

WORLD 5
PROTESTERS DEFY HK POLICE
AFTER ACTIVISTS ATTACKED**OPINION 6**
THE NEW
INDIAN IDENTITY**MONEY 10**
PMC BANK DEPOSITORS STARE
AT UNCERTAIN FUTURE

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ANDY MURRAY
REACHES
ATP FINAL
11 SPORT

India razes Pak terror launch pads

6-10 Pakistan soldiers killed in Indian Army action, says Gen Rawat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army on Sunday carried out punitive strikes on Pakistani Army posts across the Line of Control (LoC) after two Indian soldiers and a civilian were killed in Tangdhar when Pakistan violated ceasefire and tried to push in terrorists from across the LoC. At least five to six Pakistani soldiers were killed in the retaliatory action.

Firing from across the LoC began in early hours when the Pakistan Army tried to push in terrorists into Jammu & Kashmir by giving them covering fire. Two Indian soldiers and a civilian were killed in the Pak firing. The Indian Army then hit terrorist launch pads and Pakistani Army positions, Army officials said later here in the day.

They said the Indian Army had to resort to punitive action after Pakistan resorted to heavy "unprovoked firing on civilians" on Saturday night. "As a result, calibrated escalation of area weapons was undertaken by the Indian Side in which terrorist launch pads, Pakistan army posts giving incidental protection to these launch pads and certain gun positions were hit," an Army spokesperson said. This action was taken Pakistan Army initiated unprovoked Cease Fire Violation (CFV) to assist infiltration by terrorists into Indian territories, the spokesperson stated.

Army Chief General Bipin Rawat said around six to ten Pakistani soldiers and as many terrorists have been killed in the action.

"Last evening an attempt was made in Tangdhar to infiltrate terrorists, we retaliated, Pakistan carried out attack firing at our post in which we did suffer, but before they could attempt the infiltration it was decided that we target that terror camps across," Rawat said.

"In the retaliatory action, we have caused severe damage to terrorist infrastructure. Terrorist camps opposite Tangdhar sector have been destroyed. On the basis of reports that we have been getting, six to ten Pakistani soldiers have been killed, three camps have been destroyed. Similar number of terrorists have also been killed..." he added.

Pakistan, however, has rejected reports that the Indian Army targeted their terror camps in the POK and said it can arrange a visit of diplomats from P5 nations to the area to expose Indian "falsehood".

Rejecting reports, Foreign Office spokesman Mohammad Faisal said, "Pakistan categorically rejects Indian media reports about alleged launchpads being targeted by India along the LoC."

The Foreign Office said that Pakistan has called upon the P-5 countries (permanent members of the United Nations Security Council) to ask India

- Indian Army had to resort to punitive action after Pakistan resorted to heavy "unprovoked firing on civilians"
- Pakistan Army tried to push in terrorists into Jammu & Kashmir by giving them covering fire
- Two Indian soldiers and a civilian were killed in the Pak firing
- Pakistan, however, has rejected reports that Indian Army targeted their terror camps in POK
- Pakistan summons Indian envoy Gaurav Ahluwalia to condemn the firing by Indian troops



to provide information about the terror launchpads. It said Pakistan is willing to arrange a visit of the P5 diplomats to those locations to expose "Indian falsehood".

Pakistan Army spokesman Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor also rejected the reports saying the Indian media is "falsely claiming" targeting of alleged terror camps.

Meanwhile, Pakistan summoned Indian envoy Gaurav

Ahluwalia to condemn the firing by Indian troops that it said killed five civilians along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jura, Shahkot and Nausehri Sectors. Giving details of the punitive action, the Army said one civilian Mohammad Sadiq was killed and three others were injured belonging to Ghundhishat Village of Tangdhar district in "Pakistan army artillery firing."

The spokesperson said

Pakistani soldiers were killed in the firing," one source said adding each launch pad had over 15-20 terrorists waiting to infiltrate.

The launch pads were located South of Zura in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and posts included Athmuqam and Kundalshahi and sources confirmed that Indian Army has used 155mm heavy artillery guns. Usually during ceasefire violations, small arms are used and as caliber escalation happens heavy mortar is used eventually leading to the use of heavy artillery which has been intermittently used by both sides on the LoC in recent times.

During the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to Army Chief Rawat who apprised Singh of the developments and the situation along the LoC. Tangdhar is one of the traditional infiltration routes in North Kashmir.

The ingress routes there will be closed in the next few weeks after snowfall and therefore the Pakistan army is desperate to push in as many terrorists possible before it.

Moreover, the punitive action on Sunday is one of the biggest since abrogation of Article 370 giving special status to Jammu & Kashmir on August five. So far, more than 2,300 cease of fire violations have taken place since January this year as compared to 1,600 odd last year.

Assembly polls in Maharashtra, Haryana today

Bypolls in 51 Assembly, 2 LS seats in 18 States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Polling will be held on Monday in all 288 Assembly constituencies of Maharashtra and the 90 Assembly seats of Haryana as the ruling BJP, a good five-months after its win in the Lok Sabha elections, is looking for a second consecutive terms in both the States.

While abrogation of Article 370 and anti-Pakistan rant has

been the main poll planks of the BJP, the Opposition claimed that economic slowdown, unemployment and general anti-incumbency could work in their favour.

Bypolls will also be held to 51 Assembly seats and two Lok Sabha constituencies spread across 18 States. Eleven of these bypolls would be in Uttar Pradesh where poll results would be seen as a litmus test for the Yogi Adityanath Government which has completed 30 months in office.

BJP's incumbent Chief Minister in Maharashtra Devendra Fadnis and Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar in Haryana are seeking second term, but the campaign face for the ruling BJP is Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Election officials walk through a damp field as they leave for their respective polling stations on the eve of Maharashtra Assembly elections in Sangli on Sunday. PTI

Slain Tiwari's kin seek death for killers

Family meets Yogi, demands Govt job for son of deceased, security; UP CM assures help

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Family members of the Hindu Samaj Party leader Kamlesh Tiwari, who was killed two days ago, met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and demanded capital punishment for the killers.

Tiwari's mother, wife and three sons met the Chief Minister at his official residence of 5, Kalidas Marg, and stayed there for over 30 minutes.

The Chief Minister assured the family of all help and said police are doing their job and the guilty will not be spared.

Officer privy to the meeting told this reporter that the CM intently listened to the family members who demanded a Government job for Tiwari's son, security to the family and an arms licence to them for security purpose. They also demanded that Khurshid Bagh should be renamed as Kamlesh Park and a statue should be installed at the park.

Speaking to reporters after meeting the CM, the slain leader's wife Kiran said, "Yogi has assured every possible action in the matter. We feel satisfied after meeting him. Our demand is that the killers should be given capital punishment."



Family members of slain Hindu Samaj Party chief Kamlesh Tiwari meet Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his residence in Lucknow on Sunday. PTI

Tiwari's mother Kusuma Tiwari said, "I told the CM I want justice for my son and strict punishment should be given to the killers. We have been assured by the CM."

However, after reaching Sitapur she changed her statement and said she was not happy after meeting Yogi because he did not look serious and concerned about our plight and his reaction was not sympathetic towards us.

"We were forced to go to

Lucknow and meet the CM. The local administration was after us saying the CM wants to meet us. As per Hindu ritual family does not move out of house before *tehravi* (13-day ritual) still we were forced to go there," Kusuma told reporters in Sitapur here on Sunday.

"I wanted to ask the CM why his security was reduced but was not allowed to ask this question. The response we wanted or we were looking for from CM was not there," she said.

Recently a video has surfaced where Kamlesh is seen castigating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi for reducing his security.

In that video he was seen saying he would be killed as some Muslim fundamentalists are after him.

Hindu Samaj Party chief Tiwari, 45, earlier associated with a faction of the Hindu Mahasabha, was killed at his home in Khurshid Bagh here on Friday.

E-booking for Kartarpur delayed over \$20 fee demand by Pakistan

Consensus on other issues yet to be arrived

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The online registration of devotees visiting Kartarpur Gurudwara could not start on Sunday as India and Pakistan failed to agree on a number of issues, including Islamabad's insistence of charging \$20 from each pilgrim. Non-completion of infrastructure connecting to India from Pakistan side also is cited as big hurdle in formalising agreement.

India and Pakistan were supposed to sign a pact on Saturday on a few unresolved issues of the pilgrimage, but that did not happen yet.

"Since some issues are yet to be resolved, the online registration for the Kartarpur pilgrimage could not be started on Sunday," an official privy to the development said. Key unresolved issues include Pakistan's insistence of charging \$20 from each pilgrim and the timing of the pilgrimage every day (first entry and last exit time).

India had asked Pakistan to



reconsider the decision on charging \$20 per pilgrim, allow 10,000 pilgrims on special occasions and an Indian protocol officer to accompany the delegation that visits Kartarpur every day. Pakistan is yet to respond to India's requests, the official said.

On October 16, chairman of the Land Ports Authority of India and Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs Govind Mohan had said the online registration for pilgrims visiting Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur is expected to commence on October 20, provided a pact is signed on remaining issues.

Last month, India and Pakistan agreed on visa-free travel of Indian pilgrims to Gurudwara Darbar Sahib using the Kartarpur corridor. Pilgrims will only have to carry their passports to visit the revered gurdwara in Pakistan.

Persons of Indian origin holding OCI (Overseas Citizenship of India) card too can visit the Gurdwara using the Kartarpur corridor.

It was also decided that 5,000 pilgrims can visit the shrine everyday and that additional pilgrims will be allowed on special occasions, subject to capacity expansion of facilities by the Pakistan side.

Both sides agreed to build a bridge over the Budhi Ravi channel near the border crossing point. Pending the construction of the bridge on the Pakistan side, both parties agreed to the crossing point coordinates of the temporary service road. India has constructed a four-lane highway in Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district in Punjab connecting the 'zero point' for onward journey to Pakistan.

A state-of-the-art passenger terminal with facilitation centre to host government officials responsible for ensuring hassle-free travel of pilgrims, food kiosks, parking areas and security points will also come up by November 8 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will formally inaugurate the much-awaited Kartarpur corridor.

CAPSULE

PMC CUSTOMERS STARE AT UNCERTAIN FUTURE

New Delhi: Nearly a month after the RBI clamped down on the operations of scam-hit PMC Bank, the depositors say their woes have only worsened, with some unable to pay school fees of their wards, while others finding it difficult to meet medical expenses.

ROHIT BREAKS DON BRADMAN'S RECORD

Ranchi: Indian cricketer Rohit Sharma on Sunday surpassed former Australia cricketer Don Bradman's record of highest average in Test cricket on home soil. He achieved the feat on day two of the third Test match against South Africa.

JAWAN STABBED TO DEATH BY TIPSY MAN

Hyderabad: A 28-year-old jawan of the paramilitary Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) was stabbed to death by a drunken man when the former tried to intervene in a dispute during a birthday party in Warangal district.

DELHI'S AIR QUALITY DROPS TO 'POOR'

New Delhi: The national Capital's air quality turned "poor" on Sunday as wind direction changed to northwesterly, increasing the contribution of smoke from stubble burning in neighbouring states to the pollution in the city.

Bodies of Stephen's teacher found on railway tracks, mother in house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An Assistant Professor, who taught Philosophy at St Stephen's College of Delhi University, was found dead under highly mysterious circumstances on Saturday evening.

His highly decomposed and decapitated body was found on the railway tracks at Sarai Rohilla Railway Station and his mother Lissy (55) was found hanging from a ceiling fan in her house with her mouth stuffed with cloth at their flat in Ashiana Apartment in Pitampura.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the young guest Assistant Professor identified as Allen Stanley (27) first killed his mother and then ended his life by jumping before a running



train. It appears to be a case of matricide and suicide as well," said a senior police officer on Sunday. However, no suicide note was recovered with Stanley's body, but a note written in Malayalam was found at the flat.

Police said they have registered a murder case under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code at the Rani Bagh Police Station after they found his mother's body in the flat.

It has been learnt that the mother-son duo was in depression because of an abetment-to-suicide case pending against them in Kerala, and both were out on anticipatory bail. A few days ago, Stanley — who hailed from Kottayam in Kerala and was also pursuing his PhD from IIT Delhi — had shared about the case with his friends who tried to convince him to not take any extreme step, a police officer said.

Stanley was living in Delhi for the last five years and his mother came to stay with him seven months ago.

Witness said Stanley was suicidal and they said he had told them five days ago that he had tried to force his mother to commit suicide but she refused.

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

After a long wait, the Centre has brought Navratangarh, a magnificent 900-year-old dilapidated nine-storey fort located in Jharkhand's Gumla district under the fold of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI).

Situated 80 kms from Ranchi, the seat of Nagvanshi kings who ruled the Chota Nagpur region from the 1st century in Sisai block of the district has historic significance as the kings there had a link with Mughal emperor Jahangir.

An official from the country's premier conservation Central agency said a notification to bring the monument under the ASI was issued recently. The ASI tag would ensure much-needed maintenance as well as conservation measures to the monument shrouded with mysteries.

Navratangarh is also referred



Seat of Nagvanshi kings gets ASI protection

to as 'Doisagarh' for its location in Doisa, the second capital of the Nagvanshi kings. Though it is visited in big numbers by tourists and historians, the heritage site has been in a dire straits.

According to Amitabha Gupta, a heritage enthusiast and blogger, the interiors of the palace are in a shambles and it is difficult to say how many rooms there were in each storey.

"There is a ruined structure with a small hall flanked by two rooms adjacent to the palace. There is a gate in the middle of this structure which leads to the palace."

"The watch tower that was visible from a distance is now within reach. The upper storey of the two-storey tower was once accessed by a staircase. Very little remains of it exist now and what does exist doesn't exactly afford access to the top," said Gupta in his blog.

Efforts being made to demonise tech: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday cautioned against efforts to “demonise” technology, saying attempts are being made to create an atmosphere of fear.

Addressing a gathering at his official residence at the launch of a book, he said “major effort is being made to demonise technology. Attempts are being made to create an atmosphere of fear”.

Specially in the context of India, technology is being presented as a challenge to the country’s demographic dividend, the Prime Minister said.

He said the debate should not be on the dangers of artificial intelligence or when will robots outsmart humans. “But the debate should be on how to create a bridge between artificial intelligence and human intentions.”

The Prime Minister stressed on the need to understand that technology is a bridge and not a divider. “Technology builds bridge



Prime Minister, Narendra Modi unveils the book, ‘Bridgital Nation’, authored by Tata Group Chairman N. Chandrasekaran and co-authored by Roopa Purushothaman in the presence of Ratan Tata on Sunday

between aspirations and achievement, demand and delivery, government and governance in order to achieve ‘sabka saath, sabka vikas’ (with all, for everyone’s development),” he said according to a

statement issued by his office. The book ‘Bridgital India’ has been co-authored by N Chandrasekaran, the chairman of Tata Sons, and Roopa Purushothaman, the Chief Economist at Tata Sons.

Ratan Tata, Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, was also present on the occasion.

Talking about the need to convert challenges posed by technology into opportunities, the prime minister cited the

❖ Debate should not be on the dangers of artificial intelligence or when will robots outsmart humans. But the debate should be on how to create a bridge between artificial intelligence and human intentions.

❖ Technology builds bridge between aspirations and achievement, demand and delivery, Government and Governance in order to achieve ‘sabka saath, sabka vikas’

❖ The book ‘Bridgital India’ has been co-authored by N Chandrasekaran, the chairman of Tata Sons, and Roopa Purushothaman, the Chief Economist at Tata Sons



example of the creation of India Post Payments Bank.

He said the disruption caused by technology to the entire postal organization was converted into a technology

intensive banking system, benefitting millions through postal bank which transformed “dakiya” (postman) into a “bank babu” (banker), the statement said.

25,000 of 1 lakh NRIs voted in 2019 LS polls: EC



❑ As many as 99,807 overseas Indians, who are living abroad and have not surrendered their citizenship, are in the voters’ lists of various States

❑ The figure include 91,850 men, 7,943 women and 14 transgenders

❑ Out of the 25,606 who voted

in the Parliamentary polls, 24,458 were men and 1,148 women

❑ In the national capital, 336 overseas Indians, including 231 men and 105 women, had registered as voters but none came to cast their votes, according to the EC data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 25,000 of the nearly one lakh overseas Indians who had registered themselves as voters flew down to India to exercise their franchise in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, according to data released by the Election Commission.

As many as 99,807 overseas Indians, who are living abroad and have not surrendered their citizenship, are in the voters’ lists of various States. The figure include 91,850 men, 7,943 women and 14 transgenders.

Out of the 25,606 who voted in the Parliamentary polls, 24,458 were men and 1,148 women.

In the national capital, 336 overseas Indians, including 231 men and 105 women, had registered as voters but none came to cast their votes, according to the EC data. The Union Territory of Puducherry also recorded a similar trend with none of the 272 overseas electors casting their votes in the General Elections this year.

In West Bengal too, where 34 overseas Indians were

recorded in the State’s electoral rolls, none voted.

However, the case was entirely different in Kerala which has the maximum number of overseas Indians in the voters’ list as well as highest level of participation in the polls.

Kerala has 85,161 overseas Indians on its electoral rolls and 25,091 persons voted in the Lok Sabha polls earlier this year.

Overseas Indians are free to cast their votes in the constituencies they are registered.

According to Ministry of External Affairs estimates, there are about 3.10 crore Non Resident Indians (NRIs) living in different countries across the world.

An expert committee of the Election Commission had in 2015 forwarded the legal framework to the Law Ministry to amend the electoral laws to allow the overseas Indians to use proxy voting.

Not many overseas Indians turn up to cast their votes as they do not want to spend foreign currency to come to India for the purpose, officials said.



Participants seen at Rajpath during the 15th Airtel Delhi Half Marathon on Sunday in New Delhi

PTI

Herbal drug Fifatrol may stop overuse of antibiotics: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As antibiotic-resistant bacteria, known as “super-bugs,” are becoming more numerous and more virulent owing to rampant overuse of antibiotics, researchers are exploring herbal medicines as an alternative to these increasingly ineffective drugs.

In this direction, researchers from Bhopal-based AIIMS have found that Fifatrol, a herbal drug can be a good substitute to allopathic antibiotics to treat bacterial and fungal infections, and that too without causing any side effects.

“Fifatrol, an ayurvedic

drug, enriched with immune-enhancing herbs has been found to be effective in curing major bacterial infections such as dreaded staphylococcus species of bacteria,” said Dr Samran Singh, Director of AIIMS Bhopal.

Staphylococcus species causes fever, cold and cough, skin diseases, etc and if not treated in time can be fatal.

Beside these, the Fifatrol drug has also been found suitable in controlling spread of infectious diseases caused due to echolalia, pneumonia, klebsiella aerogenes, etc.

Talking about the research, Dr Singh said that normally, the ayurvedic medicines have

been seen as supplements to increase immunity, but Fifatrol has shown very promising results against bacteria too. It has been found effective against bacteria P Ruzinivosa too.

“We are in the midst of doing detailed research to arrive at the final result.” These are compelling evidence that medicinal herbs can be a first line of defense against infectious diseases.

Singh, who heads the team of researchers, further explained, “Staphylococcus bacteria is responsible for skin, respiratory and stomach infections. In people who have weak immune system, its infection can also be fatal.”

INSHORT

NSDC PARTNERS WITH SARTAHAK EDU TRUST

New Delhi: To generate awareness about skill trainings in the disability sector and to remove barriers of social inclusion, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) partnered with Sarthak Educational Trust to enable the participation of 40 persons with disability (PwD) in Airtel Delhi Half Marathon on Sunday. Dr Manish Kumar, MD and CEO, NSDC said, “We believe, all individuals must be given equal rights to live with dignity and be given equal opportunities. We are working to provide PwDs respectful livelihood and to eliminate the environment of social exclusion.”

NAIDU PRESENTS AWARDS TO EX-AGI

New Delhi: Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday presented ‘Most Eminent Senior Citizen Award’ to legal luminary, scholar and former Attorney General of India, K Parasaran at a function here. Parasaran was honored with the Award on the occasion of the Elder’s Day celebration of Age Care India, an organization working for the welfare of the elderly.

AIIMS DIRECTOR RELEASES BOOK



New Delhi: AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria and Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government, K Vijaya Raghavan recently released “A Dragonfly’s purpose”, an autobiographical account of Dr Sujata Sharma’s recovery from an autoimmune disease, Guillain Barre Syndrome at an event here. Professor in AIIMS, Dr Sharma is the recipient of the National Bioscience Award for Career Development, one of the highest Indian science awards, for her contributions to biosciences, in 2011.

1 IN 4 INDIAN WILLING TO TAKE ALTERNATIVE

New Delhi: Only one in four Indians are willing to take a lower carbon footprint alternative to air travel, even at the cost of inconvenience and additional expense, according to a new World Economic Forum study.

Parl panel to examine accidents involving Defence assets, assess Defence procurement policy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel headed by former Union Minister Jai Oram will assess the cases of accidents involving defence assets and also examine the defence procurement policy currently in vogue.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence has selected a number of subjects for examination, which include reviewing the selection procedure of officers in the armed forces, according to the Lok Sabha secretariat’s bulletin.

“Accidents involving defence assets — a critical review, an assessment of defence procurement policy” are also among the subjects selected by the panel for examination, the bulletin said.

The committee had, in its report tabled in Parliament last year, said accidents had



become a continuous feature in the Navy.

The Indian Navy witnessed 62 accidents between 2007 and 2017, and 177 officers were found guilty during inquiries ordered into such incidents, according to the report.

As many as 44 aircraft and helicopters — 26 fighter jets, six helicopters, nine trainer

aircraft and three transport planes — of the Indian Air Force were lost in crashes since 2014-15, in which 46 personnel were killed, according to official data.

The details of the crashes were provided in the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik, while replying to a question.

Over 380 Ladakhi-origin policemen to be transferred from J&K to Ladakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 380 police personnel belonging to Ladakh and working in different places in Kashmir and Jammu regions will soon be transferred to Ladakh and posted under the administrative control of the new Union Territory. The new Union Territory of Ladakh will come into existence on October 31. The Ministry of Home Affairs has given nod for the transfer of police personnel working in different wings of the Jammu & Kashmir Police.

“Approval has been given for the transfer of about 385 Ladakhi-origin police personnel to Ladakh and they will function under the new UT which will come into existence on October 31,” a Ministry official said. The police personnel will work with the Ladakh UT Police, which will be under the direct control of the MHA. The police personnel — from the rank of constable to inspector — will also get the pay and perks available to police personnel of other UTs like Chandigarh and



Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

According to The Jammu & Kashmir Re-organisation Act 2019, Ladakh will not have a legislative assembly. The Act says cadres of IAS and IPS for the existing state of Jammu & Kashmir, on and from the appointed day (October 31), shall continue to function on existing cadres. However, in future, the all India service officers to be posted to UTs of Jammu & Kashmir or Ladakh shall be from the Arunachal, Goa, Mizoram, Union Territory cadre, more popularly known as UT cadre.

India seeks UN action to combat anti-microbial resistance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has expressed its concern on the global emergence of anti-microbial resistance (AMR) and called upon the relevant United Nations agencies to contain this threat to public health. India has one of the highest rates of resistance to antimicrobial agents used both in humans and food animals. The environment, especially the water bodies, has also reported the presence of resistant organisms or their genes.

While attending the G20 Health Ministers’ meeting held in Japan’s Okayama, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan participating in the deliberations on health risk and health security, made an intervention on AMR, seen as a serious emerging threat to global public health.

According to an official statement, while voicing his concern on AMR, he called upon all relevant UN agencies to align themselves in their endeavour to combat antimicrobial resistance.

Students attendance in Kashmir 20%, in Jammu 100%

New Delhi: A little over 20 per cent students in Kashmir and 100 per cent in Jammu have started attending schools and there is no restriction on the movement of people anywhere in Jammu & Kashmir, officials said on Sunday.

While all of the 1,02,069 landline phone connections were restored till October 18, a total of 84 per cent mobile phone connections were restored in 22 districts till last Friday.

The landline connections in Kashmir valley were restored about two months ago, post-paid mobile connections were restored on October 14.

Restrictions on the movement of people, vehicles and phone connections were imposed on August 5 following the announcement by the cen-



tral Government the abrogation of the special status given to Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370 and its bifurcation into two Union Territories.

A total of 20.13 per cent students are attending schools in Kashmir valley, while 100 per cent students are attending

in Jammu region, a home ministry official said, quoting a report from the Jammu & Kashmir administration.

Also, 86.3 per cent teachers in Kashmir valley and 100 per cent teachers in Jammu are attending schools till Friday. A total of 21,328 schools in

Jammu and Kashmir have started functioning, which is 98 per cent of the total schools.

The Jammu & Kashmir administration last week announced the dates for year-end examinations from Class 5-12, apparently to enhance the attendance of students in schools.

There have been no restrictions in any of the 202 police stations while essential commodities like food items, baby food, petroleum products are available in adequate numbers, the official said.

As many as 130 major hospitals, 4,359 health centres in Jammu & Kashmir are functioning normally and on an average 600 surgeries are conducted and 65,000 people avail OPD care every day, another official said. **PTI**

UP Govt has failed to control crime, says Priyanka

New Delhi: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday slammed the BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh over the state’s law and order situation, alleging that it had failed to rein in crime.

The Congress general secretary also shared a snapshot of news headlines of major crime incidents in the state. Among the headlines was a reference to the killing of Hindu Samaj Party chief Kamlesh Tiwari.

The collage of news headlines had the caption, “Har din apraadh ke naam, bhajpa sarkaar puri nakaam (everyday criminal incidents, BJP Government a complete failure)”.

The Congress on Saturday had hit out at the BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh over the law and order situation in the state, alleging “jungle raj” was prevailing there.

Reacting to Uttar Pradesh police chief’s comments that Tiwari was killed probably because of a controversial statement he made in 2015, senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal had said, “A State for which the apex court of the country said that there is ‘jungle raj’, should we believe the DGP or the Supreme Court?” **PTI**

PIL in Delhi HC seeks direction to authorities to convene SRB meeting every three months



New Delhi: A PIL has been filed in the Delhi High Court seeking direction to the Delhi government and the Director General of Prisons to convene the meeting of Sentence Review Board (SRB) every three months in compliance with the rules.

The plea said as per the SRB order of July 16, 2004 and Delhi Prison Rules, 2018, the board shall meet at least once in a quarter to convene the meeting and pointed out that between October 2018 to October 2019, the board had convened only once on July 19 this year.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar is likely to hear on

Monday the petition filed by advocate Amit Sahni.

The SRB was constituted to review the sentence awarded to a prisoner undergoing life imprisonment and make recommendations about cases of premature release in appropriate cases.

“The respondents (Delhi government and Director General of Prisons) are duty bound to comply with the notification/rules but to the reasons best known to the respondents, between October 2018 to October 2019 the SRB had convened only once, that is, July 19, 2019, thereby causing hardship to those, who otherwise qualify all parameters for consideration but are not consid-

ered since SRB meetings are not convened in every quarter as envisaged under the SRB Order dated July 16, 2004 and Delhi Prison Rules, 2018,” the petition said. According to the SRB order and the prison rules, it shall be open to the chairman of the board to convene the meeting more frequently as may be deemed necessary, it added. The petitioner said he has made a representation to the authorities on October 4, requesting them to implement the mandate of the SRB order and the prison rules and ensure that the board meeting is convened in every quarter without fail. He said the authorities have not responded to the representation yet. **PTI**

BJP faces wipe out in Bastar as Chitrakot votes today

STAFF REPORTER ■ JAGDALPUR

Chhattisgarh's ruling Congress has put its all might to flush BJP out of the sprawling but restive Bastar region as Chitrakot assembly seat is all set for voting on Monday.

Bastar has total 12 assembly seats and the BJP would be driven out of the key tribal stronghold region if it loses Chitrakot where the Congress is reportedly comfortable to retain the seat.

A total of 167911 electors including 88626 women are eligible to exercise their franchise to seal the fate of six candidates though the main fight is between Congress' Rajman Benzam and former legislator Lachhram Kashyap of the



BJP

Election Commission has set up 229 polling booths and deployed thousands of security personnel to ensure a free and fair polling in the Scheduled Tribe reserved seat which is



partially infested by leftist militancy since late 1980s.

The polling was necessitated as sitting legislator of the Congress resigned after being elected to the Lok Sabha from Bastar seat of which Chitrakot

is one of the assembly segments. The result would be declared on October 24 along with the assembly seats of Maharashtra and Haryana where the BJP is in the power.

The BJP and the Congress had conducted high-voltage electioneering in Chitrakot. Chhattisgarh's former chief minister Raman Singh was the star campaigner for the saffron party while Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel led the campaign for the Congress.

Reports emerging from the ground say Congress is well poised to retain the seat but the BJP has scotched all such reports and claimed it will wrest the seat from the Congress as the Bhupesh Baghel government has let down people in its nearly 10-month-long regime.

28 Naxals shun violence in Dantewada district

STAFF REPORTER ■ DANTEWADA

As many as 28 leftist insurgents, four of them carrying cash reward on their heads, surrendered on Sunday in the insurgency-hit Dantewada district, police said.

The rebels including two women, turned themselves before senior police and CRPF officials at the newly set up Chikpal police camp in Katekalyan area, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava said.

Of the surrendered, Manglu Madkani (22) who was active as a member of platoon no. 22 of Maoists, and Baman Kawasi (23), a

The rebels including two women, turned themselves before senior police and CRPF officials at the newly set up Chikpal police camp in Katekalyan area, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava said.

member of Katekalyan LOS (Local Organisation Squad), were carrying reward of Rs 2 lakh each on their heads, he said.

Besides, two more surrendered cadres identified as Handa (35), an LGS (local guerilla squad) member, and a woman- Podiyami Gangi, commander of CNM (Chetna Natya Mandli- a

cultural outfit of Maoists) were carrying reward of Rs 1 lakh each on their heads, he said.

The remaining 24 cadres were working as Janmilitia- low rung members, under Katekalyan area committee of Maoists, he added.

In their statements, they all said they have decided to delink from Maoists after

getting disappointed with hollow Maoist ideology and violence being committed by them, Pallava said.

The surrendered ultras were given an encouragement amount of Rs 10,000 each and further they will be provided assistance as per the Surrender and Rehabilitation policy of the state government.

Tragic road accidents claim four lives

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Four persons including a woman died in separate road accidents that took place in different locations in Raipur city on Sunday, police said.

"Three persons including two brothers were killed after two bikes in which they were riding collided head-on near Pepsi Company compound under Urla police station," a local police officer said.

The deceased were identified as Kalyan Chaturvedi, Sukhdev Chaturvedi both son of Accholi Corporator Johan Chaturvedi and Nehru Baghel son of Pratap Baghel resident of Accholi Sarkari Kua locality, police informed.

One man was injured in mishap who was taken to hospital.

"Three persons including two brothers were killed after two bikes in which they were riding collided head-on near Pepsi Company compound under Urla police station," a local police officer said

In a separate incident, a rashly driven truck ran over a scooter near DD Nagar police station, ring road thereby killing the woman riding the vehicle on the spot.

The truck driver identified as Mahesh Kumar Patel was arrested and had been charged under the relevant sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Guv to visit disease-hit Supebeda tomorrow



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Governor Anusuiya Uikey will be on a visit to village Supebeda in Gariaband district on October 22.

As per schedule, Governor will proceed from Raipur by road and reach circuit house,

Gariaband at 10.00 AM. She will then proceed from there to village Supebeda.

She will interact with villagers about the prevailing disease and then reach Deobhog. She will hold a meeting of district officials at Deobhog circuit house at 3.30 PM. Governor after meeting will return back to Raipur.

Raman regime responsible for Supebeda deaths, alleges Cong

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Amid rising death tolls due to kidney ailments at Supebeda in Gariaband district, health minister TS Singhdeo and Chhattisgarh Congress chief Mohan Markam on Sunday blamed Raman Singh-led previous BJP regime for death of up to 70 people at Supebeda.

In a joint statement issued on Sunday, the duo claimed that Congress government was working with complete sensitivity in state.

"For winning public confidence on state health



services, Bhupesh Baghel government has taken



effective steps. This includes upgradation of Supebeda

sub-health centre to primary health centre and appointment of specialists," they said in a statement.

According to both Congressmen, for providing relief to the residents of Supebeda a large-scale drinking water supply scheme has been formed and its tender has also been issued, so that the heavy metal water problem in village could be solved.

"For better connectivity the demand for construction of a culvert on Tel River by Supebeda residents' has also been approved," the statement added.

Police 'spying' on my family, alleges Mukesh Gupta

Gupta seeks intervention of SC on alleged illegal phone tapping

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh's suspended CIPS officer Mukesh Gupta who was notorious for over the years in state's power corridor for allegedly illegally tapping phone calls of potential persons, has now filed an application in the Supreme Court that Chhattisgarh police are illegally tapping phone calls of his family members.

According to information, Gupta has filed an application regarding the same in a petition which is already under consideration before



the apex court. The hearing is scheduled on October 25.

According to sources, Gupta had succeeded in getting substantial proof

that Chhattisgarh police had ordered for spying on his (Gupta's) family members by tapping their phone calls.

NGGB an iconic scheme for rural economy: Minister

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Ravindra Choubey on Sunday termed Narva, Garva, Ghurva, Badi (NGGB) a milestone scheme in boosting rural economy in the state.

Choubey was addressing a day-long workshop on NGGB and annual convention of SC/ST Veterinary Doctors association being held at New Circuit House.

The development of state could only be attained with development of vil-



lages and the NGGB scheme will not only

strengthen the rural economy but would also generate employment for rural youths, he opined.

The NGGB, Suraji Gaon scheme would also promote organic cultivation and there is tremendous awareness globally about usage of organic food, he said. He further stated that the Gauthans (cowsheds) would now become a symbol of development in state.

On this occasion he appealed the veterinary doctors to show interest in developing cowsheds in state. Citing an example of Gandhi Gram Kandel in Dhamtari district, Choubey appealed for construction of cowsheds with public's contribution.

National Conference on 'Mahatma Gandhi and Swaraj' concludes

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The two-day national conference on 'Mahatma Gandhi and Swaraj' organised by Public Relation Society of India (PRSI) Raipur Chapter concludes on Sunday in which chief guest of the valedictory session G.R. Churendra (IAS) Raipur Commissioner & Vice-Chancellor, Kushabhau Thakre University of Journalism and Mass Communication, Raipur said, "The Swaraj of Gandhi Ji obey the principle of Global Village".

Churendra stressed on reading of Gandhi's live histo-



ry to understand his Philosophy of Swaraj, to achieve FactualSwaraj we need to save our water, forest

and land.

Addressing the august gathering as special guest Dr. Girish Kant Pandey, Registrar,

Pt.RSU said "we should remember both Ba and Bapu both."

Prof. (Dr.) Sanjeev Bhanabat, Dr. Sudheer Sharma, Dr. Ajit Pathak, Dr. Gopa Bagchi and Dr. Shrikant Singh were among the distinguished guests of the valedictory session.

The conference report was presented by Dr. Sahid Ali President, PRSI Raipur Chapter. Delegates from public relation, mass media, and media academicians from all across the country participated in the conference. A total of forty research paper presented in three different technical sessions.

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Stage is all set for the urban bodies' elections in the state and a total of 35.3 lakh voters could exercise their franchise in the elections expected to be held in the month of January next year. About 1.25 lakh will be the first time voters.

Notably, under urban bodies' across the state, elections are to be held in 9 Municipal Corporations, 38 Municipal Councils and 103 Nagar Panchayats.

According to State Election Commissioner Thakur Ram Singh, after the



final publication of the voter's list there are 35 lakh 29 thousand 565 voters all over the state.

The state election commission had after initial publication of voters' list invited claims and objections from the voters. After sorting out objections and claims, 1,25,606 new names have been included in the list. Corrections in names and addresses were carried out for 8,146 voters.

In the revision of voter's list for the elections omission of 32,171 names was also done, the official informed.

OPGC to get coal from M'pur mines

State Energy Secy holds meet with Union Coal Secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Manoharpur Coalmines becoming operational, the Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) will start receiving coal from November onwards. State Energy Secretary Bishnupada Sethi briefed Union Secretary Coal Anil Kumar Jain in this regard in a review meeting taken up by Ministry of Coal for ensuring raw material for the power plants in New Delhi on October 17.

Sethi briefed in details about the arrangements for supply of coal to OPGC plant in Odisha.

The Secretary Energy, who is also Chairman of Odisha

Coal and Power Limited (OCPL), which controls Manoharpur Coal Block, apprised the current status on the coal mine development and its operations.

It was also informed that that coal despatch to OPGC power plant through Kanika sidings is planned from November 2019 once the co-user agreement is signed with the MCL and the permission thereof is accorded by the Indian Railways.

Jain was happy to learn about the positive developments and asked the State authorities to coordinate with the Indian Railways for smooth evacuation of coal.

Manoharpur and Dip-Side Manoharpur Coal mines, located in the district of Sundargarh, have been allotted to Odisha Coal and Power Limited (OCPL), a Government Company of the

State of Odisha in August, 2015.

These coal mines have been allotted exclusively for the end use plants of OPGC, located at Banharpalli in the district of Jharsuguda.

All the permits and clearances are available and the mine operations have been commenced from November 1, 2018.

However, the coal production could not be started due to evacuation constraints.

The coal productions from the mine have now been started from October 10, subsequent to the last review meeting of Secretary, Coal, in September.

In the review meeting, it was decided to transport coal from Manoharpur Coal Mine to OPGC power plants through Kanika siding.

In the meantime, the Secretary, Coal, Jain on

October 17 reviewed the status and constraints of 11 coal blocks which have already received the Mine Opening Permission (MOP) from the Coal Controller Organisation under Ministry of Coal (MoC).

While OPGC is facing problem in getting coal from MCL, with supply from its own captive mines, raw material problem will be sorted out, said CEO, OCPL Kshirod Brahma.

Due to short supply from MCL, the State owned OPGC was forced to go slow in power generation and its Unit-2 faced forced shutdown.

Looking at the grim scenario, the State Government intervened in the matter and due to effective intervention of State police, situation has improved and the MCL authorities have promised to supply adequate quantity of coal to the OPGC

ODISHA TRAVEL BAZAAR ENDS Foreign tour operators told to prepare Odisha package

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government requested foreign tour operators, those who participated in the Odisha travel Bazaar to prepare Odisha specific packages or atleast include Odisha in their India specific packages.

At the concluding day of Odisha travel Bazaar Tourism Joint Director Utpal Pati said, "We requested foreign tour operators to add Odisha in their packages. Normally, they are preparing 3 night 4 days packages for their customer. If Odisha gets any place in their packages then it will help Odisha tourism in a big way."

On the development of

Private player participants have shown more interest to set up eco cottage, water park and theme park in major tourist sites

tourism infrastructure in the State, he said," A land bank is being prepared for the tourism and hospitality industry. We identified lands in Chilka, Gopalpur and Puri-Konark area."

Private player participants have shown more interest to set up eco cottage, water park and theme park in major tourist sites. Some players are interested to go to Jaipur, Raigada and

Sambalpur like places. Investors participated in Odisha Travel Bazaar have given more importance to royal palaces, eco cottages and other high quality facilities, he informed.

More than 85 tour operators participated in the event. Domestic tour operators are interested to know about the new products coming to Odisha and unexplored areas.

GMU gets UGC tag for performance

12 (B) status to help varsity get grants

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

In a remarkable achievement, the Gangadhar Meher University (GMU) has bagged 12 (B) status for its performances in various fields. The University Grants Commission (UGC) being satisfied with its academic activities has conferred this unique status.

"The GMU is the first university in the State among the recently created ones to be endowed with the status," said Deputy Registrar of university Prof U C Pati.

He further said that the 12 (B) status will make GMU eligible to receive various grants for infrastructure development, research programmes and other purposes from the UGC. Moreover, the 12 (B) status also paves the way for NAAC accreditation, he added.

The GMU is the first university in the State among the recently created ones to be endowed with the status

"This will help the university tremendously in its journey towards quality and excellence. A number of student-centric quality initiatives can now be launched by the university. The institution had been trying to achieve the status since the day it was upgraded to university," Prof Pati further said.

Gajalaxmi Mahotsav held at Bhoi Sahi



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Gajalaxmi Puja Committee and the Matrushakti Mahasangha celebrated a three-day Gajalaxmi Puja Mahotsav at Bhoi Sahi near the Baramunda Bus-stand here from October 13 to 15.

Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Minister Ashok Chandra Panda and the local Corporator inaugurated the Mahotsav and praised the organising bodies for holding such a programme.

They also felicitated the winners of a competition in which more than 400 Self-Help Groups' (SHGs) members had taken part recently.

Among others, Matrushakti Mahasangha president Renubala Das, secretary Sabyabhama Bhoi, Gajalaxmi Puja Committee Secretary Soumya Ranjan Das, members Rakesh Bhoi, Sanjay Behera, Fakir Bhoi, Anil Behera, Rabindra Bhoi, Santosh Bhoi, Bikram Bhoi and Ratikant Behera were present.

Landmark-II Owners' Assn elects office-bearers

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Members of the Landmark Phase-II Owners' Association here elected its new office-bearers for the year 2019-20 at the annual general body meeting held on Sunday.

While Gayatri Routray was elected aspresident), Surajit Pattanaik was elected as VP, Biswa Mohan Pattanaik assecrretary, Amaresh Chaudhury as joint-secretary, Suraj Nayak as treasurer, Monalisha Dash as assistant treasurer and Banita Pattanaik as joint secretary cultural.

The Landmark Phase-II



Resident Welfare Society is the society of the flat owners of Landmark Phase-II Apartment Complex along the Sundarpada-Jatni Road on the city outskirts with over 290 flats.

Before the election process the AGM discussed various

issues like pending works, changes in its byelaws, standard operating procedure for renting out flats by owners, parking allotment, security, sanitation, maintenance of lifts in each block, nomination of names from each block for the executive committee and the members who are defaulting the payment of their society fees.

AT KANJIPANI GHATI 6 kids among 13 hurt in bus mishap

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

As many as 13 persons, including six children, were injured when a bus by which they were travelling overturned at Kanjipani Ghati in Keonjhar district on Sunday afternoon.

The bus was en route to Katarapali from Manoharpur village. Passengers said that the driver lost control over the bus at Kanjipani Ghati while negotiating a turn, leading to the mishap.

On receiving information, Fire Services personnel reached the spot and rescued the passengers trapped underneath the bus. The injured were rushed with the help of some locals to hospital for primary treatment. Conditions of all the injured were stable, said hospital sources.



Kolkata school wins KIIT quiz trophy

BHUBANESWAR: Subhadeep Sinha Roy and Anubhab Sinha of Don Bosco School, Kolkata became the winners of KIIT

Education Summit National Level Quiz Competition.

The final round of the quiz competition was held in KIIT campus on Sunday. Swadhin Rout and B Ankit Patro of KIIT International School, won the 1st runners up, while Samyak Anand and Aviral Choudhary of Bridgeford School, Ranchi, was declared as 2nd runners up.

The winning team was given trophy with cash prize of

`50,000.

The 1st runners up team awarded with trophy with cash prize of `30,000, while the 2nd runners up team awarded trophy with `20,000 cash prize.

Quiz Master Major Dr Chandrakant Nair conducted the final round of quiz competition.https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/images/clear-dot.gif

The theme of the quiz competition was 'Education for All.'

Education must to respect culture & traditions: HP CM

PNS ■ SHIMLA

In the midst of overall anxiety of the modernisation drive, education especially science education must be given a strategic priority for overall development of the youth," said Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday.

While presiding over the state level Gyan-Vigya Mela of Saraswati Vidya Mandir here, the Chief Minister said that that education was the foundation for scientific and technological advancements and personnel training of human beings.

He said that true morality lies in the awareness of the spiritual reality and calls for a disciplined life, a clean and useful life dedicated to disinterested

service. The founding Fathers of the Indian Republic have given great importance to the cultivation of "Scientific Temper" among the citizens of this country by suitably incorporating it in our constitution, he added.

Thakur said that it was unfortunate that we have forgotten the actual meaning of education. Education merely does not mean learning a few books and reproducing the same during examinations.

The real education was to upgrade skills of students by inculcating in them respect for our culture and traditions so that after completing education, they become job providers and not job seekers, he said.

Bypolls to four Punjab Assembly seats today

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

As many as 7.68 lakh voters will decide the fate of total 33 candidates in Punjab's four assembly segments of Phagwara (reserve), Dakha, Jalalabad and Mukerian.

The bypolls will be a litmus test for the ruling Congress which has just completed its two-and-a-half years in power, while the SAD-BJP combine and the state's principal opposition party Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) would fight for their political survival.

The polling will be held from 7 am till 6 pm, and the results of the elections will be declared on October 24.

Seven companies of paramilitary forces have already been deployed in the four assembly segments, officials said, adding that 920 polling stations have been set up. Some polling stations in Dakha and Jalalabad have been categorized as "sensitive".

During the previous elections, while the SAD-BJP combine had bagged two of the four assembly segments, one each was won by the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

This time, the main contest is between the Congress and the SAD-BJP combine.

While the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) is contesting the Jalalabad and Dakha seats, its

ally BJP has fielded candidates in Phagwara and Mukerian.

The ruling Congress would like to maintain its winning momentum in the bypolls while the SAD-BJP alliance and AAP are looking at their political revival. Congress had registered an emphatic victory in 2019 Lok Sabha polls by winning eight out of total 13 parliamentary seats in the state.

In Phagwara (reserve), the main contest is between Congress candidate and former IAS officer BS Dhaliwal and BJP's Rajesh Bagha. Besides, the AAP, BSP and the Lok Insaaf Party have also fielded their candidates.

The Phagwara seat fell vacant after sitting MLA Som Parkash was elected to the Lok Sabha from Hoshiarpur, and elevated as the Union Minister of State.

On Dakha seat, the Congress has fielded Capt Sandeep Sandhu, political secretary of Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh. The SAD nominee from the seat is former MLA Manpreet Singh Ayali.

It is being seen as a keen contest between the Congress and Akalis. Capt Amarinder had himself taken out two - roadshows in favour of Capt Sandhu who has been his trusted lieutenant. The Dakha assembly seat got vacant fol-

lowing the resignation of former AAP leader and noted Supreme Court lawyer HS Phoolka from the state assembly.

Phoolka had resigned in October last year over the Congress government's alleged failure in taking action against those involved in the desecration of religious sects in 2015 in the state.

In Jalalabad, considered an Akali bastion, there is a straight contest between SAD's Raj Singh Dibipura and Congress' Raminder Singh Awla.

The Jalalabad seat fell vacant after sitting MLA and SAD chief Sukhbir Badal was elected to the Lok Sabha from Ferozepur parliamentary segment in the 2019 general election. The top leadership of Akali Dal including Sukhbir Badal, Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Bikram Majithia held poll rallies to retain Jalalabad seat.

From Mukerian, the BJP has fielded Jangi Lal Mahajan. The Congress nominee is Indu Bala, the wife of the late Congress MLA Rajnish Kumar Babbi, whose death necessitated the byelections.

In the 117-member Punjab Assembly, the Congress at present has 77 legislators. The SAD has 13 MLAs while the strength of AAP legislators is 19.

3 bike lifters held in Khordha; 15 vehicles seized

PNS ■ KHRORDHA

The Khordha police on Saturday arrested three inter-district motorcycle lifters, who were involved in two-wheelers thefts in Khordha , Ganjam and Boudh districts.

The three accused were identified as Santosh Kumar Jagdev alias Milu, Abhi Jaysingh alias Muna and Sagar Hati. All of them are residents of Kulei village under the Banapur police station in the district.

The police got lead about the gang, while investigating into the complaint of one Basanta Rana, whose motorbike was stolen from the front of Chilika block office on October 14.

Later, on the directions of the Khordha SP and Balugaon SDPO, a team was formed comprising Inspector SK Patnaik. Later, the team conducted raids on various locations across the three districts and recovered 15 stolen motorcycles.

Later, on the directions of the Khordha SP and Balugaon SDPO, a team was formed comprising Inspector SK Patnaik

Boris sends unsigned extension letter to EU

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was on Sunday branded a "spoilt brat" by the Opposition after he sent an unsigned letter seeking a three-month extension to the October 31 deadline from the European Union (EU).

The UK PM was bound by law to issue a letter seeking a delay to Brexit after MPs voted in a historic Super Saturday Parliament session to delay voting on his motion on a new Brexit deal.

Johnson has previously said he would rather be "dead in a ditch" than miss the October 31 deadline and had triggered speculation soon after the House of Commons vote by declaring that he would not negotiate an extension.

However, given the Benn Act passed by MPs last month to avert a no-deal crash-out from the economic bloc meant that he was obliged to send an extension letter by the end of October 19

BREXIT

unless a new Brexit deal had been passed through by the Commons.

"The United Kingdom proposes that this (extension) period should end at 11.00pm GMT on 31 January 2020. If the parties are able to ratify before this date, the government proposes that the period should be terminated early," reads the unsigned letter sent to European Council President Donald Tusk on Saturday night.

While the Downing Street stance is that the UK PM has complied with the Benn Act by sending the Parliament's letter, there is some speculation if it opens up the prospect of legal action by it being an unsigned request.

In an accompanied signed letter to Tusk, Johnson repeated his pledge of leaving the EU within the October 31 deadline by pressing ahead with the requisite legislation next week to seek Parliament's ratification

for his withdrawal agreement.

"I have made clear since becoming Prime Minister, and made clear to Parliament again today, my view, and the government's position, that a further extension would damage the interests of the UK and our EU partners, and the relationship between us," he states, insisting that the prolonged Brexit process must be brought to a conclusion to prevent a "corrosive impact" from further delays.

Tusk took to Twitter to say the UK's extension request has been received and that he would consult with EU leaders on "how to react".

Meanwhile, the Opposition Labour Party warned that Johnson could be in contempt of Parliament and possibly even the courts with his latest actions.

Labour's shadow Chancellor said: "He may well be in contempt of Parliament or the courts themselves because he's clearly trying to undermine the first letter and not signing the letter."

Trump slams Clinton for 'Russian asset' jab at Gabbard

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Hillary Clinton has gone crazy, US President Donald Trump has said as he slammed the former secretary of state for calling Democratic presidential aspirant Tulsi Gabbard and former Green Party candidate Jill Stein as Russian assets.

During a Thursday podcast interview, Clinton said Russia had groomed Stein to be a spoiler third-party candidate in 2016 and implied that the Kremlin is doing the same with Gabbard in order to take votes away from the 2020 Democratic ticket and secure Trump's reelection.

"Hillary's gone Crazy!" Trump said in a tweet on Saturday night.

"So now Crooked Hillary is at it again! She is calling Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard 'a Russian favorite', and Jill Stein 'a Russian asset'. As you may have heard, I was called a big Russia lover also (actually, I do like Russian people. I like all people!)," Trump said.

Clashes amid efforts for Kurd pullout from Syria border town

AP ■ AKCAKALE (TURKEY)

Kurdish-led fighters and Turkish-backed forces clashed sporadically on Sunday in northeastern Syria amid efforts to work out a Kurdish evacuation from a besieged border town, the first pull-back under the terms of a US-brokered cease-fire.

Turkey said one of its soldiers was killed in the day's violence.

The planned evacuation of Kurdish fighters and civilians from the town of Ras al-Ayn would open the way to a pull-out of the fighters from a broader swathe of territory along the border, a senior official in the Kurdish-led forces told the Associated Press. The official, Redur Khalil, said Saturday evening that the evacuation could take place Sunday if there were no new problems.

Both sides accuse each other of repeatedly violating the three-day old cease-fire.

Turkey's Defense Ministry said the soldier was killed in a Kurdish attack with anti-tank weapons and small arms fire near the border town of Tal Abyad.

That brought the Turkish military's death toll to seven



American military convoy stops near the town of Tel Tamer, north Syria on Sunday

AP

soldiers since it launched its offensive against Kurdish-led fighters in northeast Syria on October 9.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said Turkish troops and their allied Syrian fighters have continued their offensives the past 24 hours, forcing its fighters to retaliation.

It said 16 SDF fighters had been killed and three wounded in Turkish attacks around

the border town of Ras al-Ayn and nearby villages.

Ras al-Ayn, under siege by Turkish-backed fighters, has been the scene of continual fighting since the cease-fire came into place on Thursday night.

Khalil told the AP that the force had reached understandings with the Americans to evacuate its fighters from the town from the start of the cease-fire but the siege had

delayed the plans.

Turkish officials have denied they were preventing the withdrawal of any fighters.

On Saturday, medical convoys were able to enter for the first time into neighbourhoods still in the hands of the Kurdish fighters, delivering medical supplies and bringing out 30 wounded and four dead.

Khalil said the full evacuation could follow the next day unless there were new delays.

EU calls for Afghanistan ceasefire

AFP ■ KABUL

European Union officials called Sunday for a ceasefire in Afghanistan, saying the breakdown in talks between the US and the Taliban presented an opportunity to push anew for a truce.

US President Donald Trump last month declared talks with the insurgents "dead", citing a Taliban attack that killed a US soldier.

Negotiations had been in the final stages for a deal that would have seen the US pull troops from Afghanistan after 18 years in return for various Taliban guarantees.

But to the dismay of many Afghans and international observers, the deal included no immediate, comprehensive ceasefire, rather it would supposedly have paved the way for a reduction in violence and later talks between the Taliban and the Afghan Government.

Protesters defy HK police after activists attacked

AFP ■ HONG KONG

Large crowds of Hong Kongers defied a police ban and held an illegal march on Sunday, their numbers swollen by anger over the recent stabbing and beating of two pro-democracy protesters.

Authorities had forbidden the march in Tsim Sha Tsui, a densely packed shopping district filled with luxury boutiques and hotels, citing public safety and previous violence from hardcore protesters.

But tens of thousands joined the unsanctioned rally regardless as the movement tries to keep up pressure on the city's pro-Beijing leaders after nearly five months of protests and political unrest.

Tensions were running high after the leader of the group organising the weekend rally, Jimmy Sham, was hospitalised by men wielding hammers earlier in the week. Then on Saturday night a man handing out pro-democracy flyers was stabbed in the neck and stomach.

A sea of protesters shuffled



Protesters set fire to a Xiaomi shop at Nathan road in Hong Kong on Sunday

AP

through the streets under a canopy of umbrellas to protect from the bright sunshine on Sunday. Many said they wanted to show they were unbowed by the attacks and authorities increasingly banning marches.

"The more they suppress, the more we resist," a 69-year-old protester, who gave her surname Yeung, told AFP. "Can police arrest us all, tens of thousands of people?" Philip Tsoi, a self-described frontline protest-

er, said they needed to keep getting numbers out even though many more hardcore activists like him had been "arrested or wounded" in recent weeks.

"What I want is a truly democratic government whose leader is elected by Hong Kong people instead of selected by a Communist regime," he told AFP.

In a now familiar pattern, the large march remained peaceful, but smaller groups of black-

clad protesters vandalised some subway station entrances and mainland Chinese banks along the route.

Police fired tear gas volleys at crowds of hardcore activists outside Tsim Sha Tsui police station.

Vigilante violence has mounted on both sides of the ideological divide. In recent weeks pro-democracy supporters have badly beaten people who vocally disagree with them -- although those fights tend to be spontaneous outbursts of mob anger during protests.

In contrast, pro-democracy figures have been attacked in a noticeably more targeted way, with at least eight prominent government critics, including politicians, beaten by unknown assailants since mid-August.

Protesters have labelled the attacks "white terror" and accused the city's shadowy organised crime groups of forming an alliance with Beijing supporters. Beijing has denounced the protests as a foreign-backed plot and condemned attacks on those voicing support for China.

Trump drops plan to host G-7 at his Doral golf resort

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Responding to stinging criticism, President Donald Trump has abruptly reversed his plan to hold the next Group of Seven world leaders' meeting at his Doral, Florida, golf resort next year.

Trump announced a rare backtrack Saturday night after facing accusations that he was using the presidency to enrich himself by hosting the international summit at a private resort owned by his family.

"Based on both Media & Democrat Crazed and Irrational Hostility, we will no longer consider Trump National Doral, Miami, as the Host Site for the G-7 in 2020," Trump tweeted. He said his administration "will begin the search for another site, including the possibility of Camp David, immediately."

The striking reversal raises further doubts about the position of the president's acting

chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, who held a press conference Thursday announcing the choice of Doral for the summit. He insisted his staff had concluded it was "far and away the best physical facility."

Mulvaney said the White House reached that determination after visiting 10 sites across the country.

In the same press conference, Mulvaney acknowledged a quid pro quo was at work when Trump held up U.S. Aid to Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine's investigation of Democrats and the 2016 elections. Mulvaney later claimed his comments had been misconstrued, but not before drawing the ire of the president and frustration from other senior aides.

Trump had been the first administration official to publicly float the selection of his property to host the summit when in August he mentioned it was on the short-list and

praised its facilities and proximity to Miami's international airport. His comments, more than a month before the official announcement, drew instant criticism from good governance groups and Democrats, who said it raised concerns that Trump was using the White House to boost his personal finances. The vociferous criticism did not die down, even as Trump insisted he would host the summit at cost, though he refused to disclose financial details. The annual heads-of-state gathering would at minimum have provided good-will value to his property.

Noah Bookbinder, executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, said Trump's reversal Saturday "is a bow to reality, but does not change how astonishing it was that a President ever thought this was appropriate, or that it was something he could get away with."



US Defense Secretary Mark Esper walks Gen. Scott Miller chief of the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, at the US military headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday

AP

Pak will achieve all FATF targets in time: Qureshi

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Government will achieve all targets sets by the Financial Action Task Force in time to get the country out of the anti-money laundering watchdog's grey list, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said as he accused India of trying to blacklist it.

Qureshi's remarks came after the Paris-based FATF put Pakistan on notice on Friday, warning that it will be blacklisted if it does not control terror funding by February.

The FATF plenary noted that Pakistan addressed only five out of the 27 tasks given to it in controlling funding to terror groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Hizbul Mujahideen, responsible for a series of attacks in India.

"India has failed to get Pakistan included in the FATF blacklist. The country has been given various tasks until February 2020," Qureshi said, adding the government would achieve all targets in time and bring the country out of the grey list.

He said the FATF has recognised the steps taken by the Government to control money laundering and terror financing.

The FATF is an inter-Governmental body established in 1989 to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

During the FATF meeting, several countries voiced concern on Pakistan's failure to do enough to contain terror funding on its soil.

Nigeria rescues 147 from 'torture house': State Govt

AFP ■ KANO

Police in northern Nigeria have rescued 147 people from an Islamic boarding school where the students were being abused, the fourth such raid in a month, a local official told AFP.

Armed officers found the inmates when they raided a school in the Rigasa district of Kaduna, said Hafsat Baba, Kaduna state women affairs commissioner.

"All the inmates were found in chains and said they were beaten. There are 22 women among them and some of them complained of being sexually abused," she added.

Two Cameroonians and two

people from Niger were among those rescued, she said. There were also four children at the school. The inmates had been taken there by family members for "petty theft, delinquency and drug addiction," Baba added. "Some of them have psychological problems and are mentally unstable."

Last month police rescued more than 300 male students from a similar boarding school in the same neighbourhood. They too said they had been tortured and sexually abused.

That led to police raids on two other boarding schools in nearby Katsina state this week, where officers said they rescued more than 400 male students.

Tens of thousands protest in Lebanon for third day

AFP ■ BEIRUT

Tens of thousands of Lebanese people took to the streets Saturday for a third day of protests against tax increases and alleged official corruption despite several arrests by security forces.

They streamed into the streets around the country's parliament in Beirut, as well as elsewhere across the country, AFP journalists said, despite calls for calm from politicians and dozens of arrests on Friday.

The number of protesters grew steadily throughout the day, with major demonstrations in second city Tripoli, in the north, and other locations.

Many waved billowing Lebanese flags and insisted the protests should remain peaceful and non-sectarian.

The demonstrators are demanding a sweeping overhaul of Lebanon's political system, citing grievances ranging from austerity measures to poor infra-

structure. They have crippled main roads and threatened to topple the country's fragile coalition Government.

Most Lebanese politicians have uncharacteristically admitted the demonstrations are spontaneous, rather than blaming outside influence.

In Tripoli demonstrator Hoda Sayyur was unimpressed by the contrition some leaders displayed on television and echoed a widely-held hope that the entire political class be replaced.

"They took all our fundamental rights... We are dying at hospital gates," the woman in her fifties said.

"I will stay in the street... Since I was born, we've been spectators to their quarrels and corruption," she said.

The army on Saturday called on protesters to "express themselves peacefully without harming public and private property". Saturday evening thousands

were again packed into the Riyadh al-Solh Square in central Beirut, despite security forces using tear gas and water cannons to disperse similar crowds a day before.

The Internal Security Forces said 70 arrests were made Friday on accusations of theft and arson.

But all of those held at the main police barracks were released Saturday, the National News Agency (NNA) said.

It said that the father of one man detained tried to set himself on fire in front of a police station.

The demonstrations first erupted on Thursday, sparked by a proposed 20 cent tax on calls via messaging apps such as WhatsApp.

Such calls are the main method of communication for many Lebanese and, despite the Government's swift abandonment of the tax, the demonstrations quickly swelled into the largest in years.

World's oldest pearl found in Abu Dhabi

AFP ■ ABU DHABI

An 8,000-year-old pearl that Archaeologists say is the world's oldest will be displayed in Abu Dhabi, according to authorities who said Sunday it is proof the objects have been traded since Neolithic times.

The natural pearl was found in the floor of a room discovered during excavations at Marawah Island, off the capital of the United Arab Emirates, which revealed the earliest architecture found in the country.

"The layers from which the pearl came have been carbon dated to 5800-5600 BC, during the Neolithic period," Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism said.

"The discovery of the oldest pearl in the world in Abu Dhabi makes it clear that so much of our recent economic and cultural history has deep roots that stretch back to the

dawn of prehistory," said its chairman Mohamed Al-Muabarak.

The excavation of the Marawah site, which is made up of numerous collapsed Neolithic stone structures, has also yielded ceramics, beads made from shell and stone, and flint arrowheads.

The "Abu Dhabi Pearl" will be shown for the first time in the exhibition "10,000 years of Luxury" which is opening on October 30 at the Louvre Abu Dhabi -- the outpost of the famous Paris museum.

Emirati experts believe that the pearls were traded with Mesopotamia -- ancient Iraq -- in exchange for ceramics and other goods. They were also likely worn as jewellery.

"The Venetian jewel merchant Gasparo Balbi, who travelled through the region, mentions the islands off the coast of Abu Dhabi as a source of pearls in the 16th century," the culture department said.

Afghan vote results delayed: Official

AFP ■ KABUL

Preliminary results expected Saturday after last month's presidential election in Afghanistan have been delayed, the election commission said.

Officials had previously indicated that results would likely be pushed back.

But in her announcement, Awa Alam Nuristani, who heads the Independent Election Commission (IEC), did not say how long the vote count will be delayed.

"Unfortunately, because of some technical issues and for transparency, we could not announce the results based on the election timetable," she said, apologising at a press conference.

The IEC previously said that less than one-third, or about 2.7 million of Afghanistan's 9.6 million registered voters, cast ballots in the September 28 first-round poll.

With fears of fraud and threats of deadly Taliban violence, it was a record low turnout.

The contest featured 18 candidates but President Ashraf Ghani, seeking a second five-year term, and Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, are the favourites.

Just two days after the election and before all votes had even arrived in Kabul for counting, Abdullah claimed victory in a move that international and local observers panned as premature.

On October 12, his running mate Asadullah Saadati complained of "systemic fraud" organised by "circles within the election commission and the palace".

Voting this year was supposed to be more secure than ever, with each voter verified through biometric machines to ensure no one could cast multiple ballots.

Saadati claimed the IEC was counting "fraudulent" and non-biometric votes.

The IEC has repeatedly said it would not count votes unless they had been verified biometrically.

But use of biometric read-

ers to prevent repeat voting complicated the process, partly because communication breakdowns prevented data from numerous readers being transmitted to the IEC on voting day.

Instead, the machines had to be taken to the commission in Kabul to extract the data.

Highlighting the challenges it faces, the commission has said unidentified hackers unsuccessfully attempted to break into its computer servers.

After a recent visit to the IEC, Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan Dave Metcalfe said he was "impressed" by the commission's attempts to fight voter fraud. Election officials have called on candidates to show restraint and wait for the preliminary results in a bid to avoid a repeat of 2014.

That year's election was marred by duelling claims of victory and fraud by Abdullah and Ghani. The IEC's initial timetable called for final results on November 7, after which a second electoral round would be held within two weeks if necessary.

Tale of returnees

The deportation of 311 Indians by Mexico shows that old and wily job cartels can no longer sell a golden dream



The US has its compelling reasons for enforcing strict norms to phase out illegal refugees and asylum seekers and bolster homeland security. But reverberations of the Trump Administration's tough immigration rules are finally being felt back home, where cartels for years have resorted to underhand means to smuggle the lesser privileged aspirants from the hinterland into the US. This is why the deportation of 311 Indians, including a woman, from Mexico, is significant for it means old hoodwinking habits and unscrupulous border crossings will simply not work. Hopefully, it will also awaken migrants to be realistic and not entrust their lives and property to agents and human traffickers for the proverbial El Dorado, where they would rather do menial services on the recommendation of an acquaintance than earn a work permit legally. Hopefully, for the thousands of villagers in Punjab and Haryana, the overseas dream will not be their only aimless ambition. Each of the returnees reportedly bought illegal passage for ₹15 to ₹18 lakh, a sum that would have ensured them a decent livelihood in India itself had they invested it wisely. Now they are staring at a bleak future on home ground, too. The deportation of Indians from Mexico is a first. As per the National Migration Institute of Mexico, trans-Atlantic air transport to ferry deportees is unprecedented and is expected to continue. The move is not surprising considering that Mexico has been sending back migrants, especially Central Americans, in droves in line with its agreement with the US. It has vowed to significantly curb America-bound migration in exchange for averting US tariffs on Mexican exports. Reports suggest that the backlog of migrants in southern Mexico has grown as officials have stopped issuing permits for them to cross the country. They deported 25,069 Central Americans in January and February, almost double the number in the same period last year. Of these deportees, 3,289 were minors. Contrary to Asians, a majority of Central American migrants flee murderous gangs while others run from poverty or look to reunite with their parents working in the US. The dreams of Indians may have been shattered but they are fortunate to have survived the ordeal and escaped the horrendous detention centres.

An ideal US immigrant would evoke images of a young educated person, either wanting to go there for higher education or already a software professional, adding to the US talent pool, and by extension to the US economy and human resource. However, illegal immigrants are the polar opposite. All those sent back are between 18 and 27 years, hold a graduate degree and wanted to earn a livelihood as a taxi driver in the US. It is, therefore, not difficult to comprehend why despite knowing all the perils involved, they embarked on a risky journey. Obviously their gamble is rooted in the problem of shrinking job space and the comparatively low wages offered by both private and public companies in the country. For those unemployed, the lure of healthy earnings and the prospect of sending a large paycheck back home are enough to embark on a life-threatening journey overseas. It is this desire that scammers encash. The fake job racket is now a booming industry in the country. And a very organised one at that. Operators engage some very creative minds and legal expertise to identify loopholes in existing rules. The higher the risk, the greater the fee. Then there are others who operate in legally grey areas by training immigrants in the art of bending the rules. Every Government will have to tackle the problem of illegal immigration. But the present incident must impress upon our Government the need to crack down on rogue agents who promise lucrative jobs. This seems to be a difficult flushout challenge in Punjab and Haryana where illegal trafficking networks are a sub-set of a larger matrix of gunrunners, drug smugglers and ganglord couriers. Simultaneously, a campaign must be launched to make the people aware of the dangers of falling prey to corrosive agents and the benefits of going through job services linked to embassies and high commissions.

Gravity of bias

Two women astronauts of NASA completed the first all-woman spacewalk, literally claiming the gender space



In a small step for two women but a giant leap for womankind, two female astronauts from the US space agency National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) completed the first all-woman spacewalk on Friday. It was a moment frozen in the history of women empowerment as the two US astronauts, Christina Koch and Jessica Meir, floated out, feet-first, of the International Space Station's (ISS) Quest airlock, tasked with replacing a failed power control unit. During the spacewalk, the coordinator on the ground was

also a woman, astronaut Stephanie Wilson. In a test of endurance and grit of the two women, the spacewalk went on for six hours and 45 minutes, something which has so far been considered a male privilege and equal to his stamina. The figures say it all. Till now, only 14 women have done spacewalks compared to 213 men. The first woman to break the glass ceiling was Russian cosmonaut Svetlana Savitskaya, who went outside the USSR's Salyut 7 in 1984. Meir became the 15th woman overall and 14th US woman to spacewalk.

How male-oriented NASA and other space programmes of the world are can be gauged by the fact that this spacewalk was to take place in March but had to be postponed as there was only one medium-sized spacesuit available at the ISS. As Christina Koch so aptly put it in an interview, "In the past women haven't always been at the table." This sentiment finds resonance with millions of women on Earth, who struggle to make their voices heard in male-dominated spheres and face discrimination and derision on a daily basis. The 40-year-old Koch is also setting another milestone as she will remain on the ISS until February, bringing her total time in space to 328 days, the longest single spaceflight by a woman and just short of astronaut Scott Kelly's 340-day record. Till now, most of the bio-medical data on the impact of spaceflights is derived from male astronauts. Researchers are collecting extensive data about the impact on Koch's body for the first time. The first all-woman spacewalk is also evidence of NASA's own journey of empowerment. According to the space agency, this was something it had not planned but happened because there has been a marked increase in the number and aspiration of women astronauts. This is the same agency which did not admit women into the astronaut programme until 1978. Sally Ride went to space in 1983 but she was beaten to it by two Soviet women. Similarly, it was only in October 1984 that Kathryn Sullivan became the first American woman to finish a spacewalk. Now, the agency is planning to put the first woman on the Moon by 2024 with its Artemis lunar exploration programme and recently unveiled the prototype for a new spacesuit. That is a big step towards gender equality everywhere though it has taken a long time coming.

opinion 06

The new Indian identity

India's new fashion mantra is not about ethnocentrism or muscularity. But yes, it is robust, meaningful and confident



RINKU GHOSH

A few days ago, a mass men's label launched the Nehru jacket as an assembly line product, as regular as corporate wear, and not an ethnic fancy meant for festive or ceremonial rituals. This signals a shift from the formal code of the Western suit as the only boardroom qualifier and legitimises the ethnic identity as an equally driven negotiator. Latest brand campaigns of other labels show the young flaunting ethnic wear unabashedly and one significant advertisement has designer Manish Malhotra, the man who set the grammar of popular fashion through the porous matrix of Hindi films, advising a young woman on how to wash the *zari* in the traditional silks and saris that she has proudly stacked up in her wardrobe. The assumption is clearly of these not being just occasion wear or a one-time statement but meant to be worn regularly and, therefore, frequently washed at home. This attribute of everydayness is freeing up Indian fashion from the dictates that we have so long assumed as a given.

For long, fashion has been the most visible barometer of anthropological studies. And by that measure, India's millennial story is to be found in what we wear, rather how we live our mindset. One that has come full circle after liberalisation and opened us to the world. Post-WTO, there was a rush to co-opt a Western standard of brand consciousness and grammar. And no matter what the unease or inhibition, there was a willingness to engage with the currency of globalisation, even open acceptance of it. There was a McDonaldisation process as well that brought us out of our stiffness and made casual Friday dressing a linking code of behaviour, both in formal and informal spaces. The open democracy and gender neutrality of the casual wear market had a lasting social consequence, that of looking good everyday and being comfortable in a crowd. The exposure to refined silhouettes and minimalism of boutique fashion houses meant that we could structure our appearances better. It further meant that we could define the global Indian by what s/he wore and the accessories s/he carried; the tags could be identified anywhere. It was also the time when our designers sought international collaborations, using the luxurious heritage of our craftsmanship, to lend some accents to the ramps in New York, Milan and London.

Post-1990s, we were taking strides to be at one with the world. Almost three decades on, we are a significant player, our new-found politico-economical heft giving us the confidence to own our cultural identity. That's why Banaras is not just about saris but has emerged as a concept and motif of one of our many identity markers. We have co-opted Western structures and silhouettes to the extent of blending them with our sensibility and becoming the Indian-global rather than the global Indian. Fashion today also has finally broken through the Western



concept of seasonality of spring-summer and fall-winter and decided its own timeline. Free-flowing drapes are in, khadi is in the middle of an evolutionary explosion and the *kurta-churidar*-wasitcoat ensemble has become the most androgynous and modernist statement there is. Our designers, too, now see a potential in the domestic market and instead of international collaborations, are taking their craftsmanship to high streets in fashion capitals of the world, choosing to be an ethnic Indian label that is not just about identity but about philosophy, of handmade skills and originality, sustainability, vibrancy, colour and people. In the neo-Indian assertion of why the world ought to be at our feet, we are literally wearing it on our sleeves. And doing so with a refined sense of style that has finally taught us how fusion ought to be, a cultural memory blended with functional grammar, the deep-rooted knowledge of both now defining our body consciousness.

According to a study by Technopak, India's ethnic wear industry is expected to grow to ₹ 1,26,210 crore at the end of this fiscal, 83 per cent of it in women's wear. A survey by clothing brand Biba showed that ethnic wear is a preferred outfit for women aged between 16 to 50 years, particularly in Tier II and Tier III cities. This is significant since it reflects the empowerment of women in the social, economic and political space and their emergence as a sizeable chunk of the market. It also points to their greater buying capacity by virtue of their increased participation in the workforce. Particularly in the boardroom, where the woman had to be seen mannish in every aspect, be it in approach or power dressing to break the glass ceiling, the rules of appearance have changed completely. Women are keeping to their traditional preferences and body types with different cuts and drapes. The *salwars* have transformed to palazzo and long-flowing skirts, the embellishment streaks through short *kurtis*, the *anarkali* is becoming an asymmetrical cape, the *kurtas* are now long floor-length dresses while saris are being structured as cocktail gowns. Fusion wear, in fact, is now about day, casual and even evening wear. The Indo-Western genre has emerged as a good option for the youth who may still want the cool quotient of the university jeans and T-shirt routine and want to look ethnic at the same time.

A new consciousness about where we come from has meant a renewed interest in the sari, fabrics and our metals. Online sari-wearing challenges have translated into a revivalist search of the diversity of fabric and design and a rediscovery of cotton. This has helped designers and cooperatives rescue weaving clusters and organise the local market. India's metal and mineral wealth has also fuelled a demand for tribal jewellery as standout avant-garde statements. The comfort with drapes and flowing lines has been directly proportional to a greater embrace of "otherness", be it of the LGBTQ community or even men themselves, who have been strait jacketed so far by colonialism but are now at home with civilisational logic in sartorial choices, that we need to use organic and breathable fabrics and feel light and easy in a tropical land. Fluidity is in.

Fashion then has become the most accurate reflection of the empowerment of the mind beyond causes or politics. In fact, it has become a tapestry of our neo-consciousness. One that is proud of expressing personal experiences and narratives, localised contexts, embroidery and fabrics (like Bhagalpur silk and Assam *muga*) and even architectural motifs from our

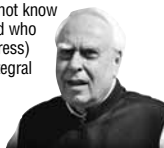
heritage sites and structures. Of course, in climate challenged times, matching India's initiatives in environment politics, Indian fashion has emerged as one of the most sustainable choices there is as creators reuse, re-engineer and recycle heirlooms. Be it zero-waste production processes, locally-sourced and woven linen or use of natural dyes, sustainability is gradually becoming the wardrobe mainstay. Particularly, fair-trade practices and the direct sourcing from and benefits to weavers' and craft clusters have meant that social responsibility is dominating popular choice. Designers are now working independently with craft clusters, often picking out the under-utilised ones, value-adding to their dead stock and joining hands with other societies/groups that are known for mastering a particular craft. This Gandhian essence of the grassroots, that mirrors the primacy of rural India in the political space, has made our fashion industry truly inclusive in its sense of purpose.

In fact, India's new fashion mantra is not about ethnocentrism or muscularity. But yes, it is robust, meaningful and confident. (The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

Modiji only remembers (Article) 370. He does not know when Pakistan split and who did it. It was we (Congress) who split Pakistan's integral part from it...

Congress leader
—Kapil Sibal



To me, fitness is about complete well-being, psychological, emotional and physical. I eat well but mindfully and work out consistently.

Actor
—Shriya Pilgaonkar



We believe that India and China should correctly view their differences and never let differences negatively affect the overall effort of bilateral cooperation.

Chinese Ambassador
—Sun Weidong



In spite of the Congress being in power for so many years, why aren't the people siding with its ideology? Because national interest is foremost for the people.

BJP leader
—Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rally controversy

Sir — This refers to the report, "Sonja gives Haryana rally a miss...fill void" (October 19). Congress president Sonia Gandhi's son Rahul cited his mother's viral fever to be the reason behind her inability to turn up at an election rally in Haryana. However, Sonia has not been attending any public functions of late, apparently on the advice of her doctors.

Officially, the rally in Mahendragarh was the only one which she was to address. There could be two reasons for scheduling the rally for Sonia by the Congress' campaign managers despite knowing about her poor health. First, they might have hoped she would be up and about in time to address the rally. Second, since Sonia remains the tallest leader in the Congress with a crowd-pulling potential, party bosses continued bandying her name about till the last minute to gain maximum traction and build up expectations. Of course, it fuelled speculation about the old vs new war.

Navin Chawla
Chandigarh

Safeguard bank depositors

This refers to the editorial, "Lessons from PMC" (October 17). The collapse of the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank has put the focus back on the need for effective regulation modules. It is the responsibility of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to regulate lesser banks. It cannot escape questions each time an institution regulated by it fails for public money is involved. With banking scams becoming the new normal now, it is increasingly becoming clear that the RBI must own up to its failure as a monitor. The PMC scandal should be a wake-up call for developing an early warning system.

As has been seen, it is because of the rich scammers, who loot the banks, that the middle classes, who toil day and night to save money for future needs, are left in the lurch. The bigger question is how to compensate the hapless victims of bank frauds. The Government as also the RBI must collaborate and find a solution. On its part, the Central bank must do all it can to sense early



warning signals of a fraud and carry out pre-emptive strikes. Proper response triggers are the only way to save the common man from predators.

Pragya Jain
Via email

Learn from Bangladesh

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Still too hungry" (October 18). The UNICEF's State of World's Children and the Global Hunger Index report for Indian children are not too surprising. It only states the truth that India has not made much headway in reducing malnutrition and is

wasting food. Yes, natural calamities do play havoc and compound this situation. But when we can strive for 100 per cent electrification and complete polio eradication, why not target this menace, too, with the same zeal? If Bangladesh can do it, why can't we? India needs to learn. What it needs is great political will.

Bal Govind
Noida

Save the banks

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Lessons from PMC" (October 17). Increasing instances of bank scams in India mean that fraudsters are looting the public money with impunity. These scams are the brightest examples of how the poor account holders are being cheated out of their hard-earned

money deposited in safe custody of banks. No doubt, higher officials have mastered the art of fudging books to play around with the poor depositors' money. Both the Union and State Governments must take credible, pragmatic and effective steps for expeditious solution of the crisis-ridden PMC.

Nimai Charan Swain
Bhubaneswar

Unsafe Capital

Sir — This refers to the report, "Snatchers have free run! Secy to Delhi Speaker latest victim" (October 19). Instances of chain, purse and mobile snatching are on an alarming rise in the national Capital. So much so that one has stopped wearing chains, necklaces and carrying mobiles in hand when out on the street. And girls are concentrating more on clutching their purses while travelling. It's high time the authorities resort to technology and camera devices to track gangs.

Shruti
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

‘ACT-EAST POLICIES MUST BE PRACTICAL AND SUSTAINABLE’

He is one of the youngest Chief Ministers in the country. But then the way **CONRAD KONGKAL SANGMA** has turned Meghalaya around means that it has been easier for him to break out of the past and chart out an original course, free of expectation. It is not just his youth but also the legacy of his father, PA Sangma, that he is reverential about and wears almost like a talisman. During the course of the interview with **SAIMI SATTAR**, the Meghalaya CM does not mince words, articulates his ideas clearly and is focussed on efficiently bringing about a change in his State — things that could make one think that he was the CEO rather than a politician. He touches upon issues that matter and how with minimal investments he is trying to make the maximum impact

Has the attitude of the Centre changed towards North-Eastern states. Can you elaborate on the difference that you have witnessed as Chief Minister?

I just wait for the right moment and then say what I have to as the situation presents itself. But overall, this is something that I have seen happening during the last one-and-a-half years after taking over as Chief Minister. There are many senior people in my team and they tell me that there was a time when they went to Delhi but couldn't meet the officials, the minister concerned or the Prime Minister. But now we do not face any difficulty and there is accessibility in terms of human connectivity. There is a different sense of importance given to the North-East. The Prime Minister himself is very concerned. The last time I went and met a Minister to invite him to Shillong, his response was that, "Even if you don't call, I will have to go, or else PM *nahin chodenge hamein* (the PM would be displeased with us)." That is the kind of response that we get now, which indicates the pressure on every Ministry when it comes to any issue related to the region.

I am of the firm belief that you cannot get work done in Shillong while sitting in Delhi. You have to see what is happening at the grassroot level with your own eyes to understand what is needed. So when Ministers come here, they understand the requirements. That is what I meant when I said that there is a change. I am sure that more will happen in the coming years due to the approach of the Government.

■ The Government has formulated the Look East policy. Is there anything in particular that Meghalaya would like to focus on as part of this initiative?

It has moved ahead and has now been renamed as Act East. For Meghalaya, I have been very clear even before I became the Chief Minister that we need to "Look South" and "Act South" which means Bangladesh. I have been a strong advocate of this. Kolkata, the nearest Indian port to export our products, is 1,200 km away. Before Independence, it was Chittagong in Bangladesh which is half that distance at 650 km. If this was to open up, the exports from the North-East would go up tremendously. At the moment, the region comprises only one per cent of the total exports from the country.

I have proposed an eight-lane highway connecting Guwahati, Shillong, Dauki in India and Chittagong in Bangladesh. If needed, the Government should invest and fund this project so that the North-East gets accessibility. One very important and good thing that has happened recently is that Bangladesh has agreed to allow access of goods from the North-Eastern States to Chittagong port which wasn't there earlier. This is a big diplomatic achievement for the Indian Government.

In order to ensure that exports increase, many policy decisions need to be cleared. For instance, there is a rubber plant in Bangladesh, which is running at 50 per cent deficiency and sourcing raw material from Malaysia even though Tripura and Meghalaya, which grow rubber, are very close. The current policy means that if I have to export rubber to Bangladesh, I have to go through Kolkata, even though the factory in Bangladesh is 40 km away. A policy decision is needed to get over such hurdles.

Then there is connectivity in terms of telephony. If Airtel or Jio go 5 km into Bangladesh, and there is a complaint against them, they have to pay a fine of ₹5 lakh every time. So these service providers do not put up a tower near the Bangladesh border. As a result everyone, including the BSF personnel, uses the Bangladesh network. It is a massive security lapse. Of course there are a lot of challenges, including illegal infiltration, but we have to tackle those while looking at the positive side also.

I will be visiting Bangladesh along with a big delegation. I have suggested that all the Chief Ministers of the North-East can go together in a bus. We should drive rather than take a flight to focus on connected corridors of mutual benefit. Tura, my home town and constituency, is a four-hour drive from Dhaka. To put it in perspective, it takes equal time to reach Guwahati by road. So for me, the entire "Look and Act East" policy should be focussed on Bangladesh.

■ One of the important changes that you



have initiated is the Public Redressal Mechanism. How does it operate and reach out to people?

There are multiple layers. We realise that connecting with people is one part and can be done easily through a WhatsApp Complaint System but the more important challenge is how to address the problems and connecting them to the department concerned. We created a system where a code is generated for every problem and then a message goes to officials concerned, both at the ground level and the senior ones. If there is no reply, then reminders are given. It is not a very complex system where a lot of money is needed. However, we are trying to understand how to make the system more efficient, accountable and deliverable.

Since we started this, approximately 500-600 complaints have come to us. There were personal problems as well as complaints like a transformer had broken down and hadn't been repaired for months. We are trying to segregate the problem into delivery mechanism problems and those which are more personal in nature and dealing with them accordingly.

I am not satisfied because the system has never been response-oriented. Earlier, there was no concept of addressing complaints within a certain time period. I am hoping this will improve from the 50 per cent redressal rate that we have managed to achieve till date.

More importantly, I try to make it a point to connect with my officers all the time through two programmes. There is a departmental review that is done at my level through video-conferencing or physically when I am present. Another important programme is a block visit. In two

IN HEALTH, OUR FOCUS WAS ON MOTHERS GETTING ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONAL DELIVERY. INITIALLY, WE WERE OF THE OPINION THAT THEY WERE NOT OPEN TO THE IDEA BUT WE WERE WRONG. WE STARTED WITH ONE DISTRICT AND USED TECHNOLOGY TO MAP EVERY WOULD-BE MOTHER. SUCH BASIC TECHNOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS WITHOUT HUGE FINANCIAL INPUTS HAVE IMPROVED HEALTH FACILITIES

years, I want to target all 46 blocks. I started this one month ago and have covered three blocks. So every month I hope to meet a similar target. Every time I have a meeting with my deputy commissioners (DCs), I keep telling them that I am not here to "catch you or find faults with your working, rather I want to find faults in the system and we will find a solution together. Let's work as a team." People-first is the crux of my approach.

■ You have signed MoUs to create smart villages. How do you intend to undertake the exercise considering rural people will always aspire to move to urban centres?

There are multiple objectives of making smart villages, including the one to stem migration to towns. People migrate in search of better facilities for health, education and employment opportunities. We can actually resolve these problems through technological interventions.

In health, for instance, our focus was on expectant mothers getting access to

institutional delivery. Initially, we were of the opinion that they were not open to the idea but we were wrong. We started with one district and used technology to map every would-be mother. There were 3,000 of them and after the exercise, we knew exactly which village they were from, which week the delivery would take place, the names of Asha volunteers taking care of them, the medical officer involved, the contacts of husbands and mothers-in-law and a shortlist of high-risk mothers due to blood pressure problems or diabetes. In each area, there is an ambulance driver covering a certain radius, who is connected with the expectant mothers and we give their phone numbers to him and his number to the next of kin. Additionally, we have connected auto-rickshaw drivers to the expectant mothers as a back-up ambulance and promised to give them ₹300 if they ferry mothers to hospitals. This has improved the overall institutional delivery in that district from a mere 40 per cent to 90 per cent in six months. That is how I

envision smart villages rather than with huge towers and buildings. Such basic technological interventions without huge financial inputs have improved health facilities.

Similarly, in education there are no fancy smart classes or thousands of crores of investments. We identified the bottom 20 per cent of the schools where the results were below a certain benchmark and launched a pilot project in one district where students from those schools, who were doing badly, were brought together in clusters. Incentives were given to teachers to bring in students and they were provided with additional tuitions on Saturdays.

It is not so difficult to improve the numbers from 20 to 60 per cent because if you are getting a 20 per cent pass percentage in any school, that means the modules there are simply not working. So just by making simple tweaks, you improve it to 60 per cent. The toughest is reaching the level of 80 to 100 per cent. But as of now, we are focussed on reaching 60 per cent and then we will think about moving ahead.

A third initiative is setting up a Self-Help Group (SHG) network of about three to four lakh women. My target is to have one woman in each household in an SHG. We use the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) funding patterns. Some money is collected and these SHGs will act as micro financing banks and give loans without paperwork. We are not just doing that but we are motivating women and giving them ideas about the industries that they can develop.

We will connect SHGs with people from Berkeley University to whom we have given seven challenges, including food processing as a part of the MoU. I have asked them to study every district of Meghalaya and zero down on certain products from the area and figure out which technological intervention at an affordable cost can be implemented to improve the livelihood of people and, also, where the products can be sold. A study of bamboo was undertaken by Berkeley and it highlighted that it was not the ply or the brush that would give margins. The highest profits, of about 25 per cent, would come from bamboo charcoal. The institution connected us to Chinese companies which make the machines to create bamboo charcoal and they gave us the cost and how much time it would take for the process. Berkeley developed an entire business plan and also, an end to end solution.

Besides food, researchers will study micro-financing, tourism, food processing, turmeric and more. We have to focus on our strengths and see what the requirements are outside and within the country. We need close to 2 lakh MT of milk whereas we produce 50,000 MT. We launched a milk mission at a cost of ₹250 crore. Then there is a huge requirement for pork not just locally, but also outside. In India, good quality pork is not available and we have to rely on imports. So we are seeing these gaps in local consumption and exports and plugging those. These are low-hanging fruits as there is an existing demand. We are doing the market research to figure out the requirements, giving money to the SHGs and training them but we let them do it on their own.

The key aspect of the SHG movement, which is so important to understand, is creating an institutional network. For instance, at three, the fertility rate is the highest in the country where some families have as many as seven or eight children. If we want to address the issue of fertility, we will have to talk about contraceptives. A lot of rural mothers have no say in when they wish to get pregnant, which is sad. Once these SHGs have a woman in every house, I can get a contraceptive network going with their help. The same applies to a nutrition programme. If we want to provide every child with one glass of milk, it is not just a doctor or a health specialist which can do this. The women in this institution can be roped in. If you pour anything on top of this network, it will trickle down. Health, social welfare, education — it will ensure all the benefits reach everywhere.

■ The first road with plastic waste was built in Meghalaya. You are also providing plastic to a cement factory. What are the other ways that you plan to incorporate sustainability in the Government's functioning?

There are more initiatives. Of course, plastic is an issue and we ensured that the CM

office and the Secretariat were plastic-free. However, it is essential to give people alternatives, otherwise they will go back to their old ways. We roped in cement companies which are providing people with bottles in place of plastic ones. While we do not have to spend money, these companies can advertise and put their logo on the bottle.

For all these initiatives, we are roping in NGOs and media houses as well and at the same time, trying to make it a fun activity. So when people see the Governor cleaning an area or the Chief Minister doing so, they are connected with the idea. It is a very powerful way to motivate people.

Our target is to make all Government offices fully sustainable in water and electricity. My first target is my own office and we will start it in the Secretariat in November. We are creating a rainwater harvesting system so that when the next rains come in, the Secretariat doesn't have to draw water from the Public Health Engineering Department (PHE).

In the energy segment, we have switched over to LED lights which reduced the cost by 50 per cent. So some part of the installation cost is getting covered by these savings.

In the meantime we have also talked to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and the Centre and they have sanctioned some funds for rooftop solar panels. The good thing about our offices is that they do not need a lot of light during their diurnal operations. We called in some experts who told us the number of panels and batteries to be set up after a survey of the roof. Even if we meet 50 per cent of our demand, it will be good. The programme will be gradually extended to the Secretariat and Additional Secretariat by the next financial year as well as the DC offices gradually.

■ Meghalaya has a lot of potential in tourism. There is history, since it was inhabited in the Neolithic age, wildlife and natural beauty. How do you plan to focus on tourism and at the same time make it sustainable?

We are looking at developing it in a sustainable manner and focussing on the strengths that we have. We would prefer to have a lesser number of tourists, who are looking at a niche experience. Something like the Bhutan model. It might not be as strict but our product line will move in that direction.

We are selecting areas that everybody connects to like Cherrapunji and have identified eight tourist spots. We want to pull the tourists there while developing them in an eco-friendly manner. We have built log houses, which give a local and natural feel in place of the cement and brick ones. Then there are events like the cherry blossom festival which is specific to the region and has become big over the years. People in the State are also fond of music, so we are building activities around such passions too.

Plans are already afoot for a hot air balloon experience so that you can see Cherrapunji and even Bangladesh from the sky. We are planning to develop chopper tourism, which will be a premium service. Tourists can see the double-decker root bridge more frequently as the chopper can land right next to it. This will naturally cater to a high-end market.

Then there is history. Geologists found a stalagmite in the Mawmluh Cave which was classified to be 4,200 years old and dated to what is called as the Meghalayan Age. Mawmluh is a 28 km long sandstone cave which is the longest in the world. There are other caves of varying lengths. We are developing a system where people can actually enter these. Some of the caves are massive and could hold an amphitheatre inside. You enter one and find yourself in a huge hall where the ceiling is 30-40 feet high. There are caves with rivers flowing inside them, almost like a swimming pool, and one where the entrance is hidden behind a waterfall and will remind people who love comics of Phantom's cave. To experience something like this, you can travel to Meghalaya or spend a lot of money to go to distant lands.

■ You love music and also perform...

All people in the North-East do. I used to be in a band in school. I played guitar, my brother was a singer. Earlier we played the music. Now, as Chief Minister, I face it (guffaws).

(Photo: Md. Mehraban)

CENTRE'S PLAN TO IMPLEMENT NRC IN BENGAL

Cong's Adhir concerned over his future citizenship

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury has expressed apprehensions about his future citizenship status going by the fact that his family too hails from Bangladesh and considering the "vindictive approach" of the Central Government in its plans regarding the implementation of the National Register of Citizens.

Warning that the Hindus will have to bear the brunt of NRC more than any other community, the senior Member of Parliament from Behrampur on Sunday said at the end of an anti-NRC rally in Kolkata that "no one will be spared. More so the Hindus... The Hindus will be more affected by NRC than any other community," citing the example of Assam where more than 11 lakh Hindu Bengalis had been targeted by the NRC.

Warning the citizens against "devastating impact of the proposed Citizens (amendment) Bill and NRC," in Bengal,

Chowdhury, a highly vocal politician with a long history of struggle both against the Left Front and the Trinamool Congress, said a whole cross-section of the society will be affected by the NRC that the BJP was planning to implement in Bengal.

"The NRC (BJ) they are planning will target every section of the society be it a celebrity or a common man," he said apprehending the torment his own family might have to go through on account of political victimisation in the name of NRC as "my family too hails from Bangladesh."

He said "I openly acknowledge that I too am a refugee in that sense as my father had migrated from that side of the border to India. I am also apprehensive of my citizenship future on account of the political persecution that one is expected to suffer in the name of NRC," he maintained.

"Will they throw me out? Will they throw my family out of India?" he asked saying

however that the BJP will not be allowed to amend the Constitution the way it likes. "Our Constitution has been drafted in such a manner that it cannot be amended the way the BJP wants it to be," he said adding his party would continue to fight against the saffron outfit's "nefarious designs."

Meanwhile, in a separate development State Congress leader Sanmay Banerjee who was arrested for allegedly violating Cyber laws was released on bail on Sunday.

Banerjee was arrested for allegedly writing "defamatory statements" against some of the senior Trinamool Congress leaders. All the opposition parties including the Left, Congress and the BJP had raised their voices against Banerjee's arrest.

Accusing the police for arresting Sanmay Banerjee for circulating posts against TMC leaders, Adhir Chowdhury said the Congress leaders arrest was a classic example of intolerance of the highest order.

POLL CODE VIOLATION

FIR against Bihar BJP chief, Kishanganj party candidate

Kishanganj (Bihar): An FIR has been lodged against Bihar BJP chief Sanjay Jaiswal and Sweetie Singh, the party's candidate for Kishanganj Assembly bypoll, for allegedly violating the model code of conduct, an official said.

The FIR was registered at Sadar police station on Saturday evening following a written complaint by Kishanganj Sadar Circle Officer Shafi Ahmad after a video surfaced on social media purportedly showing Jaiswal exhorting businessmen to close their establishments on the polling day, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Shanawaz Ahmad Niyazi said.

Jaiswal had also allegedly promised to pay Rs 500 to employees of business firms for voting in favour of the BJP.

The state BJP chief allegedly made the remarks, in the presence of the party candidate, during a meeting of local businessmen on Thursday at the residence of Kishanganj



Municipal Council vice-chairperson Aanchi Devi.

Reacting to the FIR lodged against her and Bihar BJP chief Sanjay Jaiswal, Sweetie Singh said that the state chief's statement had been "misconstrued".

"Jaiswal had talked about giving money for food and snacks to party workers but his statement has been misconstrued," the Kishanganj party candidate said.

Jaiswal, a Lok Sabha member from West Champaran, could not be contacted for his comment.

Bypolls to Kishanganj and four other Assembly seats in Bihar will be held on Monday as the incumbent MLAs were elected to Parliament in the April-May general election. **PTI**

Netish flags off 'rath' to inform farmers about Govt schemes

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday flagged off 'Krishi Jagrukta Mahabhiyan and Beej Vikas Vahan Rath' to create awareness among farmers about Government schemes being run for them during the Rabi season.

Kumar flagged off 76 raths for all the 38 districts — two 'raths' each for every district — at a function held in front of CM Secretariat on the occasion of 'Krishi Jagrukta Mahabhiyan (Rabi season 2019-20) and Beej Vahan Vikas Rath, an official release said.

The 'raths' would travel to blocks, gram panchayats and villages to tell the farmers about the schemes being run by the Agriculture department during Rabi season, it said.

The raths will be move in six districts of Patna division to create awareness among farmers asking them not to burn stubble (crop residue), go for crop residue management and about benefits of other schemes being run by Agriculture department. Farmers would be made aware by showing them the documentary film, it said. **PTI**

Cong decries BJP's plan to bestow Bharat Ratna on Savarkar

Mangaluru: The Congress in Karnataka on Sunday deplored the BJP's proposal to confer Bharat Ratna on Veer Savarkar.

Addressing reporters here, KPCC spokesman Ivan D'Souza MLC said the saffron party's agenda was to score gains in Maharashtra Assembly elections by mooted such a proposal.

The BJP was attempting to promote "traitors" as patriots only during elections.

The BJP Government should not choose a person like Savarkar for the nations highest award, despite the fact that he was named in the conspiracy case to eliminate Mahatma Gandhi, he said.

The Maharashtra BJP unit had said in its election manifesto that the party would ask the Centre to confer the Bharat Ratna on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, popularly known as Veer Savarkar.

Pointing out that Savarkar had written six letters to the British revealing his wish to surrender within two weeks of landing in jail, D'Souza sought

Pointing out that Savarkar had written six letters to the British revealing his wish to surrender within two weeks of landing in jail, D'Souza sought to know how such a person could be called a freedom fighter.

He wanted the Centre to consider former State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's proposal to confer Bharat Ratna on Siddaganga seer Shivakumara Swami.

The BJP was creating unnecessary narratives during polls just to divert attention of the people from the real issues, he alleged.

Former mayor Kavitha Sanil was also present. **PTI**

Akhilesh asks Yogi to meet kin of those killed due to 'bad law and order situation' too

Lucknow: Shortly after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday met the family members of the little-known Hindu outfit's chief Kamlesh Tiwari, Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav asked him to meet the kin of those killed in the state "due to bad law and order" too.

"The CM's meeting the family members of the victim who was murdered in Lucknow is a welcome step. I hope the CM will visit Allahabad, Kannauj, Jhansi and Meerut also where family members of those killed due to bad law and order resides."

Separate murder incidents were reported in Allahabad, Kannauj, Jhansi and Meerut

districts in past few days. Tiwari's family members had earlier met the chief minister at his residence and demanded capital punishment for his killers.

Tiwari's distraught mother, his wife and three sons spent around 30 minutes with the chief minister.

Sources said the chief minister assured all possible help to the family during the meeting, assuring them that the police are seriously probing the case and the guilty persons will not be spared. The Samajwadi Party had on Saturday targeted the state government over Tiwari's murder in the State capital and sought a reply from the chief minister on this. **PTI**

NDA may lose ally in Tamil Nadu

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The already fragile National Democratic Alliance in Tamil Nadu is all set to deteriorate further with one of the constituents expressing its displeasure and thinking loudly of possible alternatives.

Puthiya Tamilagam, a Dalit outfit led by Dr K Krishnasamy, which is a prominent partner of the AIADMK-led NDA in Tamil Nadu may quit the front on its own as the alliance has failed to address an important demand raised by the party. Dr Krishnasamy, a medical doctor-turned-politician wants the Centre and State Governments to remove seven sub sects from the list of Scheduled Caste and elevate them to the status of Other Backward Community (OBC). This is the first of its kind demand in South India where most castes

prefer to be designated as SC or Scheduled Tribe to enjoy the benefits of reservation in education and employment.

Dr Krishnasamy, who belongs to the Pallar community is of the view that his caste was designated as scheduled caste erroneously by the then British colonial masters, a mistake which was not rectified by the post-independence governments. He says there are seven such sub sects designated as SC by the colonial government. "We want to save our community from this imposed identity and to reclaim the history of the community," Dr Krishnasamy told The Pioneer.

The communities Pallar, Kudumbar, Pannadi, Kaaladi, Kadayar, Devendra Kulatar and Vadhiriyar are the communities which were listed as Scheduled Caste communities. "All these communities should be integrated as Devendra Kula

Vellalar and re-designated as OBC," said the doctor.

Quoting from authentic history books, records and archive materials, the doctor says that all these sects and sub sects were land-owning communities. "Our communities were engaged in wet-land farming. The Chola-Chera-Pandya dynasties arose from the Devendra Kulla Vallalar communities. But over a period of time, we came under invasion and all our land were annexed by the aggressors. Thus we lost our position as rulers," explained Dr Krishnasamy.

He said the community members lost rights to their own land because of a rule enacted during the Chola period. "The Kudi Neeki system introduced by the Chola rulers mandated that those who could not pay taxes would not have any rights on their lands and they were denied even citizenship. The

Devendra Kula Vellalar community members who were in dire straits following the loss of their farm lands couldn't pay taxes and thus ended up as victims of many atrocities perpetrated on them. During the British rule, we were designated as marginalized and poor sections and listed as Scheduled Caste," he said.

The then leader of the community, Sreenivasan Pillai, wrote to the British authorities in 1927 itself stating that they were culturally and traditionally different from Adi-Dravidar. "The Nadars too had been facing this discrimination. But they took up the matter and travelled to London for meeting the Simon Commission. Since our community had been ruined financially, the leaders could not mobilise money for the London meeting with the Simon Commission," he said.

Mathrubhumi institutes ₹5L Book Of The Year award



PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A Prominent Malayalam daily, Mathrubhumi, has instituted a ₹5 lakh "Book Of The Year" award. The first award will be presented at the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters (MBIFL) in Thiruvananthapuram from January 30-February 2, 2020, said the newspaper's joint MD Shreyams Kumar.

"The House of Mathrubhumi has been the mother lode that has enriched Malayalam literature since our inception in 1923. For close to a century, the best of writing in the world and in Indian languages has been mined by us for the enrichment of Keralites. Thus was envisaged the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters. It hosts the brightest and the best from across the world, debating, discussing and dissenting on concepts, ideas and thoughts," Shreyams Kumar explained.

"The Mathrubhumi Book of the Year award is a commitment from Mathrubhumi to honour the best in Indian literature every year. We are inspired to honour and celebrate brilliant works, and encourage the publishers to look for the best writing by Indian authors," Shreyams Kumar said.

The award is open to Indian writers whose works are published in India. Works in regional languages should be translated to English to be eligible for the award. Kerala's prominent newspaper Mathrubhumi was launched in 1923, supporting the freedom movement in the country. This award is considered as biggest in the publication sector in India.

Modi Govt to give 'true' self-rule, autonomy to J&K: Jitendra Singh

Kathua (J&K): Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday that Jammu & Kashmir would get "true" self-rule and autonomy under the Modi Government, and it would be quite different to the "frivolous slogans" of such demands raised by Kashmir-centric political parties.

Addressing a meeting of BJP candidates contesting the block development council (BDC) election, Singh said it is important for party workers to understand and also make others understand that this is for the first time after Independence the concept of three-tier grassroots democracy comprising panchayats, BDCs and district councils and is being introduced in the State.

"Jammu & Kashmir will get true self rule and true autonomy under the Modi government, and that will be quite in contrast to the frivolous slogans of self-rule and autonomy raised by Kashmir-centric political parties, which have been befooling the people of the state for decades, only to perpetuate their dynasty rule generation after generation," the BJP leader said.

Singh said the question to be asked to the "champions of so-called autonomy" is whether they have any moral authority to "fool" the people of Kashmir by making such demands after they boycotted the panchayat and BDC elections, which he said are meant to confer autonomy to the representatives elected at the village level.

The "champions" of self-rule, he said, must reply which self-rule they are talking about when their own Government "resisted" all efforts to hold panchayat elections and, when the election did happen during the Governor's rule, they boycotted it.

The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the response to both panchayat and BDC elections had

been "enthusiastic" in Kashmir, adding that the highest number of candidates for the BDC election were not from any district in the Jammu region, but from Kupwara and Baramulla districts in the valley.

According to the minister, the central grant has started reaching directly to the local bodies for the first time, due to which many of the panchayats have already received ₹20-30 lakh in the first phase itself, which is "more than the total amount" received by them in the last several decades.

"Will the Congress party answer why they were hesitant in introducing this provision in Jammu & Kashmir even though it was brought in by their own Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi," Singh asked. "And, whether by doing so, were they not hand in glove with the Kashmir-centric dynasties seeking to appease certain section of voters at the cost of the poor man living in rural areas?" **PTI**

and road repairs within a fortnight, the Agra Municipal Corporation, is still dragging its feet.

"To an outsider, Agra appears, as if it's ravaged by a war since most roads have developed potholes and cracks after the monsoon rains. The continuous digging by one government department or the other not only raises a lot of dust but makes mobility difficult," a local resi-



dent said. "The city administration is yet to wake up to repair and clean up the roads in the city which have not only become a safety hazard but also assault the aesthetics," complains hotelier Surendra Sharma.

A new tourist season has begun, and the number of vehicles bringing in tourists via the Yamuna Expressway or the Agra-Lucknow Expressway,



A woman busy in making earthen lamps in preparation for the Diwali festival in Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday

PTI

Bumpy roads in Agra dampen tourists' spirit

Agra: Lack of infrastructure and civic amenities are deterring tourists from visiting several significant historical monuments in Agra, the city immortalised by the Taj Mahal, say a group of local industry leaders.

Though the number of tourists at the historical monuments in Agra show an encouraging trend, hoteliers and travel agents complain of pathetic lack of civic amenities.

"Tourists generally avoid visiting other monuments in the city after a 'darshan' (seeing) of the Taj Mahal, because they are too scared of bumpy roads," tourist guide Ved Gautam said.

An estimated 35,000 tourists visited the Taj on Saturday, said data on the ASI website.

While Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the district administration to complete patch work

have gone up appreciably due to the long holiday interval.

The local tourism industry is alarmed at the lack of concern and general apathy towards streamlining vital civic amenities.

"When tourists, particularly those from the developed world, arrive in Agra, they are aghast at the dismal conditions. This results in short visits, same-day return by most visitors," says President of the Agra Hotels and Restaurants Association, Rakesh Chauhan.

The rains have exposed the claims of the city administration of having patched up or filled all potholes and completed repair work on most roads.

The municipal corporation commissioner Arun Prakash says filling of potholes is continuing. Mayor Navin Jain has assured citizens that prompt

remedial measures would be taken to ensure safe mobility.

Even during the festival season, nothing was being done. Many stretches still require patchwork treatment to avoid accidents," said Pandit Jugal Kishor.

The city police has failed to demolish encroachments around monuments.

"All they do is to send notices. For want of police force, no action to evict illegal occupants is possible. You also need political will," Goswami Nandan Shrotriya of Yamuna Kinara Road said.

The city appears in shambles, with heaps of garbage dumped along railway tracks, the dry Yamuna river bed and pollution, but the official agencies entrusted with the task of transforming Agra into a smart city dry continue to show no urgency. **IANS**

Goa stray cattle turning non-vegetarian: BJP Min

Panaji: Stray cattle in Goa's tourism savvy coastal belt, which includes popular beach villages like Calangute and Candolim, have "turned non-vegetarian" and only eat scraps of chicken and fried fish, claims the state's Garbage Management Minister Michael Lobo.

Lobo, who is a BJP MLA from Calangute Assembly constituency, also said that 76 stray cattle from Calangute village, impounded and relocated to a gaushala, were refusing to eat vegetarian food and that specialist veterinarians had been roped in to wean them of their meat fetish.

"We have lifted 76 cattle from Calangute and taken them to the gaushala run by the Gomantak Gosevak Mahasang

in Mayem village, where they are being well looked after. We always say cattle are vegetarian. But cattle from Calangute have turned non-vegetarian and do not eat grass, gram or the special cattle feed given to them," Lobo said, on the sidelines of a village function in Arpora village in North Goa on Saturday.

"The cattle from Calangute and Candolim are used to eating non-vegetarian food like leftover chicken scraps, stale fried fish from restaurants. Due to consumption of such non-vegetarian food, their system has become like that of humans. Earlier they were vegetarian, pure vegetarian. They would smell non-vegetarian food and move on, but now cattle from Calangute only eat non-vegetarian food," he said. **IANS**

BJP-Sena favourite in Maharashtra going to polls today

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In its bid to recapture power in Maharashtra, the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena alliance goes into Monday's Assembly polls as favourites against a dispirited Opposition Congress-NCP alliance that is fighting a desperate battle for political survival in a State that it ruled for 15-long years.

As much as it is for the ruling saffron alliance, it is a high-stake election for 49-year-old Devendra Fadnavis who, if the BJP-Shiv Sena is voted back to power, will re-occupy the saddle as the Chief Minister for the second consecutive term. Incidentally, he is the only second Chief Minister of Maharashtra after late VP Naik to have completed his full five-year term.

Monday's polls are also a litmus test for the Congress, which ruled the State for five decades either as a single party or in alliance with the NCP but currently finds itself in total disarray. Going by the fact that Rahul Gandhi addressed just six public rallies and Congress president Sonia Gandhi (as also Priyanka Gandhi Vadra) stayed from the poll campaign, the Congress appears to have given up on Maharashtra even before the polls.

The polls will also test the continued acceptability or otherwise of 78-year-old Sharad Pawar, who shouldered the responsibility of being the sole full-fledged campaigner for the NCP. Dismissing the ruling BJP's claim that he would "retire" permanently after the



Assembly polls, Pawar went to town with much-discussed comment "Abhi tho main Jawaan hu... I will pack off everyone home first then I will go." As against 24 public rallies he had addressed in the 2014 Assembly polls, Pawar addressed 65 political rallies—including the one in Satara amid pouring rain—in the current polls.

The electoral battle is also significant from the Shiv Sena's point of view. The 53-year-old Shiv Sena launched Aditya Thackeray into electoral politics. Incidentally, 29-year-old Aditya is the first Thackeray in four generations of Thackerays to be contesting an election. If the saffron alliance returns to power in the State, Aditya—who is contesting from Worli constituency in south-central Mumbai—will be part of the new government. It remains to be seen if he will land the deputy chief minister's post.

The election will also make or mar the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), which had skipped the

2019 Lok Sabha polls but is contesting 101 seats in the Assembly election. The MNS, which had made an impressive debut in the 2009 Assembly by winning 13 seats, put up a pathetic performance in the 2014 Assembly polls, by winning a mere one seat out of total 219 seats it had contested.

An estimated 8.98 crore voters, who are eligible to exercise their franchise in Monday's, will decide the fate of 3,237 candidates including scores of political bigwigs, perhaps the only chief ministerial aspirant, scores of ministerial aspirants and Gen-next politicians, in Monday's polls.

With dice loaded heavily in its favour, the ruling saffron alliance is going all out not only to post a highest winning tally, but also to decimate the Congress and NCP which had collectively won just 83 seats out of the total 288 seats in the 2014 State Assembly polls and together established leads in mere 45 Assembly segments in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

While the BJP-Shiv Sena



alliance has a lot to look forward to—even in the face of a threat posed by 50-odd rebels in the fray, the Congress-NCP alliance hopes against hope to put up a respectable performance that will help the two parties to set their respective houses in order and stage a comeback at a later stage.

In the current polls, the BJP is contesting as many as 164 seats, while the Shiv Sena has fielded candidates in the remaining 124 constituencies. The break-up of seats contested by other political parties is as follows: Congress- 147, NCP-121, MNS- 101, BSP- 262, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA)- 288, CPI-16 and CPI(M)- 8. There are 604 candidates from other registered parties, while the remaining 1,400 candidates are Independents.

In the 2014 polls which the saffron alliance partners had contested on their respec-

tive strengths, the BJP had won an all-time high of 122 seats as against 260 out of the total 288 seats it had contested. The Shiv Sena had walked away with 63 seats out of 282 seats it had contested. On the other hand, the Congress bagged 42 seats out of 287 seats it had contested, while the NCP emerged fourth by winning 41 out of 278 it had contested.

More than Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah, the focus in the Assembly polls has been on Fadnavis, who led the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance's campaign. He had hit the campaign trail as early as August 1, seven weeks before the Election Commission declared the date for the Assembly polls. In all, he covered 220 Assembly constituencies during his campaigning.

Fadnavis is contesting from the prestigious Nagpur South-

West seat. His main rival is Congress' Ashish Deshmukh. There are also 18 contenders including seven independents, in the fray.

Two former Chief Ministers Prithviraj Chavan and Ashok Chavan are two other key candidates. While Prithviraj is taking on BJP's Atulbaba Suresh Bhosale in his home constituency of Karad south in Satara district, Ashok Chavan is contesting against the BJP's Shrinivas alias Bapusaheb Deshmukh Gorthekar in Bhokar constituency of Nanded.

Two former Deputy Chief Ministers—Ajit Pawar and Chhagan Bhujbal—are in the fray. While Ajitdada—as Ajit Pawar is known in the Maharashtra politics—is locked in a contest with BJP's Gopichand Kundlik Padalkar in his home constituency of Baramati, Bhujbal is seeking re-election from his stronghold Yevla against Shiv Sena's Sambhaji Sahebrao Pawar and six others including three independents.

Maharashtra BJP president Chandrakant Patil is contesting polls from Kothrud in Pune, while his Congress counterpart Babasaheb Thorat and State NCP chief Jayant Patil are contesting from Sangamner in Ahmednagar and Islampur in Sangli in western Maharashtra, respectively.

Late Gopinath Munde's daughter and State minister Pankaja Munde and his nephew and leader of the Opposition in the State Legislative Council are locked

in a fierce contest in Parli constituency of Beed district in Marathawada region.

From among the Gen-next politicians, veteran Congress leader Sushilkumar Shinde's daughter Praniti Shinde is seeking re-election from Solapur South Central in western Maharashtra, while former Chief Minister Shivajirao Nilangekar's son Ashok Patil Nilangekar is contesting from Nilanga constituency. Former Chief Minister Narayan Rane's Nitesh Rane is contesting as a BJP candidate against Narayan Rane's former aide Satish Sawant of the Shiv Sena.

Similarly, late Vilasrao Deshmukh's son elder Amit is seeking re-election from Latur City seat, while his younger son Dhiraj is contesting from Latur Rural. Sharad Pawar's grand-nephew Rohit Pawar is making electoral debut from Karjat-Jamkhed in Ahmednagar district.

Prominent candidates in Mumbai are BJP's city president Mangalprabhat Lodha, who is contesting from upmarket Malabar Hill constituency against Congress' Hira Navaji Devasi and eight others and NCP's city president Nawab Malik, who is taking on Sena's Tukaram Ramkrushna Kate and 13 others from Anushakti Nagar.

Mumbai Mayor Vishwanath Pandurang Mahadeshwar of the Shiv Sena is battling it out against Sena's rebel and sitting party MLA Trupti Prakash Sawant, who was expelled recently by the Sena, and the Congress'

Zeeshan Baba Siddique.

In Nala Sopara, former encounter specialist and Sena candidate Pradeep Sharma is pitted against Bahujan Vikas Aghadi's sitting MLA Kshitij Hitendra Thakur.

Excepting in constituencies where there are strong candidates of the MNS or the Prakash Ambedkar-led VBA, there are straight contests all over state.

On its part, the BJP is taking on the NCP candidates in 60 constituencies, while it is pitted against the Congress candidates in 94 constituencies. The BJP is engaged in contests with other parties in 10 remaining seats.

The Shiv Sena is locked in a straight contest with the NCP in 57 seats, while it slugging it out against the Congress in 52 seats. The Sena is fighting other parties in the remaining 15 seats.

The MNS may cut into the Shiv Sena and BJP vote banks in a dozen of the 101 seats it is contests. Interesting, the Shiv Sena is covertly supporting the MNS in several of the constituencies where the BJP has put up its candidates.

There are nearly 50 rebels belonging to the BJP and Shiv Sena in the fray. At least 30 to 35 of them may votes of either BJP or the Shiv Sena.

The VBA, which damaged the chances of the Congress and NCP in Lok Sabha polls, is contesting 270-odd seats. But, its presence in the Assembly polls may not do much of harm to any of the parties in the State Assembly polls.

UP Assembly bypolls crucial test for BJP, Cong State unit chiefs

Lucknow: The BJP's Swatantra Dev Singh and the Congress' Ajay Kumar Lallu are keen to hit a victory note as their party's Uttar Pradesh unit chiefs in the bypolls to 11 Assembly seats on Monday to boost morale of their workers before the 2022 state elections.

Of the 11 seats going to the bypolls, eight were held by the BJP and the Pratapgarh seat was held by its ally Apna Dal (Sonelal). The BJP, BSP, SP and the Congress have fielded their candidates on all the seats.

The saffron party is hoping to increase its tally in the Legislative Assembly by registering a win in Rampur, held by the Samajwadi Party, and in

Jalalpur, held by the Bahujan Samaj Party.

On the other hand, the opposition parties are expecting to repeat the success they tasted in the bypolls to Gorakhpur, Phulpur and Kairana Lok Sabha seats, and in Noorpur assembly constituency last year.

The Congress, in particular, hopes to show signs of revival in UP after its battering in the Lok Sabha polls in when it won just one seat, party chief Sonia Gandhi's Rae Bareilly constituency. In contrast, the BJP won 62 of the 80 parliamentary seats in the state and an ally bagged two more. The BSP and the SP, which were in an alliance in the general elec-

tions, ended their tie-up after the polls. The BSP-SP combine won 15 seats. In the 2017 Assembly polls, the SP had a tie-up with the Congress.

Campaigning for the bypolls saw Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath targeting the Congress on the issue of abrogation of Article 370 provisions. He also hit out the SP and BSP over corruption.

Both Swatantra Dev Singh and Ajay Kumar Lallu exuded confidence that their parties will emerge victorious in the bypolls. While, Singh claimed that the bypolls will be "one-sided" for the BJP, Lallu said there are "indication of good results for the party". **PTI**

Will rains play spoilsport in Kerala bypolls?

Thiruvananthapuram: With all ready for Monday's bypolls to five Kerala assembly constituencies—Vattiyoorakavu, Aroor, Konni, Ernakulam and Manjerwaram, what remains to be seen is - would the rain god play spoilsport?

The IMD weather forecast for Monday is a yellow alert indicating more than moderate rains and if it turns out to be true, then barring Manjerwaram in Kasargode district, all the remaining four constituencies are located in yellow alert areas, and could see rains, which in turn could lead to a not so enthusiastic turnout.

Barring Aroor, the other

four seats are held by the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) at present. Historically, the general perception in the state is if there is low voter turnout, the beneficiary is the CPI-M led LDF and affects the Congress-led UDF, as their not so die-hard voters prefer to remain indoors. With a yellow alert already in force for Sunday and raining hard, candidates of the three political fronts were seen engaged in last minute hectic campaigning by visiting Churches, meeting voters individually at their homes and making a bee line to wedding halls and the homes of death. **IANS**

Why so many rallies of PM, Shah if no Oppn challenge? Shiv Sena

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena on Sunday sought to know why top BJP leaders held so many rallies for the Maharashtra Assembly polls, when Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis feels there is no Opposition left in the fray to challenge his party-led alliance.

In a column in Shiv Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana', party's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut also claimed that the poll plunge of Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray's son Aadiya Thackeray will change the state's "political dynamics" in coming years.

Hinting at the waning strength of the Opposition parties, Fadnavis recently said

there was no "wrestler" left in the fray who can challenge the BJP-led alliance.

"The chief minister has been asserting that the opposition 'does not exist' any more in the poll campaign. The question then arises about the motive behind some 10 rallies of (Prime Minister) Modi, 30 of (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah, and Fadnavis himself holding 100 rallies across Maharashtra," Raut said.

The same question is being raised by NCP chief Sharad Pawar as well, which is not wrong, he said.

"Though Fadnavis said he is not facing any opposition challenge, in reality there is elec-

toral challenge, which forced the BJP leaders to hold so many rallies," Raut, the Marathi daily's executive editor, claimed in his column 'RokhThok'.

He further said that Aadiya Thackeray's foray into elections was going to change the "political dynamics" of the state in coming years.

"He is contesting elections not to just sit in the Assembly, but the new generation wants him to lead the state," he claimed.

Aadiya Thackeray, the first member from his family to enter the electoral battle, is contesting the polls from Mumbai's Worli Assembly constituency. **PTI**

We should learn decent ways to disagree with one another: Bengal Gov

Kolkata: Freedom to express views is a golden gift of the Constitution and intolerance for it in any form can destroy the democratic fabric of the country, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar said on Sunday.

Dhankar's comments came close on the heels of West Bengal Congress spokesman Sanmoy Bandopadhyay's arrest over alleged criticism of the TMC government and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on social media.

"Expressions of your view point is a golden gift of the Constitution and its intolerance in any form is destructive of democracy. Let's learn decent ways to disagree one another. Intolerance by structured mechanism is painfully worrying (sic)," he said in a tweet without naming any-

one.

The governor has been on a collision course with the Trinamool Congress government in the state since he 'rescued' Union minister Babul Supriyo who was mobbed by angry students at the Jadavpur University here on September 19. Reacting to this, the Trinamool Congress said there was no need to give reply to each and every utterance of Dhankar, while the opposition BJP and the Congress blamed the ruling party to have failed to give due respect to the post of the governor.

TMC secretary general and state minister Partha Chatterjee said, "There is no need to respond to every single utterance of the governor. We don't have the will to hog newspaper headlines every day." **PTI**

Hopeful Abhijit Banerjee will give suggestions to overcome economic crisis: Dilip Ghosh

Kolkata: West Bengal BJP chief Dilip Ghosh on Sunday said he was hopeful that Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee, who has drawn criticism from a section of saffron party leaders, will give valuable suggestions for overcoming the economic crisis.

Distancing himself from the unpleasant remarks made against Banerjee by some BJP leaders, Ghosh said people may have divergent views about the acclaimed economist.

"He is a big personality and has made a huge achievement; many people are expressing their views, they are all entitled to their opinion," he said.

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, at a media briefing in Pune, recently described Banerjee as a "Left-leaning" person. Goyal on Friday also said Banerjee's suggestion of a minimum income scheme has been rejected by Indian voters and

there was no need to "accept what he thinks". Echoing similar sentiments, Rahul Sinha, a national secretary of the BJP, also claimed that Banerjee's economic theories have not been proved on the ground in India. Ghosh, also a Lok Sabha MP from Medinipur, asserted that that he was among the first to congratulate the Indian-born American economist after the announcement.

"I am sure he will give good suggestions for overcoming the economic crisis that the country as well as the entire world is going through," Ghosh said. Leading a 'Gandhi Sankalp Yatra' at Kamarhati on the northern outskirts of the city, in which central Minister Nityanand Rai also participated, Ghosh said apart from a social message, the saffron party is also "giving a call for a change" in the State through this programme. **PTI**

Anyone who harms J&K peace process will be jailed: Madhav

Srinagar: With the abrogation of article 370, Jammu and Kashmir is treading on the path of peace and development and anyone who tries to create hurdles in the way will be dealt with sternly, BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav said here on Sunday.

"Till now everything used to be done for a few families or a few leaders in Kashmir, but now whatever is happening, is happening for lakhs of families of this state... For the common Kashmiri," Madhav said.

"There will now be only two paths for J&K-- peace and development and whosoever comes in between will be dealt with sternly. There are many jails in India for those," he added.

The BJP leader was addressing a convention of the party's youth wing at Tagore Hall here which was the first political

event in Kashmir after the abrogation of article 370 and bifurcation of the state into two Union territories.

Asking politicians not to treat the people of Jammu and Kashmir as fodder for their politics, Madhav who visited the valley for the first time since the abrogation of article 370 said if 200-300 people are to be kept inside jails to achieve the path to peace and development, "then we will keep them".

"You can do your politics without disturbing the peace. Some leaders are sending messages while sitting inside jails that people will take to gun and sacrifice themselves. I want to tell those leaders to come forward first and sacrifice themselves," he said. "Politicians here were making common people a fodder for their politics and the general public was being

used. But, we will not allow such politics now. We want politics of development and corruptions will be eradicated fully from here," he added. Wanting to assure the people of Kashmir on the apprehensions about losing jobs or land, the BJP national general secretary said no step

would be taken against the interests of the people. "Some people are talking nonsense about job losses and losing land with the abrogation of article 370. No step will be taken against your interests. Each job in the state will be provided to the youth of the State." **PTI**

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
(SEE SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Naushad Ahmad S/o Shamim Ahmad R/o H. No. 13, Gali No. 9, Brijpuri Extension, Parwana Road, Delhi**, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case F.I.R. No. **105/18 U/s 354/354D/341/506/451 IPC at P.S. Jagatpuri, Delhi** and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Naushad Ahmad** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Naushad Ahmad** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Naushad Ahmad** of F.I.R. No. **105/18 U/s 354/354D/341/506/451 IPC at P.S. Jagatpuri, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated **25.11.2019**.
By Order
Ms. Deepti Devesh
M.M. Mahila Court No. 1
DP/1255/SHD/19
(-Court Matter) Room No. 55, Karkardooma Court, Delhi

VS turns 96, leaders wish oldest communist leader in the country

Thiruvananthapuram: Veteran CPI(M) leader and former Kerala Chief Minister V S Achutanandan turned 96 on Sunday and celebrated the occasion by cutting a cake.

In the persence of close family members and well wishers, Achutanandan cut a cake and his wife gave him a small piece to mark the occasion.

As leaders from various political parties, friends, well wishers and media personnel turned up to wish him, Achutanandan thanked everyone.

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan was among

those who extended birthday wishes to the senior leader.

"Conveyed my heartfelt wishes to Shri VS Achutanandan, former Chief Minister and senior leader on his 96th birthday."

Shri VS Achutanandan is one of the most respected political figures of Kerala," Khan tweeted. The Governor would be visiting Achutanandan tomorrow to wish him personally. CPI(M) state secretary, Kodieryi Balakrishnan, Senior Congress leader AK Antony, telephonically wished Achutanandan on his birthday. **PTI**

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Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India
'Nehru Bhawan', 5, Institutional Area, Phase-II
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Website: www.nbtindia.gov.in

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR OUTDOOR HOARDINGS FOR PROMOTION OF NDWBF 2020

National Book Trust, India (NBT, India), an autonomous organization under Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India is organizing the annual **New Delhi World Book Fair 2020** from 4th to 12th January 2020 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Applications are invited for EOI to empanel reputed agencies for conducting campaign through Outdoor media such as hoardings, bus/train panels, kiosks, illuminated signage, display panels etc. in Delhi region only. The display is proposed to be implemented with the objective of increasing footfall and improving awareness amongst general public towards NDWBF 2020 the largest Book Fair in the Afro-Asian region. The applicant should be an empanelled agency of DAVP. For Application Form and detailed terms and conditions, please refer to our website i.e. www.nbtindia.gov.in. Last date for submitting applications is **1 November 2019**.

The decision of the Director, NBT, India will be final and binding.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector - 6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors / firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes / amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A) (1) **66/G.M.(R)/AO/SM-JAL-OA/18-19-** Strengthening Of STP (Annual Repairing and maintenance of Submersible Motor Pump at 34 MLD SPS and 25 MLD Sector-50) Noida, Cost. 48.28 Lac

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 30.10.2019 upto 5:00 PM. Pre-Qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 31.10.2019 at 11:00 AM.

Office :-
Water Works Compound, Sector - 5, Noida General Manager (R),
G.B. Nagar, (U.P.) Noida

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NOTICE INVITING BID
For and on behalf of Governor of J&K State, the Principal Resident Commissioner, J&K Government, New Delhi invites bids from the authorized/registered agencies for providing Housekeeping Services and outsourcing of Manpower at the Guest House of J&K Government, located at Kautilya Marg, Chanakypuri and 5-Prithvi Raj Road, New Delhi for various Services as per the details given in the tender document.

The tender document may be collected from the office of undersigned at 5-Prithvi Raj Road, New Delhi on payment of tender cost of Rs.2000/- (non-refundable) through Bank Draft in favour of Principal Resident Commissioner, New Delhi on any working day from Monday to Friday between 09.30AM to 05.00 PM.

Chief Pay & Accounts Officer,
Resident Commission

No.: KBI/AdvU/1856-58/2019 No: KRC/H.K/Misc./260/566/19
Dated: 18/10/2019 Dated: 18/10/2019

MONEY STUCK FOR NEARLY A MONTH

PMC Bank depositors stare at uncertain future

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI

Nearly a month after the RBI clamped down on the operations of scam-hit PMC Bank, the depositors say their woes have only worsened, with some unable to pay school fees of their wards, while others finding it difficult to meet medical expenses.

Many fear that they might lose their lifetime earnings deposited in savings accounts, or in the form of fixed deposits. Businessmen like MA Chaudhary complained that they were unable to either pay salaries to their workers, nor pay taxes or even the electricity bills after the cheques issued by the PMC Bank bounced.

So far, three depositors have lost their lives, apparently due to the crisis.

Established in 1984 in Sion in central Mumbai, the bank now has branches in six States but most of them are concentrated in the metropolises of Mumbai and Delhi.

On September 24, the bank's Managing Director Joy Thomas sent an SMS to its

depositors about the Reserve Bank of India imposing regulatory restrictions, capping the withdrawals up to ₹1,000 for six months.

Since then, he has been arrested, along with the promoters of Housing Development Infrastructure Limited (HDIL) Rakesh and Sarang Wadhawan, in an alleged fraud case.

After protests from account holders, the RBI raised the amount to ₹10,000 and then to ₹40,000 earlier this month.

However, the depositors, who have deposited lakhs and in some cases even crores in the bank, said the amount is too less even to meet the monthly expenses.

Tek Chand (71), a retired Government servant and a resident of Janakpuri in west Delhi, said his family has over ₹18 lakh deposited in the Tilak Nagar branch of the bank.

His wife has to undergo dialysis which costs him ₹10,000 per month and half his monthly pension goes into it.

There are many like Chand whose source of sustenance is



Senior citizen Harish Malkani (69) with his wife Rani Malkani (L) at their home in Mumbai. Both husband and wife are retired civil servants and have deposited all their savings in PMC Bank. They depend on the interest received from the bank for their day to day expenses

the interest they get from their fixed deposits.

Anuradha Sen (61), a resident of Malviya Nagar in south Delhi, said she deposited ₹15 lakh in the bank.

"My livelihood is dependent on the interest from it," she said.

Sen said she was also upset with the government for not doing enough to help the account holders get back their hard earned money.

"I am annoyed. We gave them a thumping majority not to put us in this crisis. If this continues, I am surely not

going to vote in their favour next election," she said.

Malviya Nagar resident Ravindra Kumar Jha (40), an interior designer by profession, said he was struggling to pay the school fees of his two children and manage the household expenses.

He said he has ₹32 lakh deposits in his PMC Bank account but cannot access them.

Jha also complained of blood pressure after the irregularities in the bank surfaced.

"I have two school going kids. I need to manage their fees and household expenses. Recently, I met with an accident and I have not recovered yet. I never had a blood pressure problem, and now with each passing day, it is becoming difficult to survive in Delhi. Sometimes I feel like committing suicide."

"I had planned to start a new business this Navratri. Unfortunately, I deposited the surplus cash of ₹4 lakh that I had kept for emergency. Now I feel so helpless. It is my hard-earned money," he said.



MA Chaudhary, another businessman, said he has deposits of ₹35 lakh in savings account and ₹16 lakh in his current account but he is not able to access his money.

"A PMC Bank cheque issued to pay electricity bills bounced because no one would process it. I do not have money even to pay my quarterly GST," Chaudhary said.

For several depositors, the PMC Bank scam has shattered their trust in the banking system. Gurjyot Singh Keer (25) was eight when he first opened

an account in the bank's Mulund west branch in north-west Mumbai under the 'Baal Bachat Yojana'.

The lender has been central to the Keers, residents of Mulund west, and the family members have a deposit of over ₹3 crore.

"I was in awe of the bank since my childhood. Our family always believed in cash and I fought with them saying depositing money in banks is good. Today, I am fighting for the same money stuck in the bank," 25-year-old Keer, who

runs a coaching institute, said. There has been a domino effect of the crisis, where the whole "circle of money" has stopped, he said.

Students hailing from the Mulund area, a lot of whose families have accounts in the bank, are unable to pay their fees, Keer said, adding he is also not able to pay his teachers who are paid on a weekly basis as the money is stuck.

Twenty-four year-old Manali Narkar, a resident of Kanjurmarg in northwest Mumbai, said her family has been banking with the PMC since last 27 years.

The biology teacher and her family have over ₹28 lakh in accounts with the bank. It was the good service that made Narkar and her family continue with the bank, she said.

"I am losing my patience and money with every passing day. I have put all my hard earned money in the bank and this is what I get in the end. What wrong did I do that I am being made to beg for my own money?" 71-year-old Chand asked.

Top leaders from India, US to discuss trade, geopolitics

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Top leaders and corporate executives from India and the US will gather in New Delhi on October 21 for a day-long brain storming session on trade and geopolitics.

To be hosted by US India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF) with the theme "Partners of Growth", the second annual India Leadership Summit would also be attended by former US Secretary of State and statesman Henry Kissinger, Condoleezza Rice, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar among others.

"The relationship between India and the US is not just about trade. It's not just about geopolitical. Now it has gone beyond that. It is about learning how you build research-led universities, learning on managing waste, learning on quality of air exchange of scientists," USISPF president Mukesh Agni told PTI in an interview.

"What I'm saying is that there has to be a platform which encourages, supports and propagates these discussions," Agni added.

Over 300 influential and powerful people from India and the US are joining the summit which aims to focus on the immense potential that the US-India relationship has in



areas beyond trade including sustainability, security, energy access and innovation.

"The whole objective is to keep the momentum going in this relationship and come up with some plus factors, some action items so we can move forward next 12 months this relationship," Agni said.

"Because we don't have the bureaucratic limitation, we are nimble, run and build businesses, we can react, move things much faster," he added.

Agni said the objective is basically to enhance the relationship between the two nations.

"We have no political agenda. Our objective is to enhance this relationship," he said.

He said that for the top American CEOs to fly only for

this conference and spend a few days in India is a reflection of their commitment to India.

"If you would want to call it India's Davos, start of that. That's what I see it," he said.

"Our theme is partners in progress, what is a win win for both countries. That's what we're going to focus on. For example, India is energy deficit and US is energy surplus. How do you basically collaborate not just purely from procuring oil and LNG, but more research in this area?" he said.

"Does India need to follow the same economic growth model what the western development took place. Is it possible to explore our different to growth agenda for India?" he asked, referring to some of the thought provoking issues for the brain storming sessions.

India-US trade negotiations going in full speed: Sitharaman

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said the negotiations between India and the US on a trade deal are going in "full speed" and expressed hope that an agreement will be structured soon.

The ongoing trade deal negotiations briefly came up for discussion during a pull aside between Sitharaman and US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin at the IMF headquarters. Mnuchin is scheduled to visit India early next month.

"In fact, I broadly mentioned it to Secretary Mnuchin, but that is something on which the Commerce minister and Mr (Robert) Lighthizer (US Trade Representatives) are working. My inputs are that the negotiations are going in full speed and there's a great intensity with which both sides are engaging and hopefully the deal will be structured soon," Sitharaman said on Saturday.

India is demanding exemption from high duties imposed by the US on certain steel and aluminium products, resumption of export benefits to certain domestic products under their Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), greater market access for its products from sectors, including agriculture,

automobile, auto components and engineering.

On the other hand, the US wants greater market access for its farm and manufacturing products, dairy items and medical devices, and cut on import duties on some ICT products. The US has also raised concerns over high trade deficit with India. In 2018-19, India's exports to the US stood at \$52.4 billion, while imports were \$35.5 billion. Trade deficit dipped from \$21.3 billion in 2017-18 to \$16.9 billion in 2018-19.

Responding to a question, Sitharaman said a totalisation agreement with the US has always been on the cards.

Totalisation agreement seeks to eliminate dual taxation with regards to social security and medicare taxes in the United States.

"One of the reasons why that was never responded to was that India did not have a social welfare net or social insurance cover for Indians in India. And therefore, if they had to give it, they wouldn't be given in the sense where would it be used?" she said.

"Today, I think most private insurances or for many of the families which are below the certain level of income, Ayushman Bharat is a fantastic big coverage.

Will design blueprint for firms leaving China: FM

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said she will prepare a blueprint for international companies that are looking beyond China to make India as their preferred investment destination.

She said industry leaders who are contemplating getting their businesses out of China are "definitely considering India as the pitch".

Therefore, she said, it might be important for the government to now see and meet up with a lot of industry leaders and invite them to India.

"I'd certainly be doing that...I go back and design in some way whereby I will identify those multinational corporations, all American businesses or any other country European or a British origin who are moving out of China or who probably are even contemplating," she said.

"I will make a blueprint with which I will approach them and put forward to them as to why India is a far more preferable destination," Sitharaman told a group of Indian reporters on Saturday at the conclusion of her interactions at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank here.

That could also be in spe-



cific areas in which India has common capacity ecosystem building, whether it's electronics, lithium ion battery or any other semiconductors, she added.

However, Sitharaman said the government's decision is not just going to be purely on the basis of what is happening presently between the United States and China.

"That could either aggravate the situation or probably just influence at some level. But the fact remains that there are companies which are looking at relocating for various other reasons also," she said.

"That is why I gave that little fine line that I'm drawing about companies which would want to locate elsewhere outside of China. Even as I said that, I said that not every company wants to lock, stock and barrel get out of China, there are companies which will remain there to service the Chinese market.

"After all little China as a very big domestic market and the their purchasing power, consumption style may be very different from what it is in India, but I'm making that margin already that companies will probably be there to service the Chinese market tension or not tension," the Union minister said.

She said India wants to create an ecosystem to invite the companies to tap the country's market.

"I'm allowing that margin already. Over in about that for those companies, even if they continue to be in China but still would want to produce from elsewhere either to export or to capture a new hub, domestic market like India," Sitharaman said.

"There was one thing very clear that India is still for them (companies), one of the biggest options to consider," she added.

The minister said it is perceived that the opportunities in Vietnam are not that much attractive.

"In fact, today, one of the conversations that I was having with some of the bank and the government representatives was that even Vietnam now probably is getting saturated. They don't have enough manpower to address expansionary programmes of investment," she said.

DPIIT sends queries to Amazon, Flipkart on FDI norms adherence

New Delhi: After repeated complaints by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) over alleged violation of FDI norms by e-commerce majors, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has sent a questionnaire to Amazon and Flipkart over their adherence to the norms for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

The questions are concerned with their fund flow, business model and inventory management, people in the know of things said, adding that it also asks the names of their respective top five sellers and price list of vendors on these platforms. Official sources said that the department would look into their replies and then decide whether more clarification is required or any action needs to be taken.

"It is basically related to the complaints of small retailers, and a series of questions have been sent to them which are relevant to understand the allegations which small retailers make about these online platforms which are under FDI," a source told IANS.

Questions sent to Amazon and Flipkart by IANS, however, were not immediately replied. Traders' body CAIT

has time and again approached the government for its intervention regarding the "deep" discounts offered by these platforms during festival sales. CAIT recently sought an independent audit of the business models of both Amazon and Flipkart on the charges of predatory pricing and deep discounting, among others.

The move by DPIIT comes after Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal last week warned of strict action against e-commerce companies if they were found violating India's e-commerce policy.

In a related development, CAIT on Sunday alleged that not only the e-commerce companies, but even large number of brands in mobile, FMCG, electronics, electrical appliances, footwear, garments, gift articles, watches and other segments as well as several banks are also responsible for distortion of prices of different products on online portals.

"It is apparent that these brand-owning companies are also exploiting the offline market being hand in glove with e-commerce companies having separate price policy for both online and offline markets which is a clear violation of the Competition Act," CAIT said in a statement. IANS

Paddy, basmati see increase in sown area over last year

ANS ■ NEW DELHI

Paddy acreages in the current fiscal have grown by 6.5 per cent and basmati acreages have increased by a whopping 36 per cent in comparison to kharif 2018 but the increased cultivation may turn out to be a challenge due to growth concerns at the global level and within India.

National Collateral Management Services conducted a field-based crop survey for assessment of acreage, crop health and production of basmati rice during kharif 2019. The survey was com-



missioned by the Basmati Export Development Foundation, founded by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export

Development Authority.

As per the latest kharif sowing report released by the Agriculture Ministry on September 27, all India paddy acreages are reported at 382 lakh hectares which are 1 per cent lower than 2018 paddy acreages of 387 lakh hectares.

This survey is at variance with the government report and paddy cultivation is higher as per the NCML survey with total paddy acreages during kharif 2019 estimated at 6,204,000 hectares which are 6.5 per cent higher than last year's acreage of 5,825,000 hectares.

Two-wheeler exports rise 4% in April-Sep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two-wheeler exports rose by over 4 per cent in the April-September period of the current fiscal, with Bajaj Auto leading the segment by shipping over 9 lakh units to various markets, including Africa and Latin America, as per latest data by industry body SIAM.

Two-wheeler dispatches, including motorcycles, scooters and mopeds, stood at 17,93,957 units in the first half of the current fiscal, as compared to 17,23,280 units in the same period of 2018-19.

Scooter exports during the period under review stood at

2,01,277 units, down 10.87 per cent from 2,25,821 units in the April-September period of 2018-19.

Motorcycle shipments, however, rose by 6.81 per cent during the period at 15,85,338 units as against 14,84,252 units earlier. On the other hand, exports of mopeds were down by a massive 44.41 per cent at 7,342 units as compared to 13,207 units in April-September period last year.

Pune-based Bajaj Auto led the segment with shipments of 9,34,581 units, up 7.5 per cent from same period last fiscal, the data by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) showed. It was fol-

lowed by TVS Motor Company and Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) which exported 3,43,337 and 1,74,469 units, respectively, during the period under review.

Bajaj exports its bikes to over 70 countries and last year dispatched around 40 per cent of its total production to Africa, Latin America and Middle East markets. The company exported around 20 lakh units last fiscal.

Similarly, TVS Motor Company exported 3,43,337 units in the April-September period this fiscal, up 6.24 per cent from same period last fiscal. On the other hand, HMSI's overseas dispatches were 23.09

SpiceJet plans to operate wide-body planes next year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

SpiceJet plans to induct wide-body planes early next year and is looking at various options as the budget airline steers ahead with its ambitious expansion plans, according to a senior official.

The low-cost carrier is looking at options from Boeing and Airbus. An industry source said that SpiceJet might bid for Air India's wide-body operations in case the government puts up domestic and international operations for sale separately.

Currently, SpiceJet operates only Boeing and Bombardier planes.

Jio slams Trai's IUC review as anti-poor

Move sabotages PM's Digital India vision: Jio

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Jio has alleged that review of call connect charges by Trai "sabotages" the Prime Minister's vision for Digital India, and will hit not only the regulator's credibility but also investor confidence as the move protects vested interests of some old operators.

Continuing its relentless attack on the regulator and old operators over the contentious IUC (interconnect usage charge) issue that has polarised the industry, Jio alleged that Trai's move is arbitrary, bad in law, unwarranted, and anti-poor. Any change in implementation of original timeline of January 1, 2020 will end the free voice regime and is likely to increase tariffs which is against consumer interest, Jio claimed.

Typically, a telecom operator pays for completing calls made by its subscribers to a rival network. This is done by paying the rival network an interconnect usage charge, which currently is 6 paise per minute.

Trai's move to reopen the deadline for ending charges for terminating calls on rival networks beyond January 2020 had forced Jio to levy a 6 paise per minute charge on its users recently, effectively ending its free call regime.



Submitting its official response to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on the IUC matter, Jio alleged that "certain incumbent telcos" want their large body of 2G customers to forever remain digitally disempowered and deprived of the fruits of the digital revolution. Trai's consultation paper "protects and perpetuates the vested interests" of such players, it added.

Jio accused certain old operators of exploiting their 2G customers by charging "extortionist rates" for voice calls, which are offered free to all Jio's 4G-only customers.

"The Consultation Paper...Undermines and sabotages Prime Minister's Digital India vision and mission," Jio said in its comment to Trai's consultation paper.

It is unfortunate that instead of profiting the poor and marginalised sections of Indian society, the consultation paper has chosen to help profiteers in the telecom business, Jio alleged.

Ronaldo scores as Juve top serie A Table

AFP ■ MILAN

Cristiano Ronaldo and Miralem Pjanic sealed a 2-1 win for Juventus over Bologna to consolidate top spot in Serie A.

Ronaldo was presented with a special jersey before kick-off to mark his 700th career goal scored playing for Portugal during the week.

The 34-year-old hit his 701st after 19 minutes, with Pjanic adding a second eight minutes after the break following a blunder by Brazilian defender Danilo, who had earlier pulled Bologna level.

The defending champions are now four points clear of second-placed Inter Milan, who travel to Sassuolo on Sunday.

Atalanta stay third after throwing away a three-goal lead to draw 3-3 with Lazio, with fourth-placed Napoli closing the gap to just one point after Arkadiusz Milik's double saw off Verona.

"The road is the right one, but we need to work on some details. It was a good match blighted by three or four errors," said Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri whose side host Lokomotiv Moscow in Champions League action on Tuesday.

Bologna coach Sinisa Mihajlovic returned to the bench in Turin after his second course of chemotherapy as he battles cancer.

And the visitors were given reason to hope of snatching a rare point against the Turin giants when Danilo responded to Ronaldo's opener with a 29th-minute volley.

But Pjanic sealed victory with his third goal in four games in the 54th minute amid chaos in front of the Bologna goal.

Bologna keeper Lukasz Skorupski denied Ronaldo and in-form Gonzalo Higuain late before both the crossbar and



Gianluigi Buffon frustrated Federico Santander's push for a last-gasp equaliser for the visitors who slip to 12th place.

"We watched the Santander goal again, it was offside so VAR would have ruled it out," said Sarri.

"But I told the lads we mustn't sit back on a lead, we should attack, otherwise we leave ourselves in these risky situations to the very end."

IMMOBILE PUNISHES ATALANTA

Serie A leading scorer Ciro

Immobile's late brace of penalties helped Lazio wipe out a three-goal deficit in a thrilling 3-3 draw with Atalanta.

Atalanta, who travel to Manchester City in the Champions League on Tuesday, had led 3-0 with 21 minutes to go at the Stadio Olimpico.

But Immobile scored from the spot on 69 minutes and less than 60 seconds later set up Joaquin Correa for the second, before capping the comeback two minutes into injury time with his ninth goal in eight league games this term.

"With penalties, nobody can

understand a thing nowadays," blasted Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

"Immobile went for a walk, felt someone touch him slightly and dived.

"Even more, on the second penalty, Immobile put his foot in front of De Roan."

Colombian Luis Muriel scored a first-half double for the Bergamo side as compatriot and star striker Duvan Zapata was sidelined injured.

Alejandro Gomez got the third eight minutes before the break in a rematch of last season's

Italian Cup final which the Romans won.

But the visitors lost momentum after the hour mark.

Immobile got one back from the spot after being brought down by Jose Luis Palomino and then combined with Correa for their second.

Immobile earned a late penalty after a Marten de Roon foul, celebrating wildly after converting to grab a dramatic point before Lazio's Europa League trip to Celtic next week.

"I'm losing years of my life kicking penalties in the 90th

minute," said 29-year-old Immobile, after scoring his third league goal from the spot this season.

Polish striker Milik scored in either half as Napoli got back to winning ways at the Stadio San Paolo, after a goalless draw at Torino before the international break, before their Champions League trip to Salzburg.

"I started the season with fitness problems so I'm hungry now for goals," said Milik, who also scored as Poland qualified for Euro 2020 during the week. Verona drop to 13th place.



Dortmund beat Bundesliga leaders Gladbach, Bayern held by Augsburg

AFP ■ BERLIN

Borussia Dortmund beat top-of-the-table Borussia Moenchengladbach 1-0 to jump to fourth in the Bundesliga, level with Bayern Munich who earlier dropped points in a 2-2 draw at Augsburg.

The top of the Bundesliga grew even more congested with the top nine separated by just two points. Of the eight who have played so far this weekend, only Eintracht Frankfurt and Dortmund have won. Gladbach remained top, ahead of Wolfsburg, who drew 1-1 at RB Leipzig, on goal difference. Both have 16 points from eight games.

Bayern, Dortmund and Leipzig are all one point behind.

Then come four teams on 14 points, including Freiburg, who could have gone top but lost 2-0 at Union Berlin, and Bayer Leverkusen, who could also have taken over first, but lost at Frankfurt on Friday.

Schalke have a chance to seize top spot when they visit Hoffenheim on Sunday.

In Dortmund, Thorgan Hazard's first-half strike for the home team against his former club was ruled out by VAR for a tight offside call.

Hazard then found a sprinting Marco Reus with a perfect through ball in the 58th minute. Reus slotted home for the only goal of the game.

Even though another Dortmund strike was erased by VAR in the 85th minute, the home team finished the game hanging on, adopting a back-five and even a back-six in added time to end a run of three successive draws.

"We are very, very happy that our efforts were rewarded with victory today. You could see that the game could have turned in the other direction," said Reus.

Coach Lucien Favre didn't hide his annoyance with the two tight VAR decisions that went against his side.

"That the two goals were not given is not good for football," lamented the Swiss coach.

Dortmund started without 19-year-old attacker Jadon Sancho who was dropped for "disciplinary reasons".

"Jadon is a great kid, but he is still very young," Dortmund director of football Michael Zorc told German television before kick-off.

"The decision was not easy, but there was no other choice. The suspension is only active for today."

German media reported Sancho had returned late from England duty.

BAYERN SLIP UP AGAIN

Reigning champions Bayern, meanwhile, slipped up for the second league match in succession, having lost 2-1 at home to Hoffenheim before the international break.

Augsburg grabbed a rapid lead — just as they had in the corresponding fixture last year — when Marco Richter struck the net with a sweetly-struck volley just 30 seconds after kick-off, the fastest goal of the season so far.

Bayern replied as Robert Lewandowski stretched his scoring streak to eight games in the 14th minute from a Serge Gnabry cross.

After a host of missed chances, former Arsenal winger Gnabry then put Bayern 2-1 ahead after 49 minutes.

But a strong run in injury time by Sergio Cordova set up Alfred Finnbogason, who finished past Manuel Neuer to earn a point for Augsburg, and put another early dent in Bayern's title defence.

Thomas Mueller missed two chances after coming on as a late substitute after a week of controversy over the fact he has not started a game since September.

Timo Werner scored his first goal in five games for Leipzig in a tight tussle against Wolfsburg at the Red Bull Arena.

It was not enough. Wolfsburg scored a late equaliser when Dutch striker Wout Weghorst finished a William cross to keep the race at the top close.

Wolfsburg are the only unbeaten team in the division.

At the Weserstadion, Werder Bremen opened the scoring at home against Hertha Berlin as Josh Sargen's strike took a deflection on its way into the net in the seventh minute.

Real Madrid taste defeat ,Barca go on top

AFP ■ MADRID

Barcelona sailed back to the top of the table and trouble returned to Real Madrid after they endured their first La Liga defeat of the season at newly-promoted Real Mallorca.

Zinedine Zidane, David Beckham and Robinho were in the last Madrid team to lose a league game at San Moix in 2006 and 13 years later, Mallorca repeated the trick thanks to a scintillating strike by Junior Lago in the first half on Saturday.

Alvaro Odriozola allowed Lago too much room to cut inside and was then sent off late on, even if Madrid's attempts at a comeback looked doomed well before they were reduced to 1-0.

"The problem is we have to show every three days that we are good," Real coach Zidane said.

"That is what we don't do. We have to be consistent. We have to put more life into our game if we want to achieve anything this year."

The 1-0 defeat halts the resurgence of Zidane's side just as Barcelona's appears to be gathering pace, a 3-0 win away at Eibar giving the Catalans their fifth consecutive victory in all competitions. Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Antoine Griezmann scored the goals.

In between, Atletico Madrid were pegged back by Valencia as a brilliant Dani Parejo free-kick earned the visitors a hard-earned 1-1 draw at the Wanda Metropolitan.

It means Barca will finish the weekend top of the table for the first time this season as the defending champions continue to leave their stumbling target further behind them.

For Real, five games unbeaten and three of them victories had not erased the doubts, but at least seemed to offer evidence Zidane's team were turning a corner.

But Mallorca, who climb to 14th, deserved their triumph in what is their first season back in the top flight



since relegation ended a run of 16 consecutive years there in 2013.

Lago collected the ball on the left in the seventh minute, drove at the retreating Odriozola before cutting inside and unleashing a shot into the far corner.

Madrid lacked purpose and cutting edge, with their hopes all but dashed when Odriozola capped a miserable night by flying in late on Lago in the 74th minute and collecting a second yellow card.

Zidane will hope to have at least one of the injured Luke Modric, Gareth Bale and Toni Kroos back for their crucial Champions League group match away at Galatasaray on Tuesday.

'MSG' FIRE FOR BARCA

Barcelona's autumn injury crisis is over and their 'MSG' attack is finally clicking into gear as Messi, Suarez and Griezmann all scored in a ruthless win over Eibar.

Griezmann's place in the newly-formed attacking trident has not been secure but the Frenchman opened the scoring at Ipurua before

teeing up Messi and then playing the crucial pass for Suarez to make it three.

"There will be good and bad days but we are getting to know each other and bit by bit we will do even better," said Griezmann.

Victory also dismissed suggestions their players might be affected by Friday's postponement of next Saturday's Clasico due to protests in Catalonia. Barcelona's fans chanted in support of the nine Catalan leaders imprisoned last week for a failed independence bid in 2017.

The match against Real Madrid is now expected to go ahead in December.

"It is fashionable not to agree on political issues but at least let's agree on the date of the Clasico," Barca coach Ernesto Valverde said afterwards.

"It doesn't seem to me that difficult."

The only blot on the result was an injury to Sergi Roberto, who will be a doubt for the Champions League game at Slavia Prague on Wednesday after hurting his left knee.

Marquez wins 10th title of 2019 MotoGP

PTI ■ MOTEGI (JAPAN)

World champion Marc Marquez of Repsol Honda Team rode a brilliant race to claim his 10th title of the season at the Motul Grand Prix of Japan at the Twin Ring Motegi circuit here on Sunday.

Starting from the pole position for the first time in MotoGP at Motegi, the 26-year-old Honda rider clinched the title with a timing of 42:42.492 seconds.

Yamaha SRT's Fabio Quartararo, who started third from the grid, finished second, 0.870 seconds behind Marquez while Ducati's Andrea Dovizioso (42:48.817 seconds) climbed up four places to take the third spot in the 24-lap race.

Marquez's win also clinched the Constructor's title for Repsol Honda with three races still remaining in the season.

Sunday's win also gave Marquez his third Japan Moto GP title after having clinched the crown in 2016 and last year, while finishing second in 2013, 2014 and 2017.

Before coming here, Marquez had already secured his fourth consecutive world championship title at the last race in Thailand.

In total, the 26-year-old Spaniard has eight world championship titles, including six in the premier class MotoGP. Marquez's other crowns came in the 125cc World Championship in 2010 and Moto2 World Championship in 2012.

Already assured of the world championship title, Marquez meant business from the word go and held off an early challenge from 'Rookie of the Year' Quartararo.

It was immaculate riding from Marquez in dry conditions on a circuit, which has always been tricky for him.

Marquez took an early lead and maintained that till the end. His strategy was simple — take the lead and increase the gap — and he executed that with perfection.

Marquez was leading the pack with nearly a lead of 2.2 seconds early on, but Quartararo pushed hard and gave him a tough fight towards the end to close the gap by 0.870 seconds.

"I was pushing from the beginning



because the strategy was clear. I tried to open a gap from the beginning but honestly speaking I started to play a lot with the switches (gears)," Marquez said after registering his fourth consecutive win of the season.

"It wasn't easy because you need to think about a lot of things while riding but I was able to manage in a good way to finish the race. Congratulations to the team. They did a very good job," he added. They tried to find the best package for me," he added.

Second place holder Quartararo of France was made to sweat in the final stages by Dovizioso, who claimed his 100th Grand Prix podium.

But it turned out to be a pretty disappointing outing for another Yamaha SRT rider Franco Morbidelli as he finished fifth after starting second from the grid.

Maverick Vinales of Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP finished fourth after starting from the same spot, while Cal Crutchlow of LCR Honda Castrol took the fifth place.

The final race witnessed two non-finishers in Aprilla Racing Team Gresini's Andrea Iannone and the legendary Valentino Rossi of Yamaha, who crashed out in the 20th lap.

Marquez's teammate Jorge Lorenzo finished 17th after starting from the 19th position.

Earlier in the day, starting from the pole position, Luca Marini of Sky Racing Team VR46 claimed the Moto2 title ahead of Thomas Luthi of Dynavolt Intact GP and Red Bull KTM Ajo's Jorge Martini.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ethiopia's defending champion Tsehay Gemechu retained her Airtel Delhi Half Marathon title on Sunday by smashing the course record she had set 12 months ago in the national capital when she ran 66:00.

21-years old, Gemechu took 50 seconds less than the time she ran in 2018 to win the \$27,000 first prize at the IAAF Gold Label road race and also pocketed a course record bonus of \$10,000.

The women's race came down to a thrilling head-to-head duel over the final five kilometres between the defending champion and her compatriot Yelamzerf Yehualaw and when it briefly looked like African Games half marathon champion Yehualaw is

Ethiopians take the top honours

Defending champions Gemechu and Belihu retain ADHM title with improved timings; Bugatha, Suriya emerge top Indians

going to cause an upset with the finish line approaching, Gemechu dug deep and managed to claw her way past her rival to also notch up a personal best while becoming just the second woman to defend here.

"I was tired after Doha (where she finished fourth in the world championships 5000m two weeks ago) but I wanted to come here and fight for the course record. I knew I was mentally strong," reflected Gemechu.

Yehualaw, even younger than

the winner having just turned 20 in August, took more than three minutes off her previous best for the distance when finishing just one second behind Gemechu in 66:01.

It was yet another double for Ethiopian racers as the men's winner Andamlak Belihu also retained his title.

Belihu finished just under seven minutes earlier after improving his personal best by eight seconds from his winning time of 12 months ago, stopping the clock on

this occasion at 59:10.

However, in sharp contrast to Gemechu, he had the frustration of once again just missing out on beating the men's course record of 59:06, held since 2014 by yet another Ethiopian Guye Adola.

"At about 18km I started to suffer some back pain, that possibly cost me the course record. I'm a bit disappointed that I missed out on the course record again but I got a personal best so I cannot complain too much," commented Belihu, who immediately declared

his long-term intention to come back to Delhi in 2020 with the aim of attacking the course record again and trying to become the first man or woman to win a hat-trick of ADHM title.

"I have been mainly focusing on the track season in my training until recently but I always knew I was going to come here and so I had that in mind. I am always very pleased to come to Indian races and especially Delhi as it was here that I had my first successes, and this changed my life.

"This race has put the frustration of finishing fifth at the world championships (in the 10,000m in Doha two weeks ago) behind me," he added.

Meanwhile, 20-years old Berihu posted one of the fastest half marathon debuts ever when he came home second in 59:17 while Kandie hung on for third in 59:33.

As for the domestic stalwarts, Srinu Bugatha continues added another laurel in his kitty as he backed up his Tata Mumbai half marathon win with a victory here

with a timing of 1:04:33. Suresh Patel clinched Silver after finishing the race in 1:04:57 and half marathon debutant Harshad Mhatre (1:05:12) won the Bronze medal in the Indian elite men's category.

"I tried very hard to beat my best timing, but unfortunately I couldn't. Because I broke away from the rest of the runners and took a lead early on in the race, I couldn't record a better timing. I didn't have anyone who could pace me throughout the race," said Srinu Bugatha.

In the Indian elite women's category, Loganathan Suriya, the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon course record holder, emerged first (1:12:49), followed by Parul Chaudhary (1:13:55) and Chinta Yadav (1:15:28).

‘Hit Man’s’ Superhit Show

After India declared on 497/9, Shami and Umesh reduced South Africa to 9 for 2

PTI ■ RANCHI

Rohit Sharma once again provided unbridled joy with his maiden Test double hundred before India's pacers dented an already scarred South Africa top-order to gain complete control in the third and final match here on Sunday.

Revering in his new avatar, the stylish Mumbaier smashed his way to 212 off 258 balls in the company of vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane (115), as India declared their first innings at 497 for nine.

Before bad light stopped play on the second day, South Africa were reduced to nine for two in five overs. Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav removed Dean Elgar (0) and Quinton de Kock (4) respectively in their single over bursts, creating all sorts of discomfort.

The second day again belonged to Rohit, who scored his first double century in the longest format, having scored 176 and 127 in his 'debut' as Test opener in Visakhapatnam.

His innings had 28 boundaries and six sixes but, more importantly, it was the languid grace that stood out. The extra second to play those square cuts and the pull shots were exactly what a sparse Sunday crowd needed to rejuvenate themselves.



Batting on 199, the effortlessness with which he dispatched an express delivery from Lungi Ngidi into the mid-wicket stands with a front-foot pull, was worth a million dollars. His double hundred completed, Rohit, as if to taunt the pacer, repeated the shot and the result was same.

Rahane, who has been back in form since the tour of the West Indies, also looked solid during his 11th Test hundred and the first in India in three years — the last coming against New Zealand (October, 2016) in Indore.

The duo added 267 runs for the fourth wicket to set a solid platform before Ravindra Jadeja (51 off 119 balls) and Umesh Yadav (31 off 10 balls with five sixes) provided the final impetus.

Rohit, who has already broken the world record for most number of sixes in a series, has so far amassed 529 runs to become only the fifth Indian opener to score 500-plus runs in a bilateral face-off. Gavaskar had achieved it five times in his Test career and Sehwag was the last Indian to achieve the feat, having scored 544 runs against Pakistan in a three-Test series at home in 2004-05.

Rohit also joined Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag and Chris Gayle to notch 200-plus scores in both ODI and Test formats.

The lack of penetration in the Proteas

attack, save Kagiso Rabada (3/85 in 23 overs), has been the real problem for the visitors.

In the three Tests so far, India have had three double centuries — Mayank Agarwal, skipper Virat Kohli and now Rohit — which tells the tale.

While debutant left-arm spinner George Linde (4/133 in 31 overs) was the most successful bowler, Yadav took him to the cleaners, scoring all his sixes off his bowling.

When South Africa batted under fading light, the Indian pacers were too hot to handle.

Shami looked ominous, extracting extra bounce as he struck off the second ball. Elgar tried to remove his bat but the ball kissed the gloves en route to Wriddhiman Saha's waiting hands.

De Kock was done in by a brilliant bouncer, failing miserably in his attempt to evade as Saha timed his jump to perfection.

Faf du Plessis and Zubayr Hamza survived the remaining three overs as debutant Shahbaz Nadeem bowled two tidy maidens under floodlights.

With light deteriorating quickly in this part of the world, the Indian bowling attack would like to take advantage of the pitch on which cracks are beginning to open up, and the uneven bounce could only make life more difficult for the beleaguered South African batting line-up.

‘Lot could have happened if I hadn’t cashed in on opportunities’

PTI ■ RANCHI

Rohit Sharma always knew that he had to make best use of the opportunities in his new role as a Test opener or else "a lot could have happened" as far as his stint in the longest format is concerned.

"Kafi kuch hone wala tha naahin toh kaafi kuch aap likh dete mere barein mein (A lot could have happened had I not performed and you guys (media) would have written a lot about me," a satisfied Sharma said at the day end press conference.

"So it was about making most of the opportunities I got. I knew I had to make full use of it, otherwise media would have written against me. Now I know everyone will write good things about me," he added.



Rohit has amassed 529 runs from four innings thus becoming the only fifth Indian opener to score 500-plus runs in a Test series.

"It was a good opportunity for me to open the batting. As I said during the Vizag Test, the communication between me and my team management was happening for a long time about opening the batting. So mentally, I was ready for it. I knew it could come at anytime."

His double century came after India were left reeling at 39/3 in the first morning as he along with Ajinkya Rahane (115) staged a remarkable turnaround with a mammoth 267-run fourth wicket partnership, the highest versus South Africa.

"Speaking of this particular knock, I would say it was most challenging. I have not played much. I played only 30

Tests. In terms of what was thrown at me, I would definitely say it was probably the most challenging one," the talented Mumbaier said.

While he has had a blockbuster start to his career as a Test opener, Rohit himself acknowledged that he has a long way to go.

"In Tests, it has its challenges. Having played only three Tests as an opener, I know I have long way to go. I am not reading too much into these three Tests. Of course, I will take a lot of positives but I am not reading too much into it."

Talking about the challenge of opening the batting, he said, "Opening the batting is a different challenge to batting at Nos 6-7. It's just about how you prepare yourself, what you talk to yourself in your mind about what do you want to go out

there and achieve.

"Playing the first ball of the match, compared to facing a delivery after 30-40 overs is a different ball game altogether. There's nothing in particular that I've done in terms of technique."

The 32-year-old is now eyeing to replicate the success overseas when the tour New Zealand next year.

"Wherever you play the new ball, you have to have some understanding of the basics of the game. Which ball you have to play and leave. In certain aspects of the game you have to be mindful of."

"I was allowing myself to take time rather than going after the ball straightaway. It's not a good idea with a new ball. You got to play with a little lower backlift. In overseas, of course, it's a different ball game. That's a challenge and I am awaiting."



Former players slam PCB for sacking Sarfaraz as captain

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan's former stalwarts on Sunday lashed out at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for acting in haste in removing Sarfaraz Ahmed as captain in all three formats of the game.

Most of the former captains and players termed the removal of Sarfaraz on Friday as unjust. Not surprisingly the head coach and chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq and bowling coach Waqar Younis were also targeted and blamed for engineering the ouster of Sarfaraz.

The wicketkeeper-batsman is also unlikely to be part of the touring Pakistan T20 or Test squad to Australia later this month.

Batting great Javed Miandad said since Sarfaraz had gained considerable experience as a captain in the last two years, he should have been given time to regain his form instead of just sacking him.

"Azhar's appointment as Test captain is okay but if the Board wanted to appoint Babar as white-ball captain, they should have first groomed him as I fear the burden of T20 captaincy will affect his batting," Miandad said.

Former Test batsman and ex-head coach and chief selector Mohsin Khan said, "He (Sarfaraz) took Pakistan to number one in T20 cricket and he is a fighter. This is a decision taken in haste and it could also affect the career of Babar."

Former captain Rashid Latif minced no words in stating that the Board had erred by making Babar captain of the T20 side.

"He is a selfish player and we have seen this in international cricket and now in the national T20 championship. Sarfaraz is not a selfish captain and sacrificed his position many times for the team. He did not deserve this treatment," he said.

Former skipper Moin Khan said he was shocked at the way the Board had treated Sarfaraz.

"He (Sarfaraz) has shown himself to be a fine captain and yes he was struggling a bit for form but when a senior player is under pressure you have to encourage and back him, not dump him like this," Moin said.

He noted that Misbah and Waqar had never been fond of Sarfaraz and with them in charge, this sacking was expected.

Former Test pacer Aaqib Javed also criticised the Board for taking a strange decision.

"I don't know from where these decisions are coming but they make no sense at all to me. Sarfaraz should have been relieved as Test captain but the Board should have given him some time as captain of white-ball cricket."

Another former captain Ramiz Raja, however, felt that the Board had taken a brave decision to appoint Babar Azam as T20 captain and said people defending Sarfaraz should accept his poor form in recent months as skipper.

"We were struggling in Test cricket, we did not reach semifinals of the World Cup. We lost to a Sri Lankan 'B' team in T20 cricket and his own form is on a decline. I think the Board acted properly by investing in a young player in the white-ball formats. If Babar develops into a good leader he can also become Test captain," he said.

‘Big surprise’ says Murray as ex-world NO.1 reaches final

AFP ■ ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

Former world number one Andy Murray reached his first final in more than two and a half years and admitted it was a "big surprise".

Murray, steadily rebuilding his singles game after career-saving hip surgery in January, defeated France's Ugo Humbert 3-6, 7-5, 6-2 to make the championship match at the European Open.

"It's been a big surprise to me. I'm happy to be into the final," he told Amazon Prime.

"It's been a long road to get back to this point. I certainly didn't expect it to come so soon since I started playing again." On Sunday, the 32-year-old Briton will tackle fellow three-time Grand Slam title winner Stan Wawrinka in the final.



Murray, now ranked a lowly 243, last reached a final in Dubai in March 2017 where he won the most recent of his 45 career titles.

He is now playing for the fourth successive week on tour having only returned to singles at Cincinnati in August.

Murray leads Wawrinka 11-8 in

head-to-head meetings.

"I think it will be a nice match to play," added the Briton of Sunday's duel.

"Me and Stan have played a lot against each other. It is nice that we are both able to be back playing against each other in a final."

Wawrinka earlier ended Italian teenager Janik Sinner's fine run in Belgium, the Swiss veteran defeating the 18-year-old 6-3, 6-2 to reach his 30th career final.

Sinner was the youngest player to make the semi-finals of an ATP tournament since 17-year-old Borna Coric in 2014.

But he met his match in 18th-ranked Wawrinka, with the 34-year-old taking one hour and 59 minutes to edge closer to a first title since winning the Geneva Open in May 2017.

karnataka, Gujrat sail into semifinals

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Opener KL Rahul continued his good form as his stroke-filled 90 guided Karnataka to the semi-finals even as another out-of-favour opener Shikhar Dhawan's failure proved costly with Delhi exiting from another quarter-finals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Sunday.

While Karnataka cruised to an eight-wicket victory over Puducherry in one of the quarter-finals, Delhi lost by six wickets to Gujarat via VJD Method in another last eight clash.

Put into bat, Puducherry crawled to 207 for 9 with Vikneshwaran MM Marimuthu top scoring with an unbeaten 58.

The Karnataka bowlers led by the vastly experienced Abhimanyu Mithun (2-35) ran through the Pondicherry top and middle order before Mariumuthu and Sagar Trivedi (54) tried to rally their innings.

Pondicherry were reeling at 41 for 6 at one stage before Mariumuthu and Trivedi pulled them out of trouble and gave the score some semblance of respectability.

The Karnataka bowlers kept striking at regular intervals to ensure that their opponents were restricted to a sub-par total. Leg-spinner Pravin Dubey (3-44) and seamer Vasuki Koushik (2-33) also shared the spoils. In the second quarterfinal, Gujarat defeated Delhi by 6 wickets via the VJD method.

Put into bat at the Just Cricket ground, Gujarat dismissed Delhi for 223 in 49 overs as no Delhi batsman barring skipper Dhruv Shorey (91) showed any fight.

India player Shikhar Dhawan's horrendous form continued as he fell for a zero. IPL specialist Nitish Rana (33) and young Himmat Singh (26) failed to convert their starts.

For Gujarat, pacers Chintan Gaja (3-27) and left armer Arzan Nagaswalla (3-75) were among the wickets.

While chasing, skipper Parthiv Patel (76) and his opening partner Priyank Panchal (80) put on 150 runs for the first wicket to take game away from Delhi.

Delhi did try to make a comeback but it was too little too late as Gujarat overhauled the target in the 37th over.

Barua set to drag chess bosses to court

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

India's second Grandmaster and Arjuna awardee Dibyendu Barua plans to bring a contempt of court plea against All India Chess Federation after a three-members AICF committee gave clean chit to the Federation joint secretary and Bengal chess Association suspended secretary Atanu Lahiri on a plethora of charges when the matter was sub-judice.

"This is clear case of contempt of court. The court is seized with the matter and had rejected Lahiri prayer against his removal as BCA secretary by the working committee of the BCA," Barua told The Pioneer.

On October 15, late at night the AICF issued a report in which the three-member committee had given clean chit to Lahiri.

Barua had accused Lahiri of routing huge amount of fund received from the state government to his own chess promotion company in a clear case of conflict of interest. Barua produced documents to show that Rs 23 lakh in cash was withdrawn from Lahiri's

company--Global Chess-- in around 53 weeks.

Interestingly, the committee has dismissed this charge saying the routing of fund to a personal company didn't not amount to misappropriation of fund and refused to treat it as a case of conflict of interest. "Since the fund does not relate to either the BCA or AICF, the question of any misappropriation of chess association fund does not arise," it said in its report.

This is a clear case of trying to deflect attention from the crucial charge that Lahiri used his position as the BCA secretary to divert fund to his company Global Chess—a clear case of conflict of interest.

And that is how it should have been treated by the committee instead of making an attempt to obfuscate the issue by talking about "misappropriation of funds."

Barua also accused Lahiri of not allowing him to hold a youth tournament and banning two of India top players, Grandmaster Surya Sekhar Ganguly and Deep Sen Gupta, from taking part in Bengal Chess events. Lahiri also



barred under-9 national girls' champion Sneha Halder from playing in a tournament on disciplinary grounds.

Obviously, the committee had no intention to reach to the bottom of truth. Its members just met in Chennai without caring to visit West Bengal and meet the complainants and other stakeholders.

The members did not care to meet the minister or secretary of the trial development department of West Bengal. The ministry had taken cognizance of Barua's complaint and terminated its agreement with Global Chess of Lahiri.

When a similar case of conflict of interest rocked the Indian cricket, there was so many hue and cries than an expert committee

consisting of people from outside the BCCI were roped into probe the matter. But in the case of AICF, the task was given to a chosen few who were colleague of Lahiri himself.

To begin with the composition of the committee itself looked suspect since the AICF secretary was kept out of it. As per AICF constitution any such committee must include the AICF secretary. This makes the committee itself illegal.

Secondly, Barua had also written to the AICF President PR Venketramma Raja expressing his reservation about the committee. The AICF President should have realized that Barua is not wood pusher but a chess player of repute who had brought much laurels to the country and played a stellar role in popularizing chess. If a player of his stature makes some plea, it must be taken seriously.

Alas, Barua was treated with sheer contempt and nothing else. His letter to the AICF President had no impact and the committee remained unchanged.

The committee's finding flies in the face of the Court's proceed-

ings. The Court's order clearly states the presence of a "prima facie" case even as it directed the AICF not to issue any direction to the BCA to hold election or take any other decision regarding the dispute.

The most intriguing things about the AICF clean chit to Lahiri on October 15 is that it came on the day when AICF central council met to discuss among others, the West Bengal affairs. The issue was foremost on the agenda, but AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan announced that it would not be taken up because the matter was sub-judice. Only a few hours later, the AICF came out with the clean chit to Lahiri.

Why was not the report placed before the council? This is the question which has baffled the Barua camp.

"I never expected this committee o do any justice. I've never heard of such a farce. They confined themselves to Chennai and didn't even summon me to depose before them. Why didn't they summon Surya Sekhar Ganguly and other chess players, who were

banned by Lahiri?"

"I'm going to fight till the bitter end. We can't allow a handful of self seeking officials to destroy the dignity of this game," he said.

Of later, the India chess has been in the news for all the wrong reasons. Charges of high-handedness, illegal dismissal of state associations, threats and abuses by officials against players and juniors, and allegation of sleaze have destroyed the image of a game which was once linked with 'gentlemen'.

"The situation has become so grim that the day is not far when we will have some scandalous viedo involving some top officials out in open. That day we will have to hang our head in shame," said a senior player.

"I don't blame the AICF president. He is gentleman. Since he is a top businessman of the country, I don't expect him to be involved in day to day affair of chess. Some people around him are taking advantage of the situation and trying to create a coterie. I hope the president will see through their design and do justice,"