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SC's clean chit to Rafale deal again

Top court rejects plea for FIR and further probe into aspects of pricing

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a major relief to the ruling regime and a big setback to the Opposition, the Supreme Court on Thursday once again gave a clean chit to the Modi Government in the purchase of 36 fully-loaded Rafale fighter jets from French company Dassault Aviation, rejecting the plea for registration of an FIR and a further probe into the matter.

While unanimously dismissing the pleas seeking review of the December 14, 2018, verdict in which it had said that there was no occasion to doubt the decision-making process in the procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets, the SC also refused to re-examine the aspects of pricing, decision making process and selection of the offset partner in the deal. "This court did not consider it appropriate to embark on a roving and fishing enquiry," a Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and comprising Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph said.

The apex court was not satisfied with the submission that it decided the disputed questions of facts in the ₹59,000-crore deal "prematurely" without investigation. However, Justice Joseph, in a separate judgment, said, "Petitioners can approach the CBI for registering an FIR provided the Government as per the Prevention of Corruption Law."

prayer made for registration of FIR and further investigation but then once we had examined the three aspects on merits we did not consider it appropriate to issue any directions, as prayed for by the petitioners which automatically covered the direction for registration of FIR, prayed for," said the Bench.

The review applications cannot be entertained unless there is an "error apparent on the face of the record", the apex court said.

The Bench said it cannot lose sight of the fact that it is dealing with a contract for aircraft, which was pending before different Governments for quite some time and the necessity for those aircraft has never been in dispute.

"We were, however, cautious to note that this was in the context of the writ petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution of India, the jurisdiction invoked," said the Bench.

The petition seeking re-examination of the December 14, 2018, verdict was filed by former Union Ministers Yashwant Sinha, Arun Shourie and activist lawyer Prashant Bhusan. Other review petitions were filed by lawyer Vineet Dhandha and Aam Aadmi Party lawmaker Sanjay Singh.

The Bench said it appears that the petitioners construed themselves as an appellate authority to determine each aspect of the contract and

CHRONOLOGY

- AUG 28, 2007:** Ministry of Defence issues Request for Proposal for procurement of 126 MMRCA (medium multi-role combat aircraft)
- SEP 4, 2008:** Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group incorporates Reliance Aerospace Technologies Ltd (RATL)
- MAY 2011:** IAF short-lists Rafale and Eurofighter jets
- JAN 30, 2012:** Dassault Aviation's Rafale aircraft comes up with the lowest bid
- Mar 13, 2014:** Work Share agreement signed between HAL and Dassault Aviation under which they were responsible for 70 per cent and 30 per cent of the work, respectively, for 108 aircraft
- JAN 26, 2016:** India and France sign MoU for 36 Rafale aircraft
- Nov 18:** Government states in Parliament that the cost of each Rafale aircraft to be approximately ₹670 crore and that all aircraft



- will be delivered by April 2022
- DEC 31, 2016:** Dassault Aviation's Annual Report reveals the actual price paid for the 36 aircraft at about ₹60,000 crore, more than double the Government's stated price in Parliament
- MAR 13, 2018:** PIL in SC seeks independent probe into Centre's decision to procure 36 Rafale fighter jets and disclosure of the deal cost in Parliament
- SEP 5:** SC agrees to hear PIL seeking stay on Rafale fighter jet deal
- NOV 12:** Centre places price details of 36 Rafale fighter jets
- DEC 14:** SC says there is no occasion to doubt the decision-making process of the Modi Government and dismisses all the petitions seeking direction to the CBI to register an FIR
- JAN 2, 2019:** Sinha, Shourie and Bhusan move SC seeking review of its December 14 judgment

involve the SC to do the same.

While dealing with the allegation of irregularities on the pricing of the jets, the top court said that it satisfied itself with the material made available and it is not the function of this court to determine the prices and act on mere "suspicion" of certain persons.

"The internal mechanism of such pricing would take care of the situation. On the perusal of documents we had found that one cannot compare apples and oranges. Thus, the pricing of the basic aircraft had to be compared which was competitively marginally lower. As to what should be loaded on the aircraft or not and what further pricing should be added has to be left to the best judgment of the competent authorities," the Bench said.

Continued on Page 7

Verdict big boost to fast forward defence buys

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court verdict on the Rafale deal comes as a big boost to expedite defence procurements, including Government-to-Government contracts. India desperately needs modern weapon systems to maintain operational preparedness and the verdict now allows the decision makers to go ahead without looking over their shoulders.

However, the Government is not yet off the hook as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) is likely to table its report on offsets in the ₹59,000-crore deal in the Winter Session of Parliament, beginning next Monday.

With the apex court now giving a clean chit to the Rafale deal, the officials will surely now feel more confident of discharging their duties and help the Services to acquire modern weapons to face the likelihood of a two-front war with Pakistan and China.

Facing the twin challenge, India urgently needs submarines to shore up its present

- India urgently needs submarines to shore up its present strength of 14 ageing submarines besides modern warships to patrol the strategically important Indian Ocean
- If the Government gives clearance, the process of increasing the fleet will take another decade given the long gestation period of defence contracts



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Similarly, the IAF immediately requires efforts to address the issue of the depleting strength of its fighter jet squadron. At present, the squadron strength is 31 while the desired level is 42. Even if the Government gives clearance for acquisition now, the process of increasing the fleet will take another decade given the long gestation period of defence contracts.

As for the awaited CAG report, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has time and again alleged that Reliance was given a major chunk of offsets and charged the NDA regime with cronyism. As per the contract, the offsets are 50 per cent of the overall deal and the manufacturer has to tie up with Indian ventures to plough back the offset amount into the country. The CAG report covers audit of nearly 30 offset contracts of Army, Navy and IAF for 2012-13 and 2017-18.

Continued on Page 7

Sabarimala: Women entry call referred to 7-judge apex bench

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a 3:2 majority verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday referred to a larger 7-judge bench the pleas seeking review of its historic 2018 judgment allowing women and girls of all ages to enter Kerala's Sabarimala temple, set to open on November 17, along with other contentious issues of alleged discrimination against Muslim and Parsi women.

As the majority verdict, penned by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, kept the review pleas pending for a 7-judge bench and did not stay its September 28, 2018, majority judgment, the girls and women of all age groups will be entitled to undertake the pilgrimage to the shrine.

The CJJI, who wrote on behalf of himself and Justices AM Khanwilkar and Indu Malhotra, said the debate about the constitutional validity of religious practices like bar on entry of women and girls into a place of worship was not limited to the Sabarimala case.

They said such restrictions are there with regard to entry of Muslim women into mosques and "dargah" and Parsi women, married to non-Parsi men, being barred from the holy fire place of an Agyari. It was time the apex court evolves a judicial policy to do "substantial and complete justice", the added.

The majority view, delineated by the CJJI in its nine-page verdict, was not agreed to by Justices RF Nariman and DY

Chandrachud. Justice Nariman, writing for himself and Justice Chandrachud, regretted his "inability to agree with" the view of the CJJI and said the scope of the review pleas was limited to the entry of menstruating women into the hill-top shrine in Kerala and directed the State Government to ensure strict compliance of the 2018 verdict.

The majority judgment also said that a decision by a larger bench "would put at rest recurring issues" with regard to the fundamental right to profess and practice any religion.

"In the context of the present strength of judges of the Supreme Court, it may not be inappropriate if matters involving seminal issues, including the interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution touching upon the right to profess, practise and propagate its own religion, are heard by larger bench of commensurate number of judges," it said.

It set out seven questions of law to be examined by the larger bench. They included — interplay between freedom of religion under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution; need to delineate the expression "constitutional morality"; the extent to which courts can enquire into particular religious practices; meaning of sections of Hindus under Article 25 and whether "essential religious practices" of denomination or a section thereof are protected under Article 26.

Continued on Page 7



I wholeheartedly welcome the Supreme Court's categorical dismissal of the review petitions in the Rafale case and with this pronouncement the Government stands vindicated. The verdict is also a judgment on our Government's transparency in decision making

Justice Joseph of the Supreme Court has opened a huge door into investigation of the Rafale scam. An investigation must now begin in full earnest. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) must also be set up to probe this scam

It is a welcome verdict, vindicating the Government's position on the issue. We are happy that finally the controversy is buried. The controversy was created for political gains

RAJNATH SINGH

RAHUL GANDHI

BS DHANOA

BJP seeks Rahul's apology, Cong ex-chief demands JPC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following the Supreme Court's clean chit to the Rafale deal, the BJP on Thursday lost no time in launching an all-out attack on the Congress and its ex-chief Rahul Gandhi demanding an apology from him. An under-terred Rahul hit back latching on to a separate judgment by Justice KM Joseph, who said the "petitioners can approach the CBI for registering an FIR" to demand a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe.

While BJP president Amit Shah led the charge, Rahul did so for the Congress claiming that the judgment is not a clean chit for the Government and that there should be a parliamentary panel probe as Justice KM Joseph has left open a "huge door" for investigation.

The Congress had used the Modi Government's purchase of 36 Rafale jets from French aerospace major

Dassault Aviation for the IAF at a cost of ₹59,000 crore as one of the major issues in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, combining it with its "Chowkidar Chor Hai" slogan. The pitch, however, was rejected by the voters as the Congress could win just 52 Lok Sabha seats.

The grand old party may raise the issue during the Parliament session in consonance with other like-minded parties. In a series of tweets, Shah said the judgment of the apex court has proved that the disruption of Parliament over the Rafale fighter aircraft deal was a "sham". "Supreme Court's decision to dismiss the review petition on #Rafale is a befitting reply to those leaders and parties who rely on malicious and baseless campaigns," he said.

Countering the BJP narrative, Rahul took to twitter using hashtag #BJPLiesOnRafale and tweeted, "Justice Joseph of the Supreme Court has opened a

huge door into investigation of the RAFALE scam. An investigation must now begin in full earnest. A JPC must also be set up to probe this scam."

Cong to take up matter in PAC

New Delhi: As the Supreme Court dismissed the plea to re-examine the Rafale deal, the Congress is expected to take up the matter in Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), headed by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. The PAC was constituted in the last week of August and has shortlisted the Rafale issue for examination in the coming days, which could lead to a fresh Congress-BJP face-off. The committee is first expected to examine the CAG officials who prepared the report on Rafale and later, call a Defence Ministry top officials and senior IAF officials.

Detailed report on P5

SC lets Rahul off with warning for contempt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday closed the contempt plea against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for wrongly attributing to the apex court his "chowkidar chor hai" remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in connection with the Rafale case.

The court said the remarks made by Rahul were far from true and he should have refrained from those and could have been careful.

"It is unfortunate that without any verification certain remarks were made by the contemnor (Rahul Gandhi) against the Prime Minister," a bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph said.



The Bench referred to the affidavit filed by him tendering unconditional apology and said, "Gandhi enjoys an important position in political spectrum and no court should be dragged to political discourse, whether valid or invalid." "Mr Gandhi needs to be more careful in future," the Bench added.

Continued on Page 7

Fight over J'khand seats may end BJP-AJSU's 19-year ties

PRANAV PRATYUSH ■ RANCHI

The BJP did not officially announce it, the AJSU said nothing either, but the split between 19-year-old alliance partners is merely a formality now.

After days of suspense, the BJP on Thursday announced its third list of 15 candidates taking the tally of its total candidates to 69 in response to AJSU's non-negotiable stance on 17 seats, including some of the crucial constituencies where both the parties have fielded their candidates.

The decision came after a series of meetings in Delhi and Ranchi when

the BJP Central leadership took the stance to field 15 more candidates in the absence of any fruitful dialogue with the AJSU party, which has fielded candidates against the BJP on many crucial seats.

While Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das hinted in a Press conference here on Thursday that the party may go it alone in the polls by saying it will achieve the target of 65 plus seats this election.

Speaking to a news channel in Delhi, State in-charge OP Mathur said the BJP has always given due respect to its partner and it has still not announced candidates on nine seats.



Battleground JHARKHAND

Continued on Page 7

CAPSULE

GREAT MATHEMATICIAN VASHISHTHA DIES AT 74

Patna: Renowned mathematician Vashishtha Narayan Singh died on Thursday at the Patna Medical College and Hospital on Thursday. He was 74. Vashishtha completed his schooling in Netafhat in undivided Bihar and went on to do his PhD from the University of California in 1969. He taught at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, and the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

16 DISQUALIFIED CONG, JD(S) MLAS JOIN BJP

Bengaluru: A day after the Supreme Court paved the way for them to contest the December 5 Assembly bypolls in Karnataka, 16 disqualified Congress-JD(S) legislators on Thursday joined the BJP, which nominated 13 Congress and JD(S) MLAs as its candidates for the Assembly bypolls in Karnataka.

SC REJECTS PLEAS ON ARTICLE 370 ABRIGATION

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to pass any interim order on a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Centre's decision to abrogate the provisions of Article 370, which gave special status to erstwhile State of J&K.

2 ARRESTED IN NOIDA FOR SLAUGHTERING CALF

Noida: Two men were arrested here after an exchange of gunfire with police early on Thursday when the accused and two of their partners were allegedly slaughtering a calf, officials said. The carcass of the calf was found strewn on the ground, while some equipment, including a butcher's chopper, were also recovered from the spot, police said.

Moody's cuts GDP growth forecast to 5.6%, but says it'll recover in '20

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Investors Service on Thursday cut India's economic growth forecast for current year to 5.6 per cent from 5.8 per cent estimated earlier, saying GDP slowdown is lasting longer than expected.

"We have revised down our growth forecast for India. We now forecast slower real GDP growth of 5.6 per cent in 2019, from 7.4 per cent in 2018," it said. It expected economic activity to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively, but the pace to remain lower.

Detailed report on P10



Brides and grooms during a mass marriage ceremony in Prayagraj under Mukhyamantri Kanya Vivah Yojana by UP government across the state on Thursday

EPF scam: EOW arrests two more

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sleuths of Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Uttar Pradesh Police made two more arrests in the multi-crore rupees power employees provident fund scam.

Sources confirmed that after grilling him for more than 24 hours, the EOW on Thursday arrested Abhinav Gupta, son of PK Gupta, one of the Power Employees Trust directors of UPPCL who was arrested earlier along with then MD Ayodhya Prasad Mishra and another official. Besides Abhinav, his henchman, Asheesh Chowdhary, was also arrested.

introducing a bogus company to the Trust to recommend investment in DHFL. He had taken huge money as "commission" for this service. The EOW found that most of the brokerage companies were fake.

The EOW had earlier arrested former UPPCL MD AP Mishra, former director (finance) of UPPCL Employees Trust Sudhanshu Dwivedi and general manager of the Trust PK Gupta.

The arrests were made after the scam came to light in which employees trust of the UPPCL invested Rs 2,600 crore in the controversial DHFL which is reported to have link with underworld.

Abhinav was charged for

Power employees up in arms against PF scam

Thousands take out protest rally, disrupting traffic movement in city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Thousands of power employees and their family members marched to Shakti Bhawan, the Power department headquarters in the state capital, and staged a demonstration there on Thursday, demanding action against the officials involved in UPPCL provident fund scam and guarantee for their money.

The power employees also announced to boycott work for 48 hours from November 18 in support of their demand.

The family members of the power employees, including children, led the march from Hydel guest house to Shakti Bhawan, raising slogans in favour of their demands that include notification by the government to protect their General Provident Fund and Contributory Provident Fund and action against the erring chairman of the UPPCL.

In the meeting held at the gate of the Shakti Bhawan, the protesting power employees decided to boycott work for 48 hours from November 18 if their demands were not met by then. They also threatened to go on indefinite strike without any notice if action was taken against any employee for participating in the ongoing protest and said the entire responsibility for it would be on the government and the UPPCL management.

Power Employees Joint Action Committee convenor Shaileendra Dubey said here on Thursday that the demonstration was a big success. He said



it was a unique scene as the family members of the power employees from far-flung areas joined the protest. "They came by road and trains to be part of this protest," he said.

Dubey said the government was protecting the guilty officials of the UP Power Corporation Limited and thus they had not sent the letter

recommending the CBI probe into the scam to the Centre.

Dubey said that the power employees were demanding notification from the state government for payment of provident fund to the employees and arrest of the former UPPCL chairman who was instrumental in investing the employees GPF and CPF in

Power employees marched from the field office at Rana Pratap Marg to Shakti Bhawan on Thursday to protest against the PF scam. (Left) Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam caused by the massive protest rally

the DHFL. The state government has assured the employees that their provident fund and other retirement benefits would be released in a phased manner.

However, the power employees continued their agitation for the tenth day on Thursday, demanding stern action against the guilty officials and government's guarantee to pay the employees GPF and CPF. The scam came to light earlier this month when it surfaced that UPPCL Employees Trust had invested around Rs 6,200 crore of GPF and CPF of the power employees in the controversial DHFL, against whom the Enforcement Directorate has launched a probe into its link with the underworld.

10-year-old girl found hacked to death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The body of a 10-year-old girl was recovered from a field in Gosainganj around 9 am on Thursday. Speculations were rife that she was sexually assaulted but police sought to rubbish the apprehensions. The body has been sent for autopsy, report of which is expected to be out by Friday afternoon.

A group of farmers going to their field spotted the body and informed police. Investigating officer Rajendra Verma said she had gone missing from her house in Gosainganj 'kasba' on November 8 afternoon. Her father lodged a complaint at the local police station on November 9 morning.

In his complaint, the girl's father stated that his daughter went to a nearby field alone to attend nature's call. He said he and other relatives searched for the girl but when the efforts proved to be in vain, he lodged a case in this connection.

The investigating officer said the police swung into action immediately after the complaint was registered and raids were conducted at the houses of some relatives, but the girl remained untraceable.

The police said that the clothes which the girl was wearing were intact but the toe of her right leg was apparently chopped off with some sharp-edged object and there were also injuries on the neck. He said property dispute in the family might have claimed the girl's life. However, he added that it would be clear after thorough investigations. The knife used for the murder was found few yards away from the crime scene.

The police said that the deceased belongs to a Dalit family and her father and other family members sold pork in Gosainganj to eke out their livelihood.



Kids pose for a group photograph during fancy dress competition at a play house near Shah Najaf on the occasion of Children's Day on Thursday

Pioneer

UP's Dial 112 service bags prize in global contest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The single emergency helpline call centre Dial 112 achieved a major success when participating in the International Call Centre Award in Dubai, Uttar Pradesh won the third prize in Police Category. The competition was held for the first time in Dubai and jointly hosted by Dubai Police and Awaya.

Disclosing this, ADG (Dial 112), Asim Arun said the emergency call centre was working with full efficiency and it was a matter of pride for everyone in UP that within about a month of its inauguration by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Dial 112 had proved its competence at the international level and won the third prize in Dubai.

Kumar said the first prize was bagged by Singapore police and second by Sharjah police.

He said under the police category, there were over 500 police forces from across the world, including United States of America-911, Australia-102, Europe-112, and 20 were short-listed for final presentation. He said that finally on Wednesday,

Dial-112 of UP Police won the third prize.

It may be mentioned that UP has joined 20 other states and Union Territories which have a pan-India network of single emergency helpline number '112' on which immediate assistance can be sought by anyone in distress.

The '112' helpline is an integration of police (100), fire (101) and women (1090) helpline numbers and the project is being implemented under the Central government's Nirbhaya Fund. The single number for emergency services is similar to '911' in the United States. The 20 states and UTs include Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadar and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Jammu and Kashmir and Nagaland, a Home Ministry official said.

The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) envisages a single pan-India emergency number '112', which is an internationally recognised number, to target all types of emergencies.

A panic button is already provided on all mobile phones, which on activation will trigger an emergency call to '112'. The Emergency Response Centre (ERCs), being set up by the States and UTs, can receive panic signal via voice call to '112', email requests on state ERSS website or the '112' mobile app, the official said.

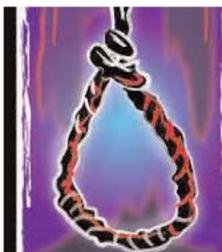
Location based tracking of victim can be done through location based services of all phones or even more accurately through GPS for smart phones. The '112' India app provides for 'shout facility' designed especially for women, for enlisting support of volunteers, who have registered themselves with the state police, for emergency response. To access emergency services, a person can dial '112' on a phone or press the power button of a smart phone three times quickly to send a panic call to the Emergency Response Centre. In case of a normal phone, a long press of the '5' or '9' key will activate the panic call.

Three persons end lives in separate incidents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Three persons ended their lives in different parts of the state capital in the past 24 hours. In the first incident in Purana Ram Nagar under Saadatganj police station, a 35-year-old man, identified as Shekhar alias Nandu, hanged himself at his house. His wife Aarti said he was cheerful and happy till Wednesday night and they had dinner together before retiring to bed. She said she woke up around 3 am to attend nature's call and found that her husband was not around. As she went out, she came to know that the main gate was bolted from outside. She raised an alarm following which neighbours reached there and opened the door, only to find Shekhar hanging in the corridor. No suicide note was recovered from the house. His wife said she was not sure why her husband took the extreme step.

Meanwhile, in



Mohanlalganj, a 30-year-old housewife, identified as Sarita of Khujaouli village, hanged herself from at her house. The police said she was all alone when she took the extreme step. Her husband Sant Sharan, along with his friends, had gone to attend a wedding reception in a neighbouring village on Wednesday night. However, the host did not allow them to leave the venue as the area remains deserted at night. When Sant Sharan returned home on Thursday morning, he repeat-

edly knocked the door but there was no response from inside.

Later, he entered house by scaling boundary wall, only to find his wife hanging from the ceiling. Married three years ago, the couple was issueless. The police said it might be the reason why the woman chose to end her life. However, no suicide note was recovered from the scene.

Elsewhere, in Bakshi-katalab, a 22-year-old clothes vendor, identified as Mandeep of Bholapurwa, hanged himself at his house. His father informed the police around 11 am. His father told the police that he got suspicious when Mandeep did not come out of his room on the first floor. He raised an alarm following which neighbours rushed to the scene. They broke open the door, only to find Mandeep hanging from the ceiling in the room. His father was at a loss of words when asked about why Mandeep ended his life.

EC announces bypoll for RS seat from UP

Lucknow (PNS): The Election Commission on Thursday announced that the by-election to one vacant seat of Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh will be held on December 12.

The Rajya Sabha seat from UP fell vacant after Samajwadi Party member Tazeen Fatma, wife of Lok Sabha member from Rampur, Mohammad Azam Khan, resigned from the Upper House after being elected to UP assembly from Rampur seat in the recent bypolls. According to the Election Commission, the notification for bypoll to one Rajya Sabha seat from UP will be issued on November 25 and the last date for filing nomination will be December 2. The scrutiny of papers will be done on December 3 and the last date for withdrawing nomination will be December 5. If necessary, the election will be held on December 12 and the result will be declared the same day.

Woman's murder case worked out; one held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

With the arrest of an accused, police on Thursday claimed to have worked out the murder of a woman. The woman was found murdered near Shaheed Path on November 8. The accused was identified as Godhan Kashyap, who was the colleague of victim's late husband. He reportedly confessed to his crime. A bag containing cash and the rope with which the woman was strangled were recovered by the police.

Godhan and Santosh worked as class IV employees in the head office of Irrigating department. Santosh's wife got the job after the death of her husband three years ago.

Police said the victim, identified as Bittu Devi, was allegedly involved in an extra-marital affair with Godhan following the death of her husband. The police said she used to give money to Godhan on a regular

basis. The relations between them soured when she refused to give money to Godhan, saying she needed money as her children were growing up. Irked over this, Godhan decided to teach her a lesson. He chalked out a plan to eliminate her. He requested her to accompany him to Shaheed Path for gambling on November 8 morning and strangled her in Kesari Kheda on Shaheed Path. The body was spotted on November 10.

Meanwhile, four persons were arrested from Thakurganj area on the charge of committing theft in the house of a lawyer, identified as Nusrat Taqi, a resident of New Kalyanpuri area under the Thakurganj police station. They were identified as Aman alias Haider, Yaqub, Irfan and Zeeshan. A nose ring, six smartphones, Rs 2,800 in cash and a stolen motorcycle and scooter were recovered from their possession.

BSIP honours youngest pathologist of India



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Thirteen-year-old girl B Aswatha from Chennai, the youngest pathologist of India, was felicitated at the Founder's Day programme of Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP). She was honoured because of her strong interest in fossils. She is currently working in BSIP's paleontology lab. The programme started with the inauguration of institute's new web-site, file-tracking system, enrolment data system for employees and pensioners, followed by the release of annual report.

The chief guest on the occasion was CEO of Biotech Park Pramoed Tandon. Suryendu Dutta from IIT-Mumbai delivered the '49th Prof Birbal Sahni Lecture' on evolution of plant terpenoids on rafting continent.

The function was attended by Ashok Sahni from Punjab University, MP Singh from Lucknow University and several geologists, botanists, geochemists, and earth scientists from various organisations like NBRI, Geological Survey of India, Kashmir University etc.

The director presented key highlights of the institute's recent research achievements published in various international journals. She remembered the vision of late Prof Sahni for achieving glory in palaeobotany and other allied subject through persistent research. Dutta took the audience to palaeo-journey of Indian continent plate from Australia to its present position and focused his lecture on evolution of plant terpenoids since Permian-Eocene to Palaeogene. He also listed the achievements of Prof Sahni.

Rizvi donates ₹51,000 for Ram temple in Ayodhya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

UP Shia Central Waqf Board chairman Waseem Rizvi on Thursday announced to donate Rs 51,000 for construction of a Lord Ram temple in Ayodhya. Rizvi said the board had already extended its support for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya and had even submitted an affidavit in the Supreme Court in this regard. "The Supreme Court verdict in favour of Ram temple was expected and it was the only way the vexed issue could be solved," the Shia Waqf Board chairman said in a statement issued here.

The donation of Rs 51,000 was given by the film production company owned by Rizvi.

"The donation on behalf of Waseem Rizvi Films would be handed over to Mahant Rakesh Das of Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas by Ashfaq Hussain 'Zia', a member of the Shia Central Waqf Board," the statement said. Whenever the temple was built, Shia Waqf Board would help in its construction, Rizvi said, adding that Ram temple in Ayodhya was a matter of pride for 'Rambhaktis' all over the world and also in India. He added that he would donate cash for the construction of the mosque also.

CM to inaugurate UMI conference today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will be inaugurating 'Mobility India (UMI) Conference-cum-Exhibition 2019' at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan on Friday. Additional Secretary, Ministry of Urban and Housing Affairs, Sanjay K Murthy said while addressing mediapersons at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan on Thursday. The conference also witnessed the presence of LDA Vice-Chairman PN Singh and LMRC managing director Kumar Keshav.

"With urbanisation, urban transport is a major challenge. The primary objective of the conference is to disseminate information to help officials concerned keep up-to-date with latest and best urban transport practices globally. The conference provides an opportunity to interact with other professionals, technology and service providers so that the delegates can carry home ideas to develop their urban transport along a sustainable path. The event brings together technology and service providers in urban transport from India and abroad as well as policy makers, practitioners and officials on the same platform," he said.

"The challenge India is facing is that the use of desir-

able modes of transport like walking and cycling was declining, and that of undesirable modes such as cars and motorbikes was increasing. We are also going to introduce standards created under which the Metro projects can be brought into the city," he added.

Murthy said that in the last five years, 877 km length of the Metro was being covered in 27 cities with over 400 projects being sanctioned. Officials said that congestion was increasing, mobility being reduced, and accidents, pollution and the use of fossil fuels are increasing. "To address these issues, the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs issued the National Urban Transport Policy, 2006 (NUTP). The objective of the policy is to ensure safe, affordable, quick, comfortable, reliable and sustainable access for the growing number of city residents to jobs, education, recreation and such other needs within our cities," he said.

The three-day event will offer the visitors a unique experience of India's first regional rapid transit system (RRTS) through virtual reality. RRTS is a rail-based high-speed, high-frequency, high-capacity, comfortable, air-conditioned, reliable and safe commuter service.

IITR report: Aliganj, Charbagh noisiest in city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Among residential areas, Aliganj emerged as the noisiest in the morning and Indiranagar at night while as for commercial areas, Charbagh turned out to be the noisiest both in the morning and at night, as per the post-monsoon Ambient Air Quality Report released by Indian Institute of Toxicology (IITR). Aliganj recorded 69.5 decibels during the day time while Indira Nagar 64.8 decibels at the nights. Charbagh recorded 77.2 decibels during the day time and 68.9 decibels at nights.

respectively. All the values were higher than the prescribed limits of 55 and 45 dB(A) for day and night time respectively.

In commercial and traffic area, the day and night time noise levels were recorded between 68.9 and 77.2 and 58.0 to 68.9 dB(A) respectively. Noise levels at all the commercial sites during day and night time were found above the prescribed limits of 65 and 55 dB(A) respectively.

In the industrial area (Amausi), the day and night time noise levels were recorded at 71.9 and 68.8 dB(A) respectively. Noise levels during day time and night time were lower than the prescribed limits of 75.0 and 70.0 dB(A) respective-

ly. There is no major industrial activity in this area and the major source of noise is transport. Head of IITR's Environmental Division SC Burman said that in terms of day time noise levels in residential areas, all the locations showed a slightly decreasing trend as compared to the previous year. In commercial and traffic areas too, noise levels were found to be on the lower side except Chowk, as compared to that last year.

In Amausi too, the noise level was slightly lower than that recorded last year. Meanwhile, IITR has made certain recommendations for improvement in the air quality. The report says major roads of

the city should be widened as far as possible.

"Suitable modification should be made on crossings and encroachments be removed for smooth flow of traffic. It is important to restore footpaths for pedestrians and make provision of parking facilities by private operators on vacant private land," a senior scientist said. Other recommendations include increase in parking charges on hourly basis to discourage the use of personal vehicles in congested areas.

Subsidised public mass transport, improvement in traffic management, public awareness programmes on air pollution and its health effects, reduction of automobile pollution by

proper maintenance of vehicles, driving skills, Systematic development of residential complexes are some of the recommendations.

"There should be a provision of bus stands on all the outgoing highways to reduce traffic load inside the city. There should also be proper removal of garbage dumped along the roads," the senior scientist said. IITR has also recommended ban on burning of dry leaves, tyres or any other type of solid waste. It also recommended arrangements for proper disposal, plantation of saplings wherever possible, more CNG filling stations across the city, promotion of battery-operated or hybrid vehicles.

CITYBRIEFS

MoU SIGNED

Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) and FEEDS-Ethno-Medicinal Research Centre on Thursday signed an MoU for scientific validation of traditional knowledge. Foundation for Environment

and Economic Development Services (FEEDS) is a scientific society at Hengbung, Manipur, involved in ethno-medicinal research of potential medicinal plants available in the wild in north-eastern region of India with unique tra-

ditional belief and used for curing diseases. "According to the MoU, FEEDS-EMRC will undertake the large-scale cultivation and supply of plant materials to be studied based on their ethno-traditional knowledge of medicine and



MoU signed by CDRI and FEEDS-Ethno-Medicinal Research Centre

pharmacognosy, and will also perform extraction, chemical characterisation and initial bioactivity assessment of the plant material.

research to ensure environment safety and service to industry, which are relevant to this day.

Development (NCLED) will be held at Integral University on November 15 and 16. The conference is being organised jointly by Centre for Incubation, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship Development and department of Commerce and Business Management of Integral University.

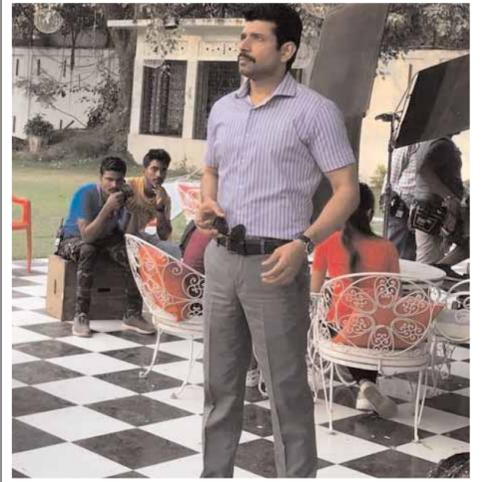
INSPECTION

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash inspected Kanha Upvan and Vrihad Gau Ashray Kendra at Amausi. He was accompanied by Municipal Commissioner Indramani Tripathi. The DM was informed that there were a total of 3,547 cows, 380 calves and 4,688 bulls in 19 shades. The DM said there should not be more than 100 cows in a single shade. Chief veterinarian, LMC, AK Rao told the DM that cowdung was lifted with the help of JCB machines. He said they were also mulling PNG and CNG pipelines.

WORKSHOP

Sanjay R Bhosreddy, Principal Secretary, Sugar Industry and Cane department, and UP cane commissioner, urged scientists to develop a cost-effective and farmer-centric sugarcane production technology to help farmers increase their income. Bhosreddy was speaking at a workshop on "Sugarcane: Challenges and future strategies for doubling farmers' income", organised by Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research, in collaboration with Directorate of Sugarcane Development at Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research. He said that with the improvement in economic condition of sugar mills, the farmers will also get timely payment of their produce. A souvenir was also released on the occasion.

'Mukkebaaz' actor shooting for next film in Lucknow



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Actor Vineet Kumar, known for his role in the film 'Mukkebaaz', is currently shooting in Lucknow along with actress Urvasi Rautela for an untitled movie.

Kumar said Lucknow will be seen in the movie the way it is. "Lucknow is an integral part of the film and will be shown the way it actually exists," he said. The life of Kumar, who belongs to Varanasi, changed post the success of 'Mukkebaaz', which was directed by Anurag Kashyap.

"The film gave me back my ten years in the industry and it is because of this film that I am getting a variety of movies to act in. I am getting a lot of films in which I can experiment. 'Mukkebaaz' has provided me a great amount of freedom as

an actor," he said. "Although the name of the film has been decided, it has not been announced. The film is the remake of a Tamil hit directed by Sufi Ganeshan and produced by Ramesh Reddy. It is based on what takes place in the digital world. People who are swept into the social networking world do not realise the consequences. People who come from small towns think that intra-personal relationships are the same in the online world as they are in real world, which is not the case. In real world, we know what the other person is like and how he or she behaves, but as for the virtual world, we know only what the other person wants us to. Social networking sites have an impact on us and people can relate to this film because everyone is on social media these days," the actor said.

| GOVT. OF N.C.T. OF DELHI EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SW) III Sector-VII, R.K. Puram, New Delhi- 110022 Phone No.011-26167618 | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| N.T.T.NO. 49(12019-20)SW III | | | | |
| S. No. | Description | Amount Put to Tender, Earnest Money and tender fee | Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution | Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution |
| 1. | Replacement of water line i/c cutting of road, excavation of trench, sluice valve, specials & shifting of water connections back filling etc at Bhikaji Cama Place under SW-III | Rs. 31,47,435/- Rs. 63,000/- and Rs. 500/- | 13.11.2019 Tender I.D. NO. 2019_DJB_183719_1 | 29.11.2019 at 2:00 P.M. |

Further details in this regard can be seen at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>
ISSUED BY P.R.O (WATER)
Advt. No. J.S.V. 526/2019-20

Office of the Cantonment Board
64, Subhash Chandra Bose Marg, Cantt Kanpur-208004

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT) Date: 13th Nov. 2019

Online tender for the one year through two bid system are invited from experienced and eligible contractor through the Government e-procurement portal <http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> by the Cantonment Board Kanpur. The detail of work is given below.

| Sl. No. | NIT NO. | NAME OF WORK AND LOCATION | COST OF TENDER |
|---------|-----------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | CBK/RS/K-1845/1 | Site for Parking of Vehicles along the boundary of St. Mary's Convert High School along Tagore Road Side in Cantt. Area Between Sy. No. 83 & 85 | 2,000/- |

The CEO/Board reserves the right to increase/decrease the estimated cost of works and to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning reasons therefor.

Tender document can be downloaded from www.eprocure.gov.in from 16.11.2019 onwards. Online tenders can be uploaded till 06.12.2019 up to 15.30 Hours. For any clarification contact RS (Mob: +918400390942) and the Revenue Section of Cantonment Board Kanpur on any working day during office hours. The bidder are advised to examine carefully all instructions, conditions of contract, contract data, forms, terms, technical specifications, bill of quantity etc. in the bid document. Tenders will be accepted via online mode only.

For Chief Executive Officer,
Kanpur Cantt.

U.P. Raja Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd, Obra Thermal Station, Obra - Sonbhadra-231219.

E-TENDER INVITING NOTICE E-TENDER NO.: 57/SE (Civil)/OTPS/OCCMD-1/2019-20 Online e-Bids are invited for the work of "Special M & R of residences of UP Purva Sainik Kalyan Nigam Ltd. in Sector No. 9 of Obra Project Colony" Sonbhadra (U.P.). e-tender has been published on 08.11.2019 at 12:00 Hrs on the e-tender portal <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Last date of submission end date of bid will be up to 05.12.2019 at 17:00 Hrs, last date and time for submission of hard copy of requisite documents will be up to 06.12.2019 up to 17:00 Hrs. and technical bid (Part-I) will be opened on 07.12.2019 at 16:00 Hrs. Estimated Cost of work is approximately Rs. 16,71,904.02 only. The E.M.D and Tender cost for e-bid submission is Rs. 33,500.00 and Rs. 1180.00 respectively. Total Quantity of work, tender specification and other terms & condition is as per tender document available on the e-tender portal. Superintending Engineering (Civil), OTPS, Obra reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids without assigning any reason. It may please be noted that this is online bid and shall be accepted online only on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Information related to extension in due dates and corrigendum if any shall be uploaded only on the above website. Bidders are advised to visit the website on regular basis in order to keep themselves update.

E-TENDER INVITING NOTICE E-TENDER NO.: 58/SE (Civil)/OTPS/OCCMD-1/2019-20 Online e-Bids are invited for the work of "Special M&R of officers type residences in Sector No. 1, 3 & 9 of Obra Project Colony" Sonbhadra (U.P.). e-tender has been published on 08.11.2019 at 12:00 Hrs on the e-tender portal <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Last date of submission end date of bid will be up to 05.12.2019 at 17:00 Hrs, last date and time for submission of hard copy of requisite documents will be up to 06.12.2019 up to 17:00 Hrs. and technical bid (Part-I) will be opened on 07.12.2019 at 16:00 Hrs. Estimated Cost of work is approximately Rs. 26,93,014.43 only. The E.M.D and Tender cost for e-bid submission is Rs. 53,900.00 and Rs. 1180.00 respectively. Total Quantity of work, tender specification and other terms & condition is as per tender document available on the e-tender portal. Superintending Engineering (Civil), OTPS, Obra reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids without assigning any reason. It may please be noted that this is online bid and shall be accepted online only on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Information related to extension in due dates and corrigendum if any shall be uploaded only on the above website. Bidders are advised to visit the website on regular basis in order to keep themselves update.

S.E. (CIVIL) Notice Inviting e-Bid e-Tender No. T-09/O&MC-III/EMD-I/BTSP/2019-20 Online e-Bids are invited for the "Overhauling of 250MVA, 15.75/420KV BHEL make GT-13, BTSP Obra. E-tender has been uploaded on 07/11/2019 on UP Govt. e-tender portal <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Technical Bid (Part-I) will be opened on 04/12/2019 at 16:00 Hrs. Estimated Cost of work will be approximately Rs. 16.75 Lakh only. The E.M.D and Tender cost for e-bid submission is Rs. 34,000.00 and Rs. 1,180.00 respectively. Total Quantity of work, tender specification and other terms & condition is as per tender document available on the e-tender portal. It may please be noted that this is online bid and shall be accepted online only on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Information related to extension in due dates and corrigendum if any shall be uploaded only on the above website. Bidders are advised to visit the website on regular basis in order to keep themselves update. The

last date of e-bid submission is 02/12/2019 up to 18:00 hrs. S.E., O&MC-III, BTSP OBRA - SONBHADRA

E-TENDER NOTICE 1. NAME OF WORK : Works cutting, repairing and re-installation of Main Steam Stop valve V2-06 (L&R), HP Bypass (L&R)-ARS-63 and HP Bypass pressure reducing spray valve BD (E 32 S) of unit no. 13 of 2x200MW, BTSP, Obra during R&M.

2. E-Tender No.: 26/O&MMC-V/TMD/BTSP/2019-20, 3. Estd Cost of Work : Rs 57.60 Lakh (Rs. Fifty Seven Lakh Sixty Thousand Only) 4. Last Date and Time for Submission of e-Bids (Technical and Financial) at e-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in> 11.12.2019 Up to 18:00 Hrs. 5. Last Date and Time for Submission of Hardcopy of Requisite Documents in the Office of Undersigned : 12.12.2019 Up to 13:00 Hrs. 6. Date And Time of Opening of e-Bids: 13.12.2019 (16:00 Hrs.), 7. Place of Opening of e-Bids Office of Superintending Engineer O&MMC-V, OTPS Obra. Address for Communication: Superintending Engineer O&MMC-V, BTSP, Obra - Sonbhadra, U.P. 231219. E-mail Address: rajkrgupta66@gmail.com, 9. Bid Document Cost (Tender Cost) : Rs. 1180.00 (One Thousand One Hundred Eighty Only) Earnest Money : Rs. 90,000.00 (Rs. Ninty Thousand only).

E-TENDER NOTICE 1. NAME OF WORK : Round the clock routine / preventive maintenance works of Turbine & its auxiliaries of unit no. 12, 13 and CW Pump House of 5x200MW BTSP, Obra. 2. E-Tender No.: 27/O&MMC-V/TMD/BTSP/2019-20, 3. Estd Cost of Work : Rs 12.17 Lakh (Rs. Twelve Lakh Seventeen Thousand Only) 4. Last Date and Time for Submission of e-Bids (Technical and Financial) at e-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in> 11.12.2019 Up to 18:00 Hrs. 5. Last Date and Time for Submission of Hardcopy of Requisite Documents in the Office of Undersigned : 12.12.2019 Up to 13:00 Hrs. 6. Date And Time of Opening of e-Bids: 13.12.2019 from 16:00 Hrs., 7. Place of Opening of e-Bids Office of Superintending Engineer O&MMC-V, BTSP Obra, 8. Address for Communication : Superintending Engineer O&MMC-V, BTSP, Obra - Sonbhadra, U.P. 131219. E-mail Address: rajkrgupta66@gmail.com, 9. Bid Document Cost (Tender Cost) : Rs. 1,180.00 (One Thousand One Hundred Eighty) 10. Earnest Money : Rs. 24,500.00 (Rs. Twenty Four Thousand Five Hundred only), SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER O&MMC-V BTSP OBRA. No. - 282, Date - 14.11.2019, SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF NATION

LECTURE

One of the most amazing advances in life sciences has been the ease and affordability of genome information. This information provides an extremely comprehensive insight into life processes and these unprecedented opportunities are likely to be game changers in health care challenge. These views were expressed director of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (Hyderabad) Rakesh K Mishra while delivering the '23rd Professor Sibte Hasan Zaidi Oration' at Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (IITR) on Thursday. IITR director Alok Dhawan said Prof Zaidi created this institute more than 50 years ago, focusing on translational

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE -07-19-2019
Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Con/N.E. Railway / Lucknow, for and on behalf of President of India invites "OPEN" e-tender for the following work - Tender No. - OT/19/2019, Description of Work :- Electrical work of Newly under construction washing pit and platforms at Gonda Railway station along with construction of substation and other allied electrical works in Gonda, Approx. Value :- Rs. 4,13,30,335.55, Earnest Money :- Rs. 3,56,700.00, Cost of Tender Form :- Rs. 10,000.00, Completion Period :- 12 Months. Date & Time of closing of E-Tender :- 06.12.2019 at 14.30 Hrs. Note: Manual offers are not accepted against this tender and any such manual offer received, shall be ignored. For full details and submission of bid, kindly visit the official website of Indian Railways i.e. <http://www.ireps.gov.in> In case any disparity arises between Hindi and English version of tender notice, English version will hold good and will be followed.

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Con Lucknow
CPRO/EL-86
About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955
Do Not Smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train

उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड ई-निविदा सूचना

इस कार्यालय के द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य/सामग्री की आपूर्ति सम्पादन हेतु अनुमति, दक्ष एवं जीएएसटी0 में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित ई-निविदा वर्ष 2019-20 में आमंत्रित की जाती है जिसका विस्तृत विवरण ई-टेंडर वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-138/ विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम कानपुर के अन्तर्गत 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र आर0पी0एच0 पर वाइडिंग एवं आयल टैम्परेचर इन्डीकेटर उपलब्ध कर लगाने का कार्य।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-139/ विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम कानपुर के अन्तर्गत 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र आर0पी0एच0 एवं सिकन्दरा पर ए0बी0सी0 ड्राई कार्टेज टाइप फायर एक्सट्यूगुइसर की आपूर्ति।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-140/ विद्युत 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र पनकी पर लान के अनुक्षण का कार्य।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-141/ विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 132 के0वी0 जैनपुर-कानपुर देहात पर लान के वार्षिक अनुक्षण का कार्य।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-142/ विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम कानपुर के अन्तर्गत 132 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र आजाद नगर पर लार्डिंग सम्बन्धी समस्त कार्य।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-144/ विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र आर0पी0एच0 पर डिजीटल टाइप मीटर उपलब्ध कर लगाने का कार्य।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-143/ विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 132 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र आजाद नगर पर लार्डिंग सम्बन्धी समस्त कार्य।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-144/ विद्युत प्रेषण खण्ड प्रथम के अन्तर्गत 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र आर0पी0एच0 पर डिजीटल टाइप मीटर उपलब्ध कर लगाने का कार्य।

ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-143 से 141 तक दिनांक 11.12.2019 एवं **ई-निविदा संख्या-ईटी-142** से 144 तक दिनांक 13.12.2019 को खोली जायेगी। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत परेषण मण्डल प्रथम, पनकी, कानपुर पत्रांक-1015 दिनांक-14.11.2019 "सफुहित में बिजली बचाव" उपमोक्ता सेवा हेतु समर्पक करें - www.etender.up.nic.in

CONFERENCE

A two-day national conference on Leadership and Entrepreneurship



Brides and grooms during a mass marriage ceremony in Lucknow under Mukhyamantri Kanya Vivah Yojana by UP government across the state on Thursday Pioneer

SCHOOLSCAN



Children's Day celebrations at St Joseph in Thakurganj

CHILDREN'S DAY

Children's Day was celebrated at all the branches of SKD Academy on Thursday. The stu-

dents took part in various competitions. They highlighted the lifestyle of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru through speeches, messages and skits. At St Joseph Inter College (Thakurganj), managing director Rajesh Agarwal and Seema Agarwal congratulated the students on the occasion.

STORES E-PROCUREMENT

TENDER NO. S/12/2019 Dated: 11-11-2019. (1) All tenders have been uploaded on Indian Railways E-Procurement portal (IREPS) - www.ireps.gov.in For details & necessary guidelines for quoting against e-tender. Please visit IR-E-Procurement portal. (2) The prospective tenderers are advised to get them registered on the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> on line. This registration is mandatory for participation in e-tendering and is free of charge. (3) Offers are to be submitted online only. Offers sent/submitted against such e-tenders through e-mail, post/fax or in person will be rejected summarily without any consideration. (4) This notice is for information during initial phase only. In future, no such notice shall be published. Vendors are requested to get registered with IREPS and visit portal www.ireps.gov.in for future tenders. (5) Please submit offers online for the following Materials: SN.1, Tender No. 40/19/0526/OT/026/19. Brief Description: Feeder junction box. Quantity: 27 Nos, Closing /Opening date: 28-11-2019. SN.2, Tender No. 40/19/0404/OT/027/19. Brief Description: Belt tensioning arrangement. Quantity: 715 Nos. Closing/Opening date: 29-11-2019. SN.3, Tender No. 37/19/0634/OT/028/19. Brief Description: Yoke/BG Wagon. Quantity: 252 Nos, Closing/Opening date: 09-12-2019. For PCMM NORTH EASTERN FRONTIER RAILWAY Serving Customers With A Smile

CS: Initiatives taken to attract investors

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Rajendra Kumar Tiwari said several eye-catching initiatives have been taken to attract investors and meaningful efforts are being taken to provide a compatible atmosphere for establishing industries in the state. "Uttar Pradesh has immense possibilities for establishment of industries and investments. Moreover, UP is growing as a hub for investment due to its 21 new policies," Tiwari said. He added that as per number of MSMEs, UP ranks first in the country. "Through investor summits and several other events, foundation stones have been laid for various projects estimated to be around two lakh crore in the state, which would provide employment to about five lakh people. Similarly, defense industrial manufacturing corridor has also been inaugurated in Bundelkhand, which promises employment for 2.5 lakh people. The Chief Secretary said after inaugurating the Uttar Pradesh Mandap at the Indian International Trade Fair-2019 held in New Delhi.



A special assembly was organised at Amity International School in Vrindavan Yojana to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev. Tynyots of learnt the importance of Guru Parv and teachings of Guru Nanak Dev.

Information Technology Development Agency (I.T.D.A.)
(Department of IT, Government of Uttarakhand)
IT Bhawan, Plot No. 17-07, IT Park, Sahasrabudhra Road, Dehradun - 248001
Ph: 0135-2696335, email: ditda@itda.gov.in

Ref.: 1028/ITDA-471(A)/2019 Dated: 14/11/2019
Tender Notice No. 11/ITDA-471(A)/2019 dated 14/11/2019
Request for Proposal (RFP) for Supply of Hardware at Uttarakhand Secretariat
Request for Proposal (RFP) is being issued by ITDA, Department of IT, Uttarakhand to the reputed companies meeting the qualification criteria for selection of system integrator for Request for Proposal (RFP) for Supply of Hardware at Uttarakhand Secretariat. The RFP document can be downloaded from www.ireps.gov.in from 15/11/2019 from 10.30 AM onwards. The parties willing to participate in the RFP will have to apply through the Electronic Tendering Procedure (e-Tendering) as per the guidelines issued by Government of Uttarakhand available on the above mentioned web site under the link "Bidders Manual Kit".
Director ITDA reserves the right to cancel the RFP at any point of time, without assigning any reason therefor. DIRECTOR

GEOGRAPHY OLYMPIAD

The 5-day International Geography Olympiad 'Geofest International-2019', organised by City Montessori School, will be inaugurated on Friday. Cabinet minister Nand Kumar Gupta 'Nandi' will be chief guest on the occasion.

2nd clean chit on Rafale blunts Cong attack plank

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The second-time clean chit on Thursday by the Supreme Court to the BJP Government on the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter jets from French company Dassault Aviation and rejection of petition for registration of an FIR by the CBI for the alleged kickbacks in the deal like that in the Swedish Bofors howitzer Gun case, has seemingly knocked the bottom of the Congress plank of attacking the Narendra Modi dispensation on 'big-ticket' corruption and taken away its shine built on its anti-corruption pitch against the UPA regimes.

The verdict coming days after the court had put a lid on the decades-old dispute on the title suit of 'Mandir-Masjid' dispute paving way for the construction of a temple for 'Lord Ram' at Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, has come as a major political boost for the BJP which had promised to the effect at its Palampur (Himachal Pradesh) convention in 1989, when it had adopted a resolution to build a temple at the birth place of 'Bhagwan Ram'.

The BJP had reacted with obvious glee over the judgment which would only add further polish on the anti-corruption plank of the party and the claim that its leadership was "without a blemish".

The party leaders including BJP President Amit Shah also latched on the court's admonition to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for saying "Chowkidar Chor hai" (alluding to Modi) and closing the contempt

Congress to take issue in PAC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the doors of Rafale issue are closed in Court, the Congress is expected to take up the matter in Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), headed by its leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. The PAC was constituted in the last week of August this year and has shortlisted the Rafale issue for examination in the coming days, which could lead to a fresh Congress-BJP face-off. The Committee is first expected to examine the CAG officials who prepared the report on Rafale and later, call the Defence Ministry top officials and senior Air Force officials.

It is likely that the PAC Chairman would prefer to call the PMO officials who dealt the files of Rafale negotiations

against the latter with a warning that he should be careful in future. They demanded an apology from the former Congress president for his misdeed and "lies".

The BJP is now certain to convert the 'opportunity' to put the Congress on the backfoot on the issue in the coming winter session of the Parliament, beginning November 18, and insist that its image is spot clean.

The judgment has given a blow to the Congress efforts to turn the Rafale deal into a Bofors saga which had in the past derailed the successive Congress regimes. But given

with the French authorities. This might be the triggering point between the Congress and BJP MPs inside the PAC.

It is learned that the MPs opposing the Rafale deal are determined to raise demand for summoning PMO officials engaged in Rafale negotiations. The Congress MPs in the Committee may also demand summoning of Anil Ambani, whose company got offset contracts in the Rafale deal, which is the main corporate in the purchase of 36 fighter jets.

The PAC will not summon Ministers and need Lok Sabha Speaker's clearance.

The PAC Chairman is selected from the Opposition parties and the ruling party has a majority. The PAC has 21 Members of which 15 are from Lok Sabha and six from

Rajya Sabha. In the PAC, the Congress is having only three MPs including the Chairman, who has major decision-making powers.

This exercise by the PAC would lead to a face-off between Congress and BJP similar to the one they had in 2011, when then PAC Chairman Murli Manohar Joshi examined 2G scam, summoning all top officers from PMO, Telecom, Attorney General and all telecom corporate including Ratan Tata, Anil Ambani, Sunil Mittal and controversial lobbyist Nira Radia.

The PAC meetings of 2G Scam led to the members almost coming to blows with the ruling Congress MPs having majority then even occupying the chair of Joshi and declaring a parallel PAC.

for registering an FIR, which Rahul said "has opened a huge door into investigation of the RAFALE scam".

The apex court contended that the review applications cannot be entertained unless there is an "error apparent on the face of the record".

The petition seeking re-examination of the December 14, 2018 verdict was filed by former Union Ministers Yashwant Sinha, Arun Shourie and activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan. Other review petitions were filed by lawyer Vineet Dhandha and Aam Aadmi Party lawmaker Sanjay Singh.

BJP seeks RaGa apology for 'lies'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP lost no time to launch a blistering attack on the Congress on Thursday describing the Supreme Court judgment on Rafale as 'victory of truth' and demanding an apology from the party and its leader Rahul Gandhi for telling a spate of "lies" on the entire issue.

Soon after the SC verdict, the BJP fielded its top Ministers and party leaders to launch an all-out attack on the Congress and Rahul.

Leading the attack, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday termed the Supreme Court verdict on Rafale deal a befitting reply to the leaders and parties who rely on "malicious and baseless" campaign, and sought apology from them.

In a series of tweets, Shah said the judgement of the apex court has proved that the disruption of Parliament over the Rafale fighter aircraft deal was a "sham".

"Supreme Court's decision to dismiss the review petition on #Rafale is a befitting reply to those leaders and parties who rely on malicious and baseless campaigns," he said.

Slamming the Congress, Shah said the decision reaffirms Modi Government's credentials as a dispensation that is transparent and corruption-free. "Now, it has been proved that disruption of Parliament over Rafale (issue) was a sham. The time could



have been better utilised for the welfare of people. After today's rebuke from SC, Congress and its leader, for whom politics is above national interest, must apologise to the nation," Shah said in a swipe at Rahul.

The Rahul and the entire Congress leadership have carried out an aggressive campaign before the last Lok Sabha elections against the multi-billion dollars deal to buy 36 Rafale fighter aircraft from France.

Hitting hard at Rahul, BJP working president J P Nadda said the Congress leader had tried to mislead the country on the issue and should now apologise. Asserting that truth has prevailed, Nadda said, "From road to Parliament, Rahul Gandhi and his party tried hard to mislead the country on this issue but truth prevailed. I wish Rahul would be in country and should apologise to nation. Addressing a press con-

ference at the party office, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Congress and in particular its former president Gandhi must apologise to the country. Hailing the Supreme Court's order on the Rafale deal as a victory of the country's national security, Prasad said, "It is recognition of the honest decision making process of the Narendra Modi Government... Satyameva Jayate. The Congress party must apologise and Rahul Gandhi in particular must apologise to the country."

Pointing to Rahul's "Chowkidar chor hai" slogan ahead of the Lok Sabha election, Prasad said the Congress leader has not only called the Prime Minister a thief, but he lied about the former French Prime Minister's statements and misquoted the Supreme Court.

"Today the people of the country want to know which powers were backing Rahul Gandhi. All I can say is that the whole campaign is extremely suspicious. He ran a sponsored political programme that masqueraded as a quest for justice. Today, Rahul Gandhi, you need to apologise. Today even the review petition is rejected. You apologised to save yourself from the court. But will you apologise before the people of India?" Prasad said.

Hitting at Gandhi family, he said, "People having saga of corruption from Jeep scandal

to Bofors to submarine to Augusta Westland, where undertaking a political programme masquerading at the quest of justice.

With the Congress insisting on a high-level probe into the deal after the court's order, the law minister said it was really "shameless" of the opposition party to continue to push for an investigation despite losing the battle in courts as well as in elections.

Asked that former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was also off by a court order in the Bofors case, Prasad said that was a "highly questionable" order of the Delhi High Court when the Congress government at the Centre did not challenge.

In Tangang in Arunachal Pradesh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the allegations of corruption in the Rafale deal were aimed at maligning Modi's image of a clean and honest leader and demanded an apology from the Congress.

Hailing the judgement, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tweeted the SC verdict on Rafale shows Government's decision was right on the price, the process and on the offsets. "PM Modi put #NationalSecurity on top. Indian Air Force needed to be strengthened without any further delay. #NationFirst. Motivated propaganda defeat-ed: Sitharamn tweeted.

ED arrests ex-Fortis chief, other

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday arrested former Ranbaxy and Fortis promoter Malvinder Singh and former CMD of Religare Enterprises, Sunil Godhwani in Religare Finvest Ltd (RFL) in connection with a money laundering case relating.

The duo was arrested from the Tihar jail where both are currently lodged in a case related to funds misappropriation of Religare Finvest Ltd. (RFL) being probed by the Delhi police.

The agency's lawyer Nitesh Rana informed a designated court about the duo's arrests and pleaded for issuance of a production warrant against the accused for seeking their custodial interrogation.

However, the court directed the ED's counsel that the accused be produced before a



metropolitan magistrate in the Tihar jail itself as trial prisoners are not being produced in the Saket District court due to the ongoing lawyers' strike.

"The court is informed that accused Malvinder Mohan Singh and Sunil Godhwani are lodged in central jail numbers 8 and 7 respectively at Tihar Jail. Accordingly, the applications filed by the ED be put up before the concerned duty MM, Tihar jail tomorrow, i.e, November 15, for disposal in accordance with law," Special Judge Sandeep Yadav said in response to the ED's plea.

Both Singh and Godhwani have been charged by the ED for offences under provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The duo is undergoing judicial custody and lodged in Tihar jail along with Singh's brother Shivinder and two other accused persons -- Kavi Arora and Anil Saxena -- in a criminal case being probed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police.

These accused allegedly transferred an amount of approximately Rs 1,000 crore to various persons from entities linked to

Duo was arrested from the Tihar jail where both are currently lodged in a case related to funds misappropriation

the corporate loan book and finally, the money was siphoned off and invested in other companies, according to the ED.

The Delhi Police had registered an FIR in March after it received a complaint from RFL's Manpreet Suri against Shivinder, Godhwani and others, alleging that loans were taken by them while managing the firm but the money was invested in other companies.

The money laundering case was filed by the ED after taking cognisance of the Delhi Police FIR as money laundering is a predicate offence.

Govt grants additional House Rent Allowance to forces serving in J&K

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry has granted additional House Rent Allowance to the tune of 16 per cent of basic pay in addition to normal HRA at the original place of posting where paramilitary forces personnel left behind their families to undertake duties in Jammu and Kashmir.

The facility under Kashmir Valley Package will come as a relief for paramilitary personnel as many of them have to bear expenses of running two residences.

The benefit will not be applicable to such personnel who have availed government accommodation at their original posting.

In addition to the additional HRA, the paramilitary personnel will be entitled to

draw the normal HRA for the original place of posting.

"The issue of grant of additional HRA to Central Armed Police Forces personnel posted in Kashmir Valley has been considered in the Ministry and it has been decided by Competent Authority that those personnel who are posted in Kashmir Valley and compelled to leave their families at their last place of posting will be eligible for drawing additional HRA."

The move has come days after the new Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir formally came into existence on October 31 after the Centre on



August 5 abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution that granted special status to the erstwhile State. The move benefit nearly one lakh personnel of the paramilitary forces' personnel posted in the Valley.

Special allowances have been a major relief for paramilitary personnel who have been at the forefront of countering terrorism and maintaining law and order in the Valley.

INSHORT

RS BYPOLLS TO BE HELD ON DEC 12
New Delhi: The EC on Thursday announced that bypolls in two Rajya Sabha seats in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, which fell vacant recently, will be held on December 12. The Karnataka seat fell vacant after Congress member KC Ramamurthy resigned to join the BJP. The seat from Uttar Pradesh fell vacant after Samajwadi Party member Tazeen Fatma resigned to contest the Rampur assembly bypoll, the seat once represented by her husband Azam Khan. The counting of votes will take place on December 12.

TWO ADVISERS TO J&K GUV APPOINTED
New Delhi: Retired IPS officer Farooq Khan and former bureaucrat KK Sharma have been appointed as the advisers to the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. According to an order of the Union Home Ministry, the appointments of Khan and Sharma will be effective from the day of their joining in their respective posts. The advisers will assist LG Girish Chandra Murmu in the administrative work.

JAISHANKAR FOR 'HONEST REVIEW'
New Delhi: Delivering the fourth Ramnath Goenka Memorial Lecture in the national Capital, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Thursday called for "an honest review of our performance" in the seven decades since independence in a "visibly changing global order". Our past handling of Pakistan, a society which we are supposed to know well, also raises many questions. These are not exactly hypothetical situations and are cited to underline the contention that emergence as a leading power requires great pragmatism, Jaishankar said.

TWO ARRESTED FOR SMUGGLING GOLD
New Delhi: Two men have been arrested by the customs officials for allegedly trying to smuggle gold into the country by hiding it inside their wrist watches. The accused were intercepted after their arrival from Bangkok at the IGI Airport on Tuesday. The gold, weighing Rs 25.85 lakh, has been seized and the duo have been arrested.

AMIT SHAH TO VISIT CRPF HEADQUARTERS
New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit the CRPF's headquarters here on Friday and review its operational preparedness. This is the first time Shah, who became Home Minister, will visit the head office of the country's largest paramilitary force.

FCRA CASE

SC issues notice to Grover, Jaising on CBI plea against HC order

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought a response from the Lawyers Collective and its founding members Anand Grover and Indra Jaising on a plea by the CBI challenging the Bombay High Court order granting them protection from coercive action in an alleged FCRA violation case.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Aniruddha Bose and Krishna Murari issued notice to the senior lawyers and the NGO.

The top court also refused to stay the Bombay High Court order.

The CBI had registered a case against Grover and the NGO over alleged violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) in the use of foreign funds received by Lawyers Collective.

The probe agency contended that the high court had neither rendered any finding as to how the FIR registered against the accused parties was "unsustainable and bad in law" nor referred to any finding as to how the continuance of the investigation against the accused would be contrary to law.

Grover and his wife had approached the high court in July seeking that the FIR registered by the CBI against the



NGO and them in June be quashed.

The CBI registered the FIR following a complaint by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in May alleging violation of FCRA provisions.

While the FIR did not name Jaising as an accused, the MHA complaint, which is part of the FIR, mentioned her name and made specific allegations against her.

The CBI alleged that the NGO received foreign funds between 2009 and 2015, but failed to disclose a major part of it. It said that Grover and Jaising used foreign funds for "personal benefits". According to the MHA complaint, during her tenure as Additional Solicitor General, Jaising continued to draw remuneration from the

NGO, the CBI said, adding that this came from foreign

contributions received.

The petitioners also pointed out that the MHA complaint was based on an inspection report from 2016 that had pointed out a single violation of non-disclosure under the FCRA. At the time, following the inspection report, the MHA had issued an order cancelling the registration of Lawyers Collective for receiving foreign funds. This cancellation order was challenged in the high court by the NGO in 2017, and is currently pending before a single judge, the petitioners said.

While granting interim relief, the division bench took note of the petitioners' submission that the CBI's act of filing an FIR on the basis of a two-and-a-half-year-old report, when the matter had reached the court, was questionable.



President Ram Nath Kovind meets visually-impaired students on the occasion of Childrens Day, at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, in New Delhi

'Waqf should not accept the 5-acre plot'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maintaining that the SC judgment on Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title dispute was "beyond understanding", the head of prominent Muslim body Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUEH) Maulana Arshad Madani on Thursday said the Sunni Waqf Board should not accept the 5-acre plot which the apex court directed the Centre to allot for a mosque.

He said the Jamiat had asserted that the Supreme Court verdict in the Ayodhya case, based on evidence, will be respected by it.

Maulana Madani, however, said the judgment was

"beyond understanding". The court accepted that placing idols in a mosque and demolishing it is illegal. "But the court gave its decision in favour of those responsible for it," he said.

The JUEH president also said the court has accepted that the Babri mosque was not built by demolishing a temple during Babur's rule.

Madani said a decision on whether a review petition in the Ayodhya case should be filed will be taken in a meeting of the working committee of the JUEH which would sit till late evening to deliberate on the matter.

Settling a fractious issue that goes back more than a cen-

tury, the Supreme Court, in its verdict in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi title case on Saturday, said the entire 2.77 acres of disputed land should be handed over to the deity Ram Lalla, who was one of the three litigants in the case.

The five-judge Constitution bench also directed the Centre to allot a 5-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board in Ayodhya to build a mosque.

Asked about his views on whether the land should be accepted by the Muslim side, Madani said, "The land has not been given to us. They have given the land to the Sunni Waqf Board." "Our opinion is that the

Sunni Waqf Board should not accept the land, but finally it is up to them," said the head of JUEH, which was also a litigant in the case. "The issue is about rights not about land. We don't want land. Muslims don't need land," he said.

Madani said that according to religion, a mosque remains a mosque irrespective of 'namaz' is being held or not.

"The SC said it was mosque and not made by destructing a temple. For us, according to religion, it is still a mosque, Madani said.

Responding to a question, he asserted that whatever they have to say on the verdict they will say only within the country

MAHARASHTRA IMPASSE

Cong, NCP, Sena hold parleys on CMP

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Leaders of the Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena held meetings here on Thursday to discuss a 'common minimum programme' before a possible alliance with the Uddhav Thackeray-led party for government formation in Maharashtra.

A draft of the common minimum programme (CMP) will have to be approved by top leaders of the three parties before being finalised, a senior Congress leader told PTI.

Leaders of the allies Congress-NCP and the Shiv Sena held several parleys to work out a consensus on a common agenda of governance which will be called the CMP,"

he said.

However, unlike the frenzy and buzz in political circles during the last few days, the meetings on Thursday were held in a discreet manner.

NCP MLA and former state deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar on Wednesday told mediapersons that a scheduled meeting between his party and the Congress was cancelled and that he was going to Baramati, triggering speculations about possible differences between the allies.

However, later NCP chief Sharad Pawar told reporters that his nephew Ajit Pawar made the remarks to avoid media.

An NCP spokesperson later said the meeting was on.

"The Congress and NCP leaders had to lie on Wednesday to keep the media at bay. Now secrecy is being maintained," a leader said on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut dismissed rumours that Thackeray had a meeting with senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel on Tuesday in Mumbai.

"Rumours being floated that Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray had meeting with Ahmed Patel and we have come to some sort of settlement. On behalf of Uddhav Thackeray let me clarify that this is untrue & being deliberately spread, our talks with Congress and NCP are in process," Raut tweeted.

Earlier, senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan on Thursday morning said talks for government formation in the state were at a "preliminary" stage and no decision was taken so far.

The Congress and NCP on Wednesday deliberated at their respective party levels and later jointly to work out a CMP and power-sharing formula, the former state chief minister said.

"The Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena have so far held preliminary talks. A meeting will again be held today between the Congress and NCP, and later both the parties are expected to hold talks with the Shiv Sena. There is no decision as yet," Chavan told PTI.

President's rule was imposed in the state on Tuesday after Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari sent a report to the Centre, stating that formation of a stable government was impossible in the current situation despite all his efforts.

The BJP and Shiv Sena, which fought the October 21 state elections in alliance, secured a comfortable majority by winning 105 and 56 seats, respectively, in the 288-member Assembly.

But the BJP did not cede the Sena's demand of sharing the chief minister's post, leading to falling apart of the nearly three-decade-old alliance.

The Congress and NCP won 44 and 54 seats, respectively, in the last month's polls.

Pawar may meet Sonia on Nov 17

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and NCP supremo Sharad Pawar are likely to meet in Delhi on November 17 to discuss possible alliance with the Shiv Sena for forming government in Maharashtra, sources said.

The Congress and NCP would work out a common minimum programme (CMP) with the Sena, which would then be discussed in the meeting between Gandhi and Pawar, sources said on Thursday.

It was, however, not clear whether and when Sena president Uddhav Thackeray will meet the two leaders after the CMP is finalised.

A 10-member coordina-

tion committee of the Congress and NCP met here on Wednesday to hold preliminary discussions on the CMP.

According to sources, Maharashtra Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat and state NCP president Jayant Patil met Thackeray here on Thursday morning, as decided in the meeting of the coordination committee.

"They (Thorat and Patil) held preliminary discussion with Thackeray. Now state leaders of the three parties will meet again here on Thursday to prepare the document (CMP) which will be sent for the approval of the respective top leadership of the three parties," the sources said.

President's rule in Maha a scripted act: Sena

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Thursday alleged that imposition of President's rule in Maharashtra was a "scripted act" and took a jibe at the governor, saying he has now given parties six months to form government.

It also said that former state chief minister Devendra Fadnavis is shedding "crocodile tears" over the imposition of President's rule as power is still indirectly in the hands of the BJP.

Criticising the governor for giving the Shiv Sena just 24 hours to stake claim and refusing it additional time to muster numbers, an editorial in party mouthpiece 'Saamana' said, "It looked like some invisible power was controlling this game and decisions were taken accordingly."

President's rule was imposed in the state on Tuesday after Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari sent a report to the Centre, stating that formation of a stable government was impossible in the current situation despite all his efforts.

The Sena alleged that protocol was not followed when it went to the Raj Bhawan to seek more time to stake claim for government formation.

The governor waited for the term of the 13th Assembly to end. Had he initiated the government formation procedure earlier, his action of recommending President's rule would have looked "ethically correct", the Marathi publication said.

"The former chief minister has expressed concern on whether President's rule would

Mamata targets Guv

Kolkata (PTI): Hitting out at Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari for recommending President's Rule in the state after the assembly polls, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said some people in constitutional posts are acting like BJP mouthpieces. These people wish to run a parallel administration in some states, she said.

Banerjee said some nominated persons are exceeding their brief. "They should not supersede the central government. The Centre must take care of this," she said.

"I generally do not comment on constitutional posts, but a few people (governors) are acting just like BJP mouthpieces. In my state too, you have seen what is going on — they want to run a parallel administration," Banerjee said.

The central and state governments are elected by the people and the federal structure must work as per Constitution, she said. "They (governments) should be allowed to work," the CM said. President's Rule was imposed in Maharashtra on Tuesday after Koshiyari in a report to the Centre stated that formation of a stable government was impossible in the current situation despite all his efforts, drawing flak from non-BJP parties.

President's rule was a scripted act. It was already decided," the Sena alleged.

The governor was earlier an RSS worker and served as chief minister of Uttarakhand. But Maharashtra is a grand state in terms of geography and history, it noted.

"When the governor denies 48 hours (to stake claim), then people would think something is wrong with the way he is acting," the Uddhav Thackeray-led said.

The Shiv Sena said after the imposition of President's rule, Fadnavis termed it as an "unfortunate" development.

Had Fadnavis condemned the decision of President's rule, then it could have been said his intentions were true, the Sena opined.

"The former chief minister has expressed concern on whether President's rule would

impact investments in Maharashtra. Fadnavis is shedding crocodile tears over President's rule in the state, it is a farce," the editorial said.

With President's rule, the power is still indirectly in the BJP's hands, it said, adding that those who demitted office "look happy" with this decision.

The BJP and Shiv Sena, which fought the October 21 state polls in alliance, secured a comfortable majority by winning 105 and 56 seats, respectively, in the 288-member Assembly.

But the BJP did not cede the Sena's demand of sharing the chief minister's post, leading to falling apart of the nearly three-decade-old alliance.

The Congress and NCP won 44 and 54 seats, respectively, in the last month's polls.

Newly-married couple held for brandishing firearms at reception



A combo of two photos shows Bohoto Kiba and his newly-married wife posing with assault rifles on their wedding reception in Dimapur. The Dimapur police took suo moto cognizance of the photo of the couple posing with assault rifles and arrested them on Wednesday for an unauthorised display of firearms in contravention to the ceasefire ground rules. PTI

PTI ■ KOHIMA

A newly married couple in Nagaland's Dimapur town were arrested by police after a photo of them brandishing assault rifles on their wedding reception went viral on social media, a police officer said on Thursday.

The Dimapur police took suo moto cognizance of the photo of the couple posing with assault rifles on their wedding reception and arrested them on Wednesday for unauthorised display of firearms in contravention to the cease-

fire ground rules, the officer said

Bohoto Kiba and his newly married wife posed for photographs with the assault rifles on November 9 during their reception, the police said.

Bohoto Kiba's father Kilo Kilonser is a senior member of the NSCN (NK), the police said. Two other NSCN(NK) militants who gave the couple the weapons to pose with were also arrested by the police, the officer said.

The couple were later released on police bail bond, the officer added.

Dhankhar shares Mamata's views of no politics over cyclone relief

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday shared views of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee that there should not be any politics over distribution of relief material to people affected by cyclone Bulbul.

Dhankhar said he would assess the situation in the cyclone-hit areas before deciding whether to visit those places or not.

"All agencies are working... (I think) time is (that) agencies must come forward, government must come forward and NGOs also must come forward for those who have (suffered) loss of property or life... I am all for it. I do not want any politics," Dhankhar told reporters here.

"I urge people not to do politics. The moment you put politics into governance it will somewhere damage the fabric of democracy," he added.

His reaction came a day after Union minister Babul Supriyo had faced massive protests and was asked to go back by a group of people when he had visited South 24 Parganas district to take stock

of the situation in cyclone Bulbul-ravaged areas.

Supriyo who on Wednesday said that he was asked by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the cyclonic storm affected areas in Bengal had claimed that those holding agitation against him were workers of the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC).

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee after conducting aerial survey of the storm-ravaged areas of the state Namkhana and Bakkhali on Monday and Basirhat on Wednesday-urged people to stay positive and not to indulge in politics while providing help to those affected by the cyclone.

"Nobody should do politics over distribution of relief material. Relief material should be distributed irrespective of political identities," Banerjee had said at the administrative review meeting at Basirhat on Wednesday.

It must be mentioned that Dhankhar, who has been at loggerheads with the state government over several issues, had lauded the chief minister's role in leading from the front as the state government and other central agen-

cies worked in synergy to minimise the impact of cyclone Bulbul.

About visiting the cyclone affected areas of the state, Dhankhar said, "Whether, I will visit cyclone Bulbul-affected parts, I will decide after accessing the situation... if my visit is required (putting emphasis) I will go."

At least nine people have lost their lives in the calamity — five from North 24 Parganas, three from South 24 Parganas and one from Purba Midnapore — while seven fishermen were still missing, Banerjee had said during an administrative review meeting held in Basirhat on Wednesday. However, other sources have said that 14 people lost their lives in Bengal in the cyclone Bulbul that had badly hit three West Bengal districts of South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas and Medinipur.

As many as six lakh people have been affected and over five lakh houses damaged due to the cyclone, which made landfall late on Saturday between Sagar Islands in West Bengal and Khepupara in Bangladesh.

'Wonder if PM was in loop over 50:50'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday said that had BJP president Amit Shah informed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the "50:50" seat-sharing formula "in time", Maharashtra would not have been facing the current political impasse.

Raut wondered if Modi was "kept away" by top BJP leaders from the decision taken over seat-sharing.

Shah on Wednesday said the Shiv Sena's demands, including sharing the chief minister's post, were "unacceptable" to the BJP.

He also rejected Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray's claim that the BJP agreed to share the CM's post with the ally, saying Prime Minister Modi many times and he "at least 100 times" said in public during the Assembly polls campaign that Devendra Fadnavis will again head the government if the saffron alliance gets a majority.

Reacting to it, Raut said, "Had Shah informed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about this decision of '50:50 formula' in time, we would not have been facing this situation today."

"I heard Modi (during poll campaigns) saying that Fadnavis will continue as the chief minister of Maharashtra,

but we maintained the decorum and did not object it as we did not see it as a political message to us," he said.

"I wonder whether Modi was kept away by top BJP leaders from the decision taken between the BJP and Shiv Sena over seat-sharing," the Rajya Sabha member said. He said Shah and Thackeray had met at the latter's residence in Mumbai (in February before the Lok Sabha polls).

"It was the drawing room of late Balasaheb Thackeray, but for us it is a temple. The talks were held in the temple. If someone says no promises were made, it is an insult of the temple, Balasaheb Thackeray and Maharashtra," Raut said, adding that the room is a "holy place" for Shiv Sainiks.

Shah, in a statement on Wednesday, did not touch upon the details of the agreement between the two allies of 30 years, saying it is not the values of the BJP to bring to public what has been discussed in private.

Hitting out at Shah's remarks, Raut said, "When a promise made behind closed door is not kept, then only it comes out. We never trade in politics nor we see politics from the angle of profit or loss. We are making it public because it is about our self-respect."

Nitish defends Central rule

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday virtually defended the decision to impose President's rule in Maharashtra, saying what one should have done when no party was able to form the government in the state.

Kumar made the comment on Maharashtra issue while replying to reporters queries after paying tribute to the country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on his birthday at a function held near Patna railway station.

"What do I say. What will anyone do when no one is able to form

the government (in Maharashtra)...Political parties should see the matter. We have nothing to do with it," Kumar said when pressed by journalists as how he sees promulgation of president's rule in Maharashtra.

Governor Phagu Chauhan, Industries Minister Shyam Rajak and a host of other dignitaries paid tributes to the first PM.

It may be noted that Kumar, who also heads the JD(U), had refused to make any comment on the Maharashtra political development a few days back terming it as "their (BJP-Shiv Sena) internal matter".

After Shiv Sena with 18 Lok Sabha MPs severed its ties with the NDA by withdrawing party's only minister in the Union Cabinet Arvind Sawan, JD(U) with 16 MPs in the Lower House of Parliament has become number two party within the ruling coalition on the basis of numerical strength.

JD(U) has been saying that it is not part of NDA outside Bihar and is ready to fight assembly elections elsewhere on the basis of its own strength.

Accordingly it has fielded candidates in the ensuing Jharkhand assembly polls.

Children in India face health burden: Lancet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As temperatures rise in a changing climate scenario, children born in India will be particularly vulnerable to a greater health burden of malnutrition, air pollution and deadly heat waves, according to a major new report published in The Lancet journal on Thursday. The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change is a comprehensive yearly analysis tracking progress across 41 key indicators.

The annual project is a collaboration between 120 experts from 35 institutions, including the World Health Organisation and World Bank.

The authors noted that climate change is already damaging the health of the world's children, and is set to shape the well-being of an entire generation unless the world meets Paris Agreement targets to limit warming well below

2 degrees Celsius.

Poornima Prabhakaran, co-author of the report, noted that few countries are likely to suffer from the health effects of climate change as much as India, with its huge population and high rates of healthcare inequality, poverty, and malnutrition.

"While the report highlights the effects of climate change on people of all age groups, here what we are trying to do is to bring the focus back on children, because there is a sense of urgency about the issue," the professor at New Delhi's Public Health Foundation of India told PTI.

"Every child who is born today, the future will be decided by the changing climate. Unless we take some serious action now, by the time they reach their second, third or fourth decade of life, things will be every different because they will be living in a world that will be at least

4 degrees warmer," she said.

In India, she noted, diarrhoeal infections, a major cause of child mortality, will spread into new areas, whilst deadly heatwaves, similar to the one in 2015 that killed thousands of people in the country, could soon become the norm.

While the government has launched many initiatives and programmes to address a variety of diseases and risk factors over the past two decades, this report shows the public health gains achieved over the past 50 years could soon be reversed by the changing climate.

The energy landscape will have to change drastically, and soon, for the world to meet its UN climate goals and protect the health of the next generation, the report warns.

Nothing short of a 7.4 per cent year-on-year cut in fossil CO2 emissions from 2019 to 2050 will

limit global warming to the ambitious goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius, it says.

"Children are specifically more vulnerable to the health risks of a changing climate. Their bodies and immune systems are still in a developing stage, leaving them more susceptible to disease, pollution and environmental pollutants," Prabhakaran explained.

Nick Watts, executive director of The Lancet Countdown, added, "The damage done in early childhood is persistent and pervasive, with health consequences lasting for a lifetime."

"Without immediate action from all countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions, gains in wellbeing and life expectancy will be compromised, and climate change will come to define the health of an entire generation," Watts said in a statement.

threatening food security and driving up food prices.

Infants and small children are among the worst affected by malnutrition and related health problems such as stunted growth, weak immune systems, and long-term developmental problems, say authors of the report. Also, children will be particularly susceptible to infectious diseases such as dengue that rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns will leave in their wake.

Nine of the 10 most "hospitalisable years" for dengue transmission have occurred since 2000. Around half of the world's population is now at risk.

The report also points out that through adolescence and into adulthood, young people are poised to suffer the most damage as their lungs are still developing, making them prone to worsening asthma, and an increasing risk of heart attacks and stroke.

Focus shifts to Left govt in Kerala

SABARIMALA VERDICT

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Ahead of the pilgrimage season at the Lord Ayyappa shrine commencing on November 17, the focus has now shifted to the LDF government in Kerala over allowing women in the 10-50 age group to offer prayers at the Supreme Court has decided to keep pending the pleas seeking review of its verdict.

Devaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendran said the verdict needs to be studied in detail. "I request the opposition not to indulge in any political exploitation of the issue like last year," he told reporters. When asked if young women will be allowed at the shrine, he said "This is not the time to comment about it."

The state had been rocked by violent protests, spearheaded by right wing outfits and BJP in 2018, when the LDF government decided to implement the September 28 verdict of last year allowing women of all age groups to pray at the temple, where the deity, Lord Ayyappa is a "Naishtika Brahmachari" (perennial celibate). Head priest of the Sabarimala temple Kandararu Rajeevaru said the apex court decision to refer the verdict to a seven-judge bench "gives hope."

"This will strengthen the beliefs of devotees," he said. The BJP and Congress wanted the government to exercise restraint and not to allow women in the 10-50 age group to go to the hill shrine, which would hurt devotees' sentiments. Senior BJP leader and

former state president of the party in Kerala, Kummamam Rajashekar said the government must not allow entry of young women at the shrine. "If police try to help any women to enter the temple, there will be grave repercussions as it affects the faith of devotees. The government must show restraint and wait for the larger bench's verdict. In case women pilgrims in the banned age group try to offer worship, the government must prevent them from doing so," he said. Describing the verdict as "victory of devotees", Union minister V Muraliedharan said the apex court has under-



stood the grievances related to Sabarimala darshan, the traditions and the various methods of worship prevailing there. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the

party's politburo, meeting on November 16 and 17, will go through the Sabarimala and other recent verdicts in detail. "Since the apex court day had not stayed its September 28 judgment of last year allowing women of all age groups to offer prayers at the Sabarimala temple, that judgment continues to stand," he said.

"From what I can understand, the court has not stayed the earlier judgment. If they have not stayed the judgment the verdict stands. We need to get more clarity on that part," Yechury told reporters at Kozhikode. Asked if the CPI(M) stand on the matter had changed, the Marxist leader said "we have said whatever the SC decides, we will implement."

LDF convener A Vijayaraghavan said the UDF had earlier "exploited" the apex court's September 28 verdict. "The state government will make all efforts for the devotees to visit the shrine peacefully. The government's primary objective is to maintain peace. When the verdict in the Ayodhya issue came, people responded peacefully," he said.

While Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala wanted the state government "not to create issues" by providing security and taking young women to offer prayers at the hill shrine, former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said Thursday's verdict will help in protecting the faith of devotees. Pandalam Royal family member Sasikumar Varma, one of the petitioners, said the court has understood the feelings of the devotees and transferred the petitions to be reviewed by a seven-judge bench. Reacting to the verdict, Bindhu, who along with Kanakadurga had trekked the holy hills and offered prayers at the shrine, scripting history on January 2, said the positive aspect of the order was that the court had not stayed the September 28 verdict.

"The Sangh Parivar which welcomed the Ayodhya verdict is bound to accept the SC verdict in this case also. The government and the police are also bound to help and protect those who want to visit the shrine," she told the media.

Kanakadurga alleged the decision to leave the matter to the seven-judge bench was "politically motivated."

"If there is no stay, I would like to go there again," she said. The women trekked the hill shrine a day after the state government organised a 620-km-long human wall of women from Kasargod to Thiruvananthapuram to uphold gender justice. The CPI(M)-led government had on January 18 filed an affidavit in the apex court, saying 51 young women had entered the temple during the last pilgrimage season.

RSS welcomes SC ruling; says issue is not about discrimination

Nagpur: Welcoming the Supreme Court's decision to refer Sabarimala case to a larger bench, the RSS on Thursday said the restrictions on women's entry in the famous Kerala shrine have nothing to do with gender discrimination. Arun Kumar, Akhil Bhartiya Prachar Pramukh of the RSS, said on the organisation's Twitter handle that "matters related to traditions and customs are issues of faith and belief". "We welcome the Supreme Court decision to accept the review Petition and refer the matter to a larger Constitutional Bench," he tweeted. "Matters related to traditions and customs are issues of faith and belief. Restriction of women belonging to a particular age-group to the Sabarimala shrine has nothing to (do) with gender inequality or discrimination, and that is strictly based on the speciality of the deity," the senior RSS leader said. "We are of the firm view that the judicial review under whatever pretext in the matter will be violative of the spirit of the freedom of worship guaranteed by our Constitution. And the opinion of concerned authorities should be given paramount consideration in such matters," Kumar tweeted.

Deadline for filing GST annual returns extended

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to taxpayers, the Government on Thursday extended the due dates for filing GST annual returns for 2017-18 to December 31 and for the financial year 2018-19, to March 31 next year.

The dates for filing the reconciliation statement has also been extended accordingly. In another relief, it has also decided to simplify the two GST forms by making various fields of these forms as optional, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said in a statement.

"The Government has decided today (Thursday) to extend the due dates of filing of Form GSTR-9 (Annual Return) and Form GSTR-9C (Reconciliation Statement) for 2017-18 to December 31, 2019 and for 2018-19 to March

2020," it said. The earlier deadline for filing of GSTR-9 and GSTR-9C for 2017-18 was November 30, 2019, while that for 2018-19 was December 31, 2019. Notifications regarding the extension of the dates have been issued.

The CBIC in the revenue department has also notified the amendments regarding the simplification of the annual return and reconciliation statement forms. A reconciliation statement allow taxpayers to not provide split of input tax credit availed on inputs, input services and capital goods for 2017-18 and 2018-19.

CBIC added it is expected that with the simplifications in the two forms and the extension of deadlines, "all the GST taxpayers would be able to file their annual returns along with reconciliation statement in time."

Govt to consult legal experts on verdict: Vijayan

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The left Government would consult legal experts to get more clarity on the Supreme Court's Sabarimala verdict but it seems that the earlier order on allowing entry of women of all age groups still stands, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Thursday.

Vijayan, who met the media here to explain the government stand in the backdrop of the apex court's decision to refer the case to a larger bench, said the State Government was always ready to implement the court order, whatsoever it may be. The top court has decided to set up a larger bench to re-examine religious issues including those arising out of its ear-

lier verdict that lifted a centuries-old ban on women of menstruating age visiting the shrine. Asked if women will be provided security to enter the shrine, Vijayan said such things can only be decided after clearing "certain doubts and confusions" in the order.

Ahead of the pilgrimage season commencing on November 17, Vijayan said "It seems like the September 28, 2018, order still stands.

However, there are certain confusions with regard to today's order. The court ordered for a seven-judge bench to consider various gender related issues. It had kept pending the review petitions on Sabarimala. We need to get more clarity on various matters," he said.

SC'S CLEAN CHIT TO RAFALE DEAL AGAIN

With regard to the decision making process, the apex court said the petitioners contended there was contradictory material on the basis of certain documents obtained. "We, however, found that there were undoubtedly opinions expressed in the course of the decision making process, which may be different from the decision taken, but then any decision making process envisages debates and expert opinion and the final call is with the competent authority, which so exercised it."

"In this context reference was made to (a) Acceptance of Necessity granted by Defence Acquisition Council not being available prior to contract which would have determined necessity and quantity of aircrafts; (b) absence of Sovereign Guarantee granted by France despite requirement of the Defence Procurement Procedure; (c) oversight of objections of three expert members of Indian Negotiating Team regarding certain increase in benchmark price; and (d) induction of Reliance Aerostructure Limited as an offset partner," the apex court said.

VERDICT BIG BOOST TO DEFENCE BUYS

The NDA has all along refuted the Congress allegations of favoritism. The offset deal in the Rafale deal led to controversy with the Congress demanding a CBI probe as to how Reliance Defence of Anil Ambani was awarded the offset contract. The earlier CAG report tabled in Parliament in February this year pertained to pricing issue and other related matters pertaining to the process of procurement of the Rafale jet. The Government watchdog, however, did not include the offset examination in that report.

Meanwhile, former IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal (retired) BS Dhanoa on Thursday welcomed the Supreme Court's verdict and said the ruling vindicated the Government's position and that it will have positive impact on overall military procurement.

The political controversy relating to purchase of 36 Rafale jets from France peaked during Dhanoa's tenure as chief of the air staff and he had stoutly defended the deal. "It is a welcome verdict, vindicating the Government's position on the issue. We are happy that finally the controversy is buried," Dhanoa said. He retired from the top job two months back.

The former IAF chief said he had defended the deal on merit and considering the requirement of the IAF, referring to criticism in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls that he was making political comments about the procurement.

Dhanoa maintained that deal was clean and exuded confidence that the verdict by the apex court would have a positive impact on procurement of military platforms by the IAF, the Indian Army and the Navy. "It is a good verdict for the armed forces," he said. During his tenure, Dhanoa strongly backed the deal asserting it was sealed following a transparent procurement

FROM PAGE 1

procedure and that the Rafale jets would significantly enhance the IAF's combat capabilities.

India had signed an inter-governmental agreement with France in September 2016 for procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets. The first batch of four Rafale jets will arrive in India by May 2020.

The aircraft is capable of carrying a range of potent weapons and missiles. The IAF has already completed preparations, including readying required infrastructure and training of pilots, to welcome the fighter aircraft.

The first squadron of the aircraft will be deployed at Ambala air force station, considered one of the most strategically located bases of the IAF. The second squadron of Rafale will be stationed at Hasimara base in West Bengal.

The Rafale jets will come with various India-specific modifications, including Israeli helmet-mounted displays, radar warning receivers, low band jammers, 10-hour flight data recording, infra-red search and tracking systems among others.

SC LETS RAHUL OFF WITH WARNING FOR CONTEMPT

The bench noted that subsequently the contemnor has filed an affidavit that contempt proceedings should not be taken forward. "In view of the affidavit filed by Gandhi, we close contempt proceedings initiated against him," the bench said. The court's verdict came on the contempt plea filed against Gandhi by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi.

Gandhi had made the remarks on April 10, the day the apex court had dismissed the Centre's preliminary objections over admissibility of certain documents for supporting the review petitions against the December 14 last year verdict in the Rafale case.

The court had on May 10 reserved the judgement on Lekhi's contempt plea filed against Gandhi for the "chowkidar chor hai" remarks against Modi, which the top court had said were incorrectly attributed to it.

Gandhi, who was then the president of the Congress Party, had told the bench that he has already tendered unconditional apology for wrongly attributing the remarks relating to the prime minister to the apex court.

Senior advocate AM Singhvi, appearing for Gandhi, had told the bench that the Congress leader expressed regret over the wrongful attribution to the apex court.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Lekhi, had submitted that the apology tendered by Gandhi should be rejected and action must be taken against him as per the law.

Gandhi had on May 8 tendered unconditional apology in the apex court for wrongly attributing to it his "chowkidar chor hai" remark in the Rafale verdict and said that he holds the top court in the "highest esteem and respect" and any attributions to it were "entirely unintentional, non-wilful and inadvertent."

The three-page affidavit was filed by Gandhi after he had drawn flak from the apex court on April 30 over his earlier affidavit in which he had not directly admitted his mistake for incor-

rectly attributing the contemptuous remark to the top court.

The apex court on April 15 had given a categorical clarification that in its Rafale verdict there was no occasion for it to make a mention of the contemptuous observation that "chowkidar Narendra Modi chor hai" as has been attributed to it by Gandhi.

Gandhi, in his explanation filed in the court earlier, had said that his statement was made in the "heat of political campaigning" and there was not the "slightest intention to insinuate" anything regarding the Supreme Court proceedings in any manner.

He had said that his April 10 statement was made in purely political context to counter the "misinformation campaign" being led by senior BJP functionaries as well as the government that the apex court verdict of December 14 last year was a "clean chit" to the Centre regarding all the aspects of the Rafale deal.

SABARIMALA: WOMEN ENTRY CALL REFERRED TO 7-JUDGE BENCH

Another question was the "permissible extent of judicial recognition to PILs in matters calling into question religious practices of a denomination or a section thereof at the instance of persons who do not belong to such religious denomination."

The top court said, "The subject review petitions as well as the writ petitions may, accordingly, remain pending until determination of the questions indicated above by a larger bench as may be constituted by the Chief Justice of India."

However, Justices Nariman and Chandrachud, in their dissenting view, said that what was before the bench were the review petitions and fresh pleas challenging its 2018 decision. "What a future constitution bench or larger bench, if constituted by the Chief Justice of India, may or may not do when considering the other issues pending before this court is, strictly speaking, not before this court at all."

The only thing that is before this court is the review petitions and the writ petitions that have now been filed in relation to the judgment dated September 28, 2018. As and when the other matters are heard, the bench hearing those matters may well refer to our judgment and may either apply such judgment, distinguish such judgment, or refer an issue/issues which arise from the said judgment for determination by a larger bench. All this is for future Constitution benches or larger benches to do," was the minority view.

The split decision came on 65 petitions — 56 review petitions, four fresh writ petitions and five transfer pleas — which were filed after the apex court verdict of September 28, 2018 sparked violent protests in Kerala.

The apex court, by a majority 4:1 verdict, had lifted the ban that prevented women and girls between the age of 10 and 50 from entering the famous Ayyappa shrine in Kerala and held that the centuries-old Hindu religious practice was illegal and unconstitutional.

The minority verdict dismissed the review and fresh pleas, saying there was no error apparent with regard to the

apex court's 4:1 earlier majority decision.

It also directed the Kerala Government to comply with the September 2018 decision of the apex court by widely publicising through television and newspapers. It also directed the State Government to take steps to secure the confidence of the community in order to ensure the fulfilment of constitutional values.

FIGHT OVER J'KHAND SEATS MAY END BJP, AJSU'S 19-YEAR TIES

"We are open as we have still left nine seats. You cannot take decisions single headedly. We will contest on the issue of development and cross 65 plus figure. This will be clear to all on December 23 (Counting Day)," said Mathur to the channel.

AJSU party has not cleared its stand till the time of filing of the report but party spokesperson Deosharan Bhagat said AJSU is the 'younger brother' of the BJP, which did not consult it before releasing the lists. "The BJP announced names for 52 seats, then one seat and then 15 seats without taking us in confidence, but we did not say anything. We have just announced a list of 12 seats. Decisions should not be imposed by the elder brother. They should be properly consulted beforehand. We have also left several seats this time and earlier also. Last time (in 2014) they (BJP) had to find outsiders for majority despite coalition. What will be done this time has to be thought about," said Bhagat.

Notably, the BJP has till date announced candidates on 69 seats in the 81-member Assembly, while the AJSU has announced names of 13 candidates. Sources said the BJP had offered 12 seats to the regional party, while the AJSU, which has remained in all the Governments formed by the BJP since the formation of the State and party chief Sudesh Mahto has handled plum portfolios including the post of Deputy CM, was adamant on contesting from not less than 17 seats. The AJSU contested on eight seats in 2014 polls and bagged five of them.

Notably, in the third list the BJP has come forward with the names of Gajadhar Singh (Poreyahat), Janki Yadav (Barkatha), Laxman Prasad Singh (Dhanwar), Jay Parakash Verma (Gandey), Viranchi Narayan (Bokaro), Amar Kumar Bauri (Chandankiyari), Aparna Sen Gupta (Nirsa), Ganesh Mahli (Seraikele), JB Tubid (Chaibasa), BP Pingla (Majhgaon), Jawahar Vanra (Kharwan), Neelkanth Singh Munda (Khunti), Deo Kumar Dhan (Mandar), Dinesh Oraon (Sisa) and Sujana Munda (Khunti).

Both the BJP and AJSU have fielded candidates against each other in Chakradharpur, Lohardaga, Chandankiyari, Sindri, Mandu, Ghatshila, Husainabad and Chhatrapur. AJSU has fielded a candidate against State BJP chief Laxman Gilua at Chakradharpur, while the AJSU has fielded former BJP chief whip RK Kishore against BJP candidate at Chhatrapur. Only a formal announcement from either of the parties is left to break the 19-year old alliance, while political experts said that neither of the two is ready to take the blame.

Govt eases norms for opening bank account for migrants with Aadhaar KYC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has eased KYC norms for migrants to open bank account by allowing them to give a self-declared local address as sufficient proof of residence in case it is different from one mentioned in Aadhaar document.

Migrants face difficulties in having proof of residence as address on Aadhaar is different from their current location.

The Department of Revenue on Thursday said its notification is with regard to easing of Aadhaar KYC use for opening of the bank account for the convenience of people who often migrate from place to place for jobs or any other reason.

The changes were made by amending the Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, as per a gazette notification issued on Wednesday. This amendment has been issued to allow people who have used Aadhaar KYC to open bank account and want to give an address different from the address in Aadhaar as current address on a self-declaration basis.

कार्यालय जिला दिव्यांगजन सशक्तीकरण अधिकारी लखनऊ
पत्रांक-1059 / जिएडिआर/2019-20 दिनांक-14 नवम्बर, 2019
ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
जिला दिव्यांगजन सशक्तीकरण अधिकारी, लखनऊ द्वारा दिव्यांगजन सशक्तीकरण विभाग, उ०प्र० द्वारा दिव्यांग बच्चों (दृष्टि-बाधित) को सहायक उपकरण (डेजी प्लेयर) से लाभान्वित किये जाने के उद्देश्य से डेजी प्लेयर क्रय किये जाने हेतु ऑन लाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा से संबंधित विस्तृत जानकारी e-tender.up.nic.in से डाउनलोड कर/प्राप्त की जा सकती है।
जिला दिव्यांगजन सशक्तीकरण अधिकारी लखनऊ

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, ALLAHABAD
E-Tender Notice Allahabad Division
E-Tender No.-ALD-Sig-96-2019-20
Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer / Coordination / North Central Railway / Allahabad, for and on behalf of the President of India, invite E-TENDER on prescribed form for the following work up to 12.00 hrs. on the opening date. The details of the Tender are as under:-

| S No. | Tender No. | Name of work | Approx. Cost of work (₹) | Earnest Money (₹) | Cost of Tender Form (₹) |
|-------|------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 96 | "Interlocking of level crossing gates No. 19 at Lusa station in Chunar-Chopan section of Allahabad division." | ₹ 3705536/- | ₹ 74100/- | ₹ 3,000/- |

Completion Period: 03 Months. Date of closing of tender: 06.12.2019.
2. Availability of tender form: Tender forms are available on www.reps.gov.in. 3. Earnest Money to be deposited: The prescribed amount of Earnest Money as mentioned above must be deposited along with the tender form Online through Internet Banking or Online Payment gateway only. The tenderer (s) should note that, in any case, the Earnest Money in any other form than specified above shall not be acceptable. Tenders without earnest money shall be summarily rejected. 4. Time & place of opening of tender: Tender will be opened through E-tender at office of Divisional Railway Manager, Allahabad on or after pre determined date at 12.30 hrs. In case tender opening date happens to be holiday, Tenders will be opened on the next working day. 5. Validity of offer: 45 days from the date of opening. 6. Right of Railway to deal with tender: Railway administration reserves the rights to postpone/modify or to cancel the tender without assigning any reasons.

North central railways @CPRONCR 1645/19 FA

Office of the Superintending Engineer, Prayagraj Circle, P.W.D., Prayagraj (U.P.)
E-TENDER NOTICE Date:
1. The Superintending Engineer, Prayagraj Circle, PWD Prayagraj on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate online bids from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, Class A (ISO 9001:2005; ISO 14001, OHSAS 18000, BIFMA, AIO/TA certified) as can be may be. The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 3 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

| Sl. No. | District | Name of work | Estimated Cost (Rs. in Lacs) | Bid Security (Rs.) | Cost of Bid Documents (Rs.) | Times of Completion (Month) |
|---------|-----------|--|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Kaushambi | Jangpud Kaushambi mein Nyayalayon and outline court meing navmirni Nyayalay Karkshon mein Furniture ke adhistapan ka kary. | 71.40 | 5.60 | 2000+3000-stationery charge+GST | 01 Month |

2. Time allowed for completion of each work is as mentioned in Column no. 7, including Rainy Season.
3. Website http://e-tender.up.nic.in may be referred for detailed terms and conditions of the Invitation for Bids.
4. Bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on website http://e-tender.up.nic.in from 17-11-2019 to 24-11-2019 upto 12:00 Hours. Bids must be submitted online only at e-tendering portal of http://e-tender.up.nic.in on or before 12:00 Hours on 25-11-2019. Technical Bid received online will be opened on 25-11-2019 at 12:30 Hours.
5. The prospective bidders who do not possess Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) must get the same issued from approved agencies before submission of bids.
U.P. 145480, Date: 13-11-19
विज्ञापन वेबसाइट: www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।
(V. K. Rai) Superintending Engineer Prayagraj Circle, U.P.P.W.D. Prayagraj For and on behalf of Governor of U.P.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, ALLAHABAD
E-Tender Notice No.: Sr. DEE/RS/EL/CNB/2019-20/ET-08 & 09 Dated: 08.11.2019
E-Tender Notice
Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer/RS/North Central Railway/Kanpur, for and on behalf of the President of India, invite the following open E-Tender for the following work up to Tender Opening Date & Time. The details of the tenders are as under:-

| Tender No. | Name of work | Advertised Value (₹) | Earnest Money Deposit (₹) | Completion period of Work | Tender Document Cost (₹) |
|----------------------|--|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| ELSCNB-2019-20-ET-08 | Repair/Reconditioning and overhauling of main Compressors of ELGI-make TRC-1000 MN UG for WAG-7 & WAP-4 Locomotives of Electric Loco shed, North Central Railway, Kanpur, Qty. 50 nos. | 35,56,597.50 | 17,100,000 | 24 Months | 3,000.00 |
| ELSCNB-2019-20-ET-09 | Conversion of the CBC coupler uncoupling arrangement from bottom operated to top operated system in locos as per RDSO Modification Sheet No. RDSO/2016/EL/MS/04 54 Rev '0' dated 29.04.2016 & materials required as per CNB drg. A1/2015/CNB/2512/5026/Coupling, Alt.A at ELSCNB, Qty. 80 nos. WAG-9 Loco. | 11,01,944.00 | 22,000,000 | 12 Months | 2,000.00 |

Tender Opening Date & Time: 04.12.2019 & 11:30 hrs. for each tender. **Note:-** 1. The complete information along with tender document of above e-Tenders is available on website www.reps.gov.in up to due date & time of tender opening. 2. Bids, other than in the form of E-Bids, shall not be accepted against above Tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificates issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3. Offer rates quoted in the form of e-tender schedule & duly signed digitally shall be Final. No other documents related to offer rates shall be entertained. Tenderers are advised not to attach any document related to offer rates (except undertaking(s) asked). These documents shall be treated as NULL and void and shall not be considered for evaluation of offer. 4. Documents being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. 5. This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 6. In case of any difficulty/helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 1634/19(K)
North central railway www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @CPRONCR

Sabarimala takeaways

By referring its order that allows women entry into the shrine to a larger Bench, SC is buying time, not giving in



Faith over women's rights? A regressive over a progressive society? Religion justifying patriarchy or not? The Supreme Court needs more time, investigations and a larger bench to give answers on who can pray at Sabarimala, knowing that its ruling will become a precedent for all time to come and should, therefore, be well-considered. That it will affect 50 per cent of the nation's population, namely women, who could always interpret justice as hostage to a brute majoritarian force. Till then, its earlier order allowing women of reproductive

age into the shrine holds. There were assumptions that the Supreme Court's verdict on Ayodhya, which relied heavily on the faith of believers and their continued practice of it, would influence it to review its own order. Simply because the patriarchal servitors of the house of Lord Ayyappa, the celibate God, had codified belief that women of a certain age group would bring temptation to a sacred space, if not the lord himself. As if menstruation and procreation were sins rather than the law of the universe. With their early hold on interpreting religion, they appropriated primacy by unequal means and solidified it as an ordained custom. They monopolised godliness when faith is a soul concern, irrespective of gender. They even equated the deity's rights to that of Ram *lalla's*, humanising the claims of the God-kings to be treated as private individuals in their own homes. Such has been the sanctity of this practice in the public domain that even Judge Indu Malhotra, during the earlier ruling, had wondered if the ban should be respected as the ritualistic right of a sect to keep to its customs as a secular allowance. The apex court doesn't usually admit a review plea but given the confusion, it did so despite a 3:2 verdict, with justices Rohinton Nariman and DY Chandrachud against another relook. Though petitioners may claim an admission of oversight is implicit in this decision, there are layered takeaways. One, it is intended to defer another ruling of landmark proportions so soon after the Ayodhya verdict and control the fallout. Second, the top court has suggested widening the ambit of a mosque's devotional rights across religions, including the entry of women into mosques and Parsi shrines and the practice of female genital mutilation in the Dawoodi Bohra community. This could work both ways. For one, the localised appeal by a sect could be circumvented and made a subset of a larger ruling on democratic rights of women across religions. Or the Hindu sect could be treated at par with the other groups with a right to practise their socially sanctioned faith and attendant rituals. Last but not the least, the deferment helps most mainstream political parties, which do not want to deal with the ramifications before the Kerala elections in 2021. For the BJP which has thrown its weight behind a review of the order allowing women inside the shrine, its stance has so far not yielded results, the party failing to win either a seat or increase its vote-share during the Lok Sabha elections. The Congress, in fact, has gained for endorsing the same line, that the hill shrine be entitled to its own traditions. So the court's need to study the objections raised is a reprieve for all parties concerned.

Yet it raises a vital question. Why do we need the highest judicial authority of the land to lay down the code of societal evolution and dynamism when we should be reforming practices and executing them ourselves? Why are we still hesitant to acknowledge that we need to look at women as they are without being referenced by the patriarchal gaze, be it social or religious. Lord Ayyappa himself as a fountainhead of divinity would not have discriminated between his people. The Hindu pantheon has always prided the sacredness of both the masculine and feminine as essential attributes of spiritual enlightenment and has made women the originator of *shakti*. Our early Vedic texts are replete with examples of women scholars and priests. Believers maintain that Lord Ayyappa had sworn not to marry till his earthly mission was fulfilled and women devotees who understand empathise with the woman who still waits for him. But Ayyappa is also the most democratic god there is. Devotees dress uniformly in black, symbolising a renunciation of worldly pleasures and donning a garb of equality beyond caste and other social hierarchies. A Dalit can lead the prayers if he is the group leader and a Brahmin follower must touch his feet, too. Nowhere in Hindu rituals is such liberalism on display. So Lord Ayyappa himself would not turn away the genuine seeker, be it a woman or man. When will we understand this?

Setback for Congress

The SC dismissal of the Rafale plea has given the BJP fresh ammunition to target the party



Now that the Rafale jets have made their way to India and their indispensability has been proven to our forces, the Supreme Court was expected to dismiss a review petition against their acquisition. Politically though, it gave the BJP, weather-beaten by the latest round of Assembly results, some ammunition to beat the Congress with all over again. The latter was in for some embarrassment, not because its poll plank on the questionable nature of the Rafale deal was battered electorally, but because the court

warned the party's former chief Rahul Gandhi for justifying his "*chowkidar chor hai*" jibe, citing court observations that were never made. While the court exempted him from a contempt case, the BJP used the severity of its warning to demand a national apology from the Gandhi scion for insulting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The "*chowkidar chor hai*" slogan wasn't just in bad taste but gave the BJP an opportunity to crest public opinion by taking a high moral ground. It, in fact, turned the slogan on its head to make its most effective brand slogan of "*Main bhi chowkidaar*." The Congress, therefore, will have no manoeuvring space in its self-defence now and the BJP won't let go of a chance of cornering Rahul on this. Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad lost no time in reminding that not only did Rahul call the Prime Minister a thief, he lied about the former French Prime Minister's statements and misquoted the Supreme Court.

Without a cogent defence on the sliding economy and other pressing issues, the BJP is expected to use the Rafale ruling to animate much of the discussions in Parliament. The Congress may want to shy away from being reminded about its follies but cannot walk away from them either, considering that Rahul continued with the Rafale bandwagon in the run-up to the Maharashtra polls. He may be now demanding a JPC probe and the Congress, as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, may keenly vet the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor-General) report on Rafale but there's no political capital to be made. Already facing a crisis of confidence, the Congress now needs to be careful in choosing its target and subject. It needs to work on specifics and choose issues that impact everyday life rather than blustering against the monolithic consistency of Modi. It has an existing grassroots matrix to revive its local presence in States first, championing local issues. That seems to be working. Anti-Congressism is now a convenient excuse for everybody and the party must now think whether it really wants to be an excuse in Indian politics or be something else.

Pay heed to warning signs

It is unfortunate that the Government has failed to take cognisance of the deteriorating law and order situation in the country when one expected it to act responsibly



AJOY KUMAR

A little less than two weeks ago, the national capital witnessed unprecedented protests by hundreds of policemen. The personnel gheraoed their headquarters, demanding intervention and support of senior officers with respect to the clash that took place between them and the lawyers at the Tis Hazari district court complex. On their part, the lawyers have been on a strike and have threatened to continue with it unless their demands are heard to protect them from what they call the high-handedness of the police.

While the origin of the dispute is unclear, it has been reported that the clash was over a parking dispute. Whatever be the reason, the scuffle between them escalated into something much more serious. It was reported that three lawyers were shot and as a result of the struggle, more than 30 people were severely injured. Police vans and vehicles were set on fire and the lawyers' chambers were ransacked. The dispute continues to linger till the date of writing this article and peaceful ground between the police and the lawyers looks far away. Both sides have stuck to their guns, holding the other side responsible for the scuffle.

Almost a year ago, a similar dispute had erupted, which had led to the breakdown of the law and order situation. Again, a Central Government agency was involved. In October last year, an internal rift between the then Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Alok Verma and his number two, Rakesh Asthana, had become a public spectacle. Both Asthana and Verma hurled corruption charges against each other and approached the courts to ensure protection against legal action. In an extraordinary move, the Union Government sent both officers on leave and with effect, divested the CBI Director of all duties. This move was extraordinary because the CBI Director enjoys a tenure of two years after his appointment by a high-profile committee, which includes the Leader of Opposition.

However, this committee was bypassed to remove Verma, who among other voices, had cast aspersions on the Government for subverting investigations into significant cases. While I have written about the crisis of credibility in the past, the reason I want to recount this incident is because both the present crisis involving the police and lawyers as well as the last incident involving the CBI have two things in common: First, both situations make a mockery of the law and water down safeguards that are essential for a democracy to thrive. Second, in both cases no one from the Government took responsibility for the mess or showed interest to ensure that the situation is diffused in a responsible manner.

The failure to maintain law and order is unfortunately becoming more frequent over the last few years in the country. The law has been abused by individual lawmakers in power. It seems the rule of law has now changed to the law of rulers.



Therefore, I will not go through these details again.

The fact, however, is that we now live in a country where we have been immunised against impropriety in general. This is not necessarily always in the form of cases like Swami Chinmayanand and the Uttar Pradesh Police's handling of the rape case against the said BJP leader. Sometimes, mockery takes different forms. For example, the unilateral manner in which demonetisation was pressed upon the citizens and the lack of scientific examination into it that has had a tectonic impact on the country's economy.

Another example is how the Right to Information (RTI) Act was watered down or how fake news and hate speech have been allowed to thrive on social media. All of these instances, while completely unconnected at the first blush, have a disconcerting common thread running through them: They are all symptoms of a weakening democracy. The clash between the police and the lawyers is only the latest symptom of a more serious problem.

Now let's talk about the second issue, which relates to the fact that no one from the Government has taken responsibility for or ensured that the stand-off between the Delhi Police, which comes under the Union Home of Ministry, and the lawyers, is settled responsibly. It is here that questions about

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS FACED WITH A CRISIS, WE DO NOT SEE ANY OFFICIAL OFFER AN EXPLANATION OR PROVIDE REASSURANCE. IN A FEW INSTANCES WHERE WE HAVE SEEN MINISTERS TAKING QUESTIONS DURING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS, WE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED THAN REASSURED

leadership arise. Through the entire dispute we saw senior police officials stepping in. We have seen numerous voices throw their inputs into the mix. But what we did not see was the intervention of the Union Home Minister on this issue. We have seen the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi in the front and centre but none from the Union Government intervened. This is especially disappointing because it follows a trend where during the good times — typically election victories — we get to hear many representatives of the Government speaking on television for great lengths.

However, just as often, during times when the Government is faced with a crisis, we do not see any official offer an explanation or provide reassurance. In a few instances, where we have seen Ministers taking questions during difficult situations, we have been left a little concerned than reassured. One example of this was how the Finance Minister responded and reacted to the economic crisis. While taking questions on the slow-down of the auto industry, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman deflected the blame to cab aggregators like Ola and Uber for the plummeting sale of cars. A response like this seems to be disconnected from reality and displays a desire to deflect blame rather than taking responsibility to fix the situation. Not one person can be

held completely responsible for a crisis. In an economic/job crisis, for example, external factors matter, too. However, as things stand today, there should be little debate on the fact that there are internal governance issues, which have exacerbated the problem further. It would have been nice to see the Finance Minister talk about addressing these issues rather than worrying about image management. The former is the kind of leadership that can help India steer itself through crisis.

The showdown between the police and lawyers calls for a brand of leadership where people are reassured that the Government is capable of taking steps to ensure that the crisis is averted with minimum loss and with maturity. I am fortunate to see the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) at work. I have seen it taking steps while at the same time encouraging brand of leadership. No doubt, there will be instances where we may fall short, too, but I am optimistic that we will not shy away from the problem, no matter how uncomfortable. I will instead face the problem head-on. This is frankly what our voters expect from us. Similarly, I think we should not be shy of demanding same standards from other political leaders, too.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, an MP and currently a member of the AAP)

SOUNDBITE

I generally do not comment on constitutional posts, but a few people (Governors) are acting just like BJP mouthpieces.

West Bengal CM — Mamata Banerjee

I have certain responsibilities as a filmmaker. I don't want to make mindless entertainment. As a filmmaker, I have to be socially relevant.

Filmmaker — Ananth Mahadevan

Kashmiris, who came to Pakistan for training, received a hero's reception. We used to train them and support them.

Ex-Pakistan President — Pervez Musharraf

Some of the top court's recent verdicts must be studied studiously. If somebody says some verdicts are in favour of an ideology, he cannot be blamed.

CPI(M) general secretary — Sitaram Yechury

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Being watchful

Sir — Post the news that the Israeli spyware, Pegasus, targeted over 100 members of civil society, including journalists and human rights activists, WhatsApp, the Facebook-owned messaging app, is now banning global users if they are found to be part of group chats with malicious or suspicious names, in some cases permanently.

It's welcome that at least some action is being taken to address the problem of the spread of false information. Further, the social media giant must roll out an upgraded version of its app that is secured from the spyware. This way, it can be stopped from affecting more phones.

It is a matter of grave concern that Pegasus has had an impact on around 1,400 devices globally. The violation of one's privacy is a grievous offence. People may start feeling compelled to use other messaging apps if WhatsApp proves to be vulnerable to the malware. Something is better than nothing at all.

Tushar Anand Patna

Maharashtra saga continues

The riveting turn of events in Maharashtra politics since the Assembly poll results has been a study in the possibility of political realignments. The fast-paced developments have validated the proposition that "politics is the art of the possible." The "divorce" between the Shiv Sena and the BJP — after "cohabiting" as ideological peers for more than a quarter century following their inability to hammer out a mutually acceptable power-sharing formula — has given the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress to try and form a three-party coalition Government. The imposition of President's Rule has attracted criticism that it presaged "Operation Kamal" by the BJP to outwit its opponents and "manufacture a majority" for itself. The BJP cannot claim itself to be "a party with a difference" since it is not against horse-trading if it helps in seizing power. By the way, turncoats betray a staggering contempt for decency in public life. The Assembly is now kept "in suspended animation"; it means the doors for revocation of Central rule and the formation of a new State Government are wide open. There is now ample time for parties to try out all sorts of manoeuvres in the game of politics.

Talks are now said to be under way among the Shiv Sena, the NCP and the Congress on the contours of the Government, terms of power-sharing and a common minimum programme. Interestingly, the NCP is now said to ask for "rotational chief ministership", something that caused

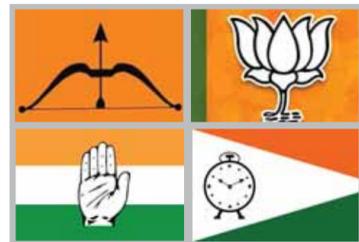
Prepare an action plan

Sir — With air quality index breaching the 900-mark, bad air is severely affecting the health of

the residents of Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR).

It is sad that though the reasons that contribute to air pollution are well-known, we have

been unable to alter the situation. One of the causes for such high level of pollution is the burning of crop residue by farmers in the neighbouring States of Punjab,



the severance of Shiv Sena-BJP ties. It is evident from the non-committal positions of the NCP and the Congress over joining hands with the Shiv Sena and the speculation over the remote possibility of reconciliation between the erstwhile saffron allies that the current political scenario in Maharashtra is in a state of flux. We will watch with keen interest how things take shape. There is never a dull moment when news breaks split second by split second. However, how long will it take for the denouement of the political thriller in the "great State" is hard to tell.

G David Milton Maruthancode

Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The lack of seriousness on part of the respective State Governments as well as the Central Government to devise an action plan has led to the present saga of people suffering from "severe" category of air pollution. The Government must proactively work with all stakeholders concerned to bring down air pollution levels.

Devendra Khurana Bhopal

Piecemeal measures

Sir — The problem of air pollution is not new to the capital city. It is also a fact that policy measures kick in at the nick of the time when health is at stake. Besides, much of the policies do little to address the heart of the problem, which is stubble burning. Bans, incentives and targeted subsidies are only temporary solutions. If indeed we intend to tackle the problem, behavioural changes are needed.

Sunita Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Clear roadblocks to innovation

India and the US must address key digital issues and help their trade relationship reach its full potential



JASON OXMAN

Innovation does not happen in a vacuum. The constant free flow of ideas and data across the globe fuels the development of the new chip that powers our smartphones and the apps we use to learn, play and connect with loved ones. But to ensure that these advancements and technological breakthroughs not only continue but thrive, nations must embrace an environment of cross-border cooperation and competitiveness. And few trading relationships hold as much promise as the partnership between the United States (US) and India. The US and India are positioned to gain more than all other markets from a significant reduction in global barriers to services trade, according to a study recently cited by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Further, the strengths of India and America's technological sectors are complementary and allow both countries to innovate and excel. The Indian Information Communications Technology (ICT) sector employs around 3.5 million workers and contributed 9.5 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014. India is the second-largest exporter of IT services and now has over 550 million internet connections and over 500 million smartphone users, making it the fastest-growing telecom market in the world. In addition, India has a vibrant start-up ecosystem, which is growing at a rate of 12-15 per cent annually. In fact, the nation saw the emergence of 1,200 startups in 2018 itself.

Similarly, the technology sector is essential for America's innovation, job creation and economic growth. Technology companies account for 10.2 per cent of the US economy and 7.6 per cent of its workforce, with application of technology products and services spanning all sectors. Every day, US companies work with partners and research hubs in cities around the world to create and bring to market new products and services that drive commerce and support jobs in the country.

By leveraging these strengths through international cooperation, both nations can pursue a meaningful digital future together. However, current policies in India challenge that growing relationship. Even where well-intentioned, Indian Government measures may inadvertently cut off Indian companies from collaborating with and benefiting from US partners. High tariffs, coupled with regulatory barriers, limit companies from importing products and components that drive local business and innovation. Potential digital barriers, such as restrictions on the movement of data and data localisation requirements, would compound investment uncertainty. The ongoing US-India trade talks provide an important opportunity for both countries to find solutions to long-standing technology trade issues, thus encouraging a robust, integrated and mutually beneficial trade relationship. As negotiators work toward a trade package, there are two essential issues to raise, which would elevate the promise of the bilateral innovation partnership. First, India's import barriers must be eased. ICT products are a key enabler of technology adoption and utilisation and an essential element of India's development as a technological leader. Reducing burdensome testing and conformity assessment programmes and high tariffs on ICT products would not only facilitate US sales, but would also allow India to buy the best equipment at the lowest cost. Additionally, breaking down these barriers would support job growth in both the US and India, and push the country further up the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, a key objective of the Indian Government. This would be a win-win for both the countries.

Second, the US and India must create a concrete and continuing dialogue to discuss digital issues. The Indian Government is considering a range of new policies, including a potential data protection law with restrictive elements and a broad framework for data governance. These are valid issues to consider and India is asking many good questions about how data should be handled to ensure that the economic benefits can be realised by all, including through finding ways for the Government to access data across borders to enforce the law and protect national security. However, if data policies in both the countries diverge so significantly that companies are unable to operate across borders, this will stifle innovation and economic benefits on both sides. A standing dialogue would provide a regular forum to discuss and inform digital strategies and help both sides avoid unintended consequences of new policies. The value of increased US-India trade is clear. Already, greater Indian openness to trade has led to economic growth and higher rates of economic inclusivity and educational attainment. The path to greater innovation starts with clearing existing roadblocks and ensuring that new ones do not emerge. The Information Technology Industry (ITI) council hopes that both Governments capitalise on the important opportunity of bilateral trade talks to address key digital issues and help the US-India trade relationship reach its full potential.

(The writer is CEO and president ITI council)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE PREVIOUS SPEAKER RAMESH KUMAR HAD CONSPIRED ALONG WITH SIDDARAMAIAH. THE APEX COURT HAS GIVEN A CLEAR DECISION ON IT.
 —KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER
 BS YEDIYURAPPA



THE SC'S DECISION HAS EXPOSED BJP'S 'OPERATION KAMAL.' KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT IS ILLEGITIMATE IN LAW AND MUST BE DISMISSED IMMEDIATELY.
 —CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON
 RANDEEP SURJEWALA

Understand the burning issue

With a robust combination of the right policies, economic incentives and awareness campaigns, the problem of managing crop residue in an environment-friendly manner can be addressed



SPOORTHY RAMAN

Delhi, one of the world's most polluted cities, is in the news again for its worsening air quality as the Government has been forced to close schools and declare a health emergency. The much-loved winter months in other parts of the country are a nightmare for the residents of Delhi-NCR as the area gets enveloped in a blanket of toxic haze.

With the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaching new levels each year and going as high as 1,200+ (classified 'Hazardous') this month, the city is suffocating, literally. Apart from coal and construction dust, vehicular emissions and smoke from Diwali firecrackers, stubble burning by farmers in the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh (UP) are cited as the primary reason for this crisis.

While the Delhi Government has been trying to bring down pollution levels through its vehicle rationing odd-even scheme and by closing polluting factories and coal-based power plants among other things, biomass burning is something it has failed to stop. For this, it needs the cooperation of its neighbouring States and has no control over the farmers there.

Crop residue burning is a practice where farmers set their entire fields on fire after harvesting the rice crop, to make way for the next i.e. wheat. The sowing of rice is timed such that its intense water needs are met by the monsoon rains in the Indo-Gangetic plains and the crop is harvested just before winter starts. However, the result is a whopping 23 million tonnes of paddy residue in the fields that need to be cleared in a short span of 10 to 20 days, before the farms are readied for sowing wheat. If the farmers had more time between crops, they could have just left this biomass lie in the fields and let it turn to mulch, which is an excellent fertiliser. However, with such a short gap between the two crops, setting fields afire seems to be the easiest way to get rid of the stubble. This however severely degrades the ambient air quality of Delhi-NCR.

Taking cognisance of the consequences of stubble burning, the Government banned it in June, imposing fines on those who defied the diktat and recently the Supreme Court (SC) even pulled up the chief secretaries of the three neighbouring States and ordered them to ensure that farmers don't burn crop residue anymore.

Nevertheless, the practice seems to have continued as growers contend that feasible, affordable and scalable alternatives are lacking. In an effort to encourage farmers to find alternatives to burning the residue, the SC had also directed the three States to pay ₹100 per quintal of paddy straw to growers, but it doesn't seem to have worked.

The atmospheric factors at play: People often wonder how a practice followed a few 100 km from Delhi-NCR has big implications. Here is the science behind this phenomenon. During winter, the region sees low wind speeds and temperature inversion — an atmospheric phenomenon where the temperature of the air near the surface is lower than that of the air higher in the atmosphere. Hence, when the pollutants from vehicular emissions and crop burning are released into the air, they are not dispersed but trapped in the lower layers of the atmosphere. As a result, the air quality takes a deep dive.

IT ISN'T DELHI-NCR ALONE THAT TAKES THE HIT; OTHER TIER-2 CITIES IN THE REGION ALSO SEEM TO BE AFFECTED BY BIOMASS BURNING. A 2019 STUDY, WHICH INVESTIGATED THE SOURCE OF POLLUTANTS IN 20 INDIAN CITIES OTHER THAN DELHI, FOUND THAT IN PLACES LIKE AMRITSAR, CHANDIGARH AND LUDHIANA, CROP RESIDUE BURNING, ALONG WITH EMISSIONS FROM POWER PLANTS AND SEASONAL DUST STORMS CONTRIBUTED TO ABOUT 50-52 PER CENT OF PARTICULATE MATTER



"Air pollution in cities like Delhi may be attributed to the growth of the metro and the pollutants from sources far away that get carried to the national Capital by the moving air or environmental conditions, which are unfavourable for the dispersion of pollutants," said Prof Vinoj V from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bhubaneswar, talking about his study published in 2018. The study, among other things, had found that crop burning has been increasing at an alarming rate of 25 per cent since 2000.

It isn't Delhi alone that takes the hit; other tier-2 cities in the region also seem to be affected by biomass burning for similar reasons. A 2019 research, which investigated the source of pollutants in 20 Indian cities other than Delhi, found that in places like Amritsar, Chandigarh and Ludhiana, crop residue burning, along with emissions from power plants and seasonal dust storms contributed to about 50-52 per cent of particulate matter.

In essence, the timing of winter-related atmospheric phenomena, coupled with the surge in emissions when the fields are set on fire, is a perfect pollution cocktail.

The health and economic costs of stubble burning: It is well-known that inhaling polluted air can lead to severe health conditions like lung cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, asthma, bronchitis and dementia. Not just this, air pollution also adversely affects crop yields in India. But, what really is the economic cost of stubble burning in these maladies?

A study, published by researchers at USA's International Food Policy Research Institute and Oklahoma State University, pegs that number at \$30 billion, includ-

ing the economic loss and associated health costs. It found that about 14 per cent of acute respiratory infections, recorded in Haryana, Punjab and Delhi in 2013, could be attributed to stubble burning. Researchers estimate that living in areas where there is intensive crop burning increases the chance of acute respiratory infections three-fold, with children under the age of five being the most affected.

Crippled policies adding to woes: As most studies have pointed out, a robust combination of the right policies, economic incentives and awareness campaigns are the need of the hour to curb the "burning" problem of air pollution. Badly-designed policies could have unintended effects on air quality, as shown by a research from the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in India and Mexico and the Cornell University, USA. It showed that groundwater conservation policies, introduced in 2009 in Punjab and Haryana, could have contributed to the rise in stubble burning.

Although rice is a lucrative crop for farmers, it is water-intensive. Hence, the Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act and the Haryana Preservation of Subsoil Water Act banned the transplantation of rice before monsoon to conserve groundwater. As the monsoon arrives in these States in July, the crop is harvested in early November, forcing farmers to clear their fields as soon as possible for wheat sowing. Using satellite data, the study found that prior to 2009, about 40 per cent of rice was harvested by late October and this number declined to 14 per cent after the law was enforced. The number of fires went up from 490 per day during late October prior to 2009, to 681 per day, peaking

around early November. The average daily PM2.5 concentrations in November were also found to be 29 per cent higher after the groundwater Acts were passed.

With the clamour for alternatives to stubble burning increasingly being heard, science may have solutions, as shown by a 2019 study. It analysed 10 alternatives to stubble burning and found that contrary to what farmers believed, these methods were not only environment-friendly, but also profitable. Among them is using Happy Seeder, a machine that can sow wheat despite the presence of rice straw in the fields. This yielded nearly 10-20 per cent increase in profits or about ₹11,498 per hectare on an average. The profits come from lower land preparation cost and the reuse of the crop residue, which increases soil moisture and benefits the long-term health of the soil.

However, these benefits come at a cost of ₹2.4 billion — necessary to produce about 16,000 Happy Seeders to cater to 50 per cent of the rice — wheat cultivation areas. With a meagre subsidy of ₹2,000 provided by the Government for purchasing machines to manage crop residue, machines like Happy Seeders are unaffordable to many farmers, leaving them with no options but to set fields on fire.

As most of these studies have pointed out, with a robust combination of the right policies, economic incentives and awareness campaigns, the pressing problem of managing crop residue can be addressed. It is about time that policymakers took note of such insights and acted to provide us all with clean air to breathe — a basic necessity of life.

(The writer is managing editor at a science portal)

The nuttiness of history in a nutshell

In analysing historical events, context provides uncomfortable perspectives that challenge simplistic versions of our understanding



NADEEM PARACHA

Histories, when confined to nutshells, become absolute facts devoid of context. They are turned into miniature caricatures, paraded as stripped actualities that anyone can dress in the manner they deem fit. This is particularly true in the age of social media, that only allows the exhibition of historical facts as end results. It completely ignores the complex historical processes which led to the end results.

For example, as miniaturised history, the 18th century French Revolution was an uprising of the poor against the rich. Just recently I heard someone say this in a podcast, positioning it as a "historical fact" which the podcaster said was aiming

at a "privileged, middle-class" foe.

Indeed, the poor did rise up in France but the uprising was largely instigated and navigated by the middle-classes against common foes: the aristocratic/landed elite and the powerful clergy. The well-known historian Henry Heller, in *The French Revolution and Historical Materialism*, roots the revolution in the gradual growth of the middle-class in France.

According to Heller, by the 18th century, the political and economic aspirations and interests of the French middle class began to clash with those of the *ancien régime*, i.e., the monarchy, the feudal class and the church. This friction saw the middle-class intelligentsia strongly propagate the ideas of democracy, secularism and nationalism, which became the main ideological engines of the revolution. Another example is the American Civil War (1861-1865). In a nutshell, it is often explained as an armed conflict between the pro-slavery South and the anti-slavery North in the US. American economists M Thornton and RB Execlund write, in *The Economics of the Civil War*, that the

conflict was mainly due to economic tensions between the "industrialised North" and the "agricultural South." Prominent in this respect was the perception in the South that tax revenues collected there were largely being transferred to strengthen industrial interests of the North.

The anti-slavery position was adopted by the North and President Lincoln only after the Southern states declared their secession. Lincoln's original stance on slavery, which he displayed a year before the Civil War, was rather different. He had said: "I have no purpose to interfere with the institution of slavery where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I don't intend to."

There are numerous such examples from world history which, when carefully studied outside their nutshell versions, often add a deeper dimension to the end result. Many such examples are also present in Pakistan's history. Take for instance, the 1974 Second Constitutional Amendment and the 1986 Article 295-C in the country's penal code. The first ousted the Ahmadi community from the fold of Islam and the

second introduced the death penalty for those found to have committed blasphemy.

When explained in a nutshell, the Second Amendment is elucidated as the sole doing of the "socialist" regime of ZA Bhutto. Unlike various conventional religious groups that had opposed the creation of Pakistan, Punjab's Ahmadi community had backed Jinnah's call. They then became prominent in the country's State and Government institutions.

The Iranian-American author and academic Vali Nasr, in *The Vanguard of Islamic Revolution*, writes that soon after Pakistan's creation, radical religious groups in Punjab often "articulated economic grievances in Islamic terms." This contributed to the 1953 anti-Ahmadi movement when the provincial Government, headed by Mumtaz Daultana, failed to address an economic crisis. As a distraction, Daultana went on to tacitly support the movement. He was dismissed by the President after the movement was crushed by the military.

The 1973 international oil crisis badly hit world economies and Pakistan was no exception. Urdu

newspapers of this period are full of statements by religious parties expressing economic grievances in 'Islamic' terms. Then, an episode in Rabwah, in which a group of Ahmadi youth clashed with the student-wing of Jamaat-i-Islami, suddenly triggered a brand new anti-Ahmadi movement in Punjab.

In his 1997 study of the Bhutto regime, Rafi Raza writes that Bhutto refused to allow the Opposition to discuss the issue in the Parliament. And when violence increased, he publicly threatened to crush the protests with the help of the military.

However, with the army already engaged in fighting an insurgency in Balochistan, Bhutto demurred. On the insistence of some of his party's members in the Punjab Assembly, the religious parties were finally allowed to table a Bill.

In an essay for *Political Power and Social Theory*, Sadia Saeed writes that the 1953 movement had largely been crushed on the insistence of the military and the bureaucracy but that, by the 1970s, both had been weakened and distanced from politics. She also writes that the pressure to allow the Opposition to table the

anti-Ahmadi Bill also came from the Left and liberal quarters. For example, Wali Khan's National Awami Party did not oppose the Bill, and a June 7, 1974 editorial in *Dawn* explained the Bill as the Opposition's "democratic right."

Now, to Article 295-C. In the nutshell version of its history, this Article was introduced by the reactionary General Zia dictatorship. It is true that this dictatorship introduced various controversial laws in the name of faith, but the fact is, Zia was actually not in favour of introducing the death penalty in this context.

According to a February 11, 2011 article by Khalid Ahmad in *The Express Tribune*, some journalists and lawyers from Punjab approached the Federal Shariat Court in 1984, petitioning it to introduce stern laws against blasphemy.

On June 8, 1986, some members of the National Assembly — which was formed after the 1985 elections — agreed to table a private Bill that would include the death penalty for blasphemy.

The Zia-backed Government of Mohammad Khan Junejo pre-empt-

ed the move and tabled a Bill that did not include the death penalty. However, during a debate, which included no more than six legislators, the death sentence was added. As a last-minute addition, the Government hastily added "death penalty or life imprisonment" in the Bill that was passed.

Upon emotional appeals, especially by those who had demanded the death penalty, Zia, as President, signed the Bill into law in October 1986.

The addition of the words "or life imprisonment" was challenged by the same politicians in 1987 in the Shariat Court. In 1990, the court ruled that the death penalty alone should be mandatory for blasphemy. It asked the then sitting Government of Nawaz Sharif to remove the words "or life imprisonment" from the law. The Government planned to challenge the decision in the Supreme Court but since those who had originally demanded the death penalty were by then part of Sharif's party and coalition Government (the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad), the regime withdrew the challenge. (Courtesy: Dawn)

Wholesale inflation slowed to 0.16% in October

Lowest in three-and-a-half years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wholesale inflation slipped to about three-and-a-half-year low of 0.16 per cent in October on account of a decline in prices of manufactured goods though food products remained dearer, government data showed on Thursday.

The previous low was in June 2016 when the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was a negative 0.1 per cent.

In September this year, the WPI-based inflation was at 0.33 per cent, while it stood at 5.54 per cent in October 2018.

The rate of price rise for food articles was 9.80 per cent during the month, while for non-food articles it stood at 2.35 per cent, showed the latest data released by the commerce and industry ministry.

The wholesale inflation in potato remained in the negative zone at 19.60 per cent (from 22.50 per cent in September).

However, for vegetables, the inflation jumped to 38.91 per cent in October from 19.43 per cent a month ago, while that for pulses, it remained elevated at 16.57 per cent as com-

pared with 17.94 per cent. For fruits, it eased to 2.72 per cent during the month as against 6.67 per cent in September. While wholesale inflation in manufactured products was (-)0.84 per cent in October 2019.

"The sequential dip in WPI inflation in October 2019 was led by core items, fuel and power, minerals, and crude petroleum and natural gas, whereas inflation for primary food and non-food articles, and manufactured food products recorded an uptick," said Aditi Nayar, economist at ICRA.

Among other articles in the WPI basket, the inflation for the fuel and light category declined further to 8.27 per cent.

Rahul Gupta, currency research head, Emkay Global Financial Services, said, "The data in wholesale prices signals that there is still lack of demand in segments such as manufacturing, metals, and chemical products. While only a surge in vegetable prices led to a rise in WPI from the market forecast. The continued weakness in WPI along with slowing growth will induce the RBI

Retail inflation may average at 4% in FY20: SBI report

Mumbai (PTI): Surplus rainfall in August and September is likely to keep food and vegetable prices elevated going forward, and retail inflation may average at around 4 per cent in FY20, an SBI research report said.

In October, inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) spiked to a 16-month high of 4.62 per cent on costlier food items. In 2019 five states — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka — bore the brunt of excess rainfall and were affected by severe floods. The surplus rainfall during August and September seriously damaged many Kharif crops.

"Going forward, thus, food and vegetable prices could remain elevated and inflation prints in November still may be on a higher side due to the low base in 2018. We expect FY20 CPI to now average closer at 4 per cent," SBI research report Ecwrap said. The report said even as food CPI will remain elevated, core CPI will go below 3 per cent in this fiscal.

According to the report, RBI may cut repo rate in the upcoming December monetary policy meeting and may pause thereafter on concerns over inflation.

"We expect a December rate cut, but beyond December it will be a close decision (as inflation prints beyond October will remain elevated). Thus, it will be better if the rate cut is front loaded in December," the report added.

(Reserve Bank of India) to cut repo rate again in December." The retail inflation for the month hit a 16-month high of 4.62 per cent due to soaring prices of food articles, including fruit and vegetables, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Wednesday.

The RBI takes into account the retail inflation data to decide on its bi-monthly monetary policy announcement, which is due early next month.

Sensex ends 170 pts higher; bank, IT stocks save the day

Mumbai (PTI): Market benchmark Sensex rebounded over 170 points after a volatile session in mainly banking and IT stocks. After swinging 322 points during the day, the 30-share Sensex ended 170.42 points, or 0.42%, higher at 40,286.48. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 31.65 points, or 0.27%, to end at 11,872.10.

Top gainers in the Sensex pack included ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bajaj Finance and HDFC Bank, rising up to 2.67%. However, IndusInd Bank, Vedanta, Tata Motors, ONGC and HUL fell to 2.79%.

After trading on a choppy note through the day, value-buying in select index-heavy weights lifted key benchmarks, traders said. A broad-based weakness prevailed in the market as weak macro numbers and negative global cues kept investors on edge.

Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul traded on a mixed note, while those in Europe were also trading in the red in their respective early deals.

Meanwhile, the Indian rupee recovered 14 paise to 71.94 against the US dollar intra-day. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.64 per cent to USD 62.77 per barrel.

Moody's cuts India's economic growth forecast to 5.6% for 2019

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Investors Service on Thursday slashed India's economic growth forecast to 5.6 per cent for 2019, saying the government measures do not address the widespread weakness in consumption demand.

"We have revised down our growth forecast for India. We now forecast slower real GDP growth of 5.6 per cent in 2019, from 7.4 per cent in 2018," it said.

"India's economic slowdown is lasting longer than previously expected," it added.

Moody's had on October 10 slashed India's economic growth forecast for 2019-20 fiscal to 5.8 per cent from an earlier estimate of 6.2 per cent. Last week, it downgraded India's outlook to negative from stable.

In October, Moody's had attributed the deceleration to an investment-led slowdown that has broadened into consumption, driven by financial stress among rural households and weak job creation.

In its Global Macro Outlook 2020-21, Moody's on Thursday said economic activity in India will pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively, but the pace to remain lower than in the recent past.

"The Narendra Modi government has undertaken a number of measures to arrest the growth slowdown. In September, it announced a cut in the corporate tax rate to 22 per cent from 30 per cent. It also lowered the tax rate for new manufacturing companies to 15 per cent to attract new foreign direct investments.

The tax rate reductions bring India in line with rates in other Asian countries.

The government's other initiatives include bank recapitalisation, the mergers of 10 public sector banks into four, support for the auto sector, plans for infrastructure spending, as well as tax benefits for startups.

"However, none of these measures directly address the

widespread weakness in consumption demand, which has been the chief driver of the economy," it said.

Moody's said the Reserve Bank of India has aggressively cut rates this year, and more rate cuts are likely.

"Benign domestic inflationary pressures, subdued oil prices and easing in other parts of the world will allow the central bank to continue to pursue an accommodative monetary policy stance. However, the transmission to lending rates continues to be hindered by the credit squeeze caused by disruption in the non-bank financial sector," it said.

Moody's said while its baseline forecasts assume that economic momentum will pick up, there are risks to the downside.

"Slow employment growth is weighing on consumption. The interest rate cutting cycle is not adequately being transmitted, which is hampering investment as companies' borrowing costs remain elevated," it said.

Vedanta Q2 profit rise 61% to ₹2,158 crore

New Delhi (PTI): Mining baron Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Ltd on Thursday posted a 60.6 per cent rise in consolidated profit to ₹2,158 crore for the quarter ended September 30.

The company had posted a consolidated profit "attributable to owners of Vedanta Ltd"

of ₹1,343 crore in the year-ago period, Vedanta said in a BSE filing.

However, the consolidated income in the July-September period dropped to ₹22,814 crore from ₹23,279 crore in the year-ago period, the filing said.

NIFTY 50

| SCRIP | OPEN | High | LOW | LTP | CHANGE |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| NIFTY 50 | 11858.75 | 11895.65 | 11802.65 | 11870.45 | 30.00 |
| ICICIBANK | 489.75 | 499.85 | 483.75 | 498.05 | 12.30 |
| INFY | 696.35 | 709.80 | 696.35 | 705.05 | 13.70 |
| BAFINANCE | 4158.00 | 4221.00 | 4120.40 | 4218.90 | 74.35 |
| HDFCBANK | 1263.80 | 1277.00 | 1257.20 | 1275.00 | 17.45 |
| MARUTI | 7160.00 | 7270.00 | 7160.00 | 7246.00 | 91.40 |
| BAJAJFINSV | 8979.95 | 9091.00 | 8900.00 | 9090.00 | 111.65 |
| EICHERMOT | 2150.00 | 2175.00 | 2135.00 | 2154.00 | 207.80 |
| HCLTECH | 1141.00 | 1157.40 | 1135.10 | 1149.00 | 10.40 |
| CPIA | 445.20 | 458.20 | 442.65 | 451.95 | 4.05 |
| TITAN | 1164.00 | 1176.30 | 1162.00 | 1169.20 | 10.15 |
| BAJAJ-AUTO | 3205.00 | 3244.55 | 3191.10 | 3232.50 | 26.50 |
| YESBANK | 68.85 | 70.80 | 67.10 | 68.75 | 0.55 |
| M&M | 575.20 | 579.65 | 567.75 | 579.00 | 4.30 |
| AXISBANK | 711.00 | 721.80 | 707.25 | 716.25 | 5.05 |
| HDFC | 2207.90 | 2232.85 | 2190.20 | 2222.80 | 15.35 |
| IOC | 133.20 | 140.00 | 131.40 | 134.65 | 0.80 |
| TCS | 2187.50 | 2200.00 | 2146.70 | 2190.00 | 11.40 |
| TECHM | 765.00 | 763.50 | 748.30 | 760.90 | 3.85 |
| BPCCL | 507.00 | 520.05 | 503.80 | 511.80 | 1.70 |
| NTPC | 118.50 | 119.15 | 117.55 | 118.50 | 0.20 |
| WIPRO | 254.00 | 254.75 | 251.40 | 253.45 | 0.35 |
| ITC | 25.10 | 25.90 | 25.25 | 25.85 | 0.00 |
| ASIANPAINT | 1778.00 | 1800.00 | 1766.65 | 1770.20 | -0.25 |
| NSTEIND | 1425.00 | 1430.95 | 1410.00 | 1424.75 | -8.50 |
| HEROMOTOCO | 2595.00 | 2608.15 | 2577.00 | 2587.00 | -2.10 |
| SBIN | 306.95 | 309.50 | 299.70 | 306.25 | -0.55 |
| GRASIM | 713.10 | 756.85 | 712.00 | 738.00 | -1.55 |
| KOTAKBANK | 1606.00 | 1610.40 | 1584.05 | 1602.25 | -3.55 |
| SUNPHARMA | 413.20 | 417.35 | 407.55 | 410.50 | -1.50 |
| POWERGRID | 190.00 | 190.15 | 186.90 | 188.55 | -0.70 |
| LT | 1397.00 | 1405.95 | 1376.95 | 1385.00 | -8.00 |
| ADANIPT | 371.00 | 374.10 | 365.85 | 368.20 | -2.60 |
| GAIL | 124.10 | 125.00 | 119.60 | 122.90 | -0.95 |
| BHARTIARTL | 357.90 | 367.10 | 350.30 | 365.60 | -3.00 |
| RELIANCE | 1476.00 | 1481.60 | 1458.80 | 1458.25 | -14.05 |
| HINDUNILCO | 2090.00 | 2090.60 | 2061.45 | 2069.00 | -22.00 |
| JSWSTEEL | 248.00 | 249.70 | 244.25 | 246.00 | -2.75 |
| UPL | 541.55 | 544.20 | 531.10 | 535.15 | -6.15 |
| DREDDY | 2775.00 | 2777.35 | 2724.95 | 2730.55 | -32.60 |
| BRITANNIA | 324.90 | 3274.90 | 3200.00 | 3229.00 | -40.75 |
| TATASTEEL | 396.10 | 398.70 | 389.40 | 392.50 | -5.40 |
| ONGC | 138.20 | 139.25 | 135.65 | 136.00 | -2.20 |
| TATAMOTORS | 170.20 | 170.30 | 165.50 | 167.00 | -3.60 |
| COALINDIA | 208.50 | 208.50 | 201.75 | 202.55 | -4.70 |
| TATACON | 413.00 | 413.20 | 399.10 | 401.95 | -102.65 |
| HINDALCO | 193.50 | 193.40 | 187.80 | 188.20 | -4.95 |
| VEDL | 150.00 | 150.50 | 142.75 | 144.50 | -3.90 |
| ZEE | 292.35 | 295.70 | 281.00 | 282.65 | -7.90 |
| INDUSINDBK | 1399.70 | 1399.70 | 1353.20 | 1373.00 | -41.20 |
| INFRATEL | 205.00 | 211.25 | 198.75 | 209.60 | -8.60 |

NIFTY NEXT 50

| SCRIP | OPEN | High | LOW | LTP | CHANGE |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| NIFTY NEXT 50 | 28324.65 | 28327.35 | 28077.95 | 28172.60 | -126.00 |
| NIACL | 158.25 | 158.25 | 158.25 | 158.25 | 7.50 |
| CADILAC | 222.50 | 235.40 | 220.00 | 233.50 | 8.75 |
| DLF | 202.85 | 209.85 | 202.50 | 209.35 | 7.15 |
| INDIGO | 1478.00 | 1525.00 | 1465.00 | 1521.00 | 43.45 |
| AMBUJACEM | 195.10 | 201.00 | 193.00 | 200.65 | 5.40 |
| SBILIFE | 999.00 | 1013.80 | 984.90 | 1004.00 | 15.85 |
| MOTHERSUNI | 133.90 | 137.30 | 133.20 | 135.90 | 1.45 |
| LUPIN | 732.90 | 739.80 | 720.90 | 738.00 | 7.65 |
| PUNJ | 110.55 | 112.75 | 108.10 | 111.70 | 1.15 |
| PIDILITIND | 1318.00 | 1349.90 | 1317.75 | 1334.95 | 10.95 |
| SRTRANSFIN | 1137.55 | 1141.65 | 1107.15 | 1139.70 | 8.15 |
| HINDZINC | 208.50 | 210.95 | 206.25 | 210.10 | 1.50 |
| PAGEIND | 23703.00 | 24040.00 | 23439.90 | 23851.00 | 144.65 |
| ICICIGI | 1371.00 | 1379.85 | 1357.00 | 1372.85 | 7.35 |
| L&T | 95.80 | 96.40 | 94.90 | 95.90 | 0.30 |
| SHRECEM | 1248.00 | 1253.35 | 1230.00 | 1245.90 | 3.65 |
| BERGEPAINT | 19750.05 | 19972.00 | 19550.05 | 19800.00 | 55.60 |
| HDFCAML | 482.45 | 488.70 | 479.20 | 481.30 | 1.35 |
| PNB | 60.40 | 60.95 | 58.85 | 60.40 | 0.10 |
| GHG | 10981.00 | 11249.90 | 10800.00 | 10999.00 | 18.15 |
| KANKBARODA | 93.50 | 94.00 | 90.65 | 93.05 | -0.30 |
| HAVELLS | 675.90 | 683.55 | 668.15 | 671.80 | -2.50 |
| BAJAJHLDNG | 3735.00 | 3750.00 | 3695.00 | 3703.70 | -14.35 |
| NHPC | 23.70 | 23.85 | 23.40 | 23.55 | 0.10 |
| MCDOWELL-N | 619.00 | 622.35 | 611.75 | 617.20 | -2.95 |
| DABUR | 465.50 | 468.75 | 455.00 | 461.40 | -2.30 |
| CONCOR | 577.00 | 582.95 | 572.15 | 574.00 | -3.00 |
| ICICIPRULI | 531.00 | 532.05 | 519.05 | 526.40 | -2.80 |
| GICRE | 278.00 | 284.70 | 266.00 | 269.00 | -1.55 |
| ACC | 1490.00 | 1508.60 | 1473.55 | 1485.05 | -8.95 |
| SHKLEY | 80.20 | 80.40 | 77.40 | 80.10 | -0.50 |
| HDFCLIFE | 592.50 | 594.90 | 581.50 | 585.25 | -3.90 |
| PETRONET | 279.25 | 282.85 | 274.90 | 276.35 | -2.35 |
| BIOCON | 255.10 | 258.35 | 249.65 | 254.35 | -2.35 |
| DISVALB | 1668.50 | 1694.70 | 1643.45 | 1656.55 | -15.95 |
| BOSCHLTD | 15300.00 | 15320.00 | 15051.50 | 15150.00 | -152.30 |
| COLPAL | 1555.00 | 1559.10 | 1539.95 | 1545.00 | -15.80 |
| HINDPETRO | 291.25 | 292.05 | 284.30 | 287.75 | -3.55 |
| BANDHANBANK | 565.30 | 576.70 | 552.05 | 556.50 | -7.45 |
| SIEMENS | 1635.00 | 1650.15 | 1608.25 | 1610.10 | -24.45 |
| GODREJCP | 725.75 | 725.75 | 712.95 | 714.00 | -13.35 |
| DMART | 1964.90 | 1966.60 | 1910.00 | 1917.15 | -42.80 |
| OFSS | 3123.00 | 3123.00 | 3020.00 | 3055.00 | -75.10 |
| MARICO | 365.50 | 365.50 | 354.00 | 356.90 | -9.55 |
| NHMD | 101.30 | 102.85 | 97.80 | 98.10 | -2.70 |
| PEL | 1802.00 | 1808.95 | 1745.65 | 1759.00 | -51.00 |
| IBULHSGFIN | 222.50 | 223.85 | 208.10 | 210.45 | -7.80 |
| AUROPHARMA | 412.65 | 412.65 | 389.35 | 397.00 | -36.85 |
| IDEA | 3.35 | 3.45 | 2.85 | 3.00 | -0.70 |

BSE 500

| SCRIP | Open | High | Low | LTP | PCF |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------|
| NH | 307.95 | 309.35 | 285.00 | 304.85 | VOLTA |
| NIPL | 445.00 | 458.00 | 444.00 | 451.50 | NOCIL |
| YESBANK | 68.75 | 70.80 | 67.15 | 68.75 | ESCORTS |
| IBULHSGFIN | 222.90 | 224.95 | 208.40 | 211.20 | M&M |
| CHOLAFIN | 298.15 | 310.70 | 293.85 | 309.15 | RITES |
| ULTRACEMCO | 4120.00 | 4120.00 | 3992.75 | 3996.80 | BRITANNIA |
| ICICIBANK | 490.30 | 499.90 | 483.55 | 498.75 | BALANCO |
| RELIANCE | 1475.00 | 1481.00 | 1456.05 | 1463.40 | TECHM |
| HDFCAML | 3694.80 | 3770.00 | 3538.25 | 3601.65 | RAIN |
| INFY | 695.00 | 709.75 | 695.00 | 705.35 | TATAPOWER |
| BANDHANBANK | 567.90 | 575.85 | 552.15 | 557.15 | UJIVAN |
| SBIN | 306.80 | 309.35 | 299.85 | 306.10 | EDELWEISS |
| LICHSGFIN | 422.50 | 423.25 | 415.00 | 420.20 | LALPATHLAB |
| POWERGRID | 190.00 | 190.00 | 187.10 | 188.25 | UPL |
| MARUTI | 7163.80 | 7272.70 | 7163.80 | 7247.10 | WOCKPHARMA |
| RBLBANK | 336.00 | 336.00 | 314.35 | 317.90 | ACC |
| AUROPHARMA | 414.00 | 414.00 | 389.70 | 395.55 | IDFCFIRSTB |
| BHARTIARTL | 358.00 | 368.00 | 350.50 | 362.65 | GLENMARK |
| TATAMOTORS | 170.90 | 170.90 | 165.50 | 167.00 | DIVISLAB |
| IDEA | | | | | |

Modi, Putin agree to bolster special strategic ties

Russian premier invites Indian PM to Victory Day celebrations in May next year

PTI ■ BRASILIA

Russian President Vladimir Putin invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the massive Victory Day celebrations in May next year as the two leaders had an "excellent meeting" here during which they reviewed the progress made in the bilateral ties and discussed ways to further bolster the special strategic partnership.

Modi, who is in Brazil for the 11th BRICS Summit which will focus on building mechanisms for counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthen India's ties with the world's five major economies, met Putin on Wednesday on the sidelines of the meeting and reviewed the full range of India-Russia relations.

"Had an excellent meeting with President Putin. During our talks, we reviewed the full range of India-Russia relations. India and Russia are cooperating extensively in areas such as trade, security and culture. The people of our nations will benefit due to close bilateral ties," Modi said in a tweet.

During the bilateral meeting, the fourth between the two leaders this year, prime minister Modi said the "frequent meetings have strengthened our relations".

"Our bilateral relations are growing. You have invited me to visit Russia in May for the Victory Day celebrations. I am happily waiting that I will get an opportunity to meet you once again," the Prime Minister said.

Both leaders reviewed the progress made in the bilateral relationship since the Prime Minister's visit to Vladivostok in September.

The two leaders noted with satisfaction that the USD 25 billion target of bilateral trade by 2025 had already been achieved. They decided that the first Bilateral Regional Forum at the level of Russian Provinces and Indian States be held next year to dismantle the barriers of trade at regional level.

The two leaders noted the stability and progress made in imports of oil and natural gas. They also reviewed the progress made in the field of infrastructure, particularly

railways in context of raising the speed of the Nagpur-Secunderabad sector railway line.

The leaders also noted with satisfaction the cooperation in defence sector and in the field of civil nuclear energy. They welcomed the prospects of cooperation in civil nuclear energy in third countries.

The two leaders also noted that both sides shared a common position on international issues and agreed to continue close consultations in the future.

President Putin reiterated the invitation to Modi to visit Moscow to participate in the Victory Day celebrations next year, which the prime minister gladly accepted.

"I expect that we will meet in Moscow in May of next year during the celebratory events timed to the 75th anniversary of victory in the Second World War. I am very glad to see you," Putin was quoted as telling Modi by the official Tass news agency.

The annual May 9 Victory Day parade in Moscow, where Russia shows off its military



Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomes Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the talks on the sidelines of the 11th edition of the BRICS Summit, in Brasilia (Brazil) on Wednesday

might, commemorates the May 1945 allied victory over Nazi Germany.

Leaders of India, Cuba, France, the Czech Republic, Venezuela, Belarus, Armenia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia

and Serbia are among those who have already confirmed their participation in the celebrations. An invitation has also been sent to US President Donald Trump, Tass reported. During the meeting,

President Putin also highlighted the potential of Arctic region in natural gas and invited India to invest in the region. He said the bilateral trade had registered a growth of 17 per cent.

"This our fourth meeting this year. I am so glad to have this high intensity of contacts. We have been implementing major bilateral projects and strengthening technical cooperation and our cultural exchanges are expanding," the Russian President said.

The two leaders met over two months after holding extensive talks in Russia's far east Vladivostok city on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) during which they discussed ways to further cement the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between the two countries.

On September 5, Modi said the friendship between India and Russia was not restricted to governmental interactions in capital cities, but was about people and close business relations.

India had announced an "unprecedented" USD 1 billion line of credit for Russia's resource-rich Far East with Prime Minister Modi vowing to support President Putin's "stupendous efforts" to develop the extremely harsh region.

Brazilian Prez Bolsonaro to be chief guest at India's R-Day in '20

PTI ■ BRASILIA

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has accepted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in 2020.

Prime minister Modi met Bolsonaro on Wednesday on the sidelines of the 11th BRICS Summit held here to focus on building mechanisms for counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthen India's ties with the world's five major economies.

During his meeting with Bolsonaro, Prime minister Modi invited the President of Brazil to be the chief guest at the Republic Day in 2020. Bolsonaro accepted the invitation with pleasure.

The two leaders held "fruitful talks" to strengthen the bilateral ties.

Prime Minister Modi invited Bolsonaro to the Republic Day, 2020. The Brazilian President has accepted the invitation with pleasure, according to an official statement.

"Both leaders agreed that on this occasion, the two countries can comprehensively enhance our strategic partnership," it said.

Modi said that he looked forward to discussing matters relating to trade. He also outlined areas for potential investment from Brazil, including in areas of agricultural equipment, animal husbandry, post-harvest technologies and bio-fuels, the statement said.

The Brazilian President expressed his readiness and informed Prime Minister Modi that a large business delegation will accompany him to India, it said, adding that the two leaders also discussed other areas of cooperation including space and defence sectors.

Modi also welcomed the decision of the President to grant visa-free travel to Indian citizens.



Modi discusses bilateral, multilateral issues with Chinese President Xi

PTI ■ BRASILIA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping here and the two leaders agreed to maintain a close contact on matters relating to trade and investment to further deepen and add new vigour to the bilateral ties.

During the meeting on the sidelines of the 11th BRICS Summit on Wednesday, prime minister Modi said there was a "new direction and new energy" in bilateral ties after the two leaders' second informal summit in Chennai.

"Fruitful meeting between PM Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Brazil. Trade and investment were among the key issues both leaders talked about," the Prime Minister's Office said in a tweet.

The leaders had forward-looking discussions on various aspects of the multifaceted India-China relationship, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said in a tweet.

They both agreed on the importance of maintaining close dialogue on matters relating to trade and investment.

The two leaders agreed that the new high level mechanism on trade and economy should meet at an early date, an official statement said.

"I am glad to meet you once again. When I look back, we had met for the first time in Brazil itself... and our journey began. This journey of unknown people has today turned into a close friendship. Since then, we have met at many forums, bilaterals; you visited my home state, took me to your village, came to receive me outside Beijing in Wuhan... It is such a significant thing that within the five years, there have been so much trust and friendly relations," Prime Minister Modi told President Xi.

"As you said and I believe that our meeting in Chennai gave our journey a new direction and new energy. Without any agenda, we talked about each other's issues, global situations... these have been very successful," Modi said.

The two leaders met for the second informal summit at Mamallapuram, a coastal town near Chennai, on October 11-12 and discussed a range of bilateral issues, vowing to jointly combat terrorism and radicalisation, and expand bilater-

al trade and investment.

President Xi thanked prime minister Modi for India's substantial participation in the just concluded China Import Export Expo in Shanghai.

Xi conveyed his deep appreciation to Modi for hosting him at the second informal summit in Chennai and said that he would not forget the welcome given to him by the prime minister and the people of India.

He invited Modi for the 3rd informal summit in China in 2020. The date and venue for which will be determined through diplomatic channels.

The two leaders reviewed preparations for celebrating the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries next year. They agreed that this will enhance people-to-people relations.

The leaders noted that the special representatives will have another meeting on matters relating to the boundary question and reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and security in the border areas.

The leaders also exchanged views on multilateral issues including WTO, BRICS and Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership (RCEP) at the BRICS Summit held to focus on building mechanisms for counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthen India's ties with the world's five major economies.

The meeting between Modi and Xi in the Brazilian capital comes days after India decided not to join China-backed RCEP over unresolved "core concerns", with India saying the proposed deal would have adverse impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Indians.

It also took place amidst renewed strain in ties between the two countries over the Kashmir issue. A joint statement issued after talks between President Xi and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan last month said China was paying "close attention" to the situation in Kashmir and that it should be properly and peacefully resolved based on the UN Charter.

In its reaction, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said India's consistent and clear position has been that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the country and China is well aware of New Delhi's position.

India most open, investment friendly economy: PM

PTI ■ BRASILIA

India is the world's most "open and investment friendly" economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Thursday as he wooed the BRICS business leaders, urging them to invest in the country and take advantage of its "limitless" possibilities and "countless" opportunities.

Addressing the closing ceremony of the BRICS Business Forum, prime minister Modi said the grouping of five countries had led to economic development despite the global economic slowdown.

"India is the most open and investment friendly economy in the world due to political stability, predictable policy and business friendly reforms. By 2024, we want to make India a five trillion dollar economy. The infrastructure alone requires USD 1.5 trillion investment," he said. Noting that India has "limitless" possibilities and "countless" opportunities, the prime minister urged the BRICS business leaders to take advantage of them.

"I invite the business of BRICS countries to build and grow their presence in India," he said.

"BRICS countries account

for 50 per cent of the world's economic growth. Despite the recession in the world, BRICS countries accelerated economic growth, drove millions out of poverty and achieved new breakthroughs in technology and innovation. Now ten years after the founding of BRICS, this forum is a good platform to consider the direction of our efforts in the future," Modi said.

The prime minister said simplifying intra-BRICS business will increase mutual trade and investment.

"Tax and customs procedures between us five countries are getting easier. The business environment is getting easier with the collaboration between intellectual property rights, and banks. I request the BRICS Business Forum to study the necessary business initiatives to take full advantage of the opportunities thus generated," he said. "I would also like to request that priority areas in business be identified among us for the next ten years and based on them blue print of Intra-BRICS collaboration should be made," Modi said.

The prime minister said the market size, diversity and complementarities of the members of the BRICS countries were very beneficial to each

other and urged the forum to map such complementarities in the five countries.

"If one BRICS country has technology, the other is related to raw materials or markets. Such possibilities are especially in electric vehicles, digital technology, fertilizer, agricultural products, food processing. I would urge the forum to map such complementarities in five countries. I would also like to suggest that at least five such areas should be identified by the next BRICS Summit in which joint ventures can be formed between us on the basis of complementarities," he said. "Important initiatives like innovation BRICS Network, and BRICS Institution for Future Network will be considered during tomorrow's summit. I request the private sector to join these efforts focused on human resources. Connecting young entrepreneurs with these initiatives will also give more strength to business and innovation," Modi said.

The prime minister said there was a possibility of making travel, business and employment between the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries more easy.

Activists urge India, UK to challenge Pak atrocities in Balochistan

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK chapter of the Baloch National Movement (BNM) and associated organisations called on the Indian government to challenge the atrocities of the "rogue state of Pakistan" and assist Balochistan's freedom movement. At a memorial event to mark Baloch Martyrs' Day in London on Wednesday, members of the BNM as well as groups such as the World Sindhi Congress and Baloch Students

Organisation Azad paid tributes to those killed in their fight for Baloch freedom over the years and branded the UK government "hypocritical" for its silence on the human rights violations in the resource-rich region.

"Over 20,000 Baloch people have been abducted by Pakistani security forces and many killed in the last two decades. Our message to the Indian government is that they have to raise their voice against the atrocities by the Pakistani security forces," said

Hammal Haider, foreign affairs spokesperson of the Baloch National Movement.

"India played an important role in liberating Bangladesh and it must now come forward and support our movement to gain independence from the rogue state of Pakistan, which is breeding Islamist militants and destabilising the entire region," he said.

The organisation along with Balochistan activists around the world annually mark November 13 as

Martyrs' Day in tribute to the martyrdom of Baloch ruler Mir Mehrab Khan and his fighters who defended the region in the face of British invasion on November 13, 1839.

Candle-light vigils, poetry sessions and tributes are held to honour the memory of all those killed in their struggle for Baloch independence from Pakistan, which it sees as an illegal occupier of its land.

In reference to the British government, Haider said, "The UK talks about human

rights of the Kashmiri people and remains silent on our suffering at the hands of Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence. "This is hypocritical, given that Balochistan was an independent country before the British colonialists created Pakistan and paved the way for Pakistani occupation of our land. They must speak out for all human rights violations." Dr Lakhlu Luhana, General Secretary of the World Sindhi Congress, added, "It is the duty of the

entire international community to speak out against the genocide in Balochistan. "The British, US, Indian governments all have a role to play to stop Pakistan because the implications pose a threat not only to the peace and security in the region, but also globally."

The Baloch Martyrs' Day event in London coincided with similar memorial events around the world, seen as a means of raising international awareness for the Baloch independence cause.

'Kashmir violence by outfits linked to Jamaat-e-Islami'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Much of the violence in Kashmir is tied to organisations linked to separatist outfit Jamaat-e-Islami and its partners, an influential US lawmaker has said, noting that the group has committed acts of violence against minority groups, including Hindus and Christians.

Congressman Jim Banks made the comments while addressing a seminar hosted by the Middle East Forum at the US Capitol on Wednesday. The programme was organised in association with South Asia Minorities Alliance Foundation.

Jamat-e-Islami is a violent, theocratic group that has committed violent acts against minority Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Ahmadis, he said. The Republican Congressman from Indiana said that "much of the violence in Kashmir is linked to the organisations linked to Jamaat-e-Islami and its terrorist partners."

India had earlier this year banned the Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir for five years under the anti-terror law on grounds that it was "in close touch" with militant outfits and was supporting extremism and militancy in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere. Referring to the activities of the Islamic Circle of North

America (ICNA), Banks said that it is a thinly veiled partner group of Jamaat-e-Islami within the US. The ICNA invites Jamaat operatives to its conferences to raise funds to support group's cause, he said.

"We must prevent the spread of this threat before it starts impacting Americans at home. I introduced HR-160 resolution earlier this year, and this bipartisan resolution calls on the USAID and State Department to refrain from any partnership with organisations affiliated with radical Islamist groups," Banks concluded.

In her address, Abha Shankar of the Washington-based Investigative Project on Terrorism presented the findings of her organisation's extensive research about the close links between the Jamaat-e-Islami and the ICNA. South Asia Minority Alliance Chairman Nadeem Nusrat who also heads Voice of Karachi, said that no other religious group did more to radicalise Pakistan religiously than Jamaat-e-Islami.

This group also played an abhorring role to suppress the freedom movement in the former East Pakistan (Bangladesh), where its affiliated terror groups-al-Badr and al-Shams actively participated along with Pakistani military in the massacre of nearly three million Bengalis, he alleged.

Climate change, corruption blamed for Venice floods

AFP ■ VENICE

Much of Venice was under water on Wednesday night after the highest tide in 50 years ripped through the historic Italian city, beaching gondolas, trashing hotels and sending tourists fleeing through rapidly rising waters.

The government in Rome was expected to declare a state of emergency at a cabinet meeting on Thursday after Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte described the flooding as "a blow to the heart of our country".

Officials blamed climate change while shopkeepers on the Grand Canal raged against those who have failed to protect the UNESCO city from the high tide. They said corruption had repeatedly delayed a barrier protection system that could have prevented the disaster.

"The city is on its knees," Venice mayor Luigi Brugnaro said in an interview with national broadcaster RAI.

"There's widespread devastation," he said in the famed St Mark's Square, which bore the brunt of the flooding.

"In all likelihood the damage from last night runs into hundreds of millions of euros."

The state of emergency for a natural disaster will allow the government to use "exceptional powers and means" to intervene more quickly, and Conte said his government was ready to allocate funds.

"The disaster that has struck Venice is a blow to the heart of our country," Conte said at the scene. "It hurts to see the city so damaged, its artistic heritage threatened."

St Mark's Square was calm on Wednesday evening, with just a smattering of tourists

walking through the relatively dry square marked with occasional puddles.

Four Venetian friends who had gathered in the square, all wearing boots, said the relative quiet and lack of tourists was upside of an otherwise harrowing few days.

"We've never seen anything like it," said Alvise, 19.

Earlier, tourists lugging heavy suitcases waded in thigh-high boots or barefoot through the submerged alleys, as gondola and water taxi drivers baled sewage-tainted water out of their trashed vessels.

Dirty water was swirling around the marble tombs inside the 12th-century crypt of St Mark's Basilica, which suffered untold damage when an unprecedented high tide swept through the city.

It was closed to tourists as were many other Venice highlights including the Fenice

Theatre and the Ducal Palace. "We said last year that the basilica had aged 20 years in a high tide. It risks having aged much more than that in this one," said the building's procurator Carlo Alberto Tesserin.

A 78-year old was killed by an electric shock as the waters poured into his home. "We ask the government to help us, the costs will be high," mayor Brugnaro tweeted.

"These are the effects of climate change." "The future of Venice is at stake," he warned. "We cannot live like this anymore."

Environment Minister Sergio Costa blamed climate change and the "tropicalisation" of violent rainfall and strong winds. "This is what is happening more and more often in the Mediterranean," Costa said on Facebook.

"Global warming will

destroy our planet if we do not immediately reverse the direction."

The exceptionally intense "acqua alta," or high waters, peaked at 1.87 metres (six feet). Only once since records began in 1923 has the water crept even higher, reaching 1.94 metres in 1966.

"It was unbelievable. The water rose so quickly," said resident Tiziano Collarin, 59, as he surveyed the damage.

"Windows were blown out, there are those who have lost everything," he said as the flood alarm rang out to warn those in the canal city that the tide, which had receded somewhat overnight, was rising once again.

The fire brigade said it had carried out over 400 operations as well as laying on extra boats as water ambulances. Around 160 firefighters

were deployed to rescue people stranded on jetties and to recover boats broken free from their moorings.

President of the Veneto region Luca Zaia said 80 per cent of the city had been submerged, causing "unimaginable damage" to the city, which has 50,000 residents but receives 36 million visitors each year.

A massive infrastructure project called MOSE has been under way since 2003 to protect the city, but it has been plagued by cost overruns, corruption scandals and delays.

The plan involves 78 gates that can be raised to protect Venice's lagoon during high tides — but a recent attempt to test part of the barrier caused worrying vibrations and engineers discovered parts had rusted.

Outside historic Venice, the Lido and Pellestrina islands were also hard hit by flooding.

Trump impeachment probe hears new claims ‘Proceedings a sham, must not be allowed’

AFF ■ WASHINGTON

Two top US diplomats delivered gripping testimony Wednesday about Donald Trump's efforts to get Ukraine to investigate his potential 2020 rival Joe Biden, as the impeachment inquiry into the president shifted into a new phase of high-stakes televised hearings.

Trump dismissed the probe in the Democratic-led House of Representatives as a “witch hunt” and said he was “too busy” to watch the first public hearings, during which he received staunch backing from Republican lawmakers.

William Taylor, the top US diplomat in Ukraine, began his testimony before the House Intelligence Committee with a new revelation about Trump's efforts to pressure Kiev — the main issue of just the fourth impeachment process in US history.

Democrats accuse Trump of abusing his power by using US military assistance and a possible White House meeting to pressure President Volodymyr Zelensky into

opening a probe into the Democrat Biden and his son Hunter, who served on the board of Ukrainian gas company Burisma.

The key evidence is the official White House transcript of a July 25 telephone call between Trump and Zelensky in which the US president asked his Ukrainian counterpart to investigate the Bidens.

Taylor testified that he was told Trump cared more about the probe than he did about Ukraine.

The grey-haired former Army officer and veteran diplomat, who testified in a closed hearing last month, said he had since become aware of a telephone call between Trump and the US's EU ambassador Gordon Sondland, which a member of Taylor's staff overheard.

The staffer asked Sondland after the call what Trump thought about Ukraine and was told that “President Trump cared more about the investigations of Biden,” Taylor said.

Freshman House Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, an outspoken Trump

critic, said the new Taylor comment added “a layer of proximity” for the president.

“(Trump) himself was making and partaking in some of these phone calls... And that really adds a much more disturbing degree of the involvement that he had in using the powers of government to create politically motivated investigations,” the New York representative told CNN.

Asked about the new allegations, while hosting his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House, Trump replied: “First time I’ve heard it.” Sondland “did speak to me for a brief moment, and I said no quid pro quo under any circumstances.”

Republicans sought to undercut the witnesses’ testimony by focusing on Hunter Biden's role on the Burisma board, pointing out that he was paid \$50,000 a month and questioning his qualifications.

They also stressed that the Ukrainians were not aware for months that the White House had put a hold on the nearly \$400 million in military assistance and that it was eventual-

ly released in September.

“What did President Zelensky actually do to get the aid?” asked John Ratcliffe, a Texas Republican congressman. “The answer is nothing. He didn’t open investigations.”

“He didn’t do any of the things that House Democrats say that he was being forced and coerced and threatened to do.” In his opening statement, Taylor recalled opposing making US military aid to Ukraine or a White House visit by Zelensky contingent on Kiev investigating the Bidens.

“Withholding security assistance in exchange for help with a domestic political campaign in the United States would be crazy,” he said. “I believed that then and I believe it now.”

Taylor said an “irregular policy channel” involving former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal attorney, was pushing for the Ukrainian probe into the Bidens.

Fellow witness George Kent, a career diplomat, was asked what interests Giuliani

was promoting.

“I believe he was looking to dig up political dirt against a potential rival in the next election cycle,” said the deputy assistant secretary of state.

“I do not believe the United States should ask other countries to engage in selective politically associated investigations or prosecutions against opponents of those in power because such selective actions undermine the rule of law.”

If the House impeaches Trump, it would then go to trial in the Senate, where Republicans enjoy a 53-47 majority.

The next hearing is scheduled for Friday, featuring the US ambassador to Ukraine who Kent said was recalled by Trump after being subjected to a “smear campaign” by Giuliani.

Eight more witnesses, including Sondland, are to appear next week, the second of several planned weeks of hearings.

The investigation threatens to make Trump the third US president to be impeached, after Andrew Johnson in 1868

and Bill Clinton in 1998, although the Senate would need to convict him to remove him from office.

Neither Johnson nor Clinton was convicted. But in 1974, Richard Nixon resigned in the face of certain impeachment and removal from office for the Watergate scandal.

In his opening statement, committee chairman Adam Schiff, the California congressman overseeing the probe, said the proceedings will examine “whether President Trump sought to exploit (Ukraine’s) vulnerability and invite Ukraine’s interference in our elections.” “If this is not impeachable conduct, what is?” Devin Nunes, the top Republican on the panel, hit back by accusing Democrats of a “carefully orchestrated media smear campaign.”

“It’s nothing more than an impeachment process in search of a crime.” Coming just one year before elections, the hearings carry great risks for both parties and no certain reward, with a divided US electorate weary of Washington infighting.

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has said that the impeachment proceedings against him in the Democratic-led House of Representatives are a “sham and should not be allowed.”

The public hearing of the probe kicked off on Wednesday as William Taylor, the acting ambassador to Ukraine and George Kent, the deputy assistant secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs, testified for more than five hours before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Trump is facing allegations of using his office to pressure Ukraine officials for personal political gain against Democratic presidential aspirant Joe Biden and his son Hunter, who served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company. “This is a sham and shouldn’t be allowed. It was a situation that was caused by people that shouldn’t have allowed it to happen,” Trump

told reporters at the White House during a joint press conference with the visiting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Trump, who was in meetings with Erdogan for most of the day at the White House said that he did not watch the public hearing on his impeachment. “Are you talking about the witch hunt? Is that what you mean? Is that what you’re talking about? I hear it’s a joke,” he said when a reporter asked about his general reaction to the impeachment hearing. “I haven’t watched. I haven’t watched for one minute because I’ve been with the (Turkish) President, which is much more important, as far as I’m concerned,” Trump said, adding that he would want to find out who is the whistleblower.

It is the whistleblower, he said, who gave a lot of very incorrect information, including that of his call with the President of Ukraine in July, which he asserted was a perfect call and highly appropriate.

Gaza rockets disrupt Israel, Islamic Jihad cease-fire

AP ■ GAZA CITY

Gaza militants fired a barrage of rockets into Israel on Thursday, hours after a cease-fire was declared to end two days of intense fighting between Israel and the Islamic Jihad group, the heaviest escalation in months that killed at least 34 Palestinians, including three women and eight children, and paralyzed parts of Israel.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the new wave of rockets and it wasn’t clear how this would affect the fate of the cease-fire.

Israel had hailed the Gaza operation as a victory, defending its policy of targeting militants in their homes despite civilian deaths and vowed to continue the tactic.

Islamic Jihad said it had succeeded in getting Israel to agree to a cease-fire based on several demands, including a halt to Israeli targeted killings of the group’s leaders.

Islamic Jihad spokesman Musab al-Berim said the Egyptian-brokered deal went into effect at 5:30 a.m. An Israeli military spokesman tweeted that the Gaza operation “is over.” Some restrictions were lifted on residents of southern Israel and traffic returned to the streets of the Palestinian coastal territory.

But after hours of calm, a barrage of rockets blasted out of the territory, setting off air raid sirens in southern Israel and testing the fragile truce.

The fighting first erupted early on Tuesday after Israel killed a senior commander of the Iranian-backed militant group who was said to be

behind a string of rocket attacks and who Israel said was believed to be planning a cross-border infiltration.

The rare targeted killing by Israel sparked the heaviest fighting with Gaza militants since May. Islamic Jihad fired some 450 rockets toward Israel, while Israel responded with scores of airstrikes.

Gaza’s ruling Hamas militant group, much larger and more powerful than Islamic Jihad, stayed out of the latest escalation — an indication it would be brief.

Israel typically does not publicly acknowledge deals with militant groups, and on Thursday officials said the only unwritten agreement was that Israel would hold fire so long as Islamic Jihad did. Military spokesmen listed a series of accomplishments after the two-day spasm of violence, including the killing of some 25 militants in targeted strikes.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said the policy had “proved itself” and would continue. “Everyone who was a top military official, who was set to carry out and was involved in terror or rocket firing against Israel was eliminated,” he told Israeli Army Radio. “And we intend to continue with this.”

Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett warned Gaza militants they were not safe anywhere. “A terrorist who tries to harm Israeli citizens will not be able to sleep soundly, not in his home and not in his bed and not in any hiding place,” he said.

Critics of Israel’s contentious policy say it amounts to extrajudicial killings that endanger civilians.

But Israeli military spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus defended the attacks on militants’ private homes, saying Islamic Jihad commanders used their residences to store weapons, making them legitimate targets.

Palestinian officials say 34 people were killed in the fighting, including at least 18 militants. They say eight children, including a pair of 7-year-olds, and three women were among the dead.

The rocket fire crippled life across southern Israel and on Tuesday, also in the country’s heartland and around Tel Aviv, as nonstop air-raid sirens canceled schools and forced people indoors. At least three people were lightly wounded from shrapnel or shattered glass. Most rockets landed in open areas or were shot down by Israel’s Iron Dome missile defense system.

Much of Gaza resembled a ghost-town, with almost no vehicles on the roads except for ambulances evacuating the wounded.

Al-Berim, the Islamic Jihad spokesman, lauded the group’s efforts against Israel, saying it “had its word, confronted the aggression,” and “defended the Palestinian people.”

Shortly after al-Berim’s cease-fire announcement, two rockets were fired out of Gaza, setting off sirens in southern Israel. It was not immediately clear whether the launches were intentional or misfires caused by electronic timers. Israel didn’t respond.

Islamic Jihad said the fire was likely because word hadn’t spread to all members about the halt to violence.



Israeli soldiers prepare their armored vehicles at a gathering point near the border with Gaza on the Israel-Gaza Border on Wednesday. Israeli airstrikes killed more Islamic Jihad militants in Gaza on Wednesday as rocket fire toward Israel resumed after a brief overnight lull, raising the death toll in the strip to at least 18 Palestinians in the heaviest round of fighting in months. AP

ICC judges authorise Rohingya probe

The Hague (AP): International Criminal Court judges on Thursday approved a request from prosecutors to open an investigation into crimes committed against Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslim minority.

The court said it has jurisdiction over crimes partially committed in Bangladesh, which is a member state of the court. Myanmar, which is not a member of the global court, has been accused of committing widespread abuses in a campaign against the Rohingya. Myanmar’s military began a counterinsurgency campaign in August 2017 in response to an insurgent attack. More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh to escape what has been called an ethnic cleansing campaign involving mass rapes, killings and the torching of homes. The court said in a statement that a panel

of judges who studied Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s request to open an investigation concluded that there are grounds to believe widespread acts of violence were committed “that could qualify as the crimes against humanity of deportation across the Myanmar-Bangladesh border and persecution on grounds of ethnicity and/or religion against the Rohingya population.”

The decision came just days after Gambia, on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), filed a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Myanmar of genocide in its treatment of the Rohingya. Both courts are based in The Hague. The International Criminal Court seeks to convict individuals responsible for crimes, while the International Court of Justice settles disputes between nations.

Schools closed as protests choke HK

AFF ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong authorities ordered schools and universities closed Thursday as protesters challenging China’s rule brought parts of the city to a near standstill by barricading roads and disrupting public transport links.

Six months of anti-government political action have morphed from peaceful mass rallies into a so-called “blossom everywhere” campaign of violent hit-and-run confrontations with police by groups of black-clad protesters.

Key arterial roads were cut by brick and bamboo barri-

cades, a cross-harbour tunnel was closed, and metro stations and bus services suspended — leaving many of the city’s 7.5 million people struggling to get to work.

Authorities ordered schools and universities to close until next week, while hospitals deferred non-emergency operations.

The government urged employers to be flexible with workers trapped in the gridlock.

Of those who made it to work, some joined lunchtime rallies across the city — including in the city’s financial hub — part of an increasingly embold-

ened white-collar support base for the protest movement.

Shouting “Fight for Freedom, Stand with Hong Kong”, thousands of office workers blocked roads through Central district as broad-based strike entered its fourth day.

“A lot of young people have been hurt... so we have to come out,” a legal worker who only gave her surname as Chan told AFP.

“They have sacrificed too much for us, so Hong Kongers must come out.” The protests began in June as a kickback against an attempt by the city’s Beijing-backed government to hustle through an extradition

bill. The bill was eventually shelved, but demonstrations have snowballed into a wider demand for democracy by protesters who fear the city’s unique freedoms are being hacked back by Beijing.

Violence has intensified this week across the financial hub, leaving several people badly hurt, stretching police resources and hammering the transport network.

The first volleys of tear gas were fired early Thursday by police near the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, as a call went out for protesters to mass at the campus.

In a Facebook post, police

accused “rioters” of shooting “arrows at several police officers who were patrolling” near the Polytechnic.

Students are using a novel arsenal of weapons to defend themselves and attack police, from giant makeshift catapults to bow and arrows looted from sports departments. They have also used tennis rackets to volley tear gas canisters back at police.

“Urgent! Poly is in a battle! Need people! Need supplies!” a post said on LIHKG — an online forum widely used by the largely leaderless movement as the campus became a focal point for Thursday’s action.

Bolivia leader hopes to end power vacuum amid clashes

AFF ■ LA PAZ

Bolivia’s interim president Jeanine Anez moved Wednesday to fill the power vacuum left by the resignation of Evo Morales, who said he was ready to return from exile in Mexico to “pacify” the country, as riot police clashed with his supporters and one was killed.

Anez, a 52-year-old deputy senate speaker before proclaiming herself acting president on Tuesday — a move endorsed by the Constitutional Court — named 11 cabinet ministers and appointed a new military high command.

In a press conference at the presidential palace, she reiterated a pledge to “hold elections in the shortest possible time.”

Anez named former diplomat Karen Longari as foreign minister, and a right-wing senator, Arturo Murillo, as minister for the interior.

Her economy minister Jose Luis Parada worked for the local government in the wealthy eastern province of Santa Cruz, an opposition bastion.

Rejecting Morales’ claims that her presidency amounted to a coup, she said: “There is no coup in Bolivia. There is a constitutional replacement.”

“The only coup d’Etat in this country has been by Evo Morales,” she said, referring to a 2016 referendum that blocked the ex-president from running for re-election, but which Morales had overturned by the Constitutional Court.

Riot police fired tear gas during clashes with hundreds of Morales’ supporters who marched towards the presidential palace to protest Anez’s appointment.

A 20-year-old man was shot and killed in a village near the eastern city of Santa Cruz during a clash between Morales supporters and police, a doctor said.

Bolivia has been in political turmoil since a controversial October 20 election in which Morales was awarded a fourth term as president.

Opposition figures cried foul, claiming electoral fraud, and an audit by the Organization of American States (OAS) found clear evi-

dence of vote count manipulation.

Ten people have now died and more than 400 have been injured in the protests, according to prosecutors. A previous toll put the number of deaths at eight.

On Wednesday, demonstrations took place in Morales strongholds of El Alto, around 20 kilometers (nine miles) from La Paz, and El Chapare, a coca-growing region in the center of the country.

The La Paz clashes took place three blocks from the presidential palace, where Anez was presiding over the appointments of the new military top brass.

Anez praised the “democratic disposition of the Armed Forces and police” who abandoned Morales last weekend, prompting him to resign on Sunday after weeks of protests.

Police units in various parts of the country had rebelled on Friday, siding with opposition supporters.

On Wednesday, troops tried to remove barricades on the main highway linking two of the country’s biggest cities,

Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, amid efforts to resume business as usual after three weeks of protests and strikes brought much of the country to a halt.

Public transport services in La Paz were returning to normal on Wednesday, and bank and businesses reopening.

“We are doing everything possible to bring everything back to normal,” said police chief, General Yuri Calderon. He said dozens of small police stations had been ransacked and burned by pro-Morales supporters in the wake of the ex-president’s resignation.

“If the people ask me, we are ready to return to pacify” Bolivia, Morales told a news conference in Mexico City, where he arrived Tuesday after receiving political asylum.

Morales, who became the country’s first indigenous president in 2006 and ruled for nearly 14 years, resigned Sunday and fled Bolivia after losing the support of the army and police.

He called for a “national dialogue” to resolve the crisis, and rejected Anez’s legitimacy.

US, S Korea could scale back jt drills

AFF ■ SEOUL

US military exercises with South Korea could be scaled back to aid diplomacy with the nuclear-armed North, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on his way to Seoul, as Pyongyang warned it was running out of patience.

The North has long protested joint military drills, which it condemns as preparations for invasion, and has set Washington an end-of-year deadline to come up with a new offer in deadlocked negotiations on its weapons programmes.

The US and South Korea last year cancelled several joint drills in the wake of the Singapore summit between President Donald Trump and the North’s leader Kim Jong Un, but are due to carry out a combined air exercise later this month.

“We will adjust our exercise posture either more or less depending on what diplomacy may require,” Esper told reporters on board his plane to Seoul, where he starts an Asian tour Thursday.

The possible downsizing of the joint drills should not be seen as a “concession” to Pyongyang, he said, “but as a means to keep the door open to diplomacy.”

“I’m all for diplomacy first,” he added.

His comments came after Pyongyang reiterated its demands for the

combined exercise to be scrapped.

“The US is not accepting with due consideration the year-end time limit that we set out of great patience and magnanimity,” a spokesman for the State Affairs Commission (SAC) said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

The SAC is the North’s top governing body and it is unusual for it to issue such declarations.

Holding the drills would be an “undisguised breach” of the Singapore summit declaration, it said, adding: “Betrayal is only what we feel from the US side.” “We no longer feel the need to exercise any more patience,” it went on, but gave no details of the “new way” it was threatening to pursue if Washington did not meet its demands.

Negotiations have been gridlocked since the Hanoi summit between Kim and Trump broke up in February with disagreement over sanctions relief and what the North would be willing to give up in return.

Working-level talks restarted in Sweden in October only to break down quickly, with the North blaming the US for not giving up its “old attitude.”

Pyongyang has carried out a series of missile tests in recent weeks and months, including one launched at sea, which it said was fired from a submarine — a potential strategic game-changer.

Kuwait’s govt resigns after grilling on infrastructure

AP ■ KUWAIT CITY

Kuwait’s Cabinet submitted its resignation on Thursday, days after the country’s minister of public works announced she would step down after being grilled by parliament.

Some elected lawmakers had accused Jenan Ramadan, who is also minister of state for housing, of failing to fix infrastructure and roads that were damaged in massive floods in 2018.

Ten lawmakers had filed a no-confidence motion against her, according to local media. Ramadan had claimed, however, that the problems plaguing her ministry are long-running and argued she should not be held responsible for issues that precede her time as minister.

There was also reportedly an effort underway among lawmakers to request to grill the country’s powerful Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al Jarrah Al Sabah.

The government in Kuwait has resigned in the past, particularly when faced with no-confidence votes and requests to grill members of the ruling Al Sabah family. Kuwait’s state-run news agency, KUNA, reported that Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Sabah formally submitted Cabinet’s resignation to the country’s ruler, Sheikh Sabah Al Sabah, without providing further detail.



The Last Supper by FN Souza



Untitled (Cityscape) by Piraji Sagara

THE IMPECCABLES

CHAHAK MITTAL walks into Sotheby's India's preview, *Boundless: India*, with deputy director SHIVAJIRAO GAEKWAR and discovers that the art market is gradually finding its feet in the country

Painted in greens, blues and greys, bordered with bright red, Piraji Sagara's wood texture-like artwork is what comes into view as one enters the Sotheby's International Realty preview of an array of artworks and sculptures being displayed at The Leela Palace. The riverside cityscape features geometric forms of houses. Shivajirao Gaekwar, deputy director and specialist at Sotheby's India, says that Sagara's works are known for their rich texture, which is his trademark. Priced at ₹15,00,000, Gaekwar adds, "He is a special artist because a lot of his work revolves around wood. He comes from a family of carpenters. This work has mixed media on board."

On its left is Nasreen Mohamedi's *Untitled* ink on paper artwork, priced from ₹30,00,000 to ₹40,00,000. The work features an array of triangular shapes and lines, which have an ethereal quality to them. A few viewers beside me describe it thus, "The comprehension of space in the drawing is daring." "It's amazing how neatly it is drawn." "It's impeccable." The lines and larger triangles are crisscrossed with smaller triangles, made in varying tones. The changing of ink tone has been used to differentiate the triangles, which, the artist had claimed, is reminiscent of both East Asian and Islamic calligraphy. The smaller triangles are placed symmetrically, on top of each other, in a way that they create shadows, which look like the ones reflected on an empty channel of water in Fatehpur Sikri.

The next one that grabs the attention is *The Last Supper* by FN Souza. Most remembered for his compelling paintings of Christ and the power of erotically charged nudes, still life and landscapes, this painting combined printed imagery with drawing and painting. Gaekwar tells us, "The east, the west, the spiritual and the physical fuse together in this work," very well giving credence to his

philosophy, 'whole meaning of life is life itself!' The painting features the figure of Christ in the centre, which is projected to be a self-portrait of the artist, surrounded by 12 alien-like figures that depict the Apostles. The most striking parts of this work are its bright colours, 3D texture and the fact that while some figures wear cassocks, there are six figures which are dressed in modern-day suit and tie, taking one back to his 1955 work, *Six Gentlemen of Our Times*.

With the price starting from ₹3,50,00,000 to ₹5,00,00,000, it is one of the most expensive works to go under the hammer at this exhibition. However, Gaekwar averts and points out that it isn't as high as compared to what it would have fetched had it been auctioned in the Western market. "As compared to the Western market, it is not that highly priced. Even when you open the catalogue, the cheapest price you'll find there is \$600. So rather than calling it expensive, I would say that it is very well-priced given its size and its label, which is quite huge," adds he.

So what is the reserve pricing criteria for these works? "The paintings and sculptures hail from a particular time and the textures, fabrics and designs are very much reminiscent of it. The works are



Untitled by VS Gaitonde

evaluated according to a process. It is decided by how much the sellers are will-

ing to sell them at and how much, we, as auction-holders, are willing to sell them for," says Gaekwar.

Yamini Mehta, deputy chairman of Indian and South Asian Art, Sotheby's, adds, "It also depends on who are the artists, the quality of the work and age. It is a combination of various things. Even it is a small piece, it could be priced very high if the quality is good. It also depends on which collection it is coming from."

Talking about the theme, *Boundless: India*, Gaekwar tells us why it is centred around India and its heritage this time. He says, "These works narrate the various,

multi-faceted stories of contemporary Indian artists. It covers many aspects —

designs, popular culture, sculpture, ceramics, wood, paintings, mixed media on canvas and natural shades. Our aim is to just highlight this sophistication. This is important for the Indian art market."

As we move towards the next pavilion, we come across Bhupen Khakar's *Preparatory Study for The Celebration of Guru Jayanti*, priced at ₹20,00,000 to ₹30,00,000. The sepia-tinted drawing has a number of figures, including a couple, about to be married, in a porch fenced with flowers. A group of musicians and cooks can be seen in the distance. However, the eye settles on a bespectacled man in a white *kurta-pyjama*, which viewers say is the artist himself. Interestingly, the work is only a preparatory study and the final painting is a lot different yet similar to its initial composition. Both the works depict the demarcated scenes of human activity, separated by wide areas of flat space, against the backdrop of a cityscape. Timothy Hyman, Chemould Publications, had said, "It wasn't the isolated protagonist or the man in white *kurta-pyjama*, "but the 'inconsequential' crowd that was the real concern."

Next up is Sotheby's star attraction, the most expensive of the lot — Vasudeo

S Gaitonde's *Untitled*. 'Estimate On Request,' reads its label. Gaekwar informs us that it is predicted to begin at ₹21,00,00,000. There are five orbs suspended in space which appear to be planets. The abstract work can be read within those spaces as the canvas is divided into swathes of gold and bronze which are reminiscent of the horizon. "This painting's rich story is deeply intertwined with artistic, architectural and scientific modernity in India," says Gaekwar.

As per a report of 2017, the size of the Indian art market equalled to ₹1,460 crore. However, Gaekwar says that with artists and works like these, the market is certainly growing. "The Westernists and impressionists have been connecting the dots since time immemorial. India is still an emerging market and it will take time to reach that place. But they are still at a very strong position," he adds.

Even the response is "great" this time, says Gaekwar as he looks at the audience around and commends the number of buyers. He adds "Crowd doesn't necessarily mean sales. But there are buyers here despite pollution taking over the city these days. (Laughs) This does mean something!"

(The auction is on November 15 in Mumbai.)

Archivist as painter

While EBRAHIM ALKAZI's reputation as a director of ground-breaking plays is well-documented, his brush with paintings is something that has been a well-kept secret until now, says UMA NAIR

Long before the art world woke up to my works, it was Ebrahim Alkazi who bought my *Kali* (1989)," Tyeb Mehta told me in 2005. "Alkazi was a brilliant artist too, he understood Western art genres and had done many works. I wonder where they are? Maybe, somewhere in a bundle."

Little does Rahab Allana, his daughter, know that this was what Tyeb had spoken so many years ago. At Shridharani and Art Heritage in Triveni Alkazi's early works done more than 60 years ago come alive in *Opening Lines* curated by Ranjit Hoskote. And as Allana says, she found 99 works on paper carefully knotted in a bundle.

ALKAZI AND SOUZA

In the nation and the city of Delhi, Alkazi the writer, the thinker, the play wright the collector was friend, gallerist and peer to Indian artists like Souza, Tyeb Mehta, K G Subramanyan

and many more. At Shridharani and Art Heritage his daughter Amal Allana has created an oasis of drawings sculptures and paintings with a neat narrative strung together.

MULTIPLE MEDIUMS

Alkazi was deft in his choice of mediums, deeper in his understanding of cubist, abstract, realist modes of translating the human figure and the face and also trying his hand at sculptures. Carbon-tracing, frottage or textural rubbing, charcoal, inks, washes, printer's ink, graphite, pastels, poster paints — this is a spread that educates informs and states that Alkazi is one of India's greatest collectors because he knew his art. The only oil-on-canvas in the exhibition, is a magnificent self-portrait, that ticks off all the boxes for expression, elegance and emotive evocation. Observation and a finer sense of deeper aesthetics are what define Alkazi as an astute and accurate artist. His lines are a lexicon of lithe language.

Alkazi directed magnum opus productions like *Tughlaq*, *Asadh Ka Ek Din* and even *Hamlet* and *Othello*. His legendary reputation as a theatre director, an institution builder and a mentor to several generations of actors was just a tip of the iceberg because in the art world he was not just patron to artists like Souza and Tyeb Mehta but was also an archivist



and gallerist.

SOUZA FAMILY

This catalogue is a historical gem. Souza often spoke about his early days with friend, philosopher and guide, Alkazi. And one remembers his words about Souza's epic work *Family*. "In the entire history of Indian art, he (Souza) is exceptional, in the sheer power and development of his work to a truly distinctive style, which sets it apart. In no period of Souza's work can you mistake it with anyone else's. What is this quality in him that sets him so uniquely apart and at the same time does not make him derivative? His work has incredible vitality and one has to search for its basis," he said.

One recalls Alkazi's words of the early years in London. "...I remember taking a handcart full of Souza's paintings and going up and down Oxford Street and Bond Street trying to sell them."

Alkazi was friends with the Progressives but he was critical too and pulled no punches when he had to speak the truth. In 1954 a Progressive Art Group show was published in the Theatre Unit Bulletin, Alkazi questioned their existence and wrote: "...what holds the group together is not a common aesthetic... but a herd instinct of self-preservation and security

against the feeble attacks of an indifferent public."

ASTUTE COLLECTOR NOT TROPHY HUNTER

Unlike some in the art world today Alkazi is no trophy hunter. He was a true blue-blooded collector. He knew the permutations of art as investment and did not believe in boasting. At best, Alkazi unveils as an archivist who loves history, literature and the wisdom of all the world being a stage in which men and women are merely players. This show is about the beauty of a personal and private passion, it is about the magic meandering of lines that speak about people, places, paradigms and parallels in the world of illustrations, emotions and worlds within worlds.

Amal Allana's design speaks to us about how integral and imperative a floor plan is to vitality of a show. In more ways than one, *Opening Lines* is about art, it is about life and also about the inner journeys of India's greatest collector who has the eye of a historian. Never has the magic of monochrome been so riveting as it is here in this multi-pronged curation. Indeed whether sedimented, imperial, textured or brooding, the power of drawing is unparalleled.

FLOWERS ARE FRAGILE

A museum at the Harvard University campus features plants made with glass which are so life-like in appearance that one would be forgiven for believing that they are real



Tucked inside a museum on the Harvard University campus is a gallery teeming with plants so lifelike in appearance you'd be forgiven for swearing they're real. But this foliage is glass — really old glass.

There's a red maple branch, for instance, that looks plucked from a Vermont tree during the fall peak season. There's part of a budding cashew tree boasting two rust-coloured cashew apples and drooping nutshells, each leaf vein and stem intricate in detail.

These are only two examples of more than 4,300 individual glass models in the collection, which has at least 780 species from the plant kingdom represented. They are affectionately known as the *Glass Flowers*, or formally as the *Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants*.

The detail and the anatomical exactness stuns onlookers like Erin Averill, a 26-year-old from Orange County, California, who was recently perusing the flowers. "My first thought was that they'd be similar to Dale Chihuly's work," she said. But the *Glass Flowers* are understated in colour and size when compared to Chihuly's colourful, often towering sculptures. "I'm really blown away by just how real they look and the level of skill demonstrated in the details," Averill said. "This is really a lost art form."

The *Glass Flowers* date back to the 19th and early 20th centuries, and were intended to dazzle the public while educating botany students. They have been on display continuously at Harvard since 1893.

This third-floor gallery at the Harvard Museum of Natural History is one of the institution's most beloved — and most visited — treasures. The *Glass Flowers* helped draw about 3,00,000 people to campus last year, a significant number for a college museum situated in an urban area known for its art offerings.

"I've been at the museum for three years and in that time I've counted visitors from 54 countries," said Lewis Bushnell, a Cambridge resident who volunteers inside the gallery one day a week.

In August, an array of rotting fruits, rendered in glass, was pulled from the storage room shelves. On display for the first time in 20 years is *Fruits in Decay*, a temporary exhibit until March 2020. Among the decaying lot is an apricot showing signs of brown rot caused by a fungus, a strawberry covered in mold, and a bruised pear, all in great detail.

The flowers' story of origin is equal parts ingenuity and happenstance. In the 19th century, there was no reliable medium for modeling or preserving plants to study. Wax was used, but its temperature was always a concern. Plants could be pinned to papier mache boards, but over time the specimens' shapes and colours often became distorted.

This is when Harvard professor George Goodale heard of Leopold and Rudolph Blaschka, a father-son team of glass artists living outside Dresden, Germany. Goodale was aware of some small marine animals the Blaschkas had made in glass. So he sailed across the Atlantic to speak to the artists, and com-

misioned his first glass model in 1886. The collection was completed almost 50 years later.

Leopold, the father, died in 1895, but Rudolf finished the job, dying three years after completing the last flower. All the decaying fruits were Rudolf's creations. "They worked from nature, so they knew and studied plants," said Donald Pfister, a professor of systematic botany, and curator of Harvard's Farlow Library and Herbarium of Cryptogamic Botany.

Sometimes the creative process had the Blaschkas growing specimens in their garden so they could examine the plant up close. "They informed themselves completely," Pfister said.

Early drawings, including a Canada lily from 1892, are part of the exhibit, as are many cross-sections and dissections of all parts of a plant. Over time, some of the glass models have been retouched and repaired, but the flowers are largely the same as when first displayed.

The temperature and humidity of the room where they are kept are now controlled. And as science and technology progressed, the plants were reclassified according to DNA sequencing. The cashew branch resides next to a mango and some poison ivy because they're family.

The *Glass Flowers* are still as relevant as they were decades ago, said Jenny Brown, manager of the collection. "People visit it once and they bring their friends and relatives back to see it the next time," she said. "They are very much loved."

—AP

Trend Blazer

Sonam to play blind character

Actor **SONAM K AHUJA** will play a blind character in the Hindi remake of the 2011 South Korean crime thriller film *Blind*. Filmmaker **Sujoy Ghosh**, who will be the creative producer of the film, said, "Shome Makhija, my friend, is directing the film. It's an out-and-out female-hero story." The *Kahaani* director feels that Sonam is the right fit for this role.

Sonam was last seen on the big screen in *The Zoya Factor* this year. The film failed to receive much critical or commercial impact upon release.

She said, "I haven't done any action and horror films, so these are the two genres I would love to explore."



'I was lucky to be part of a team who made me feel comfortable with what I was doing. It

was amazing to be among such hardworking people as Sonakshi (Sinha). Playing Gabru in Khandani Shafakhana was both, difficult and easy for me. The complete transition in the last courtroom scene was the challenge.'

—Badshah

Actor **RAKUL PREET SINGH** is excited about her forthcoming cross-border romantic-comedy. She reveals shooting for the yet-untitled film will start later this month.



"The film is in the rom-com space and it is the story of characters who belongs to India and Pakistan, so it's a cross-border, coming-of-age rom-com," Rakul said about the film, which sees her team up with **Arjun Kapoor** for the first time.

The film will be directed by debutant **Kaashvie Nair** and produced by **Bhushan Kumar**, **Nikkhil Advani** and **John Abraham**.

Pink confirms she is taking a break

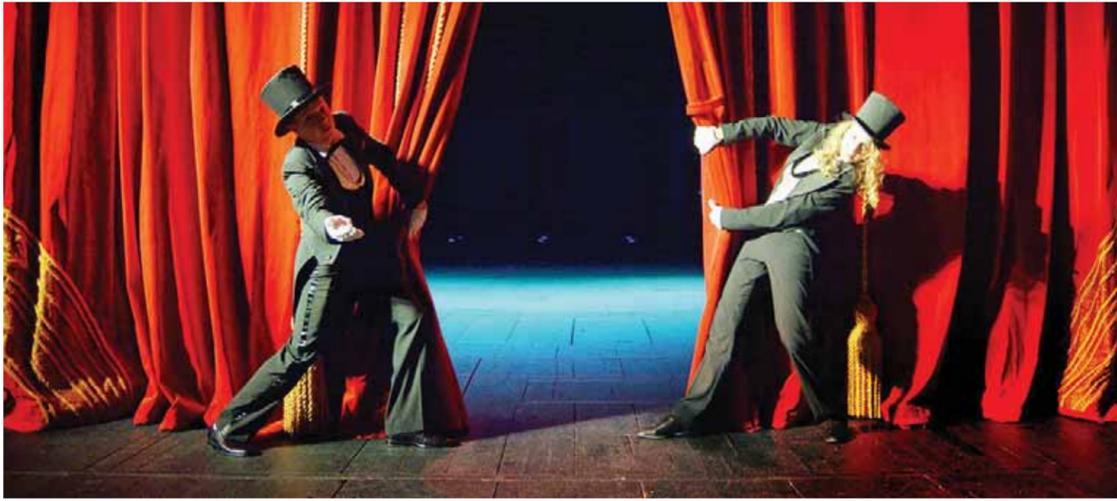
Singer **PINK** has confirmed that she will be taking a break from music for at least a year.

The 40-year-old singer has spent the past two years on the road with her successful Beautiful Trauma World Tour and she is now looking in a different direction for her future. Pink arrived at the

Country Music Association Awards for 2019 with her kids in tow as she and husband **Carey Hart** made the event a family affair.

Speaking about her future on the red carpet, Pink said, "It's time to do something else for a minute."

Ahead of the ceremony, Pink posed for pictures with Hart and their two kids, daughter **Willow**, 8, and son **Jameson**, 3.



EMOTIONS MAKE FOR AN UNENDING DRAMA

Theatre directors tell **CHAHAK MITTAL** that till the time a play offers distinct aesthetics and addresses contemporaneity, it cannot stay relevant

Even though the written language of classics might appear foreign and old-fashioned, initial readings might leave one feeling confused and unsure of what's being exactly said. However, themes and incidences of human behaviour in plays like that of Shakespeare and Rabindranath stay as relevant, irrespective of the number of scientific or industrial developments over the time. The very fact that we still read these classics is itself an evidence of how important they are to the present times. And why then will they not be a part of modern theatre? One such example is that of *Mahabharata*, which has been reinterpreted a number of times and not even once made the audience feel like it's dated. Each of its episode brings a certain narrative which is true to our lives. The issues that it highlights stand as a mirror to the present-day society.

So how is it that classical plays and writings are made relevant to the contemporary times? **Prakhar Gautam**, theatre director and founder of Delhi-based theatre group *Parindey Storytellers*, believes that classics have stood the test of times, which is why they hold such an importance. "The predominant example is William Shakespeare. His plays have stayed relevant for centuries and the biggest reason for that is their focus on emotions. *Othello*, for example, deals with power and jealousy. *Hamlet* deals with the conflict of a man and a child. Such plays are going to be relevant as long as the person who is interpreting the play can understand the emotion behind the script," he says. Giving Indian examples, he adds, "Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad's plays have stayed relevant as the framework of our society is more or less the same as they depicted. Plays by Moliere, Dario Fo and Anton Chekhov still maintain the fragment of human emotions and even

though times have changed, the emotions can be interpreted in the modern schema."

Theatre director and founder of *Dreaming Stage*, **Nikunj Wadhwan** argues that plays and stories don't have to be "made relevant" to contemporary times because even though the current environment and surroundings might have evolved, human beings stay the same. He adds, "Just like previous times, fewer men have chivalry. Women had more duties and limitations than men and though it is changing now, it is still prevalent to an extent. And the ones who rule us take decisions based on their mindset rather than on the basis of right or wrong."

Recalling **Mohan Rakesh's** *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, which talked about Kalidas and how his lover had waited for him for years, he says, "This has certainly changed but only because today's woman and lover are more evolved people, who use social media and eat through apps. However, the lover would still feel the same pain and longing for one's beloved." Theatre director **Bharti Sharma**, who is set to bring her play, *Chhaya-Hindol*, at the Delhi Government's art and culture wing *Sahitya Kala Parishad's Mohan Rakesh Natya evam Samman Samaroh*, also agrees to the point that it is human emotions which are universal and they will react in the same way to different plays, regardless of the language or era the classic has been written in. While experts argue about how human behaviour has been similar, **Prateek Kumar**, director of *Arcus en Ciel Theatre*, believes that classics are important because they have a certain sense of "aesthetics" and a socio-political relevance. "The aesthetics offered by them is unmatched when they are performed with a particular form," he says and recalls theatre directors like **KS Rajendran**, who had directed *Pratimanatkam* (based upon *Ramayana*) and *Priyadarshika*, in which he took *mudras* (gestures) from the *Natyashastra*. He adds, "The performances have had

long-lasting imprint on the audience because of the visuals offered by classical theatre. There is also experimental theatre director **Suresh Anagalli**, who had directed Sanskrit classic *Bhagwat Ajukam* in an abstract and modern form. It has mesmerised the audience in a similar manner."

Once a play is read, the reader is impacted by its character for some time but soon, the chapter ends. When the story is reimagined after 50 years and brought on the stage, the director re-explores the moral fibre of each character, revealing his/her demons and strengths in a more nuanced way. And this has become a trend. More theatre directors are picking up old classics and adapting and re-interpreting them in their own ways to make it relatable to the current audience.

Prateek says that the trend is also because of the fact that the Indian audience has evolved to understand the vision of a director and take onus to understand the art form which director chooses to display his/her story. Giving example of one of his directions, "When I adapted *Andha Yug* (based on the last day of *Mahabharata*), it gave me a broader understanding of relationships, human instincts and violence. I could understand them better because the play offered me a parallel image of today's world and showed the issues which still haunt us. Till the time a play offers distinct aesthetics and addresses the contemporary times, it cannot stay relevant."

Prakhar also takes *Mahabharata* as an example and points out that it explores every possible human emotion in its story, "which is why it is always going to be relatable. Wherever a director's imagination or creativity takes him/her to... it will."

However, when the story is already known to the audience, why bring it over and over again? **Nikunj** points out that even though the sto-

ries might be known to people, there still could be a number of angles which have never been explored or thought about in their first readings. "Pick up a mythological story, be it *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*, we have always known it through the eyes of one of the protagonists and now, with the evolution of society, we can hear the other side of the story too. *Duryodhana* and *Ravana* have been called the most evil souls but there might have been a side to them that we haven't been pen to hearing. Villains have always been and will remain bad but they were not born like that. Which is what new adaptations are highlighting today. Evolution of the audience is also another reason here. There is a shade to these negative characters which people are interested to know. *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* has an evil character that is loved by everyone. *Dhruvswamini*, a play written by **Jaishankar Prasad** has **Ramagupta**, brother of **Chandra Gupta** who is again a villain but somewhat relatable."

For **Kaushik Bose**, director of theatreworms productions, it also helps the newer generations to understand the classics, which were penned ages ago. "It helps in bringing some aspects of life which we can still relate to. *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* bring so many aspects which we are living even today. Other such examples are old Bengali plays *Katha Amrita Saman*, *Nathabati Anathbat*, which were written in the 80s and 90s and are based on Indian women. A recent interpretation of these plays were *Karappu*, in which the story was retold in a way where body movements were profoundly used."

It certainly is a good trend, which should continue. However, experts feel that we should also look at newer languages, plays and stories, which can talk about the present phenomenon.

'Education is important'

Ahead of Children's Day, veteran actor **Boman Irani** used the occasion to draw attention to the fact that every child in the country should have access to formal education, although that is not the only way to educate an individual. "In my opinion, basic education should be accessible to every child in this country. Later, they should practice their choice on higher education, and things should not be imposed on them. I am not a big believer in formal education because I am a self-taught actor and photographer. I do not believe that one can only educate himself between the age of five to 25. But I say that because formal education did not work for me that well," Boman said.

"Having said that I think when children go to school, they get a sense of childhood (later in their lives) because that is how society looks at children who are cared for. What they learn in school, and how much they are educated by attending class, is a different discussion. But access to education, the whole thing of wearing uniform, walking together with classmates and going to school, such things give them a structure in life," he said.

Boman plays a pivotal role in the new film *Jhalki*, which addresses the issue of child labour. He essays the character of **Shyam Singh** in the film, which is broadly based on the Nobel Peace Prize winner **Kailash Satyarthi**, who is known for his relentless work for children's rights and **Bachpan Bachao** movement.

Jhalki is one of the releases in the Children's Day weekend. The film revolves around the struggle of a young girl from an underprivileged background. She is in search for her brother who is employed as child labour and has gone missing. The film is directed by **Brahmanand Singh**, and features two child artistes, **Aarti** and **Goraksha** along with **Sanjay Suri**, **Tannishtha Chatterjee**, **Divya Dutta** and **Govind Namdev**.

"When a child wishes to go to school but doesn't get the chance to do so owing to poverty, he or she feels like an outcast. That is almost criminal," said the actor.

Interestingly, Boman has played characters like **V i r u Sahasrabudde (3 Idiots)**, **Dr J C A s t h a n a (Munna Bhai MBBS)** that show another extreme side of higher education and how it can suffocate young minds. The actor mentions he has treated each of these characters differently, keeping his personal opinion aside.

"I reserve my opinion and never impose it on the character I portray in the film because every character serves to tell a story and I am just an actor there. I am not judging the character. Personally, I do not support such imposition on students," said he. —IANS



Survival and betrayal

Actors **JUSTIN HIRES** and **LUCAS TILL** say that their series *MacGyver* is popular because it is about family, something that everyone is related closely with. By **TEAM VIVA**



never-ending. I've used a flamethrower, I get to do comedy and drama, the opportunities with this character and show are endless.

What kind of research did you do for your role as the master mask maker?

Justin: I watched the *Mission Impossible* films. They gave me a deeper insight about my role. I learnt the nuances of my role from it.

What do you think are the reasons behind the show's popularity?

Justin: The show is about family. And family is something that everyone connects and relates closely. So the show provides a universal connection for everyone.

Lucas: There's something for everyone. The whole family can watch the show — grandparents, parents, and the kids.

How has your character developed throughout the seasons?

Justin: It has developed a lot. I went from just being a cook at a fast food restaurant to a secret government agent. Even the audience has been able to see

Bozer endure several obstacles throughout the series and come out on top as an unsuspecting hero.

Lucas: Mac started off beautifully naive in certain things initially. But as the seasons unfold you will see him discovering herself. Even with this latest season, he figures out that the world is just not black and white, it has various shades of grey too.

Are you a fan of detective shows? What makes a great detective show according to you?

Justin: I love detective

shows. And the best sequences are the ones where the detective is tracking down a great villain. That's why I love **David Dastmalchian's** character, **Murdoc**, on the show so much.

Lucas: According to me, a great detective show should make you look things differently. It should leave the scenes to be interpreted by the audience in the way they want to. Also it should allow the viewer to think like a detective.

What are your current and future projects?

Justin: I have just released

my hip hop music under the name, **J Hires**. My first song *Fire Flame* has got over five million views and streams online so far. I'll be putting out my first full mixtape soon entitled — *Chapter 1: I Do This Too*.

Lucas: I recently completed a film based on the life of **Robert Zellner** called *Son of the South* directed by academy award winner **Barry Brown** and executive-produced by **Spike Lee**.

Where is Mac's relationship with his father headed in Season 3?

Lucas: It is like an arc which swings back and forth. Sometimes it is good and sometimes it's not. The relationship heads slowly taking baby steps.

Why does the Phoenix Foundation need Mac back?

Lucas: They need him back because **Jack** is in trouble. **Jack** has been spotted with a former dictator who's been deposed and trying to get his throne back. It looks like he's doing bad stuff and I've got to figure out whether he's gone rogue and bad, or he just needs my help. So I had to rescue him from a situation which I thought he was getting into.

And **Mac's** dad thought that he's gone rogue and he is doing wrong things. But I was like, 'no that's not the case.'

Tell us more on Mac returning to the Phoenix Foundation?

Lucas: He goes along with his dad to save **Jack**, out of respect for him. But it's funny because **Mac** and his dad still don't get along.

(*MacGyver Season 3* premieres every Friday at 10 pm on AXN.)



Injury-time goal saves India



PTI ■ DUSHANBE

India escaped with a 1-1 draw after an injury-time goal saved them the blushes against lower-ranked Afghanistan in their FIFA World Cup Qualifier match here on Thursday.

The result meant the 106-ranked India remained winless in their qualifying campaign so far.

When the visitors seemed headed for their second defeat, substitute Seiminlen Doungel (90+3) provided India with a lifeline, outjumping his markers to head one into the far post.

Afghanistan had taken the lead through Zelfagar Nazary's strike (45+1), putting India on the backfoot.

India remained at the fourth position in Group E with three points from four

matches, while Afghanistan continued to be on the third with four points.

Starting the away game, being played in extremely cold conditions at the Central Republican Stadium, on a bright note, India conceded a goal in the first half's injury time (45+1).

Afghanistan went into lead after a fine move saw David Najem play a square ball to Zelfagar Nazary at the centre of the box, and the mid-fielder's attempt breached the Indian defence before finding the back of the net.

It wasn't really a home match for Afghanistan either, but wins here against Cambodia and Bidesh, followed by draws with Tajikistan and Jordan have given them much-needed confidence ahead of the clash against Igor Stimac's 106-ranked India.

And the 149-ranked Afghanistan car-

ried that confidence into the game on a chilly evening when the temperature dropped to nine degree celsius.

The hosts looked the better of the two sides in the first half and the goal, in the added time of first session, was not inappropriate.

On and off, Afghanistan managed to put pressure on the Indian defence manned by Mandar Rao Desai, Adil Khan, Rahul Bheke and Pritam Kotal. With their enterprise, the likes of striker Ahmad Omran and mid-fielder Faysal Shayesteh kept India on their toes, forcing Bheke and Adil to make a few clearances in the first quarter.

India looked to take on the opposition but they could not create any clear chances, and the couple of half chances in the opening minutes failed to test the Afghan custodian.

There was a change straightaway for India after the break as Stimac substituted Mandar with Farukh Choudhary.

The visitors showed urgency and looked desperate for an equaliser. They had a chance in the 58th minute but skipper Sunil Chhetri's header off a cross from right back Pritam Kotal was saved by Azizi. At the other end, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu made a diving save.

While he will be disappointed to end the match in a stalemate, Stimac's decision to bring in Doungel in place of Kotal paid dividends.

Stimac made three changes to the lineup that drew against Bangladesh last month, starting with Kotal, Brandon Fernandes and Pronay Halder in place of Anas Edathodika, Anirudh Thapa and Manvir Singh.

Henry to coach Montreal Impact

AFP ■ MONTREAL

Former Arsenal star Thierry Henry was Thursday appointed coach at MLS franchise Montreal Impact on a two-year contract as he gets a new chance of management after a disastrous spell at Monaco.

"Welcome to Montreal @ThierryHenry!" the Major League Soccer (MLS) club tweeted.

Henry, whose baptism by fire as a manager ended in his firing by French club Monaco in January, will coach Impact for a minimum of two seasons.

"Henry signed a two-year deal, with an option for 2022," the club said on its website.

Henry, 42, who helped France win the World Cup in 1998, is familiar with the MLS, having played from 2010 to 2014 with the New York Red Bulls.

He scored 51 goals and had 42 assists in 122 games with the club.

"It's an honour to coach the Montreal Impact and return to MLS," said Henry. "It's a league I know well, in which I had some very nice moments."

"I've always kept an eye on the club and now I'm here."

Henry becomes the seventh coach of the Montreal Impact in just eight years, succeeding Colombian Wilmer Cabrera, who was acting coach for two months after the dismissal in August of French coach Remi Garde after 10 months in charge.

Henry made his name as a world-class player at Arsenal where he scored 228 goals in 377 appearances, making him the English club's record goalscorer.

After winning the World Cup on home soil in 1998, he played in three further World Cups in 2002, 2006 and 2010.

He is also France's all-time leading scorer with 51 goals in 123 games, in front of Michel Platini.



Paes, top-players return for Pak tie

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday picked an unprecedented eight-member Davis Cup squad for the tie against Pakistan, including most of the top stars who refused to travel to Islamabad along with those who made themselves available irrespective of the venue.

Seasoned veteran Leander Paes returned to the Indian team after more than a year along with top players Sumit Nagal, Ramkumar Ramanathan, Sasi Kumar Mukund and Rohan Bopanna for the tie to be held at a yet-to-be-finalised neutral venue on November 29 and 30.

Nagal, Bopanna, Ramanathan and Mukund had reservations about travelling to Pakistan due to security concerns, the basis of the International Tennis Federation's decision to change the venue.

"It's a special case this time. We do not pick such a big travel party but we did not want the players who were ready to go Pakistan, to feel left out. So we had to create a balance," Zeeshan Ali, who is on the selection panel and is also the India coach said.

In the squad announced by the All India Tennis Association (AITA) selection committee, Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan, Saketh Myneni and Siddharth Rawat also found a place in the team. All these players were willing to travel to Islamabad when the others had refused.

AITA usually names five-member main squads along with one or two reserve players.

While the ITF is still considering the Pakistan Tennis Federation's appeal against the decision to shift the tie out of Islamabad, AITA has gone ahead with the team selection.

"We wanted the players to be mentally ready. They can make their respective schedules now. We did not want them to wait more to know if they will be picked or not. Irrespective of the venue, only these players will be a part of the tie, wherever it is played," said non-playing captain Rohit Rajpal.

"Not all of them would get to play but at least the new players will get a feel of what it is like being on the Indian Davis Cup squad. It will be a kind of experience for the new generation players like Rawat. We have to prepare the next rung," added Rajpal.

It has been learnt, that the ITF will stick with its decision to have the tie at a neutral venue. The world body is expected to announce its final decision by November 18.

In the absence of top player Prajnesh Gunneswaran, India's singles challenge will be led by the in-form Nagal (ranked 127) and Ramanathan (190). Mukund (250) and Myneni (267) will be the back-up singles players.

Perhaps for the first time, the squad has three doubles specialists in Bopanna, Paes and Nedunchezhiyan.

Divij Sharan and Prajnesh, who were part of the five-member squad, which was announced earlier when the tie was to be held on September 14 and 15 are now unavailable for personal reasons.

While Sharan is taking a two-week break after his wedding reception on November 23, Prajnesh is getting married on November 28, a day before the start of the tie.

Tsitsipas reaches ATP Finals semis



Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates winning a point against Alexander Zverev AP

AFP ■ LONDON

Stefanos Tsitsipas coasted past defending champion Alexander Zverev in straight sets to advance to the last four of the ATP Finals on Wednesday after Rafael Nadal came back from the dead to keep his title hopes alive.

The Greek tyro, 21, broke his big-serving German opponent three times in the Group Andre Agassi match to seal a 6-3, 6-2 win at London's O2 Arena.

The straightforward victory, which took Tsitsipas's head-to-head record against Zverev to 4-1, was in sharp contrast to the earlier match, in which Nadal produced an astonishing comeback to beat Daniil Medvedev.

The Spanish top seed was on the brink of defeat when facing a match point at 5-1 down in the deciding set but stormed back to win 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

"Today is one of those days that one out of 1,000 you win and it happened today," said a delighted Nadal.

The 19-time Grand Slam champion, who also beat Medvedev in the US Open final, said earning a break back in the deciding set had infused him with confidence.

Both players were under intense pressure after losing their opening round-robin matches on Monday.

6 TEAMS UNVEILED FOR ATP CUP

SYDNEY: A Grigor Dimitrov-led Bulgaria was among the final six teams announced on Thursday for the ATP Cup in Australia.

Chile, Poland, Uruguay, Moldova and Norway were the other countries to make the grade, based on the ranking of their number one singles player at the second entry deadline of November 13.

The rest of the 24-nation field was announced in Sept, although Switzerland later pulled out after Roger Federer opted to skip the tournament. The field will be split into six groups across Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

As the highest-qualifying country at the second deadline, Bulgaria replace the Swiss and join Belgium and the Andy Murray-led Great Britain in Group C in Sydney. The championship takes place from January 3-12 in the lead-up to the year's first Grand Slam, the Australian Open in Melbourne.

Eight teams — with up to five players each — will emerge from the round-robin stage to compete in the knock-out phase in Sydney until one is left standing with ties comprising two singles and one doubles match. PTI



Bryan brothers to retire in 2020

AFP ■ LOS ANGELES

US men's doubles duo Bob Bryan and Mike Bryan said on Wednesday they will retire at the end of the 2020 season, bringing the curtain down on one of the most successful pairings in tennis history.

The 41-year-old twins said in a statement they planned to hang up their racquets after taking part in next year's US Open, where they made their Grand Slam championship debut in 1995.

Since that first Slam appearance, the Bryans have racked up a record 118 trophies including 16 Grand Slam doubles titles. They also won Olympic Gold at the 2012 London Games.

Bob Bryan said the duo had opted to end their 2019 season after the US Open in order to remain fresh for next year.

"We decided that it would be best to rest our minds and strengthen our bodies in preparation for 2020 which will be our final season on the ATP Tour," Bob Bryan said in a statement.

"It has truly been a magical ride," he added. "However, we want to end this great ride while we're healthy and we can still compete for titles."

At their peak, the Bryans were a formidable doubles duo, rising to No 1 in the rankings for the first time in 2003.

They spent a total of 438 weeks at the top of the rankings and ended 10 seasons as the No 1 team.

'Go back to baseball' Ibrahimovic confirms LA Galaxy exit

AFP ■ LOS ANGELES

Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic confirmed his departure from the Los Angeles Galaxy on Wednesday, but gave no clue over his future plans or possible retirement.

The 38-year-old striker's departure from the Galaxy had been widely expected following the club's elimination from the Major League Soccer playoffs last month.

Ibrahimovic, who joined the Galaxy in the opening months of the 2018 campaign, announced the end of his Californian sojourn in a characteristically enigmatic post on Twitter.

"I came, I saw, I conquered. Thank you @lagalaxy for making me feel alive again," Ibrahimovic wrote. "To the Galaxy fans — you wanted Zlatan, I gave you Zlatan. You are welcome."

"The story continues... Now go back to watch baseball!"

The Galaxy said in a brief statement the club had parted company with Ibrahimovic by mutual agreement.

"We would like to thank

Zlatan for his contributions to the LA Galaxy and Major League Soccer," said LA Galaxy President Chris Klein.

"Since his arrival in 2018, Zlatan has positively influenced the sport of soccer in Los Angeles. We are grateful for his work ethic and passion. We thank Zlatan for his professionalism and immeasurable impact on the Los Angeles community and the soccer community in North America as a whole."

Ibrahimovic has been strongly linked with a return to Italian club AC Milan, where he played for two seasons between 2010 and 2012, scoring 42 goals in 61 league appearances.

Although Ibrahimovic was unable to help Los Angeles Galaxy return to the pinnacle of Major League Soccer, the Swede has been one of the most successful foreign players ever to grace the league, scoring 53 goals in 56 regular season appearances.



PTI ■ HONG KONG

World champion P V Sindhu exited the \$400,000 Hong Kong Open in the pre-quarterfinals but Kidambi Srikanth made the quarters for the first time in seven months after claiming a thrilling win in men's singles here on Thursday.

It was also curtains for H S Prannoy and Parupalli Kashyap after they suffered contrasting losses in the second round.

World number 6 Sindhu went down 18-21, 21-11, 16-21 to world number 18 Busanan Ongbamrunphan of Thailand in 69

Sindhu poor show continues

minutes to continue her recent dismal run in international circuit. It was Sindhu's first loss to the Thailand player in 11 meetings.

Earlier, former world number 1 Srikanth, who slipped to the 13th spot in the latest BWF rankings this week, emerged as the only Indian survivor after notching up a 21-11, 15-21, 21-19 win over compatriot Sourabh Verma in the men's singles second round. Srikanth had last

reached the quarter-finals at the Singapore Open in April. The Guntur shuttler, who received a first-round bye from world number 1 Kento Momota of Japan, will face Olympic champion Chen Long of China next.

Earlier, H S Prannoy suffered a 12-21, 19-21 loss to sixth seed Indonesian Jonatan Christie in the second round.

Former Commonwealth Games

champion Kashyap played his heart out before going down narrowly to world number 2 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei 21-12, 21-23, 10-21 in a match that lasted exactly an hour.

In other results, fourth seeded Japanese pair of Arisa Higashino and Yuta Watanabe beat Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa 21-19, 21-12 in 42 minutes in the mixed doubles.

I'm coming for the One Championship World Title: Ritu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian wrestling superstar Ritu Phogat is set to make her professional mixed martial arts debut when she takes on Korea's Nam Hee Kim in an atomweight contest. The pair faced-off on Thursday at an open workout and are scheduled to meet in the One Championship ring at One: Age Of Dragons, which takes place on 16 November, at the Cadillac Arena in Beijing, China.

Ahead of her first foray into the mixed martial arts arena, the 25-year-old details how she envisions her path unfolding in a new sport, her ultimate goal, and how she plans to accomplish the mission she has set for herself.

"No question, I want to become a mixed martial arts World Champion, and everything I'm doing



now is preparing me for that," said Phogat. "I made the decision to jump into this with my full heart and will. My goal is to become the first Indian woman to win a mixed martial arts World Championship. I believe I'm in a great position to represent my country and I want to inspire as many women as I can. It's an honor."

Phogat is already an accomplished athlete, having garnered multiple accolades throughout her competition career. She is a Commonwealth Wrestling Championships Gold Medalist, World U23 Wrestling World Championships Silver Medalist, Asian Wrestling Championships Bronze Medalist, and multiple-time Indian National Wrestling Champion.

Already a recognizable face in her home country, Phogat now enters the international arena.

She looks to make her presence known. "One of my goals is to bring honor to Indian martial arts. I think it's really important that we celebrate my country's culture and history and I really hope I can represent that well on the global stage," said Phogat. "I have big plans, but first, I have to

take care of business against an opponent who wants to spoil the party. I've prepared well for this, but this is my first time, and we'll have to see where I'm at after this fight."

Ritu Phogat will make her professional mixed martial arts debut tomorrow and how she performs against her opponent, Nam Hee Kim, will be a great indicator as to how far she has yet to climb the mountain until she reaches the top. Reaching the pinnacle of the sport is something she is completely focused on. For Phogat, it's only a matter of time. "I'm in no rush."

"I'm young, I'm strong, and I'm hungry," Phogat concluded. "Give me a few fights, let me get a feel for this and I'll be contending for a World Title soon. I promise my fans I'll give them something to cheer about. I want to make my country proud."



India's captain Virat Kohli, center, and teammates celebrate the dismissal of Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan, right, during the first day of first Test between India and Bangladesh in Indore

Lacked mental strength to counter pace attack: Mominul

PTI ■ INDORE

Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque on Thursday admitted his team lacked the mental strength required to counter India's formidable pace attack on the first day.

Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav shared seven wickets between them to bundle visitors for 150 runs. More importantly, Bangladesh's lower-order batsmen looked scared to face the Indian pacers.

"The wicket wasn't unplayable at all or else myself or Mushfiqur (Rahim) wouldn't have scored the runs that we scored. The problem is that when you are playing the world's No 1 Test team, you have to be mentally far more stronger," Mominul said at the end of the day's play. Asked about the match situation, Mominul made it clear that it will be very difficult to save the game from here on.

"Let's be practical. They have already scored 80 plus. We are lagging far behind and it will be very difficult to save the game from this situation."



Very few world class bowlers in Test cricket now: Tendulkar

PTI ■ INDORE

A dearth of quality pace bowlers has all but put an end to the iconic duels which once added to the charm of Test cricket, said the iconic Sachin Tendulkar, who is worried about the traditional format's health.

A Sunil Gavaskar vs Andy Roberts, Dennis Lillee or Imran Khan was worth the wait during the 1970s and '80s. Similarly a Tendulkar vs Glenn McGrath or Wasim Akram used to be a connoisseur's delight.

But not anymore, feels the man, who played 200 Test matches in his illustrious 24 years in international cricket.

"Rivalries which people invariably looked forward to are no longer there because there are very few world-class fast bowlers right now. That element I am sure is missing. The quality of fast bowling can surely be better without any doubt," Tendulkar said while analysing how cricket has evolved in the past 30 years (15th November, 1989) since he made his debut.

Asked if the competitiveness, as far as Test cricket is concerned, is confined to only three countries (India, Australia and England), the maestro agreed.

"The standard of cricket has gone down which is not great news for Test cricket. The standard needs to go up and for that, I would again say that the root cause is the playing surfaces," he said.

"I think it has also got to do with the kind of pitches that are provided. If we provide fair pitches where fast bowlers as well as spinners get help, then balance between bat and ball will be restored."

"If the balance is missing then the contest becomes weak and it fails to grab eyeballs. Test cricket must have good wickets," added the man, who has scored 15,921 runs with 51 hundreds.

For Tendulkar, the model pitches are the ones on which the Ashes was played in England.

"I feel this year's Ashes had some of the best Test pitches in recent times. Magnificent I would say. The only time they moved to Old Trafford, you saw that Test wasn't as exciting as the ones at the Headingley, or the Lord's Test or for that matter even the one at the Oval. I thought those Test matches were exciting," he said.

For someone, who has seen the evolution of the game from Test cricket to T20s, Tendulkar remains a purist at heart, who would never endorse an IPL performance as being good enough to merit selection in the ODI and Test team.

Unless, of course, the player in question is as exceptional as Jasprit Bumrah.

GET SET GO

Ishant, Shami & Umesh combine together and blast Tigers out for 150

PTI ■ INDORE

India's pace trio was at its menacing best against an under-confident Bangladesh, helping the home team seize control of the first Test at Holkar Stadium on the opening day itself.

On one of the bounciest tracks in recent times, Bangladesh were bundled out for 150 in 58.3 overs, lasting barely two sessions and a few overs more on Thursday.

With ample time at their disposal, India ended the day at 86 for 1 in 26 overs, losing Rohit Sharma's (6) wicket to Abu Jayed.

The notable aspect during the Indian innings was Cheteshwar Pujara (46 batting) outscoring the more flamboyant Mayank Agarwal (37 batting) during their unbroken 72-run stand, leaving ominous signs for the four-man Bangladesh attack.

The first day's proceedings starkly highlighted the gulf between world's No 1 and No 9 Test sides.

Umesh Yadav (2/47 in 14.3 overs), Ishant Sharma (2/20 in 12 overs) and Mohammed Shami (3/27 in 12 overs) made life difficult for a team whose batsmen lacked both in technique and temperament.

A luckless Ravichandran Ashwin (2/43 in 16 overs), let

| FASTEST TO 250 WICKETS AT HOME | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------|--|
| Bowler | Tests | Innings | |
| Muttiah Muralitharan (Sri Lanka) | 42 | 72 | |
| Ravichandran Ashwin (India) | 42 | 81 | |
| Anil Kumble (India) | 43 | 77 | |
| Rangana Herath (Sri Lanka) | 44 | 82 | |
| Dale Steyn (South Africa) | 49 | 93 | |
| Harbhajan Singh (India) | 51 | 94 | |

| MOST TEST WICKETS IN INDIA | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|------|-----|-------|
| Bowler | M | Wkts | SWI | Best |
| Anil Kumble | 63 | 350 | 25 | 10-74 |
| Harbhajan Singh | 55 | 265 | 18 | 8-84 |
| Rav Ashwin | 42 | 251 | 21 | 7-59 |
| Kapil Dev | 65 | 219 | 11 | 9-83 |
| Ravindra Jadeja | 32 | 157 | 7 | 7-4 |

India vs Bangladesh
Live from 9:30am IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

He again came in the post-tea session during which the tailenders looked scared, retreating towards square leg in fear of getting hurt. Mohammed Shami, probably the craftiest among the contemporary Indian pacers, showed there is no one better when it comes to getting reverse swing with 50-over old SG Test ball.

Mushfiqur Rahim (43), Bangladesh's top-scorer, who led a charmed life and was dropped twice, didn't have a clue when one swung back to knock the stumps back after he was beaten by away going deliveries.

The next one by Shami swung even more as Mehidy Hasan Miraj (0) was adjudged leg-before although a DRS call could have saved him had he opted for one.

In the first session, Shami had dismissed Mohammed Mithun with conventional inswing.

Even without Jasprit Bumrah, who is nursing a stress fracture, the unit looked so formidable that one could sympathise with Bangladeshi batsmen facing their combined might.

They attacked relentlessly and it didn't matter that India weren't

Indian pace attack is one of most lethal in world cricket: Ashwin



PTI ■ INDORE

The current Indian pace attack is "one of the most lethal" in world cricket since it has the ability to create openings in every spell, reckons senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

There was no Jasprit Bumrah but Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav were ruthless and unplayable as Bangladesh batsmen danced to their tunes.

"I think Shami, Ishant and Umesh have been bowling well as a pack and if you add Bumrah to it over the last few months or a year

exactly having a great day as far as slip catching was concerned. Umesh could have got Mushfiqur early had Kohli latched on to one in the third slip.

Ashwin had both Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah Riyad dropped by Rahane at first slip.

In Test cricket, I think it's one of the most lethal pace attacks going around in the world if not the best," Ashwin said at the end of play on the first day. "And I am saying that as a disclaimer, I don't want people judging me on that comment. But it's right up there and one of the best bowling attacks I have seen in recent times," he said.

"Sometimes you feel that every spell they bowl, something is happening or they make it happen," the off-spinner added.

He however denied that he and Ravindra Jadeja will be changing their approach because the pacers have started taking the lead.

"As a bowler, I personally never looked at it that way. It's my job to pick up a wicket and try and capitalise if the pacers don't pick a wicket then get a breakthrough."

"Having said that, I am taking nothing away from the fast bowlers. They have been exceptional, especially if you look at Umesh over the last few years since 2016 when the home season happened. He has always given us an early breakthrough. Ishant has been splendid and Shami has probably in his best rhythm in his entire career," said the man, who completed a feat of 250 Test wickets at home.

It didn't cost the team much but the frustrated bowler then decided that breaching the defence was the best option as Mominul Haque (36) and Mahmudullah were dismissed due to poor judgement and shot selection respectively.

Bancroft, Burns back for Pak Tests



AFF ■ SYDNEY

Cameron Bancroft and Joe Burns got the nod on Thursday for Australia's Test squad to face Pakistan, with Usman Khawaja and Marcus Harris axed after flopping during the Ashes series against England.

Bowling allrounder Michael Neser was also included as a back-up to the formidable pace attack of Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and James Pattinson.

Bancroft was only rushed into the Australia A team at the last minute this week when Nic Maddinson pulled out due to mental health issues.

But he made the most of his opportunity, top-scoring with 49 in their first innings total of 122 all out to put himself in the reckoning after failing to make an impact in the Ashes.

He is one of three specialist openers, along with Burns

and Warner, but is more likely to play down the order if selected for the two Tests starting in Brisbane next week, followed by a day-night clash in Adelaide.

Burns was unlucky to be overlooked for the Ashes having scored a century in the last Test he played against Sri Lanka in February.

National selector Trevor Hohns suggested he would open with Warner, pointing out that "he has Test hundreds on the board and has combined very well with David in the past".

Harris and Khawaja miss out after failing to impress in England or in the Australia A match, which was seen as a "bat-off" for the Test slots up for grabs.

Middle-order batsman Travis Head, who was dropped for the last Ashes Test, was given another chance after young prodigy Will Pucovski, pulled out of contention citing his "mental wellbeing".

Hohns said Neser was included due to "his ability move the ball both ways, giving the team another bowling option depending on the conditions".

Australia Test squad: Tim Paine (capt), Cameron Bancroft, Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner.

Test cricket returns to Pakistan Sri Lanka confirm two-match series next month

PTI ■ LAHORE

Test cricket will return to Pakistan after more than a decade with Sri Lanka on Thursday agreeing to a two-match series in December, which will be a part of the traditional format's ongoing World Championship.

Sri Lanka played a bilateral One Day International and Twenty20 International series in Pakistan in September-October earlier this year despite 10 of its top players, including ODI captain Dimuth Karunaratne and Twenty20 skipper Lasith

Malinga, opting out due to concussion.

The upcoming series' first Test will be played in Rawalpindi from December 11-15, while the second Test will be held in Karachi from December 19-23.

"This is a fabulous news for Pakistan cricket and its reputation of being as safe and secure as any other country in the world. We are thankful to Sri Lanka Cricket for agreeing to send their team for the longer version of the game," PCB Director (International Cricket) Zakir Khan said in a statement.

Khan said the confirmation will contribute in the PCB's efforts towards ensuring a regular resumption of international cricket in the country. Incidentally, Sri Lanka was also the last team to play Test cricket in Pakistan, back in 2009.

Sri Lanka were originally scheduled to play Tests in October and then return in December for a limited-overs' series but the matches were swapped to "provide them the opportunity to assess the situation before deciding on the Test venues".

"Now that the itinerary

has been confirmed, we will shift our focus on series preparations to ensure we deliver arrangements as per our very high standards," Khan said.

Sri Lanka Cricket chief executive Ashley de Silva said based on an earlier visit, the SLC is comfortable and convinced that conditions are suitable and conducive for Test cricket.

TOUR SCHEDULE

December 11-15 1st Test, Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi
December 19-23 2nd Test, National Stadium, Karachi.

Pollard show helps Windies beat Afghanistan in 1st T20I

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Skipper Kieron Pollard's all-round show helped the West Indies continue their winning run as the visitors defeated the home team Afghanistan by 30 runs in the first T20I of the three-match series at Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana International Stadium on Thursday.

Afghanistan won the toss and elected to bowl. Mujeeb Ur Rahman started the proceedings for Afghanistan and cleaned up Brendon King on the fourth ball of the innings immediately after conceding a boundary. Shimron Hetmyer then joined Evin Lewis at the crease and both added 87 runs for the second wicket. Lewis broke the shackles and used his



West Indies players celebrate their victory over Afghanistan. (Right) Spectators seem to be enjoying the match at Ekana stadium on Thursday

feet to hit Nabi for a boundary, followed by a pick-up shot for a six and a drive through off-side in Mujib's over. Lewis then welcomed Fareed with two sixes in his first over to bring the team's half-century. He

pulled Nabi for a six before sending the ball twice to the boundary off Rashid, bringing his fifth fifty. Hetmyer hit Rashid for a maximum. However, Rashid finally broke the partnership as Hetmyer

played the leg-stump delivery on to his pads and the ball went into the air before wicket-keeper Rahmanullah Gurbaz completed an easy catch.

Eleven balls later, Lewis's strokeful innings came to an

end when he was holed up by Nabi on mid-on boundary by Nabi off Gulbadin. After Lewis's departure, skipper Kieron Pollard and wicket-keeper Dinesh Ramdin played sensibly to take the score to

164. In reply, the home team failed to build the momentum despite huge support amidst Afghan songs. They failed to build partnerships and lost the wickets at regular intervals.

Zadran, Stanikzai and Fareed played some big shots but the run-rate was shooting all the time. Pollard was adjudged man of the match. The next match will be played on Saturday.

BRIEF SCORES:

West Indies: 164/5 (Lewis 64, Pollard 32, Hetmyer 21, Ramdin 20; Nabi 24/2, Mujib 27/1)

Afghanistan: 134/9 (N Zadran 27, A Stanikzai 25, Hazratullah 25; Fareed 24; Williams 17/3, Pollard 17/2, Walsh Jr 34/2).