by plant roots via the rhizosphere, which is the key zone of interaction between plants and soil. Therefore, root growth and rhizosphere processes have a great influence on soil nutrient transformation, mobilisation, and efficient use by plants.

Plant roots cannot only highly regulate morphological traits to adapt to soil environmental conditions, but also significantly modify rhizosphere processes through their physiological activities, particularly the exudation of organic acids, phosphatases and some signalling substances, proton release and redox changes. Rhizospheric processes are the linkages between plant processes and soil processes to some extent determining the bio-availability of soil nutrient and thus affect the crop production.

The rhizosphere management strategies lay emphasis on maximising the efficiency of root rhizosphere in nutrient acquisition towards high yield of fruit crops by optimising nutrient input in rooting zone, regulating root growth and manipulating rhizospheric interactions.

Soil microbial diversity is considered as one of the most sensitive tools of soil fertility evaluation. The rhizosphere is an area enriched by many microbes as plants release different types of exudates in this region thus

boosting the soil microbial diversity. Microorganisms play an important role in soil fertility because they oxidise organic matter and promote biomediated cycling of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sulphur (S).

The root exudates play a key role in the selective stimulation of microorganisms. Plants have an important effect on soil microbiological properties due to release of different nutrients and organic compounds into the soil. The microbial diversity has been found to be more in rhizosphere than in the non rhizosphere soil. Soil microorganisms help in maintaining soil quality and have a great influence on soil hydrolytic reactions, which are reflected in the natural cycles of N, P and S, 80-90 per cent of the processes in the soil are reactions mediated by microbes.

The plants alter rhizosphere populations through root exudation and the sloughing of root cells. Most plants also interact with specific fungi to form associations known as mycorrhizae and these have considerable effects on populations of rhizospheric microorganisms. Many bacteria are intimately associated with plant roots, the microbial population in the rhizosphere differs from those in the surrounding soil both in total number and in species distribution.

Microorganisms in the soil maintain bio-geochemical cycles in the soil by virtually degrading organic compounds sooner or later. Total microbial counts were commonly found to be increased 10-50 folds in the rhizosphere. The population of bacteria around the roots of plants in the rhizosphere is generally much greater than the bacterial density in the bulk soil. Microbes produce extracellular enzymes to acquire energy, carbon (C) and nutrients for growth and metabolisms.

It is generally accepted that microbial extracellular enzyme-production abides by a cost-effective rule of economy, i.e.,

microbes will maximise the energy, C and nutrient returns by minimising resource utilisation. The rhizosphere harbours a large and diverse community of prokaryotic and eukaryotic microbes that interact and compete with each other and with the plant root. There are various techniques that can be used to quantify the microbial diversity in the soil such as plate count technique and the most probable number technique. Bacteria were the most dominant followed by fungi and actinomycetes.

Many microbial interactions which are regulated by specific molecules/signals are responsible for key environmental processes such as bio-mediated cycling of nutrients, improvement of soil quality and maintenance of soil health. The influence of NPK fertilisers on the population of bacteria and fungi in the rhizosphere brings an increase in the microbial population with the application of fertiliser to the soil.

The organic amendments stimulate the microbial population and enhances the soil microbiological activity in the rhizosphere. Microbial population enhanced with the addition of organic and inorganic fertilisers and are reported to have high bacterial population and fungal population.

Microbial activity in the rhizosphere affects rooting patterns and supply of available nutrients to the plants thereby modifying the quality and quantity of root exudates. Rhizospheric microorganisms can both mobilise and immobilise plant nutrients and can produce growth promoting substances such as phytohormones as well as phytoalexins. The presence of certain antimicrobial compounds in the roots of plant tissues may have antagonistic effect on the soil microbial diversity in the rhizosphere.

(The writer is Dr Rehana Akhtar Biji, a doctorate in Soil Science and is presently serving as J&K Administrative Service (KAS) Officer.)

Trend Slazer

'Working with Big B is surreal'

Actor **AYUSHMANN KHURRANA** says that he wants to become a better actor after working with Big B in director Shoojit Sircar's next, *Gulabo Sitabo*.

He said, "I have grown up watching Amitabh sir's films and like every Indian boy, I've idolised and followed him. I wanted to be like him since childhood. It's like a dream come true to share screen space with him. It's really surreal. It's what I've wished for. I am excited to start this journey and become a better actor in the process."

The family comedy releases in November 2019.

'My director **Alankrita Shrivastava** made sure that all the intimate scenes (in *Lipstick Under My Burkha*) were shot in a closed set with few people around. Director **Prakash Jha** happened to drop by while I was shooting with my co-star **Vikrant Massey**. Since I had never shot an intimate scene, it was tough to get in the right zone.'

—Aahana Kumra

Actress **PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS** is excited and blew kisses to her fans as her Instagram family grew over 40 million.

"Big thanks to my Insta fam! You guys have my heart. Sending love and hugs to each one of you for being a part of my journey. I love you all. A 40 million strong," Priyanka posted on social media. She posted this along with a video in which she jumps with joy and gives a flying kiss. The actress uses the medium to keep her fans updated of her family moments and behind the scenes.

Thompson to star in *Cruella*

Actress **EMMA THOMPSON** is in talks to star alongside **Emma Stone** in Disney's *Cruella*, a live-action origin story based on the 1961 classic *101 Dalmatians* villain Cruella de Vil.

Director **Craig Gillespie** is helming the film with **Marc Platt**, **Kristin Burr** and **Andrew Gunn** producing it.

De Vil, who will be played by Stone in the new film, is the villain who was obsessed with capturing the puppies in the classic. It is currently unknown where the film will pick up in De Vil's timeline, as is the role Thompson would play.

This wouldn't be the first time that Thompson has taken a role in one of Disney's live-action adaptations.

# ASTRIDE BOTH GENRES

Actor **AJAY DEVGN**, who has notched up hits in both comedy and serious films, tells **AYUSHI SHARMA** that he relates to both because the purpose is wholesome entertainment



Just the way he made his entry in the Hindi film industry with his trademark leg split stunt in the 1991 classic, *Phool Aur Kaante*, actor Ajay Devgn straddles the genre of comedy and serious films with equal ease. And reminiscing the same pose from his debut, his latest film, *De De Pyaar De*, resurrects the famous split in the poster, except for the fact that the bikes have been replaced by cars and co-stars Tabu and Rakul Preet Singh are sitting on them.

The promos of *De De Pyaar De* were mired in controversy because of their sexist tone and tenor. But Ajay is ready for defence. He says, "When you watch the film, you wouldn't ask this question. The film revolves around a character who is 50 and dates a girl half his age. The highs and lows that they go through when they meet his ex-wife form the crux of the film. My defence is that you won't ask the question after watching the film as you would realise that the question was incorrect. It is actually a progressive film as the women characters are very strong."

Talking a little more about his latest outing, he says, "It is a slice of life. It has drama and emotions. Sometimes when the most important and relevant things are presented in a light-hearted way, they hit hard. This film has a sense of maturity. It's presented in an entertaining and humorous manner. I would put it in the category of *Badhaai Ho*."

The actor believes that the basic and the most crucial function of cinema is to entertain the audience. "Have you ever thought why people even watch films?" he questions and goes on to answer it as well, "The primary reason is that they want to feel relaxed."

If they want to be informed, he feels, people would watch documentaries, read books or attend lectures. Then he questions, "Why do you watch films? Because you want to relax. Is there any other reason? Films are made for entertainment so that



'WHEN YOU WATCH THE FILM, YOU WILL KNOW IT IS A SLICE OF LIFE. IT HAS DRAMA AND EMOTIONS. SOMETIMES WHEN THE MOST IMPORTANT AND RELEVANT THINGS ARE PRESENTED IN A LIGHT-HEARTED WAY, THEY HIT HARD. THIS FILM HAS A SENSE OF MATURITY'

the audience can have a good time. Even a film on Mahatma Gandhi's life would have twists and turns. If you go to a restaurant, you go there to eat rather than to observe or watch a lecture. If you want to approach a topic, you have to do it in a funny manner, otherwise people aren't interested. It helps to put your message across humourously because then the audience agrees with it. You are entertained and the message also comes across easily."

Yet he is not so structured in his choice of roles. "I don't know. I hear scripts and follow my heart. It's not intentional. But I would like to switch all the time because otherwise *aisa lagega ki mai vahhi cheez baar baar kar raha hoon*. Everytime you go back to a genre, you are exploring something new, because you are coming from a different mind space. So that is what keeps me going," he says. What has really worked for him is that his choices in all the genres seem to hit the bull's eye most of the time. "I guess I'm very lucky that different kinds of films have worked for me. There are so many actors who are struggling to change their genre but the audience does not accept them. It's like they want to see them play only one kind of characters. So I have been very lucky. But then, I would say I started doing it before anyone else did, like in *Zakhm*. Mainstream actors did not even touch such films with a bargepole at that time," he says.

Ajay believes that there is no genre for an actor. "You just become the character. You do what the script demands," says the actor who is playing his age this time around.

While approaching a character, he

says, "I have been working for many years now. We see and observe people and imbibe their personalities and thought processes."

The film clearly signals a change in content as this subject hasn't been touched upon often in mainstream cinema. Ajay attributes it to the audience. "Content has evolved with them. What they preferred earlier was what we did. Because of the exposure to international platforms they have evolved. Today, even seven or eight-year-olds are well aware of good content. You cannot fool them. We have to change the same way as the audience. Actors, of course, benefit from it as we get the scope to do something different. I was abused for the kind of films that I did earlier. But now the audience watches these. So what can I do?" he says with a shrug.

His co-star in the film, Tabu, recently said that he was the most bankable actor. So how does it feel when someone puts so much of faith in you? "Luckily, all the films that we have done together have worked. It's not about faith. It's about trusting each other. We've known each other for 30 years. I would not like to coerce her into accepting a role and she knows that. When I hear a script, realise that it is a strong character, then I discuss with the producer and the director that Tabu can pull it off well. Then I talk to her and tell her to listen to the script and do it if she likes it."

That they have known each other for long also means that often people want him to convince her to be a part of a film. "Often people approach me and say Tabu would look good in this role and I reply that the role is not worthy of her. She is a great actress. You need to justify her presence. It has to be something extraordinary. She's a performer and not just a heroine," says he.

He points out that the nuance and depth in his work came over the years. "It's a slow progression. I haven't changed overnight. You grow with experience. You learn from it. You learn from your mistakes as well as those that other people make. You don't even realise that there is evolution. It's one step everyday so you take 10 in equal number of days. But you can't reach the 10th step in one day," he says as he stands up to leave. One more step in his evolution as an actor.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

## She lives the character

Powerhouse performer **TABU**, who stars in *De De Pyaar De*, says Ajay and Salman are men she can always rely upon

Are you still in love with Simi, the deliciously wicked character of *Andhadhun*? But then Tabu has a way of taking up characters and making them her own. Whether it is Nimmi in *Maqbool* or Simi in *Sriram Raghavan's* thriller.

The actress will be seen next in *De De Pyaar De*, where she plays Ajay's ex-wife. Tabu said the film explores interpersonal relationships in a mature manner.

"When I heard the story, I thought it was extremely enjoyable. It's definitely not about two women vying for a man. It's not making fun or humouring everything. There is seriousness and maturity also and that's the beauty of the film," Tabu said.

The film was written with Ajay and her in mind, she revealed. Having her long-time friend and *Golmaal Returns* co-star Ajay on board and the fact that it is not a film with "mindless laughter" made her take up the project.

She said, "Every character in the film is dealing with real issues. Their struggles or conflicts aren't trivialised. If he is in love with a girl in his mid-40s, it's genuine. He is going through his own conflicts. My character's journey after getting separated has also been shown. Every relationship is highlighted and given due space."

Tabu said the film tries to understand how two couples with an age gap tend to view love and relationships. She added, "The way a mid-40s couple deals with their relationship, their definition of love and relationship will be different than a 27-year-old woman. Her insecurities are different and issues are varied. It's about people who evolve and develop a unique relationship."

In her over three-decade-long career in movies, Tabu has not only built a stellar filmography but also found "unconditional" friendships with not just Ajay but also with Salman Khan.

The 47-year-old critically-acclaimed actor says from just being co-stars Salman and Ajay have become family, who she believes will never let her "fall".

"These are the unconditional relationships I have in my life.



These are a part of my life as the majority of life has been entwined and intertwined with my work. These are the people I've met through my work. These are the people I know will never let me fall in any which way. They are like family," she said.

Tabu says her equation with the two stars is not about constantly being in touch or extracting favours but is based on trust and love.

"You meet people like Salman and Ajay who transcend your work relationships and just by being the people they are, they become that for you. It's not like 'banking' on them, but you know these are the bonds wherein you don't have to meet, express or profess friendship for each other. They are unconditional."

The actor, who first tasted success as a Bollywood heroine in 1994 with *Vijaypath* co-starring Ajay, went on to appear alongside him in films like *Haageeqat*, *Thakshak*, *Drishyam*, *Fitoor*, *Golmaal Again* before the latest *De De Pyaar De*.

With Salman Khan, 53, she has worked in *Biwi No 1*, *Hum*

*Saath-Saath Hain*, *Jai Ho* and the forthcoming *Bharat*. She, however, did not share any details about her part in Salman's latest film in which she has a cameo.

"With Salman, it is one of the non-negotiable relationships I have. It's amazing to have that kind of trust and belief in a relationship without giving it any name," she said.

But coming back to *Andhadhun*, she said, "The film was in its own world and space. Even to this day, people are talking about the ending and possible theories are doing the rounds. You can't reference a character like that. The fact that people have loved and appreciated Simi so much is a thing of joy for me. I've enjoyed the film's success thoroughly and I feel everyone involved has been able to own it completely. I want to thank the whole team for making *Andhadhun* what it became."

Tabu is doing a film with Allu Arjun as well. She said, "I will start shooting for my portions in July. It is another interesting character, but I can't talk about it yet; the film hasn't even gone on the floors. But I am excited about it. I just felt like it was time for me to reconnect with that audience. I have worked with Allu Arvind (producer) and at the end of the day, it's Hyderabad. It's home ground for me. I will get to visit my house, meet my friends... I am close to Chiranjeevi's family." Her last Telugu film was *K Raghavendra Rao's Pandurangadu* (2008).

Finally, she gave an insight into how she picks her characters. "Primarily, I look at the positioning my character is getting in a film and the contribution she makes to the story. It's not about working with names. But it is about finding out what the director has envisioned for me, what he expects from me in a character and how important it is. I also look at the value that I can add to the film and vice versa, as an experience. And of course, the overall project and the people involved in it. Then, it also depends on what I am gravitating towards at the time," she said.

—Agencies Photo: Pankaj Kumar



## Legends don't die

Cannes Film Festival opens with **JIM JARMUSCH's** zombie project and a tribute to **AGNES VARDA**

The Cannes Film Festival opened on Tuesday with the premiere of Jim Jarmusch's zombie movie *The Dead Don't Die*, passionate words from jury president Alejandro Inárritu on US President Donald Trump's plans for a Mexican border wall, and a director's chair left empty in tribute to the late Agnes Varda.

It's the first time a zombie flick has opened the festival on the French Riviera. The film, starring Bill Murray, Adam Driver and Tilda Swinton, opened the 72nd edition of the festival with a bloody and droll apocalyptic tale inspired by George Romero.

The opening ceremony began with a chair marked 'Agnes V.' to commemorate the French New Wave pioneer, who died in March at age 90, and a performance of *Without You*, from Varda's landmark 1962 film *Cleo From 5 to 7*, by the Belgian singer Angele.

Inárritu, the Mexican-born filmmaker of *Birdman* and *The Revenant*, is the first Latin American to preside over the jury that decides Cannes' top honour, the Palme d'Or. Addressing reporters earlier in the day alongside fellow jury members, Inárritu drew a parallel between the rhetoric of Trump to that of the 1930s.

"We know how this story ends if we keep with that rhetoric," said Inárritu. "We think we are evolving with the technology and social media. It seems every tweet is a brick of isolation attached to ideological things and is creating a lot of isolation and paranoia."

This year's Cannes arrives with the usual swirl of celebrity and controversy. Among the starrier films debuting at the festival on the French Riviera will be Quentin Tarantino's 1969 Los Angeles tale *Once Upon a Time in*

*Hollywood* and the Elton John biopic *Rocketman*.

Also on tap are the latest from renowned auteurs Pedro Almodóvar, Terrence Malick and the Dardennes brothers. Also of interest will be the debut from Mati Diop, *Atlantique*, which marks the first black female filmmaker in competition in Cannes.

Last year's Cannes saw 82 women, which represented the number of women directors to ever appear in competition in Cannes, protest for gender inequality on the festival's famed red carpet steps. Cannes artistic director Thierry Frémaux signed a pledge promising to make the festival's selection process more transparent and to push executive boards toward gender parity.

This year, there are four women in Cannes' 21-film main slate, tying the festival's previous high in 2011. For the first time, Cannes has revealed gender-based statistics on its submissions and selections, a measure of transparency that had been requested by 50/50x2020, the French sister group of 'Time's Up'. Frémaux defended the festival's record, bristling at critics who have said Cannes isn't progressing quickly enough.

"I'm looking forward to time when we come and we don't have to say 'the women directors' and 'as a woman,'" said juror member Kelly Reichart, the *Wendy and Lucy* filmmaker and a jury member.

"People keep asking us what it like being a woman director," said Italian filmmaker and Cannes regular Alice Rohrwacher, also a jury member. "It's a bit like asking someone who's survived a shipwreck why they're still alive. Well, ask the person who built the boat."

Also on the jury are *The Favourite* director Yorgos Lanthimos, Poland's Pawel Pawlikowski (*Cold War*), French director Enki Bilal, Senegalese actress-director Maimouna N'Diaye, French filmmaker Robin Campillo and actress Elle Fanning.

At 21, Fanning is the youngest juror ever in Cannes.

"I definitely am young but I started acting very young, as well," said Fanning, whose first movie role came at age four. As was the case last year, there are no Netflix releases in competition at Cannes. Following an outcry from French theater owners, the festival has required films in its main slate to have theatrical distribution in France. Netflix, unwilling to adhere to an exclusive theatrical window of three years in France, last year pulled its films, including Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*.

Inárritu, a close friend of Cuarón's, said "Cinema was born to be experienced in a communal experience." But he spoke strongly in support of Netflix for backing the kinds of movies — including those in a country's native language — that rarely make it into US and global cinemas.

"They have been capitalising on the lack of these films," said Inárritu. "Why not give the choice to people to experience cinema?" Some previous Cannes jury presidents have had a forceful influence on the movies chosen for awards. But Inárritu, who said he didn't want to "judge" movies but preferred "to be impregnated by them," promised he would be a very passive jury leader.

"I have never controlled anything," said the director. "Not my sets, not my family, nothing." —AP

# Kohli defends leaving out Pant for WC

APP ■ NEW DELHI

India picked veteran Dinesh Karthik over rising talent Rishabh Pant for the World Cup because of his composure under pressure, captain Virat Kohli said in an interview released on Wednesday.

The selection of the 33-year-old Karthik in the 15-member squad was sharply criticised by some former cricketers who felt the 21-year-old Pant should have been given a chance.

Since making his debut in 2018, Pant has impressed with his batting, including a maiden Test century in England.

He scored 488 runs from 16 matches in the just-finished Indian Premier League, while Karthik made 253 runs from 14 games.

Both players are vying for the reserve wicketkeeper slot behind former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

"In pressure situations, he (Karthik) has shown composure. It was something that everybody on board was convinced about. He has the experience," Kohli told the *Times of India* newspaper.

"If, god forbid, something happens to MS (Dhoni), Karthik can be immensely valuable behind the wickets. As a finisher, he's done well.

"So, it was the overall exposure to a tournament of this magnitude that was taken into primary consideration," said Kohli.

After making his debut in 2004, Karthik has played 91 one-day internationals while Pant has five to his name.



Kohli, who will be leading India for the first time at the World Cup, said he was not both-

ered about the constant attention he gets as a batsman and captain. "I don't want to be the centre

of everything. Nobody wants that. But when your intent is to make the team win, eventually you end up doing things which are always going to be seen," said Kohli, the world's number one Test and one-day player.

"I would always put my body on the line for the team."

With the World Cup round the corner, India captain Virat Kohli has revealed that the presence of former skipper MS Dhoni in the team, especially behind the stumps, is "priceless". Kohli said the selflessness with which Dhoni conducts himself makes him a delight to play alongside.

"The fact is Dhoni is among the smartest guys in the game. Behind the stumps, as I said, he's priceless. It gives me the freedom to do my thing. Someone like MS is a wealth of experience," Kohli

said.

"What can I say about him. My career started under him and few have seen him from so close over the last few years as I have. There's one thing about MS that's far more important than anything else — and there's a lot to him.

"For him, the team is always above everything else. It's always about the team, no matter what. To top it, look at the experience he brings to the squad and we're richer with it.

"Some of his dismissals behind the stumps, even as recently (as in the IPL), were match-changing," the skipper added.

He also said that there will be expectations from both Dhoni and Rohit Sharma from a leadership perspective at the World Cup that starts on May 30.

## SINGLES



Former India speedster Pravin Kumar interacting with the players during the cricket coaching camp at Ekana International Stadium on Wednesday

## FULTON TO BE NZ'S BATTING COACH

**WELLINGTON:** Former New Zealand batsman Peter Fulton will take over as batting coach of the national side following the World Cup which is slated to be held in England and Wales from May 30. The 40-year-old will assume the role from Craig McMillan who is stepping down after almost five years in the job. New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said Fulton was the stand-out applicant for the role. "We're delighted to have Pete come on board after the World Cup and are confident he will be a good fit for our environment," said Stead. "Pete obviously has a good understanding of batting, but he also demonstrated a clear vision for helping our elite batsmen. He's shown he has the coaching skills through his work with the U 19s and our winter training squads, while we know from his playing days that he will certainly add to our team culture," he added. Fulton's term will coincide with Stead's NZC contract which runs until the end of the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia next November.

## PANTHERS BEAT STRIKERS BY 6 RUNS

**MUMBAI:** North Mumbai Panthers bowlers held their nerve as they defeated Eagle Thane Strikers by 6 runs in the T20 Mumbai league game here on Wednesday. Put in to bat, a late cameo by Karan Nande (50 off 23 balls) helped North Mumbai post a challenging 190 for eight at the Wankhede Stadium. Later, their bowlers restricted the Strikers to 184/5 despite a blazing 71 off 44 balls by rival skipper Aditya Tare. Tare's knock was studded with 10 fours, but he could not complete the job and fell in the penultimate over. Strikers needed 16 runs off the final over and Moondeep Mangela, despite conceding a four on the first ball, did well to hand his team a win.

## WILMOTS TO COACH IRAN: REPORT

**TEHRAN:** Former Ivory Coast and Belgium manager Marc Wilmots has arrived in Tehran and is set to sign a three-year deal as national coach, state news agency IRNA reported. The official agency said Iran football federation president Mehdi Taj had confirmed the deal and the former Belgian striker would sign a contract later on Wednesday. It said the 50-year-old who was capped 70 times for his country was expected to sign on until the end of the 2022 World Cup for a fee of \$1.2 million (1 million euros) a year. He replaces Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz who stepped down after eight years in charge in January following Iran's semi-final exit in the Asian Cup when they went down 3-0 to Japan. He led Iran to two World Cup finals and extended his contract to 2019 after the 2018 tournament in Russia.

## PAARTH CLUB LIFT TROPHY

**LUCKNOW:** Paarth Cricket Club defeated RBN Global Club by two wickets to win the 15th BBD 'D' Division Cricket League at Akhilesh Das Stadium on Wednesday.

**BRIEF SCORES:**  
RBN:102 (Shreyas 27, Arpit 18; Apritam 19/3, Manish 11/2)  
PCC: 103 (Rajat 16, Priyank 16, Komal 14; Faiznul 18/5, Vaibhav 17/3)

## DPS BEAT ST FRANCIS'

**LUCKNOW:** DPS, Gomti Nagar beat St Francis', Gomti Nagar by 60 runs in a league match of the 1st Talent Hunt U-14 Cricket Series at RDSO ground on Wednesday.

**BRIEF SCORES:**  
DPS: 268 (Vishal Chauhan 103, Suyash Singh 91, Pranav Singh 26; Aradhya Kumar 45/2)  
St Francis': 208 (Aadi Aadesh Shukla 45, Suryansh Ojha 52, Aradhya Kumar 22, Jaspreet Singh 24; Kshitiz Singh 26/1).

## There's no one closer to Hardik's talent: Sehwaag



IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Former India opener Virender Sehwaag is known to call a spade a spade and he believes that there is no all-rounder in the Indian team who is as good as Hardik Pandya.

"There is no one even close to Hardik Pandya's talent with both bat and ball. If there was someone even closer to him — the three-dimensional players picked by BCCI — Pandya would not have made it back into the team," Sehwaag told *Cricbuzz*.

Pandya will be expected to play a crucial role if India are to stay true to the favourite tag and win the 2019 World Cup in England and Wales.

The Mumbai Indians player was in full flow in the recently concluded 12th edition of the Indian Premier League, scoring 402 runs in 15 innings in the tournament at an astonishing

strike rate of 191.42.

"I played well this season, but now time to move on. I want to lift that World Cup trophy as well," Hardik had said after Mumbai Indians beat CSK by 1 run to lift their fourth trophy.

A testimony to his all-round ability was the fact that Pandya had won a man of the match for his bowling performance in MI's final group game of the season against the Kolkata Knight Riders.

Pandya's 2/20 in three overs helped secure a convincing nine-wicket win for MI and knocked out KKR from the top four contention. "For sure, getting a 'Man of the Match' for my bowling is really pleasing. To be honest as a batsman, there is nothing better than hitting a ball. People don't expect a lot from my bowling, neither do I, but it feels nice," he said in the post-match presentation ceremony.

## Shadab declared fit for WC

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan's young leg-spin all-rounder Shadab Khan has been declared fit to play in the ICC World Cup, the Pakistan Cricket Board has announced.

"The latest blood tests carried out show zero viral load in his blood," the PCB said in a press release late on Tuesday night.

Shadab was named in Pakistan's 15-member World Cup squad but couldn't fly with the team to England after tests revealed traces of hepatitis C in his blood stream.

The PCB sent him to Manchester to consult with Dr Patrick Kennedy, who had given the leg-spinner two week's medication and rehab course, which Shadab went through at the National Cricket Academy.

The PCB said Shadab would



leave for England on May 16 and will consult Dr Kennedy the next day.

The board said Shadab's appearances in the World Cup warm-up matches against Afghanistan and Bangladesh on May 24 and 26 were subject to his fitness and team management's decision.

Shadab said he is delighted to have cleared the medical tests and be declared fit for the World Cup.

"It has been difficult to stay away from international cricket and watch Pakistan play. As a professional cricketer, you want to be part of the team's success. Having played in the 2017 Champions Trophy I understand the glamour, flavour and importance of global events," Shadab said.

"I am looking forward to competing in the World Cup and help Pakistan achieve success," he added.

## Steyn, Rabada on track to play WC opener: Gibson

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

South Africa's premier pace duo of Dale Steyn and Kagiso Rabada could be fit to play in their high-voltage World Cup opener against hosts England, according to coach Ottis Gibson.

Perennial underachievers South Africa lock horns with tournament favourites England on May 30, and the Proteas are expecting their two best pacers to return to full fitness before the opening game.

Both Steyn and Rabada's IPL campaigns were cut short by injuries, but the latter had picked 25 wickets by then for Delhi Capitals.

"There was an issue with KG (Rabada) and there was an issue with Dale, but we feel that those guys are on track,"



Gibson told reporters on Tuesday.

"There's nothing that people should be alarmed about. They're going to both make full recoveries and be able to take their place at the World Cup."

## India's squad is one quality pacer short: Gambhir

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir feels the Indian World Cup squad is "one quality fast bowler" short.

Two-time winners India begin their campaign with a big-ticket match against South Africa on June 5 in Southampton.

"I feel Indian team lacks one more quality fast bowler. (Jasprit) Bumrah, (Mohammed) Shami and Bhuvu (Bhuvneshwar Kumar) need more support. You may argue that India has two fast bowling all-rounders in Hardik (Pandya) and Vijay Shankar but I am not convinced. In the end it boils down to getting the team combination right and sticking to it," Gambhir said.

On the ICC showpiece, the left-handed batsman said, "This will be a well contested tournament as all the teams play each other. This format will give us the real world champion and



I think ICC should stick to this format for all future World Cups."

Talking about the teams to watch out for in the tournament, Gambhir picked Australia, England and New Zealand along with India.

"Besides India I will be keenly watching Australia as they are a side to beat. They have most well rounded bowling attack in the competition. I will also be watching New Zealand and hosts England."

## Igor Stimac's experience will benefit Indian team: Chhetri

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Talismanic Indian football captain Sunil Chhetri on Wednesday gave a big thumbs up to the appointment of Igor Stimac as head coach, saying that the team will benefit from the experience of the Croatian World Cupper.

"I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new boss, @stimac\_igor on his appointment as coach of the national team. He brings with him tremendous experience of having coached on some of the biggest stages in football. We will do well to benefit from it," Chhetri said on his *Twitter* handle.

The 34-year-old Indian, who has played for more than 100 matches for India and is currently the second highest international goal scorer, said while there was a change of guard at the helm of affairs, the players will continue to give their best.

"This will be a process, one towards which we will be giving nothing less than 100%. I have already spoken with the boys from the National team, and we have begun working on our fitness as we will need to switch modes soon," he said.

"While there is a change in guard at the helm, what does not change is our desire to keep improving. What I am also assuming won't change is the way all you fans have backed us. Let's all turn to this new chapter together," he added.

## AIFF appoints Stimac as India coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Croatian World Cupper Igor Stimac was on Wednesday appointed head coach of the Indian football team for a two-year term.

The national team has been without a coach since the departure of Stephen Constantine in January, following the credible show at the AFC Asian Cup.

The appointment was made by the AIFF's executive committee.

The 51-year-old Stimac, who was part of Croatia's 1998 World Cup squad that finished third in France, comes with an experience of over 18 years in coaching, structuring, and developing football and players back home, and internationally.

As a coach, Stimac's major achievement was guiding Croatia to qualify for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. During his tenure as the national coach of Croatia, he handed debuts to the likes of Mateo Kovacic, Ante Rebic, Alen Halilovic, and Ivan Perisic, amongst others.

He also played a pivotal role in developing the likes of Dario Srna, Daniel Subasic, Ivan Strinic, Kovacic, Perisic, and other players. The centre-back has made 53 appearances for the national team.

His last assignment was with Al-Shahania Club in Qatar.

As a player, he was part of the Croatia team that finished third in the 1998 World Cup.

Welcoming Stimac to Indian football, AIFF president Praful Patel said, "Igor is the right candidate to coach the



Blue Tigers. I welcome him on board. Indian football is going through a transition, and I am confident his vast experience will guide us to higher echelons."

General secretary Kushal Das added, "Indian football would benefit immensely under Igor Stimac."

"His credentials as a coach and experience as a player are sure to add immense value to the players, and the Indian football ecosystem. The momentum gained needs to be sustained."

Technical committee head Shyam Thapa, a former India international, said, "Mr Stimac's recommendation

was unanimous."

"All the members of the technical committee including the AIFF technical director Isac Doru were immensely impressed, and convinced about him being best suited for the job. He is a World Cupper, and has guided Croatia to World Cup as a coach. Who else could have been a better candidate?" he quipped.

"He also impressed us with his extensive research on Indian football."

Stimac's first assignment will be the Kings Cup in Buriram, Thailand where the Blue Tigers play Curacao in their first match on June 5.

## Griezmann confirms Atletico departure



AFP ■ MADRID

French striker Antoine Griezmann has told Atletico Madrid he will leave them in the close season, the Spanish club said on *Twitter* on Tuesday.

The 28-year-old Griezmann has a contract until 2023 with Atletico, but has a buy-out clause of 120million euros (\$134million) and has been the target of several approaches from La Liga rivals Barcelona.

"Antoine Griezmann has told the club he will not continue as a Rojiblanco (red and white, the

"Antoine Griezmann has told the club he will not continue as a Rojiblanco (red and white, the club's colours) next season," the club said on *Twitter*.

club's colours) next season," the club said on *Twitter*.

Within a few moments the player then posted a video explaining himself.

"After speaking with Cholo (club coach Diego Simeone), then with Miguel Angel and the people in the hierarchy of the club I wanted to speak with you, the fans, who have always given me a lot of love," said Griezmann, wearing a plain black t-shirt in front of a simple white background behind him.

"I wanted to tell you I have taken the decision to leave," said the French 2018 World Cup winner.

"I have had five wonderful seasons here and you will always be in my heart," said the affable forward known for doing dances from the video game *Fortnite*, when celebrating his goals.

"The truth is it has been difficult to take this route but it is what I feel I need and I would like to thank all of you for the love you have shown me during these five years."

With 133 goals in 252 games at Atletico the attacker has been ever-present and has rarely been unfit or injured.

He was a Champions League runner up in 2016, losing to arch-rivals Real Madrid. In 2018 however Atletico beat Marseille in the Europa League final.

Griezmann finished third for the Ballon d'Or in 2016, after France lost in the final to Portugal at the European Championships and was a huge presence as Les Bleus romped to a memorable World Cup win at Russia 2018 after which he also finished third for the Ballon d'Or.

# OPENERS SET UP RECORD WIN

Bairstow's 128, Roy's 76 help England chase down 359 runs target to go 2-0 up in five-match series

AFP ■ BRISTOL

Jonny Bairstow's commanding hundred was the centrepiece of World Cup hosts England's six-wicket win over Pakistan in the third one-day international at Bristol on Tuesday.

England generally prefer batting first but captain Eoin Morgan decided to give them experience of chasing just weeks away from the World Cup by opting to field first after winning the toss.

Bairstow's 128 in a score of 359 for four — England's second highest winning total batting second in an ODI — helped put the home side 2-0 up with two to play in a five-match series.

Test captain Joe Root made 43 as Pakistan became increasingly ragged in the field, England winning with 31 balls — or more than five overs — to spare. Moeen Ali was 46 not out, with Morgan unbeaten on 17.

Earlier, Imam-ul-Haq's excellent career-best 151 saw Pakistan to 358 for nine.

That left England with a seemingly challenging target, particularly as they had rested Jos Buttler following his match-winning 110 not out in the second ODI at Southampton on Saturday.

## OPENERS RUN RIOT

But Bairstow and opening partner Jason Roy, who made 76 after Shaheen Shah Afridi dropped an easy chance to catch him at mid-off on 21, shared a blistering stand of 159 inside 18 overs.

The pair took advantage of a good pitch, short boundaries, fast outfield and an inexperienced Pakistan attack — Mohammad Amir was again ruled out with chicken pox — to repeatedly send the ball soaring over the ropes.

Roy set the tone for England's reply with a huge straight six off Afridi and flat-batted medium-pace Faheem Ashraf's first ball straight back over the bowler's head for another.

He eventually sliced Faheem to Asif Ali at cover-point, having hit eight fours



and four sixes.

Bairstow, dropped on 86 when Faheem could not hold a tough caught and bowled chance off a fierce drive, was severe on anything short and went to his seventh ODI hundred off 74 balls, including 12 fours and three sixes.

He eventually fell when he bottom-edged a pull off Junaid Khan into his

stumps, with England well on their way at 234 for two in the 29th over.

Earlier, Chris Woakes bolstered his chances of being included in England's final 15-man World Cup squad with four wickets for 67 runs in a maximum 10 overs.

The Warwickshire paceman reduced Pakistan to 27 for two, a full-

FASTEST TO SIX 100s IN ODIs					
Batsman	M	Runs	AVG	H.S	S/R
Imam-ul-Haq (Pak)	27	1381	60.04	151	82.20
Upul Tharanga (SL)	31	1161	40.03	120	77.34
Babar Azam (Pak)	32	1558	55.64	125*	87.82
Hashim Amla (SA)	35	1834	61.13	140	92.53

HIGHEST SUCCESSFUL-RUN CHASES IN ODIs					
Score	Overs	Team	Opponent	Venue	Year
438-9	49.5	South Africa	Australia	Jo'burg	2006
372-6	49.2	South Africa	Australia	Durban	2016
364-4	48.4	England	West Indies	Bridgetown	2019
362-1	43.3	India	Australia	Jaipur	2013
359-6	47.5	Australia	India	Mohali	2019
359-4	44.5	England	Pakistan	Bristol	2019

FAISEL FEATURES

## MORGAN BANNED FOR SLOW OVER-RATE

AFP ■ BRISTOL

England will have to find a new captain for the fourth one-day international against Pakistan on Friday after skipper Eoin Morgan was banned from the match by ICC for a slow over-rate offence.

Morgan was sanctioned after World Cup hosts and favourites England took around four hours to bowl their 50 overs in a six-wicket win over Pakistan in the third ODI on Tuesday.

He was also fined 40 percent of his match fee and his players 20 percent of theirs after match referee

Richie Richardson ruled England were two overs short after time allowances were taken into consideration.

As Morgan had previously been found guilty of a minor over-rate offence during the Barbados ODI against the West Indies on February 22, this latest incident constituted his second minor over-rate offence within a 12-month period and so led to a one-game ban.

"The suspension means Morgan will miss the fourth ODI against Pakistan in Nottingham on Friday," said an ICC statement issued on Wednesday.

Imam surpassed his previous ODI best of 128 against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo last year before he was bowled, giving himself room, by Curran. The 23-year-old's innings was the highest individual score by a Pakistan batsman against England in an ODI, surpassing the 138 made by Fakhar at Southampton.



## Jonny credits IPL for raising his game

AFP ■ BRISTOL

Jonny Bairstow said playing alongside the likes of Australia's David Warner in the Indian Premier League had helped take his game to new heights after his match-winning hundred in Bristol.

The 29-year-old Yorkshireman carried on his recent form from the lucrative Twenty20 IPL where he scored 445 runs in 10 games at an average of 55.62 for the Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"You're able to learn different things from different coaches and different players," said Bairstow, who opened the batting for the Sunrisers with Warner — set to be an opponent during the World Cup and subsequent Ashes series in England.

"It's just little things like game plans," Bairstow added.

"He (Warner) hits in completely different areas to potentially myself. I guess it's method more than anything else. But learning from them, as well as the guys here, that can only be a good thing playing under pressure with expectation."

Bairstow was furious after his seventh ODI hundred ended when he played on to Junaid Khan, with the batsman hitting out at his stumps.

"I was cross because you want to see that through," Bairstow explained.

"You want to be going on and getting 160 or 170, and

potentially 200 and seeing your team through.

"That's where we're at as a group of players at the moment, having competition to go and get the 150s and 160s and beyond.

"We are backing ourselves and competition is healthy all the way through. That's a good place to be and I was cross about it."

Pakistan's defeat showed how once impregnable ODI totals can now be overhauled in modern limited-overs cricket.

It was especially tough on Imam-ul-Haq, whose career-best 151 was Pakistan's highest individual score against England at this level.

Imam felt Pakistan had a total they could defend although their cause was not helped by some naive bowling from an inexperienced attack and slipshod fielding.

"The score was enough, 360 was a really good total," Imam said.

"We just lost a couple of catches that cost us and our bowlers did not stick to the plan," the 23-year-old left-handed opener added.

Jonny Bairstow in IPL 2019	
Matches	10
Runs	455
Best	114
Average	55.62
SR	157.24
100/50	1/2
4s/6s	48/18



## Kookaburras beat India 4-0

PTI ■ PERTH

The Indian men's hockey team were blanked 0-4 by world No 2 Australia in the fourth match of the tour Down Under with Blake Govers and Jeremy Hayward scoring a brace each for the hosts, here on Wednesday.

After remaining unbeaten in their first three matches of the tour, world No 5 India were handed a lesson in hockey by the Kookaburras with Govers (15th, 60th minutes) and Hayward (20th, 59th) finding the net twice each.

India started the match well as they pressed Australia higher up the field, but were dealt two successive blows in five minutes.

The visitors had earlier earned themselves an early penalty corner in the fifth minute, but Harmanpreet Singh's shot was successfully blocked by the first rusher.

In the 12th minute, Harmanpreet was in action again as he played one-two with Nilakanta Sharma on the right flank, who played in a well-calculated through-ball back to the defender, but he failed to reach the ball quickly enough.

Seconds from the first quarter Australia secured their first penalty corner, which resulted in a penalty stroke for the hosts and Govers made no mistake from the set-piece.

Five minutes into the second quarter, Australia earned back-to-back penalty corners

and from the second chance Hayward beautifully flicked the ball low into the right side of goal past India goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak to double their lead.

Aaron Kleinschmidt then missed a great chance for Australia in the 25th minute as he found himself unmarked inside the box, but shot just wide of the post.

The third quarter, however, witnessed a close battle between both the teams but Australia defended stoutly to keep Indian strikers at bay.

India started the last quarter well and it was captain Manpreet Singh who created the first chance as he ran into the striking circle and shot at goal, but Australia's Durst made a diving stop on his left side to deny the visitors.

India secured another penalty corner in the 51st minute but Harmanpreet's effort was once again saved by the Australian custodian.

Desperately in search of goals, India withdrew their goalkeeper for an extra outfield player but the move backfired as Australia scored two goals in the last two minutes.

Australia's third goal came off a penalty corner conversion by Hayward before Govers scored through a fierce reverse shot to round off a disappointing day for the Indians.

India will again play Australia on Friday in their fifth and last match of the tour.

## Aston Villa reach playoff final

AFP ■ LONDON



Aston Villa progressed to within one game of a return to the Premier League after edging West Midlands rivals West Bromwich Albion 4-3 on penalties in the Championship playoff semi-finals on Tuesday.

West Brom won 1-0 on the night at the Hawthorns to level the tie at 2-2 on aggregate thanks to Craig Dawson's first-half header.

However, the Baggies' hopes of an immediate return to the top-flight were dented when captain Chris Brunt was sent off 10 minutes from the end of normal time.

The hosts held out manfully during extra-time, but Villa goalkeeper Jed Steer saved West Brom's first two penalties of the shootout from Mason Holgate and Ahmed Hegazi.

"There's obviously a lot of luck involved but wow," Steer told Sky Sports. "We practise penalties, so I think I must've

faced a 100 a day the last few days."

Conor Hourihane, Mile Jedinak, Jack Grealish and Tammy Abraham kept their cool from the spot as Villa set up a May 27 Wembley meeting with Leeds or Derby for a lucrative place in the Premier League.

Marcelo Bielsa's Leeds hold a 1-0 first-leg lead over Frank Lampard's Rams ahead of the second leg at Elland Road on Wednesday.

Villa missed out in the playoff final last year, losing 1-0 to Fulham and Grealish, who has been linked with a summer move to Tottenham, is keen to make amends in what could be his final game for the club.

"The crowd made it tough with the atmosphere but in the end I felt we ran out worthy winners," said the midfielder. "It's no good getting to Wembley and falling at the final hurdle again, so fingers crossed. All of us are very hungry."

## Pep wins manager of the year award

AFP ■ LONDON

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola edged out Jurgen Klopp to a trophy for the second time in three days as the Catalan claimed the League Managers' Association manager of the year.

Guardiola's City retained the Premier League title on Sunday, beating Klopp's Liverpool by a single point at the end of a thrilling title race.

Having also won the League Cup earlier in the campaign, Guardiola's side could complete a first ever domestic treble in English football when they face Watford in the FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday.

Guardiola topped the vote ahead of Jurgen Klopp, Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino, who has led Spurs to their first ever Champions League final, and Nuno Espirito Santo of Wolves, who finished seventh in their first season back in the top flight.



### PREMIER LEAGUE MANAGER OF THE YEAR (Last 5 winners)

Season	Manager	Club
2014-15	José Mourinho	Chelsea
2015-16	Claudio Ranieri	Leicester City
2016-17	Antonio Conte	Chelsea
2017-18	Pep Guardiola	Manchester City
2018-19	Pep Guardiola	Manchester City

### PREMIER LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR (Last 5 winners)

Season	Player	Position	Club
2014-15	Eden Hazard	Midfielder	Chelsea
2015-16	Jamie Vardy	Forward	Leicester City
2016-17	N'Golo Kanté	Midfielder	Chelsea
2017-18	Mohamed Salah	Forward	Liverpool
2018-19	Virgil van Dijk	Defender	Liverpool

## Kovac fighting for Bayern job despite possible double

### MANAGERIAL (As of 11 May 2019)

Team	From	To	G	W	D	L	Win %
Red Bull Salzburg	2009	2011	54	25	11	18	46.30
Croatia	2013	2015	19	10	5	4	52.63
Eintracht Frankfurt	2016	2018	91	38	20	33	41.76
Bayern Munich	2018	present	47	33	9	5	70.21
<b>Total</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50.24</b>

AFP ■ MUNICH



When Niko Kovac sends his team onto the pitch against Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday, there will be more than just the Bundesliga title at stake. As a rocky first season enters its final act, the beleaguered Bayern Munich coach is fighting for his job.

Kovac, who took over from Jupp Heynckes after leading Frankfurt to cup glory last season, has overseen a generational transition while keeping Bayern in the hunt for both domestic titles.

Yet he continues to face criticism from inside and outside the club, amid questions over his safety-first style and rumours that Bayern are eyeing Ajax coach Erik ten Hag and former Real Madrid boss Julen Lopetegui.

"Everything less than success is failure, I always knew that," said Kovac last week as he looked back on his first season in Munich.

Bayern can secure a seventh straight league title if they avoid defeat against Frankfurt, and could make it two trophies in a week in the German Cup final against RB Leipzig a week later.

Yet even a domestic double may not be enough to save Kovac, who appears to be the subject of a tug of war in the Bayern boardroom.

President Uli Hoenes has repeatedly backed his coach, stating early in the season that he would "defend him to the hilt", but CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has always been cooler on Kovac.

"I am not a fan of job guarantees and I don't want to just praise the coach and the players," said

Rummenigge after Saturday's 0-0 draw at RB Leipzig.

Later that evening, speculation over Kovac's future hit fever pitch when sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic refused to confirm whether the Croatian would still be in charge next season.

"Niko Kovac has my full support, but I can only speak for myself," he told public broadcaster ZDF.

Asked directly whether Kovac would hold on to his job, he replied: "we will see".

Kovac has faced the sack once before this season, after a draw at home to Fortuna Dueseldorf saw Bayern slip nine points behind Borussia Dortmund in November.

At that time, there were reports of dressing room disharmony over his training methods and rotation policy.

Kovac responded by rotating less, and led Bayern back into the title race with 13 wins in 14 games after the Dueseldorf debacle.

He also succeeded in integrating young players such as Serge Gnabry and Leon Goretzka into the first team.

Yet senior players have continued to criticise his style, which pri-

oritises defensive stability.

"We played too defensively in both games and I don't know why," striker Robert Lewandowski told Norwegian television after Bayern were knocked out of the Champions League second round by Liverpool.

For all the promise of domestic success, the second round defeat to Liverpool continues to hang over Kovac.

On ZDF last Saturday, Salihamidzic singled the tie out as a low point of the season, saying that Bayern had "lacked courage" in the second leg.

Rummenigge, too, said in April that the Liverpool defeat had "ranked hugely".

"It did damage to us financially but also to our image, and to the image of the Bundesliga," he told Bild newspaper.

The defeat has certainly piled the pressure on Kovac to deliver the league and cup double, and the next two weeks may decide the fate of the Bayern coach.

"If we win the title, then I would rate this season a B+," said Salihamidzic on Saturday. "Otherwise, it was a turd of a season."