

OPINION 8 A HIMALAYAN THREAT

WORLD 12 EU WARNS NO-DEAL BREXIT IMMINENT IF UK DOESN'T GET SERIOUS

SPORT 15 DORTMUND HOLD BARCA FOR GOALLESS DRAW

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 19, 2019; PAGES 16 ₹3



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Ayodhya verdict by mid-Nov

SC: Let us conclude hearing by Oct 18 so that we get 4 weeks to write order

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set an October 18 deadline for completion of all arguments in the protracted Ram-Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land title dispute, a move that has raised the possibility of a verdict in the politically sensitive case in the middle of November.

"Let us make a joint effort to conclude the hearing by October 18 so that we get four weeks time to write," the Supreme Court said.

As it offered to hear the case on Saturdays as well, the SC at the same time said the parties to the dispute are free to find an amicable solution through mediation and place the settlement before it.

However, the top court told lawyers from both the Hindu and Muslim sides in the Ayodhya case that it wanted to conclude the day-to-day hearings by October 18 so that the judges get almost four weeks time to write the judgment.

The target date for completion of arguments assumes significance since Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, who is heading the five-judge Constitution bench hearing the case, is due to demit office on November 17.

"The hearing of the appeals, which is at a very advanced stage, will continue without any interruption. If, in the meantime, the parties desire to settle the matter(s), including, by resort to mediation by the earlier constituted mediation panel, they may do so and place the settlement before the court, if reached," the Bench said in its order.

The court on Tuesday had



asked the counsels for the Hindu and Muslim parties to inform it about a tentative "time schedule" for concluding their arguments. The Constitution Bench, which also comprised Justices SA Bobde, DY Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and SA Nazeer, has so far heard the Ayodhya land dispute case for 26 days after it commenced the day-to-day

hearing on August 6 following the failure of mediation proceedings initiated to find the amicable resolution.

As per the apex court's calendar, the Bench now has 15 working days remaining to conclude the lengthy hearing by October 18. So far, Hindu parties have argued for 16 days and senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, representing the

No more procrastination

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Muslim sides, had advanced submissions for 10 days.

Dhavan said he and his colleagues would take eight more days to conclude their submissions and two senior counsel — K Parasaran and CS Vaidyanathan — appearing for a Hindu party would need two days to rebut his arguments.

"We are open to hearing on Saturdays, if required," the Bench said, adding a tentative schedule can also be worked out. After dealing with the time schedule, the Bench then said it has received a letter from

former apex court judge F M I Kalifulla, who was heading the three-member mediation panel, in which it was stated that some parties have written to him for resumption of the mediation process.

"There is an ancillary issue. We have received a letter that some parties want to settle the matter by way of mediation," the Bench said, adding they may do so and the proceedings before the mediation panel can remain confidential.

Referring to its earlier order, it said, "We also make it

clear that the terms and the process of settlement including mediation, if resorted to, will abide by our earlier order dated March, 8, 2019, with regard to confidentiality."

While ordering the day-to-day proceedings, the court had taken note of the report of the three-member panel, also comprising spiritual guru and founder of the Art of Living foundation Sri Sri Ravishankar and senior advocate and renowned mediator Sriram Panchu, that mediation proceedings, which went on for about four months, did not result in any final settlement and it had to decide the matter pending before it.

The court, which on March 8 referred the matter for mediation, had asked for in-camera proceedings to be completed within eight weeks, but later granted time till August 15 after the panel's earlier report said the mediators were "optimistic" about an amicable solution. The SC fixed the seat for mediation process in Faizabad, around 7 km from Ayodhya, and said adequate arrangements, including the venue of the mediation, place of stay of the mediators, their security, travel should be arranged by the State Government.

It had perused a report about the progress of mediation process till July 18 and said its contents will remain confidential. Fourteen appeals have been filed in the apex court against the 2010 Allahabad High Court judgment, delivered in four civil suits, that the 2.77-acre land in Ayodhya be partitioned equally among the three parties — the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla.

SC fumes at no safety net for sewer cleaners

Nowhere in world people sent to gas chambers to die, says apex court



New Delhi: Nowhere in the world people are sent to "gas chambers to die," fumed the Supreme Court on Wednesday while expressing serious concern over deaths during manual scavenging and manhole cleaning across the country.

Slamming the Government authorities for not providing protective gear like masks and oxygen cylinders to people engaged in manual scavenging and manhole cleaning, the apex court said this is the "most inhuman" way to treat a human being.

The SC said that although over 70 years have passed since India got Independence, caste discrimination still persists in the country and the society is not treating all human beings equally despite the Constitutional mandate.

"Why are you not providing them masks and oxygen cylinders? In no country in the world, people are sent to gas chambers to die. Four to five people are dying due to this every month," a Bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra asked Attorney General KK Venugopal.

Venugopal, while conceding that people involved in such works are dying in the country day-after-day, said deaths have also happened due to potholes on the roads but no action has been taken against the author-

ities concerned.

He told the Bench, also comprising justices MR Shah and BR Gavai, that law of tort, which deals with civil wrong and its liabilities thereof, is not developed and practiced in the country and though the magistrates have jurisdiction, not a single case has been registered suo motu (on its own) on such incidents.

"A case cannot be filed against people who are sweeping the streets or cleaning sewers. Cases should be filed against the supervisory officers and authorities who are responsible for such works as they have collected taxes from the citizens for this," the Attorney General said.

The Bench remarked, "This is the most inhuman way to treat a human being."

"It is the most uncivilized and inhuman situation where the people are losing their lives in gas chambers without any masks or oxygen cylinders," the Bench said, adding, "You have to take care of people. People are dying everyday due to this?"

Continued on Page 7

SC view evokes sharp reaction

New Delhi (PTI): In a high pitched reaction, the Muslim parties termed as "conjecture" the Supreme Court's observation Wednesday that the Hindus believed in some divinity in the central dome of the disputed structure at Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site which made them offer prayers at the railings put up by the British in 1855.

The 5-judge Constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, was scrutinising the vehement submission of the Muslim parties that Hindu worshippers never had access to the central dome and used to offer prayers at the railings.

The bench asked senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for the Muslim parties, that "maybe the 'Ram Chabutara' was the creation of 1885, but it coincides with the setting up of the railing (prohibiting entry of Hindus into the inner courtyard)."

"Why Ram Chabutara was set up in the close proximity of the railing, Hindus believed of some divinity in the central dome and this is the reason they were praying at the railing."

Dhavan then said in raised voice: "This is just a conjecture of My Lords." He later apologised for the comment.

The bench had asked him "whether the Hindus were praying at the railings with the belief that the birthplace of deity was under central dome?"

The bench, hearing the politically sensitive case on the 26th day, said that before putting up of the railings in 1850s both community members were going inside, and the presence of 'Ram Chabutara' so close to the railing has got some "significance" because Hindus might be praying there believing the central dome to be the birthplace.

"Why do people go near the railings. They go there because they believed that (central

dome) was the birthplace... There was oral evidence that Hindus prayed at the railings," the unmoved bench sought to know from Dhavan after his high pitched reaction.

The senior advocate replied: "I will go near the railings out of curiosity... They (Hindus) might have been going there to destroy the place," because a very tense situation had been prevailing there for quite long time.

There was "no evidence" on record that the Hindus prayed at the railing, he said.

"I am sorry for using the word 'conjecture,'" the senior lawyer later told the bench.

CAPSULE

RAMSAY OF 'DO GAZ ZAMEEN KE NEECHE' DIES

Mumbai: Shyam Ramsay, one of the seven Ramsay Brothers known for cult horror films such as "Do Gaz Zameen Ke Neeche" and "Tahkhaana", died in a hospital here on Wednesday, his family said. He was 67. Shyam Ramsay died of pneumonia on Wednesday morning.

PAK REFUSES TO OPEN ITS AIRSPACE FOR MODI

New Delhi: Pakistan has turned down an overnight request by India for Prime Minister Modi's upcoming US trip. This request, according to officials, is as per protocol, since Air India One is not a commercial flight but a VIP one. The longer route that AI One will now take will increase the flying time for the Delhi-Frankfurt (fueling halt for onward flight to Houston) leg of AI One by 45-50 minutes.

CHINMAYANAND'S VICTIM THREATENS SUICIDE

Shahjahanpur: The student who has levelled rape charges against Swami Chinmayanand threatened on Wednesday to set herself on fire if the BJP leader is not arrested immediately.

E-cigarette stubbed out; violators to face 3-year jail, ₹5L fine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It's the end for ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) in India. The Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to ban electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and other vaping products, making India one of the few countries that have done so.

The Government is of the view that e-cigarettes pose health risks similar to those caused by combustible cigarettes. The prohibition will entail penal provisions also with a jail term up to three years and a fine up to ₹5 lakh.

The Union Cabinet approved the Prohibition of E-cigarettes Ordinance, 2019. The Ordinance has been sent to the President for clearance.

"The ban means prohibition on the production, manufacturing, import/export, sale,



Countries where vaping is banned

- US (New York & Michigan), Argentina, Brazil, Brunei, Cambodia, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Lebanon, Mexico, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Uruguay, Vietnam, Venezuela

storage and advertising of e-cigarettes. This is keeping in mind the impact it is having on the youth today, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters here after the Cabinet meeting.

Continued on Page 7

Transport stir against MVA defers exams in Delhi, NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Unhappy over the amended Motor Vehicles Act (MVA) and an exorbitant hike in fines, the United Front of Transport Associations (UFTA), an umbrella unit of about 41 transport associations in Delhi-NCR, including cabs, autorickshaws and cluster bus services, will go on a day strike on Thursday in Delhi and NCR.

The announcement by the UFTA has caused the authorities to defer half yearly examinations in Delhi-NCR schools scheduled for Thursday.

Unions affiliated to UFTA, including those of trucks, private school/tourist buses, chartered buses, tempo, taxi, auto rickshaws had held a mega protest against steep hike in traffic violation fines at Janatar Mantar on Monday.

Continued on Page 7

Dead heat in Israel: Bibi trails by 1

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party trailed its main rival Blue and White by 31 to 32 seats on Wednesday after an unprecedented repeat election, putting the country's longest serving premier on a shaky ground and raising the possibility of a unity government.

Israelis voted on Tuesday in their country's second general election in five months after 69-year-old Netanyahu failed to form a governing coalition with a viable majority following April's vote.

The Central Election Committee said that Blue and White party seemed to be taking a lead over Likud after 91 per cent votes were counted. The centre-left bloc now has 56 seats compared to Netanyahu-led bloc, comprised of right-wing and ultra-Orthodox parties, which is at 55 seats in the 120-member Parliament.

Mamata discusses 'Bangla' with Modi, gives NRC a miss

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and discussed among others issues like the State Assembly's decision to rename West Bengal as "Bangla". The controversial NRC (National Register of Citizens) process that has added to the bitterness between Mamata and the Centre, however, did not figure during their discussion which focussed on developmental issues.

The meeting at the Prime Minister's residence that lasted for about half an hour also had Mamata extending an invite to Modi to inaugurate the world's second-largest coal block Deocha Pachami in Birbhum district after Navratri puja.

This was the first time that



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

Mamata, who has been among the harshest critics of Modi and the BJP, met him after the Visva Bharati University convocation at Shantiniketan in May 2018. She did not attend Modi's swearing-in in May when he took charge for the second time and had stayed away from the Niti Aayog meeting in June.

Continued on Page 7

EU MPs lambast Pakistan for terror drive in 'greatest democracy' India

PTI ■ BRUSSELS

European parliamentarians Eryszard Czarnecki and Fulvio Martusciello have slammed Pakistan for harbouring militants, with one of them saying terrorists who carried out attacks in India did not come from the Moon.

During a special debate of the plenary of the European Parliament on the situation in Kashmir on Tuesday, Czarnecki, the member of EU Parliament and European Conservatives and Reformists Group in

"India is the greatest democracy of the world. We need to look at terrorist acts that took place in India, Jammu & Kashmir. These terrorists didn't land from the Moon. They were coming from the neighbouring country. We should support India," said Czarnecki.

Laxmi found on Yamuna bank after 2 months

Mahout arrested, elephant owner Yusuf & his son on the run

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The 47-year-old elephant Laxmi, who went missing two months ago, was found by the Delhi Police near the banks of the Yamuna in New Delhi on Wednesday around 3.30am.

Police have arrested Laxmi's mahout Saddam, while owner Yusuf Ali and his elder son are at large. According to a senior police official, Laxmi was found along with Saddam after a day long search by three teams who combed the area along the river banks in the

eastern part of the city and the Uttar Pradesh-Delhi border.

"Saddam was produced before a court. Earlier Laxmi was kept at the Shakarpur Police Station but was later shifted to the Delhi Government's nursery at ITO from where she will be taken to the Ban Santoor elephant rehabilitation centre in Yamunanagar in Haryana," said the senior police official.

The elephant belongs to Ali's family residing in Shakarpur. Since he could not make proper arrangements for the animal's upkeep, the forest department had issued a seizure notice in February.

Ali then moved the Delhi High Court, which said the forest department can seize the elephant only when necessary arrangements for its transfer to the new site have been made.



47-year old elephant Lakshmi, which went missing 2 months ago, at Shakarpur Police Station in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

"On July 1, the forest department got the go ahead from the Ban Santoor elephant rehabilitation centre to transfer the elephant. On July 6, when

a forest department team came to take the elephant they were allegedly attacked by Ali, his son and their relatives.

Continued on Page 7

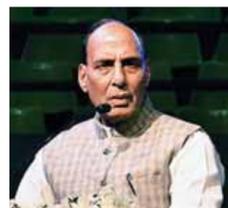
Border chronicle within 2 yrs to raise awareness: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the first endeavour of its kind, India will have in place a written history of its borders in the next two years with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approving the project. The documented history will help provide the masses and the Government officials a better understanding of the borders.

At present, India has a disputed over 4000-km border, known as Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, and the volatile 750-km long Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan.

While the LoC is "hot" at present witnessing relentless ceasefire violations by Pakistan following the abrogation of



special status to Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370, the LAC has not seen a single shot fired in anger for the last 45 years by either India or China. However, the LAC spreading from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east often sees transgressions due to differing perceptions about the border. Moreover, Indian



Parliament had passed a unanimous resolution saying even Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) is part of India and the NDA Government maintains that it will make all efforts to retrieve POK. Pakistan occupied that part during the 1947 war with India after raiders from across accompanied by the Pakistan Army intruded

Defence Minister approves project

into Kashmir. The written history will cover various aspects, including the tracing, making, unmaking and shifting of borders, the role of the security forces, of the borderland people, encompassing their ethnicity, culture and the socio-economic aspects of their lives.

Continued on Page 7

Foundation stone of ₹1200 crore biofuel plant laid in Gorakhpur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan laid the foundation stone of the first biofuel plant to be built at Dhuriyapar in Gorakhpur at a cost of ₹1200 crore.

Along with this, capacity expansion of Indane gas bottling plant set up at GIDA (Gorakhpur Industrial Development Authority) at a cost of ₹204 crore and BPC bottling plant at Baitalpur were inaugurated.

Besides 11 roads constructed at a cost of ₹43 crore were also dedicated to people by the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister thanked Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on behalf of the people of Purvanchal for the biofuel plant being set up in Gorakhpur.

"There was lack of industries in Gorakhpur and to overcome this, a biofuel plant is being set up by the Union Ministry of Petroleum under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Yogi Adityanath said.

In 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation stone of a factory in Gorakhpur that had been closed for 26 years and now a bigger factory is being built.

The Chief Minister said, "When production starts in this factory, urea will be available in sufficient quantity to Bihar, West Bengal and other states, including UP. It will be commissioned in February 2021. This will bring back the lost identity of Gorakhpur."

The Chief Minister said



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath listening to people's problem in Gorakhpur on Wednesday

that fuel could be generated from the biofuel plant by using urban and farm waste.

"People will also get the price of dung from cows and buffaloes and this will help in doubling the income of the farmers," he added.

Yogi Adityanath said that Purvanchal Expressway was being constructed by the state government to increase better connectivity and traffic facilities in the Purvanchal region.

Through this expressway, Lucknow, Azamgarh, Ghazipur, Varanasi and Gorakhpur will be connected by Purvanchal Expressway.

The Chief Minister said that industrial corridors were being constructed on both sides of the expressway.

"With this, GIDA is being expanded in Gorakhpur so that more industries can be established here," the Chief Minister said.

"Now, the youth here will not have to go to Singapore or Bangkok for employment. A large number of youth will get employment here only," he said and added, "Ayodhya and Janakpur will also be connected via four-lane highway."

The Chief Minister said that the state government was running several schemes for destitute cows.

"Gausashray shthals (cow shelters) are being built at every place. With this the farmers keeping the destitute cows will be given ₹900 per month. While ₹900 per month will be

available for the cow, the sale of cow urine and cow dung will also increase the income of the farmers manifold" he said.

Yogi Adityanath said that Gorakhpur residents would get supply of gas directly to their house through a gas pipeline like piped water supply.

The Chief Minister also listened to people's problems at a Janata Darshan programme held in the city.

Many dignitaries, including Rajya Sabha member Shiv Pratap Shukla, and Lok Sabha members Kamlesh Paswan and Ravi Kishan were also present at the programme.

More bureau reports on Page 7

Organisational polls of UP BJP from today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Organisational polls of the Uttar Pradesh unit of Bharatiya Janata Party will commence with the elections of 1.63 lakh booth committees from Thursday.

Booth committees in the BJP have become a prominent part of the party organisation as they were instrumental in the success in the 2017 Assembly and 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls in the state.

BJP leader and Union minister Amit Shah and other party leaders have interacted with members of the booth committees from time to time, showing its importance in the party set-up and election process.

"The election of booth committees will continue for five days and conclude on September 22. "During these elections, presidents and members of 1,63,331 booth committees would be elected in the state," said BJP state general secretary and in-charge of west UP, Vijay Bahadur Pathak, in Lucknow on Wednesday.

The organisational election process comes after a massive membership drive in which over 5.5 million new members were enrolled.

Urban Development Minister Ashutosh Tandon has been made the returning officer of the polls and 27,000 sector-level returning officers have been deputed for ensuring free and fair elections.

Pathak said that after booth-level elections, the party would hold elections for block-level organisation from October 11 to 20 while district-level elections would be held in November. A month later, in December, the state-level elections would be held.

Yogi Adityanath govt to celebrate 30 months in office today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government is set to celebrate its 30 months in office, or half-way mark of its tenure, in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday by holding functions across the state and highlighting achievements of the government.

Official sources said in Lucknow on Wednesday that as the Yogi government could not celebrate completion of two years in office, it had decided to celebrate 30 months (two-and-half years in office) in a big way by holding state-wide programmes.

The Yogi government had celebrated its first anniversary with aplomb but the second anniversary on March 19 last was not celebrated due to model code of conduct being in force following announcement of general elections, polling for which was held between April 11 and May 19.

This time, the main func-

tion would be held in Lucknow, where the Chief Minister would release a booklet on achievements of the government and address a press conference at his official residence.

A senior government official said that as UP had created a record in implementation of various Central schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Saubhagya, Kisan insurance, construction of toilets and health insurance, it would be highlighted in the function.

On the occasion, the government will also highlight the success of Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj, Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas in Varanasi and improvement in law and order.

Besides, investments in industrial sector and job opportunities created for the youths would also be highlighted by the government.

"All these achievements will find mention in the booklet which will be distributed at dis-

tricts, tehsils and even gram sabhas," the official said.

Ministers in the Yogi government and Bharatiya Janata Party lawmakers have been asked to attend the functions in their respective 'kshetras' (areas).

The BJP organisation on its part will also hold meetings at district headquarters.

Yogi took the oath of office on March 19, 2017. When a man clad in saffron was sworn in as Chief Minister of this politically sensitive state, many eyebrows were raised and apprehensions were abound whether the mahant of a temple would be able to give good governance.

The first year of the BJP regime was a testing time but from the second year, the government has started marching on the path of progress. In the election year, the achievements of the Yogi government were put to test and it passed with flying colours by winning 64 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP.

Shivpal ready to seek re-election from Jaswantnagar

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) chief Shivpal Singh Yadav said that he was ready to seek re-election from Jaswantnagar Assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh if he was disqualified from the membership of House.

Last week, Samajwadi Party filed a petition before the Assembly Speaker seeking disqualification of Shivpal Yadav from the membership of the House under anti-defection law.

"I had resigned from Samajwadi Party when I floated the PSP. I am not worried about disqualification as I will seek re-election from Jaswantnagar seat and the SP can field anyone they want to," Shivpal said.

Speaking to the media in Etawah on Wednesday, Shivpal said that if he had to seek re-election in a bypoll, his brother and SP patron Mulayam

Singh Yadav would campaign for him.

"I campaigned for Netaji despite my differences with the SP and he should also reciprocate," he said.

Shivpal had floated Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) last year after alleging that he was not getting 'due respect' in the Samajwadi Party. His bete noire, nephew and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav now wants Shivpal to be disqualified as he was elected from Jaswantnagar on SP ticket.

Shivpal is known for his strong hold at the grassroots-level and he even fielded candidates on all seats in UP, barring Mainpuri, in Lok Sabha elections in April-May this year.

While Shivpal, who contested from Firozabad, could not win himself, the division of votes led to the defeat of his nephew, Akshay Yadav, who contested on SP ticket.

Flood situation in UP continues to be grim

Lucknow (PNS): The flood situation continued to be grim in Uttar Pradesh with rivers flowing above danger mark in several regions leading to inundation of low lying areas. The situation in Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ballia was critical as flood waters of the Ganga and the Yamuna had entered low-lying areas of the cities and Army had been kept on a standby.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to remain vigilant and ensure relief and rescue measures in flood-affected areas, including in Prayagraj and Varanasi. Yogi, who himself reviewed the situation in Ballia, asked the authorities to shift people from low-lying areas to safer places. "Engineers of Irrigation department should monitor the embankments so that overflowing rivers do not breach them," he said.

Meanwhile, Central Water Commission on Wednesday issued a flood alert for Uttar Pradesh in districts where the water level was within danger level.

The CWC said that Ganga river at Ballia was flowing at a level of 59.34 metre, 1.73 metres above the danger level. It said the Ganga river was also flowing around the danger mark in Ghazipur while the river was flowing 0.05 metre above danger mark at Phaphamau in Prayagraj.

Similarly, the Yamuna river was flowing over danger mark in Banda, Kalpi and Hamirpur while showing a rising trend in Auraiya. The Ghaghra river continued to flow above the danger level while at Ayodhya and the river was rising at Elgin Bridge in Barabanki.

Mob on the rampage after kidnapping of girl in Agra

Lucknow: Communal tension flared up in Agra when agitated over the kidnapping of a minor girl, members of a community went on the rampage and torched houses and business establishments of the members from another community in Khandauli area of the district on Tuesday night. They alleged that the police did not respond to the SOS of the villagers.

However, denying any police apathy in the matter, IG (Agra Range) Satish Ganesh said that the police responded on time and recovered the girl within a few hours of the kidnapping.

The IG said that a heavy police force was deployed in the area and the culprits were being identified.

As per reports, a girl student of class IX from Saimra hamlet of Khandauli went missing after going to her school on Tuesday

morning. When she did not return home on time, her family launched a search.

The situation took an ugly turn when the girl's uncle received a call from a person from the other community who claimed that the girl was in his possession and warned him against lodging any report. The caller also gave an assurance that the girl would return home by the evening.

Angered by the development, the girl's father lodged a report of kidnapping with the police. Later, villagers started gathering to register a protest. Some villagers informed senior police officers that the situation could turn violent but the police did not turn up on time.

Taking advantage of the police apathy, the irate villagers went on the rampage and torched at least 15 business establishments of members of

the other community and attacked their houses. The situation could be controlled only after senior officers reached the spot and informed that protesters that the girl was recovered.

Meanwhile in Badaun, manager of a school was arrested after the father of an eight-year-old girl lodged a complaint accusing him of calling his ward to a room and behaving inappropriately with her, in Nai Sarai locality under Sadar Kotwali police station on Tuesday. The complainant also alleged that when he confronted the accused, he threw him out of the school. The girl said that the accused had also behaved in similar manner with other girls studying in the school.

A group of parents protested in the school and the police rushed to the spot to control the situation. The accused was arrested.

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT OF N.C.T OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (E&M) W&S C/N
KANHIYA NAGAR, DELHI-110035

PRESS NIT No. 09(2019-2020)

S. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	Tender Processing Fee	Earnest Money	Tender ID No. & Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender e-procurement solution
1.	Deployment of skilled, semi skilled and unskilled labour for E and M installations at Burari & Badli Constituency.	Item Rate	Rs. 500/-	Rs. 54,000/-	2019_DJB_180267_1 17-Sep-2019 11:30 AM	27-Sep-2019 11:30 AM

Further details in this regard can be seen at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>.

ISSUED BY P.R.O (WATER) Sd/-
Advt. No. J.S.V 366/2019-20 EX. ENGINEER (E&M) W&S C/N

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION
1, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Allahabad-211001

Tender No.: ELCORE-OHE-Gr-255 A Closing Date /Time: 10.10.2019, 15.00

E-TENDER NOTICE

CAO/RE acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No. ELCORE-OHE-Gr-255 A Closing date/Time 10.10.2019, 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

1. NIT HEADER

Name of Work: Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 kV, 50 Hz, Single Phase, AC, Electrification including OHE in Jalpaiguri Road (Excl.) Gumanihat (Excl.) 2nd Line Section Gr. 255-A of Alipurduar Division of N.F. Railway under RE Project New Jalpaiguri, Total 56 RKM/60 TKM.

Bidding Type	Normal Tender
Tender Type	Open
Tender Closing Date Time	10.10.2019 15.00
Pre-Bid Required	No
Advertised Value (₹)	159376954.42
Bidding Style	Single Rate for Each Schedule Item
Earnest Money (₹)	946900.00
Tender Doc. Cost (₹)	10000.00
Contract Type	Works
Bidding Start Date	26.09.2019
Ranking Order For Bids	Lowest to Highest

No.: PR/40/19 Satya Adv. "SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE" www.ireps.gov.in

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION
1, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Allahabad-211001

Tender No. ELCORE_OHE_TSS_Gr_304_306 E-TENDER NOTICE Closing Date /Time : 16.10.2019, 15:00

CAO/RE acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No ELCORE_OHE_TSS_Gr_304_306 Closing date/Time 16.10.2019, 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

1. NIT HEADER

Name of Work : Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 kV, 50 Hz, Single Phase, AC, Electrification Works including OHE & TSS as Composite Electrical Work in Gorakhpur (Excl.)-Anand Nagar-Gonda (Incl.) & Anand Nagar-Nautanwa (Incl.) and Gonda (Excl.)-Behraich (Incl.) section, Group-304 & 306 of Lucknow Division of North Eastern Railway under RE Project Lucknow, Total 323 RKM/406 TKM.

Bidding Type	Two Stage Reverse Auction
Tender Type	Open
Tender Closing Date Time	16.10.2019 15:00
Pre-Bid Required	No
Advertised Value (₹)	1,34,50,58,942.67
Bidding Style	Single Rate for Each Schedule Item
Earnest Money (₹)	68,75,300.00
Tender Doc. Cost (₹)	25,000.00
Contract Type	Works
Bidding Start Date	02.10.2019
Ranking Order For Bids	Lowest to Highest

Auto Elimination rules applicable Yes Minimum decrement (%) .1
Initial Cooling Off Period (HH:MM) 04:00 Subsequent Cooling Off Period (HH:MM) 00:30

No. PR/41/19 R.D. Adv "Serving Customers with a Smile" Website www.ireps.gov.in

कार्यालय मुख्य चिकित्सा अधिकारी, शाहजहाँपुर

पत्रांक-जि०सा०/१०/एनएचएम/विज्ञापन/सविदा/नियुक्ति/प्रमोनाम/०९०९०/२०१९-२०/६८०१ दिनांक १७-०९-२०१९

प्रेस विज्ञापित

अधिसूची निदेशक, सिफसा लखनऊ के पत्रांक ६३/है/ओ/एच०आर०/१०३ दिनांक १० अगस्त, २०१८ के क्रम में प्रधानमंत्री मातृत्व वंदना योजना कार्यक्रम के सफल क्रियान्वयन हेतु जनपद स्तरीय प्रकोष्ठ में कार्यक्रम समन्वयक एवं कार्यक्रम सहायक की नियुक्ति हेतु निम्न पदों पर सविदा के आधार पर चयन हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित किया जा रहा है, जिसकी अन्तिम तिथि ३०-०९-२०१९ है :-

क्र० सं०	पद का नाम	पद की संख्या	अनिवार्य अर्हता	मानदेय
1	डिस्ट्रिक्ट प्रोग्राम कोऑर्डिनेटर	01	Post Graduate degree in Social Sciences/Life sciences/Nutrition/Medicine/Health Management/Social Work/Rural Management /Social Work/Rural Management. At least 01 years experience in planning, implementation and monitoring of child and women nutrition programmes. High level of proficiency verbal and written Hindi & English. Good level of computer skills (MS Word, MS excel and Power Point)	Rs. 35000 per month. TDS will be deducted as per the Income Tax law.
2	डिस्ट्रिक्ट प्रोग्राम असिस्टेंट	01	Graduate degree in Social Sciences/Life sciences/Nutrition/Medicine/Health Management/Social Work/Rural Management /Social Work/Rural Management. At least 01 years experience in planning, implementation and monitoring of child and women nutrition programmes. High level of proficiency verbal and written Hindi & English. Good level of computer skills (MS Word, MS excel and Power Point)	Rs. 20000 per month. TDS will be deducted as per the Income Tax Law.

नोट- अभ्यर्थी द्वारा निर्धारित प्रारूप पर आवेदन के साथ समस्त प्रमाण पत्रों की प्रमाणित छायाप्रति दिनांक ३०-०९-२०१९ तक कार्यालय मुख्य चिकित्सा अधिकारी, शाहजहाँपुर में स्पीड पोस्ट द्वारा एवं ई०मेल आई०डी० cmospnpmv@gmail.com पर अनिवार्य रूप से प्राप्त करना होगा, अन्यथा की स्थिति में आवेदन पर विचार नहीं किया जाएगा। आवेदन पत्र का निर्धारित प्रारूप एवं विस्तृत निर्देश एन.आई.सी. शाहजहाँपुर की वेबसाइट www.shahjahanpur.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

- रिक्त पदों की संख्या विभागीय निर्देशों के अनुसार घटाई एवं बढ़ायी जा सकती हैं एवं सभी तैनाती ३१-०३-२०२० तक के लिए सविदा के लिए की जानी है। इसे परफार्मेंस एवं विभागीय स्वीकृति के आधार पर बढ़ायी जा सकता है।
- एन.आई.सी. शाहजहाँपुर की वेबसाइट www.shahjahanpur.nic.in पर समस्त कार्यक्रम की गाईडलाइन एवं टी.ओ.आर. देखी जा सकती है। भविष्य में साक्षात्कार की तिथि भी इसी वेबसाइट पर अपलोड की जाएगी।
- पूर्व में दिनांक ५-९-२०१८ को उपरोक्त पदों पर प्रकाशित विज्ञापित तत्कालिक प्रभाव से निरस्त की जाती है और जिन अभ्यर्थियों ने पूर्व में आवेदन किया था वह निरस्त माने जायेंगे, इस विज्ञापित के प्रकाशन के उपरान्त प्राप्त आवेदन पत्रों पर ही विचार किया जायेगा।

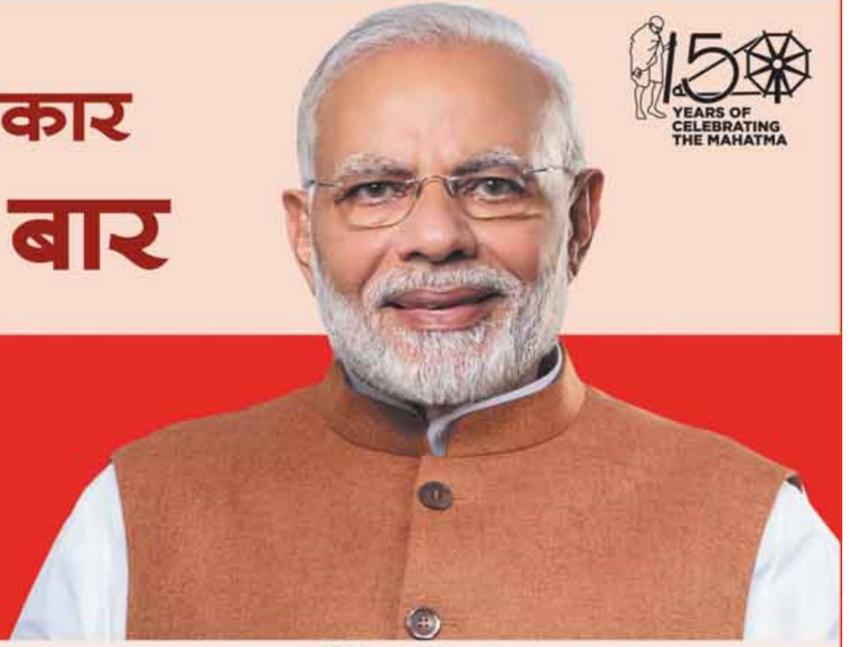
मुख्य चिकित्सा अधिकारी शाहजहाँपुर।



जन भागीदारी-जवाबदेह सरकार उत्तर प्रदेश में पहली बार



विकास एवं सुशासन के 30 माह



कृषि

- रु. 73,000 करोड़ से अधिक गन्ना मूल्य का भुगतान • रु. 36,000 करोड़ से 86 लाख लघु एवं सीमान्त किसानों का ऋण मोचन • सभी किसानों को प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना का लाभ • गेहूँ, धान, दलहन, तिलहन की एम.एस.पी. में वृद्धि करते हुए किसानों से 227 लाख मी. टन खाद्यान्न की सरकारी खरीद

सिंचाई

- 46 वर्षों से लंबित बाण सागर परियोजना सहित 8 सिंचाई परियोजनाओं को पूर्ण कर लगभग 2 लाख 67 हजार हेक्टेयर सिंचन क्षमता में वृद्धि • बुन्देलखण्ड में 8384 खेत-तालाबों का निर्माण • 50 लाख किसान ड्रिप सिंचकलर सिंचाई योजना से लाभान्वित • निःशुल्क बोरिंग के माध्यम से 1 लाख 61 हजार 485 हेक्टेयर सिंचन क्षमता में वृद्धि

चिकित्सा एवं स्वास्थ्य

- 'आयुष्मान भारत' योजना से 1 करोड़ 18 लाख गरीब परिवारों को रु. 5 लाख तक का चिकित्सा कवर। छूटे हुए 10 लाख 56 हजार परिवार 'मुख्यमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना' से आच्छादित • जे.ई./ए.ई.एस. के रोकथाम हेतु प्रभावी प्रयासों से इस बीमारी में 35% एवं मृत्यु दर में 65% कमी • गोरखपुर एवं रायबरेली में एम्स का निर्माण • 15 नये मेडिकल कॉलेज की स्थापना-कार्य प्रगति पर, जिनमें से 7 मेडिकल कॉलेज में पढ़ाई प्रारम्भ

शिक्षा

- 'स्कूल चलो अभियान' में 1.80 करोड़ बच्चों का नामांकन • बालिकाओं को स्नातक तक निःशुल्क शिक्षा • एन.सी.ई.आर.टी. पाठ्यक्रम लागू • नकलविहीन परीक्षाएं • 193 नये इण्टर कालेज संचालित • 51 नये राजकीय महाविद्यालयों की स्थापना-कार्य प्रगति पर • 2 नये विश्वविद्यालयों की स्थापना हेतु भूमि-बजट की व्यवस्था • 24 राजकीय पॉलीटेक्निक की स्थापना • 4 राजकीय इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज की स्थापना

बिजली

- जनपद मुख्यालयों को 24 घंटे, तहसील मुख्यालयों को 20 घंटे एवं ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों को 18 घंटे विद्युत आपूर्ति • 1 करोड़ 9 लाख से अधिक नये विद्युत कनेक्शन • 1 लाख 30 हजार मजरे विद्युतीकृत • सूर्यास्त के बाद ग्रामीण क्षेत्र विद्युत कटौती से मुक्त

निवेश

- लगभग रु. 2 लाख करोड़ की निवेश परियोजनाओं पर कार्य प्रारम्भ, 5 लाख लोगों को रोजगार • रु. 20,000 करोड़ के निवेश वाले डिफेंस कॉरिडोर की स्थापना-प्रक्रिया प्रारम्भ, 2 लाख 50 हजार लोगों को रोजगार मिलेगा • ओडीओपी योजना में 1 लाख 92 हजार लाभार्थियों को रु. 18 हजार 345 करोड़ का ऋण वितरित, 5 लाख लोगों को रोजगार

एक्सप्रेसवे

- 341 किलोमीटर लम्बे पूर्वांचल एक्सप्रेसवे का तेजी से निर्माण • 91 किमी. लम्बे गोरखपुर लिंक एक्सप्रेसवे एवं 297 किमी. लम्बे बुन्देलखण्ड एक्सप्रेसवे के लिए निर्माण-प्रक्रिया प्रारम्भ • मेरठ से प्रयागराज तक 640 किमी. लंबे गंगा एक्सप्रेसवे के निर्माण का निर्णय

समाज कल्याण

- अनुसूचित जाति/जनजाति के कुल 33 लाख 43 हजार, पिछड़ी जाति के कुल 55 लाख 83 हजार एवं सामान्य वर्ग के 19 लाख से अधिक छात्र-छात्राओं को पूर्वदशम एवं दशमोत्तर छात्रवृत्ति • वृद्धावस्था पेंशन प्रतिमाह रु. 400/- से बढ़ाकर रु. 500/- करते हुए 41 लाख 57 हजार 308 वृद्धजन को पेंशन • दिव्यांगजन पेंशन प्रतिमाह रु. 300/- से बढ़ाकर रु. 500/- करते हुए 9 लाख 84 हजार 709 दिव्यांगजन को पेंशन • वनटांगिया, मुसहर, कोल तथा धारू समुदाय के ग्रामों में मूलभूत सुविधाओं का विकास

कानून व्यवस्था

- कानून व्यवस्था पर जीरो टालरेन्स की नीति • संगठित अपराध पर नियंत्रण • सभी प्रमुख पर्व, त्यौहार, मेले, धार्मिक आयोजन तथा लोकसभा चुनाव शांतिपूर्ण एवं सक्षम सम्पन्न

महिला सशक्तिकरण

- प्रधानमंत्री उज्वला योजना में गरीब महिलाओं को 1 करोड़ 35 लाख निःशुल्क रसोई गैस कनेक्शन • एंटी रोमियो स्वयंसेवा का गठन • मुख्यमंत्री कन्या सुमंगला योजना क्रियान्वित • मुख्यमंत्री सामूहिक विवाह योजना में निर्धन परिवारों की 68108 कन्याओं की शादी • निराश्रित महिला पेंशन हेतु आयु सीमा की बाध्यता समाप्त • 21 लाख 69 हजार निराश्रित महिलाओं को पेंशन • अल्पसंख्यक वर्ग की निर्धन पुत्रियों की शादी के लिए अनुदान • प्रधानमंत्री मातृ वंदना योजना से 18 लाख 57 हजार 38 माताएं लाभान्वित • सभी जिलों में 181 महिला हेल्पलाइन व रेस्क्यू वैन संचालित

स्वच्छता

- सभी जनपद ओडीएफ घोषित • ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 2 करोड़ 61 लाख परिवार व्यक्तिगत शौचालयों से आच्छादित • नगर क्षेत्र में 4000 सामुदायिक शौचालयों का निर्माण

श्रमिक-कल्याण

- 60 वर्ष की आयु पूर्ण कर चुके श्रमिकों को प्रतिमाह रु. 1000/- की पेंशन • प्रधानमंत्री श्रम योगी मान धन योजना के अन्तर्गत 5 लाख 13 हजार 917 श्रमिकों का पंजीकरण • पारम्परिक कारीगरों, बढ़ई, दर्जी, टोकरी बुनकर, नाई, सुनार, लोहार, कुम्हार, हलवाई आदि के लिए विश्वकर्मा श्रम सम्मान योजना • उत्तर प्रदेश माटी कला बोर्ड का गठन

पारदर्शी भर्ती प्रक्रिया

- अब तक 2 लाख 25 हजार भर्तियां पूर्ण • पुलिस, शिक्षा व अन्य विभागों में भर्ती की पारदर्शी प्रक्रिया जारी

सड़क, वायु, मेट्रो कनेक्टिविटी

- 129441 किमी. सड़कों गड़बड़मुक्त • 66700 किमी. मार्ग का नवीनीकरण • 7948 किमी. ग्रामीण सड़कों का निर्माण • प्रधानमंत्री ग्राम सड़क योजना में 6003 किमी. सड़कों का निर्माण • 8 हवाई अड्डे क्रियाशील • जेवर इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट का कार्य प्रगति पर • 11 नये हवाईअड्डों का निर्माण जारी • लखनऊ में अमौसी से मुंशी पुलिया तक मेट्रो का संचालन • नोएडा से ग्रेटर नोएडा तक मेट्रो का विस्तार • कानपुर, झांसी, वाराणसी, आगरा, प्रयागराज, गोरखपुर और मेरठ में मेट्रो/रैपिड ट्रांसपोर्ट हेतु कार्य योजना तैयार

पर्यटन

- प्रयागराज में 'दिव्य कुम्भ-भव्य कुम्भ' का आयोजन • मथुरा में रंगोत्सव एवं अयोध्या में भव्य दीपोत्सव का आयोजन • काशी विश्वनाथ मंदिर कॉरिडोर का विकास • स्वदेश दर्शन योजना के अन्तर्गत समेकित पर्यटन विकास

पशुधन व दुग्ध विकास

- प्रत्येक जनपद में दो-दो वृहद गोवंश संरक्षण केन्द्र की स्थापना हेतु रु. 180 करोड़ एवं छुट्टा गोवंश के भरण-पोषण हेतु रु. 158.50 करोड़ की स्वीकृति • बुन्देलखण्ड के 7 जनपदों में 36 पशु आश्रय गृहों के निर्माण हेतु रु. 10.32 करोड़ की स्वीकृति • विलीय वर्ष 2018-19 में 305 लाख मी. टन दुग्ध उत्पादन कर उत्तर प्रदेश देश में प्रथम स्थान पर

राशन की कालाबाजारी पर रोक

- 63 लाख से अधिक फर्जी राशन कार्ड निरस्त • 3 करोड़ 55 लाख परिवारों को नये राशन कार्ड • 15 करोड़ से अधिक लाभार्थियों को पोर्टेबिलिटी के माध्यम से राशन दुकान चुनने का अवसर • ई-पॉस मशीनों के माध्यम से भ्रष्टाचार रहित खाद्यान्न वितरण

वन एवं पर्यावरण

- वृक्षारोपण महाकुम्भ के अन्तर्गत रिकार्ड 22 करोड़ से अधिक वृक्षों का रोपण • प्रयागराज में एक निश्चित समयावधि में एक ही स्थान पर 76824 पौध रोपण कर 'गिनीज बुक ऑफ वर्ल्ड रिकार्ड' में नाम दर्ज • स्वच्छ पर्यावरण के लिए पॉलीथीन के निर्माण एवं उपयोग पर पूर्ण प्रतिबंध

उच्च गुणवत्ता वाले हेलमेट का ही उपयोग करें।

सबका साथ-सबका विकास-सबका विश्वास

सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

Between 1990-2017 Malnutrition deaths fell by two-thirds, says study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Death rate attributable to malnutrition in under-5 children in India has dropped by two-thirds from 1990 to 2017, but it still accounts for 68 per cent of deaths in under-five children, says a study published in The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health on Wednesday.

According to comprehensive estimates of disease burden due to child and maternal malnutrition released by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the disease burden rate due to malnutrition in children varies seven-fold across states. It is highest in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Nagaland, and Tripura.

Among malnutrition indicators, low birth weight is the biggest contributor to disease burden followed by child growth failure which includes stunting, underweight, and wasting.

The study was conducted by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative - a joint initiative of the ICMR, Public Health Foundation of India, and Institute for Health Metrics

and Evaluation in collaboration with the Union Health Ministry. "Efforts are needed in each state to control malnutrition. State governments are being encouraged to intensify efforts to reduce malnutrition and undertake robust monitoring to track the progress," said Vinod K Paul, member NITI Aayog.

Balram Bhargava, secretary in the department of health research in the ministry of health, and also director general ICMR said the government in its commitment to the Poshan Abhiyaan (nutrition mission) is taking important steps to augment monitoring of malnutrition indicators across the country.

According to the study, the prevalence of low birth weight was 21% in India in 2017, ranging from 9% in Mizoram to 24% in Uttar Pradesh.

The study highlighted that the prevalence of child stunting was 39% in India in 2017. This ranged from 21% in Goa to 49% in Uttar Pradesh, and was generally highest in the EAG states. The prevalence of child underweight was 33% in India in 2017, ranging from 16% in Manipur to 42% in Jharkhand.

The prevalence of child anaemia was 60% in India in 2017, ranging from 21% in Mizoram to 74% in Haryana.

"While it is important to address the gaps in all malnutrition indicators, low birth weight needs particular policy attention in India as it is the biggest contributor to child death among all malnutrition indicators and its rate of decline is among the lowest," said Lalit Dandona, Director of the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative.

The study found the prevalence of anaemia in women at 54% in India in 2017, ranging from 28% in Mizoram to 60% in Delhi while the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding was 53% in India in 2017, ranging from 34% in Meghalaya to 74% in Chhattisgarh.

"Malnutrition in children is an outcome of inadequate maternal nutrition, poor sanitation and hygiene and suboptimal infant feeding practices. Improvement in nutrition, therefore, is linked not only with food availability and access, but also with food safety and environment," said R. Hemalatha, director at National Institute of Nutrition, ICMR.

Cabinet okays productivity linked bonus of 11.5L rly staff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved productivity-linked bonus equivalent to 78 days wages to over 11.52 lakh railway employees.

Addressing media Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said that this is for the sixth consecutive year that productivity-linked bonus is being given to railway employees.

The bonus for financial year 2018-19 would benefit 11 lakh employees and would cost the exchequer ₹2024.40 crore, Javadekar said.

"The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the payment of Productivity Linked Bonus (PLB) equivalent to 78 days wages to over 11.52 Lakh eligible non-gazetted railway employees (excluding RPF/RPSF personnel) for the Financial Year (FY) 2018-19, for maintaining industrial peace and motivation of railwaymen.

This entails an expenditure of Rs. 2024.40 crores to the exchequer," said the statement issued by Govt.

Confidence of investors shaken: Priyanka

'Govt refuses to acknowledge truth'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing their attack over the state of the economy, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Wednesday said the confidence of investors is "shaken" but the Modi dispensation is refusing to acknowledge the truth. The siblings also took a swipe at Prime Minister Modi over about his Howdy event in Houston during his current

US visit.

Congress has been attacking the Modi government over the slowdown in the economy and has criticised it for its economic policies. Rahul took to Twitter to say take potshots by ahead of Modi's visit to the United States, where he will address Indian Americans at a function "Howdy Modi". US President Donald Trump will join Modi at the event in Houston. "Howdy? economy doin', Mr Modi? Ain't too good it seems," he said on Twitter, using the hashtag "HowdyEconomy".

Citing a media report, Priyanka claimed that after

pouring USD 45 billion into India's stock market over the past six years on hopes that Modi would unleash the country's economic potential, international money managers have sold USD 4.5 billion of Indian shares since June.

"By showing glitter, saying 5 trillion, 5 trillion, everyday or by doing media's headline management, economy cannot be improved. Investors do not come by sponsoring events abroad," Priyanka Gandhi said in an apparent dig at Prime Minister Modi's upcoming diaspora event in Houston.

The confidence of investors

is "shaken" and the foundation of economic investment has "cracked", she said in a tweet in Hindi with the hashtag 'BJP bad for business'. "But the BJP government is refusing to acknowledge this truth. This slowdown is a speed breaker in the direction of becoming an economic superpower. Without improving this situation, all other razzmatazz is useless," Priyanka Gandhi said in another tweet.

She has been relentlessly attacking the government over the issue of economy in the last few days and demanding answers from the government over the economic slowdown.

India, Belgium review bilateral trade at 16th BLEU

New Delhi: India and Belgium reviewed the bilateral trade relations and setting ambitious objectives during the 16th Session of India-Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) Joint Economic Commission (JEC) here on Tuesday. The forum was established in 1997.

The European Union is India's largest trade partner. Among the 28 EU member States, Belgium has the third largest trade

with India with a total trade value worth €12.8 billion in 2018 consisting of diamonds, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, foodstuff and machinery. These trade figures reflect the close economic partnership emphasizing bilateral relationship. Belgium is keen to further diversify trade relations and explore new sectors with India. About 170 Belgian companies are based in India, whereas around 80 Indian companies

have set up a plant or office in Belgium.

As a logistics and transport expert, Belgium works along with Luxembourg to ensure a smooth and swift trade access to Europe for Indian businesses through the Port of Antwerp, which is the second largest port in Europe and functions as 'the Gateway to Europe'. India is among the most important partners of the Port of Antwerp.



Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank launches the Margadarshan, Model Curriculum for Diploma Courses & 360 Feedback of Faculty Schemes, at a function in New Delhi on Wednesday. The Secretary, Department of Higher Education, R Subrahmanyam and other dignitaries are also seen. PIB

INSHORT

SC ISSUES NBW AGAINST NOIDA SP

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against superintendent of district jail of Gautam Buddha Nagar in Uttar Pradesh after it was apprised that he had released an accused from prison despite the apex court order cancelling his bail.

GOVT IN SC ON 20-WEEK CEILING FOR ABORTION

New Delhi: The Centre has told the Supreme Court that the right to reproductive autonomy does not outweigh the state's interest in protecting the life of a foetus and therefore the ceiling of 20 weeks for abortion cannot be extended in a blanket manner. The government said that an unborn child cannot protect itself from the harm designed by his/her own mother.

ARMY HOLDS MILITARY EXERCISE IN LADAKH

New Delhi: A military exercise in the high altitude area in eastern Ladakh was carried out on Wednesday, the Army said in a statement. The exercise, encompassing the use of mechanised forces with high technology platforms, was witnessed by Lieutenant General Ranbir Singh, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command.

JAIRAM CRITICISES BAN ON E-CIGARETTES

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday took a swipe at the Government's decision banning production, import and sale of e-cigarettes, saying the governance motto now is 'a headline a day keeps news of the worsening slowdown away'.

JITIN FOR POPULATION CONTROL MEASURES

New Delhi: Congress leader Jitin Prasad on Wednesday said the party workers should "mobilise" 10 families each to adopt population control measures, stressing on the need to maintain the two-child norm in the country. He also reminded the party of its Pachmarhi resolution of 1998, in which it had stressed on maintaining the norm in India.

Govt considering construction of new Parliament building: Hardeep Singh Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Wednesday said a new Parliament building having offices of ministers and MPs that may be constructed next to the over 90-year-old structure is one of the options being considered by the government. The minister said the final decision will be taken only after designs are submitted by architecture firms.

One of the options that is being considered is the chambers of the two Houses of Parliament will be revamped to accommodate more MPs. According to an official, the strength of Parliament may increase after a possible delimitation exercise. The government will soon constitute a core team of CPWD officers to execute the ambitious redevelopment plan for Central Vista, the

over three-km stretch from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, in Lutyens' Delhi.

The Narendra Modi government had last week unveiled its mega plan to redevelop the over 3-km stretch from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate in Lutyens' Delhi. The government on September 2 floated a request for proposal for the "development or redevelopment of Parliament Building, Common Central Secretariat and Central Vista."

On Monday, the CPWD reduced the earnest money from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 25 lakh for submitting the bid for redevelopment plan for Central Vista and Parliament building owing to concerns raised by architects who participated in a pre-bid meeting last week.

Addressing the event on the theme of 'Emerging trends in public architecture', Puri said a reputed architect recently wrote to him, alleging that the gov-

ernment is going to "destroy" the Parliament building.

"Who said we will destroy Parliament?" the minister asked and explained the government has reached a stage of just inviting ideas from architecture firms for the ambitious project.

He said the British ruled India for 190 years and they had good architects who built buildings which is now part of the country's cultural heritage.

"North and South Blocks should be made museums that reflect 190 years (of British rule)...What will happen to the Parliament building? We will construct a new building which will connect Parliament through an underground pathway," Puri said. At event, Puri said 70 per cent of India has to be rebuilt by 2030.

He said that the CPWD was set up in the 1850s and the buildings constructed along the Central Vista reflected the colonial ethos.

Mother Dairy to recycle 832 tonnes plastic by March 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mother Dairy, a leading milk supplier in Delhi-NCR, on Wednesday said it will recycle 832 tonnes of plastic by March next year as part of its efforts to protect environment.

"To tackle with the burgeoning menace of post-consumer plastic waste, Mother Dairy debuted its plastic waste collection and recycling initiative in Maharashtra in June 2018 by rolling out the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programme," it said in a statement. "Mother Dairy, through leading PROs, will collect and recycle plastic waste across 25 key states of its operations and is targeting to recycle around 60

per cent of the total multi layered packaging used, i.e., about 832 tonnes by March 2020," it added.

Mother Dairy, with the help of a Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO), has collected and recycled around 1,073 tonnes of plastic waste till May 2019. This quantity includes around 183 tonnes of multi-layered packaging (MLP) and 890 tonnes of non-multi-layered packaging. Mother Dairy was commissioned in 1974 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). The company sells edible oils under the Dhara brand while fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen vegetables and snacks, range of unpolished pulses, honey, pulps and concentrates are marketed under the Safal brand.

Five rivers flowing above danger mark: MET dept calls it 'unique'

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Three weeks into September as the monsoon shows no signs of withdrawal, rivers in as many as five States are flowing above the danger mark — a feature which the MET says is 'unique'. Rivers like Ganga, Brahmaputra, Yamuna, Mahananda, Bagmati, Ghaghara, Gandak, Kosi, Sone, Jibharali, Chambal etc in Bihar, Assam, UP, Bengal and Rajasthan are above the danger mark causing flood-like situation in many areas in these States. The IMD rainfall data till September 18 showed India received an average of 861 mm as against the normal of 823.9mm, which is 5 percent above normal.

According to IMD officials, the weather phenomenon is 'unique' at the time of withdrawal of southwest monsoon in the third week of September. "Due to climate change, August and September witnessed excessive rainfall this monsoon. It is usually in July and August. Due to delayed arrival, the withdrawal is also delayed

by almost a fortnight. Data recorded close to 1,900 extreme rainfall events this monsoon, more than half of which were in August and September, underlining the expanding impact of climate change in the June-September monsoon," IMD officials said.

As many as one crore people are affected and 1400 people have died in rain-related tragedies across the country and damages to property runs into thousands of crores in 14 States. The damage to properties, infrastructures, crops, animals due to rain related mayhem is still being estimated.

According to IMD, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Nagaland, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya have recorded excessive and continuous rainfall in the last six days (September 12 to 18). The IMD said that he first was July 10 to 15, leading to flooding in eastern Uttar Pradesh and northern Bihar; the second between July 25 and 31, causing floods in Assam; and the

third between August 5 and 12, when coastal states such as Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Kerala experienced floods.

As per flood assessment report prepared by the Ministry of Home Affairs, all rivers - Ganga, Yamuna, Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Mahanand, Kamalabalan are flowing over danger marks, causing flood like situation in Khagaria, Sitamarhi, Kishanganj, Katihar, Patna, Buxar, Gopal Ganj, Bhagalpur, Khagaria districts in Bihar. Bihar recorded 774.5mm rainfall as against the normal of 941.4 mm, a deficit of 18 percent. The situation report says that several low lying areas on the river banks in the state are under flood.

Similarly, rivers in UP flowing over danger marks and causing floods in Ballia, Banda, Faizabad, Gazipur, Auraiya, Hamirpur, Bara Banki, Prayagraj, Jalaun districts are facing flood like situation. Low lying area in Prayagraj and Varansi are under water. UP recorded 581 mm of rain as against the normal of 749 mm, a deficit of 22 percent.

Uddhav: Pak wouldn't have come into existence, had Savarkar been PM

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Rooting for bestowing Bharat Ratna on Veer Damodar Savarkar posthumously, Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray has said that Pakistan would not have come into existence, had Savarkar been the Prime Minister of India.

Launching a biography in English titled "Savarkar: Echoes From A Forgotten Past" at the Swatantra Veer Savarkar Rashtriya Smarak at Shivaji Park on Tuesday evening, Uddhav said, "Savarkar deserves to be honoured with Bharat Ratna in recognition of his sacrifices to the country."

"Today it is the both birthday of (my grandfather) Prabhodhankar Thackeray and liberation day of Marathwada region. It was late Vallabhbhai Patel who liberated Marathwada from the Nizam rule. We call Vallabhbhai Patel as the iron

man. Kashmir would not have become an issue as it is today, had he been the Prime Minister. Similarly, Pakistan would not have come into existence, had Veer Savarkar been the Prime Minister of India," Uddhav said.

"Savarkar is an ideology. The Congress may have treated Savarkar like an enemy but it would not finish the ideology named Savarkar," Uddhav added.

"Savarkar must be awarded the Bharat Ratna for the sacrifices made by him to the country. We don't deny the work done by (Mahatma) Gandhi and (first PM Jawaharlal) Nehru, but the country saw more than two families being born on the political scene," he said.

"Savarkar suffered an unbearable ordeal inside the Andaman prison for securing freedom to the country. But the period after he was released from the prison in 1924 was more intolerable for Savarkar.

He was ostracised and disallowed to participating in freedom struggle. He was restricted to one place. Still he had engaged himself in the activity of eliminating untouchability in the society," the Sena president said.

"They say Nehru also underwent imprisonment during freedom struggle. I would have called Nehru as 'Veer Jawaharlal Nehru', had survived jail for 14 minutes of the imprisonment of the kind Savarkar underwent in Andaman prison (where Savarkar stayed for 14 long years)," Uddhav said.

Maintaining that it was his fortune that he was releasing a biography of Savarkar, Uddhav said: "Veer Savarkar was a role model in the history of armed revolution in the country. I cannot describe him in few words," Uddhav said.

Dwelling upon his book, author of the book Vikram Sampath said that "Savarkar:

Echoes From A Forgotten Past" was the first of two volumes and covered the period between 1883 to 1924, from Savarkar's birth at Bhagur in Nashik district to his days as a firebrand student leader in Pune's Fergusson College, as well as his fight for freedom that ended in a life sentence in the infamous Cellular Jail. Savarkar was conditionally released from jail in 1924.

The Sena president said that he would buy copies and ensure that every school and college in the state stocks it in libraries. He said that the book should be compulsory reading for MPs and MLAs too. Sampath said Savarkar's story deserves to be "written, heard and read."

"(Former Congress president) Rahul Gandhi should be given a copy of the book," Uddhav said, as he debunked the swipes that Rahul had taken at various Hindu icons including Savarkar.



An artist gives finishing touches to an idol of Goddess Durga at Kumartuli in Kolkata on Wednesday

Row futile, I said promote Hindi as 2nd language: Shah



PNS ■ NEW DELHI/RANCHI

BJP national president and Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses a rally in Jamnara on Wednesday

Against the backdrop of a raging controversy over his 'one nation, one language' proposition, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday sought to put the issue to rest saying he never asked for imposing Hindi over other regional languages and had only requested for learning Hindi as the second language after one's mother tongue.

"I myself come from a non-Hindi State of Gujarat. If some people want to do politics, it's their choice," he said. Parties, mostly from Tamil Nadu, have vociferously opposed Shah's pitch.

Hours after Shah clarified, DMK president M K Stalin said the party's proposed protest on September 20 on the issue has been postponed.

Citing Shah's assertion that he has never asked for imposi-

I myself come from a non-Hindi State of Gujarat. If some people want to do politics, it's their choice
AMIT SHAH

tion of Hindi anywhere in the country, Stalin said the protest slated for September 20 has been postponed temporarily. The DMK chief said Shah has also opined that his view had been "wrongly understood".

Speaking at an event in Ranchi, Jharkhand, Shah said he has never asked for imposition of Hindi anywhere in the country but advocated its use as the second language. Shah said he has been repeatedly pitching for strengthening regional languages.

The Home Minister said to end the confusion, people should listen to his speech carefully where he repeatedly said Indian languages should

be strengthened and people should realise the necessity of the Indian languages.

"A child can perform, a child's proper mental growth is possible only when the child studies in mother tongue. Mother tongue does not mean Hindi. It is the language of a particular State, like Gujarati in my State. But there should be one language in the country, if someone wants to learn another language, it should be Hindi. I have just made the request. I have failed to understand what is wrong in that," he said.

Shah had created a flutter on the occasion of 'Hindi Diwas' last week as he pitched for 'one nation, one language'

Rajinikanth against Amit Shah's Hindi drive

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu received a major boost on Wednesday with film actor Rajinikanth, who is expected to launch a political party soon, declaring that the move to 'impose' Hindi would not work in the State.

Amidst reports that all political parties barring the BJP would launch State-wide agitations against the statement made by union home minister Amit Shah on Hindi Diwas that Hindi was the only language which could unite India, Rajinikanth who is considered close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that though it was good to have a common language for the development and unity of the country, the same may not work in Tamil Nadu. "If Hindi is imposed, none of the southern States would accept it," said



the actor.

In another development, the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee decided to 'greet' Home Minister Amit Shah with black flags as a mark of protest against the latter's statement that Hindi was the only language which could unite India. The Home Minister would be the second person after Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be shown black flags by the DMK and

other Tamil fringe elements.

The executive committee of the TNCC which met at Chennai on Tuesday decided to 'greet' the Home Minister with black flags when he visits the State. This was stated by K S Alagiri, the TNCC chief who is a loyalist of former union finance minister and Congress strongman P Chidambaram.

"Amit Shah's statement is against the legal guarantee and protection provided by for-

mer Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to languages other than Hindi," said Alagiri while speaking to reporters after the meeting. On Wednesday, the Congress cadre staged marches all over the State to condemn the home minister's statement. But a speech delivered by Chidambaram on the occasion of Hindi Diwas while he was the union home minister has come as an embarrassment to the Congress. Chidambaram is heard telling in the speech that only Hindi could be the national and official language of the country.

"These are all part of politics and one need not give any importance to such statements and agitations. In another couple of days, this issue would be forgotten by the people as well as the same leaders," said a senior TNCC leader when asked about the statement by Chidambaram which has gone viral in the social media.

Protests make BJP swear by Kannada over Hindi in Karnataka

IANAS ■ BENGALURU

Vociferous protests by opposition parties and activists in Karnataka made the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government give primacy to Kannada after its national president Amit Shah favoured Hindi as one language across the country that sparked a controversy in the southern State.

"All official languages,

including Kannada and Hindi are equal. In Karnataka, as Kannada is the principle language, we will never compromise on its importance. We are committed to promoting it (Kannada)," said Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa in a series of tweets in Kannada and English, clarifying the party's and Government's views on the language row.

Celebrating September 14 as the Hindi Diwas, Shah had

tweeted and reiterated at a function later in New Delhi that "India is a nation of many languages and every language has its own importance. But it is absolutely necessary to have one language for the country, which becomes India's identity globally. If there is any one language that connects the entire nation in a common thread of unity, it is Hindi, which is spoken the maximum."

Pak Rangers again target posts along Border in Kathua

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Pakistan Rangers on Wednesday again targeted Border out Posts (BoPs) along the International Border in Kathua district.

The Rangers fired from small arms on BoPs in Rajbagh area in the wee hours of Wednesday.

BSF troops retaliated the fire in equal measure.

According to official sources, "no loss of life and damage to property was reported from anywhere in the forward area".

This is the second consecutive day that Pakistan Rangers have resorted to firing on BoPs along the IB across Jammu frontier.

Local reports suggested, Pakistani rangers were raising objections to ongoing developmental works in the forward villages and desperately trying to target the workers engaged in the work on ground zero.

Meanwhile, situation along the line of control remained peaceful with no fresh exchange of firing reported



from any one of the twin bordering districts of Rajouri and Poonch.

According to ground reports, jawans of the Indian army defused nine mortar shells fired by the Pakistan army from across the Line of Control (LoC) while targeting civilian areas.

Nine mortar shells of 120 mm and 81 mm have been safely defused in the Balakote, Sandote and Basoni forward areas in the Mendhar sector, the officials said.

In another related development, a video clip surfaced on the social media on Wednesday which clearly indicated presence of elite commandos of Pakistan army helping infiltrators sneak inside the Indian territory along LoC in Poonch sector.

ISRO thanks all Indians for support after it lost contact with lander

PTI ■ BENGALURU

ISRO has expressed gratitude to Indians in the country and abroad for the support it received after the space agency lost contact with the lander of Chandrayaan-2, minutes before touchdown on the Moon recently. The space agency had got support from the entire nation, despite it losing communication with the lander 'Vikram' ahead of the touchdown on September 7, with people from all walks of life praising ISRO and its scientists for the achievement.

"Thank you for standing by us. We will continue to keep going forward propelled by the hopes and dreams of Indians across the world!" ISRO tweeted on Tuesday. "Thank you for inspiring us to always aim for the sky," the Indian Space Research Organisation said.

Prime Minister Modi, who had flown down to Bengaluru to watch the planned touchdown of Vikram, had told ISRO scientists not to get dejected and

disheartened and said the country was proud of them. "I see disappointment on your faces. No need to get dejected. We have learnt a lot," Modi had said.

"These are moments to be courageous, and courageous we will be! We remain hopeful and will continue working hard on our space programme," he had said. Lander Vikram, with rover Pragyan housed inside it, lost communication with ground stations during its final descent, just 2.1 kms above the lunar surface, minutes before the planned touch-down on the Moon.

Efforts to reestablish the link have been going on since then. On September 8, ISRO had said the lander was spotted on the lunar surface by camera on-board of the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter. Vikram had a hard-landing. The lander, designed to execute a soft-landing on the lunar surface, and rover have a mission life of one Lunar day, which is equivalent to 14 earth days.

More CBI sleuths in Kolkata as Rajeev Kumar moves court again

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Even as the Central Bureau of Investigation roped in more officials from Uttar Pradesh and Delhi to "locate and fetch un-communicable and un-connectable" former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar the senior IPS officer on Wednesday moved the Alipore district court with a petition seeking to be heard before passing any order relating to a non-bailable arrest warrant.

The CBI reportedly was preparing to move the court seeking a non-bailable warrant against Kumar who is currently the Additional Director General of CID.

The former Kolkata top cop continued to remain under-



Police personnel in plain clothes seen outside the official residence of former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar, in Kolkata on Wednesday

ground even as a desperate posse of CBI sleuths tired to locate his whereabouts.

Sources said a team of 12 officers including two SPs and an Additional SP from UP and Delhi had arrived at Kolkata to assist fetching Kumar who

remained "un-communicable and un-connectable" for the fifth day on Wednesday since the Calcutta High Court removed his shield against arrest.

Kumar was earlier summoned by the CBI to reportedly interrogate him regarding his role in the investigation of the multi-crore Sharada chit

CBI reportedly was preparing to move the court seeking a non-bailable warrant against Kumar who is currently Additional Director General of CID

fund scam as the head of the Special Investigating Team constituted by the State Government in 2013, months before the Supreme Court handed over the case to the CBI following allegations that SIT was tampering with evidence and mishandling the case allegedly to protect the influential people.

Earlier on Tuesday the Barasat district court had transferred the case to Alipore citing lack of jurisdiction. The Barasat court which is conducting the trial of the chit fund case heard petitions for non-bailable warrant of CBI and that of anticipatory bail of Rajeev Kumar before refusing to pass any order and sending it to the Alipore ACJM's Court.

J&K showing signs of improvement

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the week-long trip of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States from September 21 to September 27, the situation in Jammu & Kashmir is showing signs of partial improvement. In the recent days, no major incident of law and order situation was reported from anywhere across Kashmir Valley.

The security restrictions too have been lifted from most parts of Srinagar to allow smooth movement of local residents. Large number of private vehicles can be seen moving around in different parts of Srinagar and other district headquarters while public transport continue to remain off from the streets.

Major market places remain open for few hours between 6 to 9.00 am in Srinagar but as the day progresses the shopkeepers down their shutters but remain present in the area. Majority of schools, despite remaining open, continue to wait for the children to occupy their class



rooms and board school buses. At present, the security personnel remain deployed only in certain areas to prevent any untoward incident.

Director General of Police, Dilbagh Singh, told reporters on the sidelines of a function in Police headquarters Jammu on Wednesday, "after receiving reports related to militants threatening businessmen against opening their shops, patrolling has been intensified and various other measures initiated to instil confidence among locals.

DGP said, policemen are conscious of these threats and over the past month, a couple of terrorists were neutralised and over two dozen others, including their sympathisers, arrested in the Valley. He said

the people have not responded to the Pakistani propaganda and foiled Islamabad's designs to create unrest.

Another major worry among the local residents remain suspension of mobile and internet services.

While landline telephony services have been restored across the Valley, mobile telephone services in most parts of Kashmir and all internet services continue to remain suspended since 5 August.

The Government offices have been made operational but recording thin attendance owing to absence of public transport facilities.

Referring to the issue of militants threatening orchardists, shopkeepers and setting a car ablaze in north

Kashmir's Baramulla district on Tuesday, the top cop said, "Two militants, who burnt down a car after beating its driver in Sopore yesterday, have been identified as Sajjad and Muzaffar of the Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT). We will take care of them very soon." Strong security measures have been put in place to foil any ill design being organised by Pakistan across the border, and with public support all forces are working tirelessly for peace in Jammu & Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the authorities didn't allow the Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Syed Ali Gilani, to address a press conference at his residence in Srinagar, on Wednesday. Due to suspension of communications means, Syed Ali Gilani had dispatched letters to local journalists, asking them to attend the press conference. As media men started trickling in policemen deployed there barred them from moving towards his residence. Police cited imposition of Section 144 in the area and requested journalists to disperse.

NGT refuses to entertain plea against odd & even scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal on Wednesday refused to entertain a plea challenging the decision of the AAP government to implement odd-even road rationing scheme in the national capital from November 4-15.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel questioned the maintainability of the plea and "dismissed it as withdrawn".

"Under which law of the land is this plea maintainable," the bench said. The plea filed by advocate Gaurav Kumar Bansal said CPCB did an assessment of impact of odd-even scheme on air quality of Delhi wherein it was found that during the implementation period, ambient air quality of the city was found to be more deteriorated than the one when the said restriction was not in place.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on September 13 had said the odd-even scheme was part of the seven-point 'Parali Pradushan' (pollution caused by crop stubble burning) action plan that also includes mass distribution of anti-pollution masks, mechanised sweeping and water sprinkling on roads, tree plantation, and special plans for 12 pollution hotspots in Delhi.

Opp questions timing of Mamata-Modi meet

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition parties on Wednesday raised a hue a cry doubting the "real agenda" of the meeting between Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Moments after Banerjee emerged from the parley claiming it was a "Government-to-Government meeting and not a political one" which was held congenially Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury wondered "why such Government-to-Government meeting did not take place at Mamata Banerjee's initiative on earlier occasions when she was invited to join the Niti Aayog or Chief Ministers' meeting in Delhi.

"The timing of the meeting itself evokes suspicion," Chowdhury said wondering "why if it was a Government-to-Government meeting and not a political one as claimed by her then no senior Government official was present during the conversations."

To Banerjee's claim that she would also seek appointment from Home Minister Amit Shah for a one-on-one talks with him Chowdhury wondered whether Wednesday's meeting was fruitful in the real sense.

"After meeting with the Prime Minister she will meet



the Home Minister too. Then are we to assume that the Prime Minister has redirected her to the Home Minister? Are we to assume that the agenda of talks that she is claiming pegged around something else? Was it related to the stepped up activities of the CBI against former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar whose statements could be crucial for pinning down some big person in her Government?" he said.

Left Legislature Party leader and CPI(M) central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty too aired his doubts about the "real content of the talks" even as he said "the propriety of things demands senior officers to remain present in such meetings with all kinds of data if at all the Chief Minister goes to

a see the Prime Minister with demands of her Government."

More than "20 lakh people have been affected by the Sharada, Rose Valley and other chit funds scams that went a distance in catapulting the Trinamool Congress to power in Bengal.

Twenty lakh is not a figure it means one crore votes. So the Government-to-Government talks that Mamata Banerjee is referring to seems to be an eye wash against the backdrop of the CBI action against her blue-eyed boy Rajeev Kumar whose knowledge about the scam process is dangerous for her Government's safety," adding "there is a bigger agenda behind today's talks... it is all about saving the 'aunt' and the 'nephew,' but not naming the Chief Minister and her nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

Maha Mantralaya Drama 2 teachers survive suicide bid, land on safety net

They were demanding recognition for 300 handicapped schools in State

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Two teachers on Wednesday survived a suicide attempt at Mantralaya (State Secretariat) in south Mumbai on Wednesday, as they leaped from the second floor of the state secretariat directly onto the safety net erected to prevent frequent suicides. The two teachers attempted to commit suicide, to demand recognition for 300 schools for specially-abled children in the State.

Identifying the two as Hemant Patil and Arun Netore, who attempted suicide, police said they were teachers in a school for the handicapped Akkalkot taluka of Solapur district. After the incident, police took the two teachers to a nearby police station.

A delegation of teachers had come to meet ministers concerned to Press for the acceptance of their demand. However, the delegation could not meet the Ministers concerned. Upset with their failure to voice their demand with the ministers concerned, two teachers leaped from a second floor window of the State Secretariat only onto fall onto the safety net put up at the Secretariat to prevent recurring suicides.

Wednesday's suicide attempt was foiled because of the presence of a safety nylon net that the State Government had put up in the lobby of Mantralaya in February last year to ensure safety landing for persons taking a plunge from the terrace of the State Secretariat in south Mumbai.

JuH concerned over change of counsel by Sunni Waqf Board

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind (Mehmood Madani faction) voiced its concern over the sudden change of counsel in Supreme Court by UP Sunni Central Waqf Board, pleading in Ayodhya title suit case.

The outfit demanded that the Sunni Waqf Board maintain transparency in its affairs and refrain from entering into any secret deal with the government or opposite parties.

Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind state chief Maulana Matinul Haq Kasmi said on Wednesday, "Even as the Supreme Court is hearing the Ayodhya title suit on a daily basis, the sudden change of counsel pleading in the case for several years by Sunni Waqf Board raises doubts on its integrity. Doubts are being created in the minds of the people that the Sunni Waqf Board has made some secret deal."

AYODHYA CASE

"If out-of-court settlement of the dispute through mediation is possible we will welcome it but Muslims will never accept a resolution through a secret deal with the RSS and its affiliates. I would urge the Sunni Waqf Board to efficiently pursue the matter in the Supreme Court," Kasmi said.

The Maulana said that the JuH had full faith in judiciary and the rule of law prevailed in India where everyone, irrespective of caste and religion, could approach the judiciary and place his viewpoint.

On August 30, JuH chief Maulana Mehmood Madani had held a long meeting with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at Keshav Kunj in Delhi, a day before the draft of National Register of Citizens (NRC) of Assam was published.

"It was a completely non-political discussion between leaders of two non-political outfits. Bhagwatji listened to what I had to say on the current situation and I am happy that he agreed to most things," Madani had said after the 90-minute meeting.

Maulana Madani later downplayed the significance of the NRC saying, "It has affected both Hindus and Muslims and there is no controversy over that issue."

Madani had also supported the Narendra Modi government's decision for abrogation of Article 370 and division of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories. He asserted that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India and Parliament was a sovereign body competent to legislate on the state.

Gang selling fake liquor busted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Excise department carried out a massive drive on Wednesday and recovered huge quantity of illicit liquor and liquor bottles with fake QR code and caps. In Muzaffarnagar, a joint team of police and excise officials caught a gang printing fake wrappers, bottle caps and QR Bar Codes to use on smuggled liquor bottles in UP.

The officials said due to pricing differences, the gang was selling Haryana-made liquor in UP by changing the wrappers and bar codes on the bottles. Besides, the liquor was being mixed with other substances and water to dilute it, making it dangerous for consumption, they added.

They said the team recovered 30 lakh bottle caps, 25 lakh wrappers and five lakh QR Bar Codes and also recovered three cars and illicit liquor worth more than Rs 1 crore.

The gang was operating in Muzaffarnagar, Hapur, Saharanpur, Meerut, Amroha, Bijnor, Kanpur, Aligarh, Sultanpur, Ghazipur and Gorakhpur districts besides states like Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Punjab, West Bengal and Maharashtra.

In Sultanpur, a team conducted raids at a country-made liquor shop and recovered 25 cartons of illicit liquor, 312 fake QR code and 600 fake bottle caps. The shop owner has been served a notice in this connection.

Communal forces are getting stronger due to Cong: Maya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Wednesday launched a fresh attack on the Congress, holding it responsible for communal forces gaining strength in the country.

The BSP chief also accused the Congress of adopting double standards. "Communal forces in the country are becoming stronger because of the Congress policy of double standards. Instead of weakening communal forces, the Congress is engaged in weakening the forces raising their voice against it. People should remain careful," she said in a tweet.



A day earlier, Mayawati had slammed the Congress after all six BSP legislators joined the ruling Congress in Rajasthan. "The Congress government in Rajasthan has once again lured away BSP MLAs and proved that it is an unreliable and untrustworthy party," the BSP chief had said.

Research and officials of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Directorate General of Archives, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and Defence Ministry. The project is expected to be completed within two years, they added.

Singh emphasised the importance of writing history of Indian borders reiterating that it would provide better understanding of the borders to the public in general and officials in particular. Welcoming various suggestions, he also directed officials to consult experts on source material, broad contours, methodology and action plan required for completing this project expeditiously. Besides, the nearly 15,000-km long land borders shared with Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar, India also has a 7,000-km long coast line covering nine Littoral States.

LAXMI FOUND...

In the commotion, the mahout fled with the elephant and disappeared into a wooded area in the Yamuna floodplains near the Akshardham temple," said the forest official. "In August, the forest department wrote to the chief wildlife wardens of all states asking them to alert it if they come to know about the whereabouts of the elephant. The department also alerted the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau as it suspected the elephant could have been taken to Nepal," the forest official said.

"After we received specific inputs regarding the hideout of Saddam, we also filed a complaint with police and requested them to increase patrolling in the Yamuna Pusta area as we suspected the elephant was being kept somewhere there," said the forest official. Laxmi, one of only two elephants in the city outside the Delhi zoo, was detained and will be kept in a rehabilitation centre in Haryana. Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS, said "We are finally relieved to see that the Forest department and the police have successfully seized Delhi's last elephant, and moved her to a rehabilitation centre where she can recuperate and live with dignity and freedom. "The Elephant Rehabilitation Center, run by Wildlife SOS in collaboration with Haryana Forest Department in Yamuna Nagar district is a large forested facility where this elephant will find a peaceful retirement from a life-long of suffering," he said.

Dr Yaduraj Khadpekar, Assistant Director, Veterinary and Research of Wildlife SOS said, "The elephant is in poor health due to severe neglect and complete lack of medical care, coupled with years of poor nutrition. She will require long term medical care and specialised treatment."

BORDER CHRONICLE...

Giving details of the project, Defence Ministry officials said here on Wednesday the Defence Minister on Tuesday approved initiating work of writing the history after holding deliberations with eminent personalities of Indian Council of Historical

Govt's focus on medical, education sectors: Min

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Cabinet minister Suresh Khanna said here on Wednesday that the focus of the state government was on medical and education sectors. Addressing mediapersons at Collectorate on Wednesday, he spoke about the progress of various schemes in the district with special emphasis on the Smart City project and Ring Road.

He said the gap between doctors and patients in terms of the number of patients per doctor would be filled with the increase in the strength of doctors. "We would like to see in future that there is one doctor for every 1,000 patients, which is the WHO standard. In five new medical colleges, MBBS students have already been admitted and there are 14 medical colleges in the state in the pipeline," he said.

The minister said that the district was progressing well in various government schemes and development of infrastructure. About the progress of Smart City project in Lucknow, he said it was being taken up by the government on priority.

"We want Lucknow to be smart. Projects worth over Rs 2,000 crore have been approved under the Smart City and 52 projects under progress are worth Rs 1654.66 crore. Eleven projects worth Rs 329 crore

have been completed and the rest are nearing completion," he pointed out.

The minister said there were several projects under the Smart City, including an Integrated Command and Control Centre estimated to cost Rs 45 crore, Integrated Traffic Management System worth Rs 91.4 crore, sewage work worth Rs 233 crore and other projects such as waste water treatment plant, smart bus shelter, façade lighting, smart parking, underground cabling and open Wi-Fi.

Giving details of the construction of Ring Road, he said it was being constructed in four packages. The work on Kursi road to Faizabad road worth Rs 383 crore has already been completed, while the road between Behta and Sitapur costing Rs 981 crore is under construction. He said that in the area of Setu Nigam, five bridges had been completed between 2018-19 and 2019-20 at the cost of Rs 289 crore and ten were still under construction.

"The main ones which are being constructed are the bridges between Haiderganj and Meena Bakery, between Hussainganj crossing and DAV College crossing, between Charak crossing and Cantt Mill road, and between Shaheed Path and Lucknow Airport," he added.

Waseem Rizvi hails SC decision

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Welcoming the Supreme Court's decision to fix a date for ending arguments on the vexed Ayodhya title suit, UP Shia Central Waqf Board (UPSCWB) chairman Waseem Rizvi said that the court's order had dealt a severe blow to people who were against an amicable settlement to the dispute.

Maintaining that there was still a way for an amicable out-of-court settlement to the dispute, Rizvi said that the apex court's order had given the

country a chance to celebrate in November but some people were frustrated.

The reaction of the Shia leader came after the apex Court on Wednesday said that arguments on Ayodhya issue be completed by October 18 so that the verdict could be given in a month's time. The five-judge bench is headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, who will retire on November 17, 2019.

Rizvi said, "A solution could immediately be reached if the disputed land was handed over to Hindus for construction of Ram temple.

There is evidence that the Babri mosque was constructed after demolishing temples by the commander of Mughal army Mir Baki of Mughal Emperor Babur. Now sticking to the demand for a mosque there is an effort to disturb peace and harmony in the country," he claimed.

The Shai Waqf Board chairman had proposed a mosque in Lucknow in lieu of Babri mosque in Ayodhya and advocated for early construction of Ram temple at Ram Janmabhoomi.

E-CIGARETTE...

Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Mizoram and Maharashtra have already banned vaping products which are also otherwise technically called the ENDS.

The first time violators will face jail term up to one year along with a penalty of Rs 1 lakh. The jail term can go up to three years or a fine up to Rs 5 lakh for subsequent violations. Storage of e-cigarettes shall also be punishable with an imprisonment up to 6 months or fine up to Rs 50,000 or both. The owners of existing stocks of e-cigarettes on the date of commencement of the Ordinance will have to suo motu declare and deposit these stocks with the nearest police station. E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that produce aerosol by heating a solution containing nicotine, which is the addictive substance in combustible cigarettes. These include all forms of electronic nicotine delivery systems, heat not burn products, e-hookah and the like devices. These novel products come with attractive appearances and multiple flavours and their use has increased exponentially and has acquired epidemic proportions in developed countries, especially among youth and children.

E-cigarettes are being used as a 'style statement', the Minister said, and the Government wants to stop the contagion before it spreads. Many e-cigarette companies have been accused of trying to attract a new generation of nicotine users. "Reports say that there are some who are probably getting into the habit of e-cigarettes as it seems cool. It is believed that there are more than 400 brands, none of which is manufactured yet in India. And they come in over 150 flavours," Sitharaman said. Asserting that the decision was taken, keeping in mind their impact on the youth of today, she also quoted data, which she claimed was largely derived from the US' experience, to highlight that there has been a 77.8 per cent increase in the use of e-cigarettes among school students and that surprisingly, use of such products by middle school students has also seen a rise of 48.5 per cent.

Referring to reports of seven deaths in the US directly linked to e-cigarettes, the Minister said many people will say the long term direct impact of e-cigarettes is yet to be scientifically established. "But the Cabinet rightly thought its time we immediately took a decision so that the health of our citizens is not thrown to risk," she said. Apart from nicotine, e-cigarettes may also be used for delivery of other psychoactive substances, it added. Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan said a debate on whether e-cigarettes and similar products are more harmful than tobacco cigarettes was of little

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

help. "Why are we debating whether it is more or less harmful...It is a good move to ban it," she told the reporters.

India's ban came a day after New York became the second US state to prohibit the use of flavoured e-cigarettes. Critics of vaping say flavours appeal particularly to children and risk them becoming addicted to nicotine. The World Health Organization (WHO) too does not consider it to be a legitimate therapy for smokers trying to quit as justified by those favouring the e-cigarettes.

In 2008, the WHO in its report said that the electronic cigarette is not a proven nicotine replacement therapy. Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General of WHO's Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health Cluster had said in the report that, "the WHO has no scientific evidence to confirm the product's safety and efficacy. Its marketers should immediately remove from their web sites and other informational materials any suggestion that WHO considers it to be a safe and effective smoking cessation aid."

SC FUMES AT...

"All the human beings are equal and when they are equal you should provide them equal opportunities as mandated under the Constitution. You are not even providing them an equal chance and they are not being given the basic facilities to even clean themselves," the Bench said. Justice Mishra also questioned whether the practice of untouchability, which was abolished by the Constitution, has stopped. "Despite the Constitution abolishing untouchability in the country, I am asking all of you, will any of you shake hands with them? The answer is no. That is the way we are going on. The condition must improve. We have moved 70 years since Independence but these things are still happening," Justice Mishra said.

Agreeing with the observation, Venugopal said the caste system is embedded in the country despite the Constitution saying that there should not be any discrimination on the basis of religion, caste and creed. "The apex court made these scathing observations while it was hearing the Centre's plea seeking review of its last year's verdict which had virtually diluted the provisions of arrest under the SC/ST Act. The Bench reserved its verdict on the review plea filed by the Centre against the March 20 last year verdict delivered by a two-judge bench of the apex court.

MAMATA DISCUSSES...

The Bengal Chief Minister said the PM has promised to do something about the name

change matter prompting West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh to quip that he is happy that Mamata's "good sense" prevailed and she met the Prime Minister. The West Bengal Assembly had passed a resolution to rename the State as 'Bangla'. The Congress reacted to the Mamata-Modi meeting questioning the timing when investigating agencies are probing chit fund scams and former Kolkata Commissioner of Police Rajeev Kumar. Describing her meeting with the Prime Minister as fruitful, Mamata said that renaming West Bengal has been her Government's prime agenda. "Hence we have proposed the renaming keeping 'Bangla' in mind. The Prime Minister has assured all help," the TMC supreme said.

She said the Prime Minister was also extended an invitation to inaugurate Deocha Pachami after Durga Puja. The project is worth Rs 12,000 crores. The Union Government has allotted the coal mine to the West Bengal Power Development Corporation Ltd (WBPDCL). Mamata also discussed issues like BSNL, defence ordnance factory, railway and coal with Modi.

"We submitted a lot of documents to substantiate the requests we made. Bengal's GDP is 12.8, which is highest across the country. We showed him how Bengal is progressing despite huge debt burden. We also gave him documents to highlight our achievements in the field of economy and infrastructure," she said.

Responding to a question on the National Register of Citizens, she said it is part of Assam Accord, hence there is no provision of its implementation in West Bengal. "Neither has any proposal come, nor will it be done," she asserted. Mamata is opposed to implementation of NRC in her State and said there was no provision of this process of preparing a list of genuine citizens being extended to West Bengal. "Haven't spoken about NRC with the PM. NRC is part of the Assam Accord, hence there is no provision of its implementation all over the country or in West Bengal. Neither there is any proposal, nor will it ever be done in Bengal," Mamata said.

She said developmental issues of the State were discussed during the meeting with the Prime Minister and would like to meet Home Minister Amit Shah for a courtesy visit.

"It is good that her (Mamata's) good sense has at last prevailed. But I think it's too late. Her attempts to save herself and her party (TMC) from CBI will not yield any results. The law will take its own course and all those who have looted public

Government of India, Ministry of Railways
RAILWAY RECRUITMENT BOARD
 Railway Station Road, Gorakhpur-273012 (UP)

Meeting with Exam Conducting Agencies (ECA) for conduct of Computer Based Tests

Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs) intend to engage Examination Conducting Agency (ECA) for the conduct of Computer Based Tests in connection with recruitments for Indian Railways through Open Tender. Prior to invitation of the Tender, it is proposed to hold a meeting with the Prospective Bidders on **25th September 2019** at 10:30 Hrs. in the Ministry of Railways, Conference Hall, 2nd Floor, Railway Board Rail Bhawan, New Delhi. This is an indicative Notice and detailed Agenda of the meeting is available on the official website of RRBs.

Date: 18-09-2019

CHAIRMAN

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum

In reference to this office Tender notice no. C-189-01-2019-20-LKO-DK, Dt. 23.08.2019, it is hereby inform to you that tender notice of Lucknow Railway station for Mechanized daily sanitation and conservancy work for a period of 04 years (1460 days) of Lucknow division which was published in the newspaper on dt. 23.08.2019 has been cancelled on administrative ground **3003/2019**

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 (Under the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India)
 KURUKSHETRA-136119 (HARYANA)

Advt. No. 30/2019

RECRUITMENT OF STAFF UNDER THE PROJECT SMDP - C2SD

National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra invites applications from the Indian Nationals for the recruitment to the posts of (i) Temporary Faculty (ii) Lab Engineer (iii) Research Associate on contract basis on a consolidated salary under the project SMDP - C2SD of Department of Electronics & Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Govt. of India in the Institute. Interested candidates may apply in the prescribed application form along with self attested photo copies of certificates. The last date of submission of application form is **07.10.2019**. Applications received after the last date due to postal delay or any other reasons will not be considered.

For further details, please visit Institute website: www.nitkkr.ac.in.

Sd/-
 Registrar Incharge

National Highways Authority of India
 (Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Govt. of India)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Consequent upon the approval of Competent Authority of NHAI, RO UP-East, Varanasi dated 17.09.2019, the User Fee Rates for FY 2019-20 for "Aihar Toll Plaza at km. 172.890" for 2-lane with paved shoulder of Raebareilly-Banda Section (from km. 148.993 to 211.837) of NH-232 and "Jindpur Toll Plaza at km. 229.006" for 2-lane with paved shoulder of Raebareilly-Banda Section (from km. 211.837 to 285.818) of NH-232 in the State of Uttar Pradesh on the basis of the provisions of Fee Rules, 2008 shall be collected the Revised User Fee from the Vehicles w.e.f. 31.09.2019 to 31.03.2020 as per details given below:

(1) Revised Rates for Aihar Toll Plaza at km. 172.890 (Raebareilly District):

S. No.	Category of Vehicles	Fee for Single Journey (in Rs.)	Fee for Return Journey within a Day (in Rs.)	Fee for passes for 50 Single Journeys in a Month (in Rs.)	Fee for single Journey for the Commercial Vehicles registered within the District of Fee Plaza (in Rs.)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Car, Jeep, Van, Light Motor Vehicle	50	70	1605	25
2.	Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Good Vehicle or Mini Bus	80	115	2590	40
3.	Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	165	245	5425	80
4.	Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	180	265	5915	90
5.	Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicles (MAV) (Four to Six Axles)	255	385	8505	130
6.	Oversized Vehicles (Seven or More Axles)	310	465	10355	155

(2) Revised Rates for Jindpur Toll Plaza at km. 229.006 (Fatehpur District):

S. No.	Category of Vehicles	Fee for Single Journey (in Rs.)	Fee for Return Journey within a Day (in Rs.)	Fee for passes for 50 Single Journeys in a Month (in Rs.)	Fee for single Journey for the Commercial Vehicles registered within the District of Fee Plaza (in Rs.)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Car, Jeep, Van, Light Motor Vehicle	50	75	1625	25
2.	Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Good Vehicle or Mini Bus	80	120	2620	40
3.	Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	165	245	5495	80
4.	Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	180	270	5990	90
5.	Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicles (MAV) (Four to Six Axles)	260	390	8615	130
6.	Oversized Vehicles (Seven or More Axles)	315	470	10485	155

The rate for monthly pass applicable for local non-commercial vehicle residing within a distance of 20 kms. from the Toll Plaza for the year 2019-20 shall be Rs. 265.00 for each plazas.

PROJECT DIRECTOR, NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA,
 Project Implementation Unit, Raebareilly, House No. 257, Ward No. 22, Vishnu Nagar, Raebareilly-229001, U.P.
 Tel. No. - 0535-2702526, E-mail: pdpluraebareilly@nhai.org

BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS

No need for Opposition

As federalism gives way to legitimacy of national parties, regional ones look at extinction

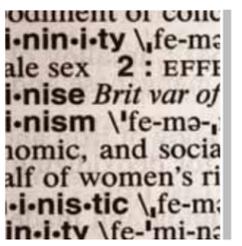


If the Lok Sabha verdict is considered a benchmark in resetting the grammar of politics as swatting the Opposition, then its impact on regional politics has been such as to eliminate the relevance of federal parties. Once the backbone of powerful coalition governments at the Centre, State parties are now much like tribal chieftains, good enough for lording over their flocks but too tiny to stall the juggernaut of national parties gobbling them up. In such a scenario, they have just two options, either withdraw to their pocketboroughs or sign up with the big players if they want to stay in the game. So it is that in Maharashtra, there has been a mass migration from the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to the BJP-Shiv Sena combine, almost wiping off the Opposition space. And in Rajasthan, the ruling Congress government has followed the same pattern of accretion to its ranks by coopting six Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLAs, grinding the theory of Dalit consolidation to the dust.

Given the current scenario, Maharashtra really doesn't need an election, considering that the only tussle will be between coalition partners, the BJP and the Sena, over seat percentage and power-sharing, much like a fraternal war of carving out the spoils. Twenty-six MLAs from the Opposition camp, including its leader in the Assembly, joined the ruling party, creating a political vacuum. The worst hit has been NCP founder Sharad Pawar, no longer appearing to be the Maratha strongman. Such is his condition that except his core team, every other party member is looking to jump ship. And though NCP is tying up with the Congress to avoid total dissipation, fact is the rump that both parties have become may just get them 30 plus seats in a House of 288. The Congress is at its worst level of preparedness given the dissension within its ranks and the Young Turks, led by Milind Deora, stepping aside and themselves not averse to charting out an independent course. Yes it has a new State chief but the will to fight back is simply missing at the unit level. The party would be just about happy with whatever it gets courtesy the standing of some of its individual leaders. Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray, who at least injected some drama into proceedings by questioning the establishment, is nowhere to be seen what with the BJP taming him with a slew of Enforcement Directorate (ED) cases. The fringe players, who could be vote cutters, like Prakash Ambedkar and Asaduddin Owaisi, have been torn asunder and chasing their own kitties. As for the BJP-Sena duel, the former is now claiming its pound of flesh, considering it can go alone and has for years stepped back to accommodate the sensitivities of the Sena. The latter may want a 50-50 distribution of seats, and maybe even a shot at deputy chief minister for Aaditya Thackeray, son of Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, but it has no negotiating edge. And while its conscience calls in the form of criticising the Modi government and functioning like an Opposition worked in 2014, it certainly isn't attractive anymore. Besides, the Sena must understand that though the Modi charisma works, BJP Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has quietly developed his own stock. If the Sena has so far peddled the local versus outsider logic, the BJP has several Maratha leaders now, courtesy the migration of senior leaders from the Congress, and has even roped in Shivaji's descendant Udayanraje Bhosale. So the Sena may engage in posturing, yet has no option but to acquiesce to the BJP's grand design. The ruling Congress in Rajasthan, too, has just gone by the old formula of buying support with promised doles, something which has become part of the BJP's playbook. In fact, it was to counter the BJP's poaching attempts in Rajasthan and create a Karnataka-like scenario that prompted the Ashok Gehlot-led government to scoop up allies. Sadly, such rampant horse-trading is just eroding the idea of a federal union and overlaying a new text of unionised federalism. A throwback to the chaos that we had hoped to clean up.

Who is a woman?

An online campaign on sexist interpretations in the Oxford dictionary is resetting conversations



The Oxford Dictionary is considered no less a Bible when it comes to semantics. Such is its credibility that seldom does one question whether its makers need to question internal wisdom rather than deciding what a word should mean to the world. Clearly it's time for some soul-searching as its editors have managed to offend, enrage and alienate women around the world through their insensitivity and failure to keep up with the times. An online petition is gathering steam to redefine the word "woman" which the dictionary still considers synonymous with "bitch, besom, piece, bit, mare, filly" and so on. As if this was not enough, the sentences that explain the usage of the word or their application add insult to injury as they objectify and portray women as subordinate to men. "Ms September will embody the professional, intelligent yet sexy career woman" and "I told you to be home when I get home, little woman," are some of the offensive examples given, clearly out of sync with not just gender sensitivities but also the fluidities of modern contexts. This stands out all the more because the Oxford Dictionary is very quick to absorb contemporary idioms and even legitimise a lot of fusion words as part of the mainstream English lexicon.

Signatories of the petition, that was started by UK-based women's rights activist Maria Beatrice Giovanardi in July, are calling on editors to "eliminate all phrases and definitions that discriminate against and patronise women and/or connote men's ownership of women." This is not the first time that the compilers of the dictionary have given a misogynistic explanation to a word. Check out "rabid" and up pops "feminist" next to it, search for "nagging" and it is followed by "wife." This should encourage a larger conversation on whether the English language is sexist and needs to modify itself, considering it is a common thread of communication across the world and, therefore, needs to be politically correct. Have we ever wondered why words like "mistress" and "madam", that actually meant women of authority, have over the decades, undergone degeneration? Pejoration of words related to women is a sad reflection on the way society views their place in it. In a rather weak response, Oxford has said that the content referred to in the petition by Giovanardi is not from the scholarly Oxford English Dictionary, but from the Oxford Thesaurus of English and the Oxford Dictionary of English, which are drawn from "real-life use" of language. However, other popular online dictionaries like Cambridge and Merriam-Webster, which also give examples of "real-life" use of the word, are more respectful and gender sensitive. While Cambridge describes "woman" simply as an "adult female human being," Merriam-Webster adds the words "female" and "lady" to the same description given by Cambridge. Given that Merriam-Webster even released an additional dictionary definition of the word "they" to refer "to a single person whose gender identity is non-binary," isn't it time that the world's most trusted lexicon changes the way it refers to women?

A Himalayan threat

Fires that engulfed the Amazon rainforests should awaken us to the threat closer home. Shivaliks and lower Himalayas, too, witness the same risk almost every year



KK PAUL

Recent fires that have ravaged the Amazon rainforest in Brazil have not only generated sufficient heat to light up the scene for a fresh debate on development and environment but are also responsible, to some extent, for overheating the world of diplomacy, which was much evidenced at the G7 summit held in France last month. It is obvious that major forest fires like the ones around the Amazon rainforest and the Indonesian blaze can no longer remain a localised affair. They tend to assume international dimensions in view of the overall impact on the environment and in the long run, on climate change. The temperature spikes in carbon sinks across the world end up melting our glaciers.

The allegation that the fires had been lit intentionally to make way for developmental projects being undertaken by the Brazilian Government in collaboration with private entrepreneurs may or may not be true but the damage to the environment has already been done. Imagine, Brazil was host to the earth summit in 1992, where the concept of sustainable development was initiated and a long term strategy to deal with climate change was formulated for the first time.

Back home, we have similar problems in our forested areas, except for those where rainfall is heavy and trees are able to retain sufficient moisture. The coastal areas and forests of the North-East as well as the Andamans are a case in point. Fires in the forests of Shivaliks and lower Himalayas are well-known. In fact, they have become a regular feature, except that they keep varying in intensity. Experience shows that forest fires in hill areas are more difficult to tackle due to the problem of accessibility as is noticed in several districts of Uttarakhand.

The year 2016 almost created history, both in the number of fires as well as their spread with at least seven casualties being reported. On account of a virtual absence of winter rain, signs of a difficult impending summer were quite visible even in mid-February during that time. During my journey from Dehradun to Nainital, while my helicopter was overflying the forests of Tehri and Pauri, a few isolated cases of smoke rising from deep inside the forests were visible. The absence of any rainfall through the months of March and April, along with an unusual rise in temperatures, compounded the situation.

Despite sufficient warning time being available, necessary steps were not taken. Mobilisation of volunteers and other personnel on the ground remained inadequate. By the end of March, almost a crisis situation had developed when the fires appeared to threaten settlements and peripheral areas of some of the towns. By then, the State had come under President's Rule and as the then Governor, containing the damage done to forest wealth besides saving life and property became one of my top priorities. It was strange to see that the forest department was neither



adequately prepared nor committed to fighting the fires. It was considering them to be a normal and an annual feature.

Given the gravity of the situation, the State disaster response force along with personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in large numbers were inducted into the operation. Simultaneously, the police personnel, who were accompanied by the district revenue authorities, were also mobilised. As the fires became more menacing and life-threatening, the Indian Air Force (IAF) was approached, who with the personal intervention of the then Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha, responded almost instantaneously.

Choppers with Bambi buckets were available at the Sarsawa airbase, not far from Dehradun, which flew to Pauri and Nainital without any loss of time. They were immediately operationalised with the lake at Nainital and the reservoir at the Tehri Dam providing adequate supply of water. The only problem faced was the supply of fuel for the choppers as the tankers moved at a very slow pace on the winding hilly roads. The ordeal was finally over after a few showers towards the end of April, breaking one of the longest dry spells of more than 50 days at a stretch.

While only a certain amount of damage by fires can be quantified, the adverse impact on biodiversity and ecosystem remains immense and unquantifiable. Suffice to

“WHILE ONLY A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DAMAGE BY FIRES CAN BE QUANTIFIED, THE ADVERSE IMPACT ON BIO-DIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM REMAINS IMMENSE AND UNQUANTIFIABLE. SUFFICE TO SAY THAT HUGE VOLUMES OF CARBON DIOXIDE SO RELEASED LEAD TO SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT”

say that huge volumes of carbon dioxide so released lead to serious environmental impact. In addition, nano-sized particles from the smoke tend to settle on snow-covered areas in the vicinity, which is a separate field of study in glaciology. It is, however, well-known that such depositions and even a fractional rise in temperatures lead to erosion and consequent retraction of the glaciers.

Two very important glaciers in the vicinity of the fire impacted area are Gangotri and Milam. Both have extensively been studied by experts. Water from these glaciers flows entirely into the Gangetic river system.

Almost 65 per cent of the landmass in Uttarakhand is under the cover of forests out of which the Chirpine (*pinus roxburghii*) occupies about 20 per cent of the area, which is about four lakh hectares. Every year, large quantities of dry pine needles fall on the ground. These are very rich in oil, are highly inflammable and constitute a major source of fire hazard in the State. The Uttarakhand Renewable Energy Department Agency (UREDA) has since launched a scheme whereby pine needles are collected by villagers, who are paid on account of the weight of their collection. The needles are then used as fuel to generate power.

During the post-fire analysis, one aspect that was mentioned very emphatically by one and all was that the particu-

ipation of Van Panchayats had almost been negligible. Earlier, forest dwellers used to provide volunteers, who would maintain a strict vigil and help prevent and extinguish the fires well in time. After the introduction of and sometimes over stringent application of the Forest Rights Act, traditional forest dwellers from certain areas faced eviction, leading to a sort of vacuum with none to look after the vast tracts of forests. The official departmental guards are either too inadequate or permanently absent from duty.

In some foreign countries, like Australia and elsewhere, spraying of fire retardants is not uncommon when the fires become life-threatening. However, such sprays have not been used in India. Nevertheless, there is enough scope for technological innovations in this important area that impacts the environment. At one time, the Uttarakhand Government had sought to do away with the chirpine plantation and resorted to large scale afforestation through oak and other hardy trees. But this was dependent on expert advice as it had serious implications for both the soil structure and the environment. Considering their impact on the environment as well as biodiversity, vital decisions need to be taken in the right earnest.

(The writer is a former Governor of Uttarakhand and a Senior Advisor at the Pranab Mukherjee Foundation)

SOUNDBITE

I too come from a non-Hindi speaking State. One has to listen to my speech carefully. If someone wants to do politics, it is their choice.



Union Minister —Amit Shah

I always heard stories about how the film industry ran on connections and *jugaad* but they never worked in my favour when I was starting out.



Actor —Rajkumar Rao

It was Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, America, certain European countries and the Zionist regime (Israel) which started the war in this region.



Iran's President —Hassan Rouhani

By showing glitter, saying 5 trillion, 5 trillion, everyday, the economy cannot improve. Investors don't come by sponsoring events abroad.



Congress leader —Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Shocking development

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Farooq, now a threat" (September 18). That former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah was booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA) exposes the true intention of the ruling Government. Ever since it abrogated the Valley's special status, there has been a complete lockdown there. More than 40 days have passed but things have remained the same. Instead of engaging with the people or taking steps to restore normalcy, the Government is imposing laws that go against the spirit of the Constitution.

Farooq's detention comes close on the heels of MDMK leader Vaiko moving a *habeas corpus* petition in the Supreme Court, seeking the J&K Government to set him free. It must also be remembered that Farooq was already under house arrest for more than 40 days, as have two other former Chief Ministers Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah. If Abdullah's arrest was inevitable, the Government must give appropriate reasons for the same. It's

Come to terms with air pollution

This refers to the editorial, "Odd-even blues" (September 16). Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal believes that the odd-even scheme will reduce pollution levels though past experiments have proved to the contrary. But it is also true that the Government was able to decongest the roads to a large extent when the rule was first introduced. With the onset of winter, especially when the farmers start preparing for harvest, air quality becomes twice as polluted than during the spring and summer. As the Supreme Court had said, Delhi resembles a "gas chamber." The capital city's image took a massive beating when a 2016 report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) described it as the "world's most polluted." The odd-even scheme may not achieve what is needed. Instead, the Kejriwal Government should take parallel and reasonable measures like ensuring vehicles are run on clean fuel. It may as well order the closure of thermal emission plants.

The second time when the "odd-even" rule was implemented, people turned on the heat by buying additional cars so that they could use it on a daily basis, thus negating the cardinal principle of the rule. Most importantly, Kejriwal was right when he declared that his Government would be in close touch with the



Governments in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to reduce crop residue burning. Planting of trees, identification of pollution hot spots in Delhi, too, have been steps in the right direction. But the rampant bursting of crackers during Diwali needs a solution. Despite a Supreme Court ban on the sale and use of conventional firecrackers, Delhi records worst air quality every year a day after Diwali. Kejriwal has claimed that air pollution in Delhi dropped 25 per cent in four years. Only a post-November study will vindicate his stand.

Ganapathi Bhat Akola

beyond imagination that a very senior politician and one of the most prominent faces in the country is being considered as a threat to security.

Tharcus S Fernando Chennai

Gandhian philosophy

Sir — Responding to the call of Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist, various Indian cities, including Delhi,

Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Kochi, Allahabad and Calicut will be hosting "climate strikes" between September 20 and September 27. Thousands of students from across the nation will skip schools to be part of the

"climate strike."

Thunberg's movement has had its impact in India and the country became a witness to some of its first school strikes with students demanding more action from authorities regarding global warming and climate change. The May 24 climate strike saw a great turnout in cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi. Though skipping schools and colleges won't make a difference, certainly it can help create awareness.

However, the best way to combat pollution, which has been one of the most pressing environmental threats to human health, is to listen to Mahatma Gandhi's message. The issues that the world community is faced with today were envisioned by him decades ago. His idea of *swaraj* in terms of clean air and water is more relevant in our times than it was when India was under foreign rule. Most importantly, his suggestion was that school and college students must be educated about the value of clean air.

Srishti Mathur Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The mystery of drone strikes

Though Pompeo blamed Iran for the attacks on Saudi oil, Trump doesn't want a full-scale war with it and neither does the kingdom



GWYNNE DYER

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo dismissed the Houthi claim that the Yemeni rebel group had carried out Saturday's strike on two huge Saudi Arabian oil processing facilities. There was "no evidence" that the drones belonged to the Houthis, he said. Instead, he blamed Iran. No surprise there. The way things are at the moment, if an incoming asteroid were about to strike the Earth, the US would blame Iran. But there's "no evidence" that the drones came from Iran either. Pompeo is simply trading on the assumption that Yemenis are too ignorant to manage that sort of technology, so it must be Iran. Saudi Arabia and the alliance of other autocratic Arab States that have been bombing Yemen since 2015 push the same line all the time. It goes down fairly well in the kingdom, where most people look down on Yemenis for being poor and less well educated, but it isn't actually true.

Within a year of the war's start, the Yemenis began launching a few small ballistic missiles (with conventional warheads) back at Saudi Arabia, but the Saudis refused to believe they were doing it themselves. The Houthis, they implied, were too backward to upgrade the Yemeni air force's old Soviet-made Scud missiles themselves. Iran must have helped them. In fact, the Yemeni air force had Scud missiles for decades before the Government collapsed in 2015, and technicians to service them. Some, maybe most of those technicians threw in their lot with the Houthis and upgraded those Scuds by cutting them in half and inserting a larger fuel tank. It changed their flight characteristic and made them very inaccurate but it did extend their range enough to hit targets all over southern and eastern Saudi Arabia. And by mid-2017 the Houthis, who controlled most of Yemen, were making their own improved copies known as Burkan missiles. The 'Super-Scuds' were more a morale booster than a war-winner for the Houthis, who live under a merciless daily bombardment from the air (7,290 documented civilian deaths so far). The current attacks, if the Houthis' claim is true, would just be another morale-booster, even though it has temporarily cut world oil production by around five per cent.

But was it really the Houthis? At this point there is no clear evidence, but it could have been. They certainly have the motive and they may have the technology. They have used small drones in previous air strikes and there are bigger drones available commercially that could do the damage seen at the Saudi facilities. The biggest currently available is the Guardian, a monster that can carry a payload of 200 kilos. It's made by Griff Aviation, a Norwegian company whose Lakeland factory in Florida is producing one Guardian a day and selling them to industrial, agricultural and military clients.

It would be quite a trick for the Houthis to acquire ten of them but stranger things have happened. Or maybe they did get their hands on some military drones, which would certainly be up to the job. Or maybe it was Iran but nobody really knows yet.

One apparent flaw in the Houthi theory is that there are no civilian drones capable of flying the almost 800 km from Yemen to the Saudi targets but that's not really necessary. Most of the land around the Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities is open desert and launching the drones for 25-50 km away would escape detection unless the Saudis were actively anticipating such an attack.

Who would launch them? There are a million Yemenis resident in Saudi Arabia, plus two to three million Saudi citizens, who suffer severe discrimination because they follow the Shia version of Islam. There are even Sunni Saudi citizens (mostly Islamists) who are sufficiently disaffected to attack the regime directly. That's a pretty large pool to fish in if you're looking for local collaborators to smuggle the drones in and launch them — which is what the Houthis themselves say happened. In their statement claiming credit for the attacks, they express thanks for "co-operation with the honourable people inside the kingdom." None of this proves that it was the Houthis or that it wasn't the Iranians. It does leave the identity of the attackers up in the air, where it will remain until conclusive proof emerges one way or another (if it ever does). Mike Pompeo's confident attribution of blame to Iran, later echoed by Energy Secretary Rick Perry, is just politics, not proof. As Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif tweeted on Sunday, "having failed at max pressure (anti-Iran trade sanctions), Sec Pompeo's turning to max deceit." Fair comment, really. And we should be grateful that Donald Trump, for all his faults, is the grown-up in the house this time. On Sunday Trump tweeted: "There is reason to believe that we know the culprit, are locked and loaded depending on verification but are waiting to hear from the Kingdom as to who they believe was the cause of attack, and under what terms we would proceed!" Trump doesn't want a full-scale war with Iran, and neither does Saudi Arabia. It probably won't happen.

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

INSTEAD OF WEAKENING COMMUNAL FORCES, THE CONGRESS IS ENGAGED MOSTLY IN WEAKENING THE FORCES THAT RAISE VOICES AGAINST IT.

—BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF MAYAWATI

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



NO ONE CAN SAY THAT CONGRESS FAILED TO PLAY THE ROLE OF OPPOSITION. OUR LEADERS FOUGHT IN LEGISLATURES, PARLIAMENT AND ON STREETS.

— CONGRESS LEADER AJAY MAKEN

Free the land to save Earth

Degraded tracts can be used for orchards and agro-forestry to help store more carbon in the soil. This will help mitigate the effects of climate change



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

The fire of humanity's end has started to burn the Amazon rainforests. Our hunger for destruction of forests is older than the Roman Empire's greed for wood or Amazonian farmers' need for more land. In India, we are victims of rampant logging and deforestation, too. The mighty Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh are stripped for lumber and in the plains trees are chopped to make way for real estate or farmland. Badland use means degraded land of 26 million hectares (ha) while excessive use of chemicals in industrial agriculture is resulting in more fertile tracts being destroyed each day. But time is up and, "any wrong step towards Earth's degradation by anyone, any government around the world affects each one of us." This was made clear at the recently-concluded United Nations' Convention to Combat Desertification Conference of Parties (UNCCD COP14) held in India.

India tops the charts as "the most climate-affected country of the world." This means that we may see temperatures hitting 55 °C, agriculture production failing and water wars in the next decade. We need to swerve towards healing the Earth and adopt realistic policies to address environmental degradation with a mass mitigation movement, otherwise climate change will destroy India. And city dwellers can't do it alone. India needs its farmers to save not just the country but perhaps, the world. And this time cultivators need help from our policy-makers too.

India is well stocked in cereals and is in fact heading towards over-production in rice and wheat, which is destabilising market prices and not allowing for farming of other crops. The culprit is the state policy of the limited scope of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme. The Government needs to extend MSP beyond wheat and rice, and given the newer challenges of water scarcity and climate chaos, we need to innovate to expand the scope of farmers' support system. A direct way is to include more crops under MSP, but the other can be to introduce relaxations to land ceilings as advised by the Economic Survey of India. This can be strictly done for growers who are willing to devote over 80 per cent of their land to orchards, agro-forestry using ecological practices like inter-cropping, natural composting and so on. The Government needs to come out in support of cultivators who can become the vanguard of India's climate mitigation campaign. We need a policy, which incentivises carbon sequestration by growers and Farmer Producers' Organisations (FPOs) using carbon credits matched by water efficiency scores. Carbon sequestration is the process by which carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere is absorbed by trees, plants and crops through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass such as tree trunks, branches, foliage, roots and soils.

We don't need all of the Indian farmland for cereal production and should promote orchards and agro-forestry, which are good for the cultivators and the Earth. As per a study conducted by the Environmental Defence Fund (EDF) in India, methane and nitrous oxide emissions from rice farms could have the same long-term warming impact as about 600 coal plants. Compare this to a research on mango orchards by ICAR-NICRA (Indian Council of Agricultural Research- National Initiative on Climate Resilient

“IF LAND CEILINGS ARE RELAXED FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS, WHY NOT FOR CLIMATE MITIGATION THROUGH BIO-DIVERSITY? INDIAN FARMERS, MUCH LIKE THE SOLAR INDUSTRIALISTS, ARE FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE; THEY ONLY DIFFER IN THEIR APPROACH. ONE USES SHINY SOLAR PANELS WHILE THE CULTIVATORS ARE ARMED WITH THEIR SAPLINGS AND SEEDS. THEY SHOULD BE GIVEN EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO INDIA'S CLIMATE MITIGATION BECAUSE THE THREAT IS VERY REAL AND AFFECTS THE FARMERS AND RURAL INDIA MORE



Agriculture) published in 2019. The study stated that the, "country as a whole has sequestered 285.005 million tonnes of carbon in its mango orchards. Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Telangana put together, having a maximum area under mango cultivation, sequestered 69.98 million tonnes of carbon. This is followed by Uttar Pradesh (35.58 million tonnes), Karnataka (29.57315 million tonnes), Odisha (21.07 million tonnes) and Bihar (20.09 million tonnes)."

This figure can grow if agro-ecological practices such as inter-cropping with pulses, other fruit trees, organic composting and fertilisers are used. Most degraded land can also be used for orchards, hence adding incomes for the farmers/FPOs and helping store more carbon in the soil.

In Ladakh, Nubra Valley produced about 4,650 metric tonnes (MT) of apricot, apple, walnut, mulberry, grape and plum and sequestered 22,300 MT of carbon. The cultivation of such temperate fruits can be used for carbon sequestration and rejuvenating degraded land, cold-arid regions by improving Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) contents and bringing more prosperity to farmers.

After achieving food sovereignty, we should diversify and not only meet climate targets, by planting trees and agro-forestry, we save water, clean the air and bring higher economic returns for farmers. To free the land to heal and repair the Earth, we have to address the issue of degraded areas. The burden of cereal production has been rapacious for bio-diversity. We need to rejuvenate bio-diversity of the hinterland, especially along the Gangetic plains and river plains of the south with trees. Let the big farmers grow forests, so the small and medium cultivators can grow cereals, lentils and oilseeds. Once the bigger

farmers shift out of cereal production, small growers can get better prices for their produce through the Government and grain traders. FPOs can play a very big role in this.

Take for example Lucknow or Kanpur, both of which are high on the air pollution index. The State Government can identify clusters of degraded or wastelands and convert them exclusively into agro-forests or mixed orchards. If a cluster decides to use agro-ecological methods of farming, it should be incentivised by allowing each individual farmer to own more than the prescribed limit in the Land Ceiling Act of UP.

Instead of the Government bearing all burden of degraded land restoration, through policy decisions facilitate farmers/FPOs to buy it. The Government can assist by providing region-wise bio-diversity-based plans. Inter-cropping, natural composting, organic farming should be encouraged within the orchards and agro-forests.

Farmers/FPOs should be exempted from the Land Ceiling Act if they purchase degraded land and bring 90 per cent of it under tree cover/orchards based on local biodiversity in the next two or three years. This should be over and above the land ceiling limits within State laws. This would ensure that the project is economically viable and reduces the pressure on the land and the Government. State laws can be amended to include this new category of farmlands and a limit should be imposed to ensure that they stay under tree cover for the next 60 years.

The next step would be to create a national kisan carbon credit programme, linking it to the global carbon credit system. Then FPOs/clusters can earn carbon credits for the country. This will also

encourage developed nations and progressive states like California to make an investment into rural communities directly. Global companies too could buy carbon credits to reduce their emissions. The farmers will earn more and we clean the air of surrounding cities while earning investments straight into rural and semi-rural India.

If land ceilings are relaxed for renewable energy projects, why not for climate mitigation through bio-diversity? Indian farmers, much like the solar industrialists, are fighting climate change; they only differ in their approach. One uses shiny solar panels while the cultivators are armed with their saplings and seeds. They should be given every opportunity to contribute to India's climate mitigation because the threat is very real and affects the farmers and rural India more. We need integration of old wisdom and new farming technologies.

The size of the land-holding is too small and is ever-shrinking, while the degradation and depletion of land fertility are at an all-time high. We have to free the land and free the farmers to help restore the ecosystem. Days of bullock carts are long gone, we need to embrace technology and steer it for the protection of the Earth and our nation.

We need to embrace new science and the forest together, to save our civilisation from the negative effects of climate change. Reconnect with the Earth and act now unitedly for the benefit of our *Vasudeva kutumbakam* (global family) or else as best articulated by James Baldwin, "Instead of ending the world with water, God will end it with fire next time."

(The writer is Programme Director for Policy and Outreach at the National Seed Association of India)

Ship-breaking poisoning the environment

The pipes and steel body of a vessel hold an average of 1,40,000 PPM mercury, that is released into the air during the dismantling process. This puts labourers and technical staff at risk



KOTA SRIRAJ

The ship-breaking business in India is booming as many nations across the world have completely banned dismantling of vessels on their soil, owing to public pressure over environmental concerns. However, the ship-breaking business in India is gaining notoriety thanks largely to the anti-environmental policies followed at the yards and the tremendous health risks involved.

A recent Dutch documentary has highlighted how environmental and safety norms are being flouted in Gujarat's Alang ship-breaking yard. The documentary titled, 'Het gischip van SBM' was aired on *Zembla*, a Dutch television documentary pro-

gramme on September 12, 2019. The documentary shows how the Dutch company, SBM Offshore, concealed that a gas tanker it owned, which was to be scrapped in Alang, was contaminated with mercury. SBM Offshore provides floating production solutions to the offshore energy industry.

Many ships are contaminated with mercury, especially the ones converted to Floating Storage and Offloading (FSO) vessels. Stationed at gas fields, these vessels accumulate high levels of mercury, which gets attached to the steel walls of the tanker. In addition, mercury also contaminates ballast water. Some studies show that its presence is as high as 300 points per million (PPM) of mercury in 4,500 tonnes of ballast water. Furthermore the pipes and steel body hold an average of 1,40,000 PPM mercury, that is released into the air during the dismantling process. This puts labourers and technical staff at risk as mercury exposure can damage the central nervous system, kidney and cause liver impairment, reproductive and devel-



opment disorders, defects in foetuses and learning deficits. Yet in spite of these conditions, the ships keep arriving at these yards and breaking continues round-the-clock. How these workers protect themselves against the health threats and what the Indian Government will do to take care of its people and the environment is anybody's guess.

The work at the yards is largely still being done by hand. As such the risks and exposures attached to the business by way of accidents and chemical reactions are very high. This raises a pertinent question as to how the Government has not fully automated the breaking process as the heavy industry technology has made major progress over the last

few decades. Big industrial corporations like Hitachi, Siemens and Hyundai specialise in heavy industry machinery. So why is the ship-breaking industry still hand driven? The Government must step in and increase automation at these yards. Not only will this benefit the workers, it will also be easy to adhere to international ship-breaking guidelines.

Further, public awareness about this business and its impact on people's health and the environment is low. This needs to change because with awareness comes safety. The Government, which is always on the back foot on this subject as it's a business fraught with risks, can use technology as a way out of this conundrum.

It can begin an online portal, which deals with scrapping of any harmful object, be it as small as white goods and e-waste to as large as ships. The portal, under different heads, can give information and live feed of the various dismantling and waste processing facilities. This information will bring transparency on

adherence to norms concerning health and environment safeguards. This will also earn the Government the respect of the common man.

While the ship-breaking business has been the focus of many researches and studies, the lot of the people on the ground and the immediate environment, whether it is the sea or the ambient air quality, has more or less remained unchanged. With such glaring examples of pollution in front of us, it seems that the authorities in India, both executive and judicial, seem to have trained their guns elsewhere and on smaller sources of pollution. This seems particularly true when one examines the fact that ship-breaking possibly is the only activity that has the dubious capability of polluting the air, sea water and harming human health all in one go and under one activity.

Surely this cannot be ignored and allowed to continue as it has thrived long enough and consumed enough human lives and environmental assets. (The writer is an environmental journalist)



TACKLING DISPARITIES

Tackling disparities in power and capital has become the leitmotif of the Left globally. France's President Emmanuel Macron has just pushed through a law for mandatory profit-sharing schemes for employees. In the US, Democratic presidential hopefuls Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren propose to tackle soaring wealth inequality by giving employees a stake in their companies. This would be welcome indeed. (The Guardian editorial)

TV makers hail scrapping of duty on open cell panel

Mfg cost to go down by 3pc

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The television industry has welcomed the government's decision to scrap the customs duty on import of open cell TV panels, saying the move will boost domestic manufacturing.

In a late night notification on Tuesday, the Finance Ministry said "open cell, (15.6 inch and above), for use in the manufacture of Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) and Light Emitting Diode (LED) TV panel", would attract nil duty. TV makers say the move will help them reduce the manufacturing cost by up to 3 per cent, however, consumer prices are expected to remain same.

The announcement has come just ahead of the festive season sales and would positively impact the sales of LED TV panels.

"Industry welcomes this decision. This will ease the cost pressure on TV and the benefit once passed to the consumers will help the industry accelerate demand," Panasonic India and South Asia President

and CEO Manish Sharma told PTI.

LG Electronics India said the government's decision would boost domestic manufacturing.

"This is a very positive development... it will certainly boost Make in India," said LG Electronics India Director (Home Entertainment) Yunchul Park.

Open cell panel is an important part of TV manufacturing and covers more than half the cost of the unit.

Sony India said reduction in duty would help enhance its efforts to increase domestic manufacturing of its TV range.

"The company has long been committed to the government's Make in India initiative. This withdrawal of duty on open cell provides a strong boost to local manufacturing and will help us further enhance our efforts in this direction," said Sony India Managing Director Sunil Nayyar.

According to Haier India President Eric Braganza, the industry has been pushing for this for some time. TV market is slow, so anything that could ignite the growth is welcome.

When asked whether it would have any impact on TV

price, Manish Sharma said currently inventories for festive season are already in place, however for fresh imports, the cost impact will be about 3 per cent.

"Our festival pricing is already in place which is attractive compared to the previous months. Hence post season, this duty reduction will help us maintain the pricing at same levels with reduced cost pressures on industry," Sharma said.

Besides removing 5 per cent customs duty imposed on import of open cell TV panel, the government has waived customs duty on import of chip on Film, Printed Circuit Board Assembly (PCBA) and Cell (glass board/substrate), which are used to manufacture open cell TV panels.

All leading TV makers along with the Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association had been asking the government to waive it.

Indian TV market, which is estimated to be around ₹22,000 crore is facing tough times due to slow demand.

Manufacturers like Samsung had shifted TV production lines to Vietnam using the Free Trade Agreement to import it.

Markets eke out modest gains as oil prices cool; Fed rate decision eyed

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity markets found firmer ground on Wednesday after two days of steep declines as easing crude oil prices and a recovering rupee shored up investor confidence. After a range-bound session, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 82.79 points, or 0.23%, higher at 36,563.88. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty gained 23.05 points, or 0.21%, to finish at 10,840.65.

Global equities and oil markets stabilised after Saudi Arabia's energy minister said more than half of the country's daily crude oil production, that was knocked out by the drone attack over the weekend, had been recovered. He added that production capacity at its targeted plants would be fully restored by the end of the month.

Market participants were also awaiting cues from the policy meeting of the Federal Reserve, traders said.

Top gainers in the Sensex pack included Tata Steel, Vedanta, SBI, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, M&M, NTPC and PowerGrid, rising up to 3.95%.

On the other hand, ONGC, Yes Bank, Bharti Airtel, HDFC Bank, Sun Pharma and Maruti tumbled up to 2.08%.

"Market was range-bound with a mild positive bias backed stability in oil prices with signs

of faster restoration in Saudi production. Further, rupee gained and 10-year yield declined which added respite to the sentiment.

"Auto was range-bound as the sector is unlikely to get any interim relief by way of GST cut due to concern of further short-fall in tax collection and challenges to meet fiscal target," said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

Sectorally, BSE realty, metal, oil and gas, power, energy and FMCG indices spurred up to 1.54%. Telecom and auto lost up to 0.43%. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices ended up to 0.39% higher.

Meanwhile, Brent crude futures fell 0.95 per cent to USD 63.94 per barrel (intraday).

Tracking the movement in oil prices, the rupee appreciated 52 paise (intra-day) to trade at 71.26 per US dollar.

Further boosting global market mood, US President Donald Trump said a trade agreement between the US and China was likely to happen either before or immediately after the American elections.

Elsewhere in Asia, Shanghai Composite Index, Hang Seng, Nikkei and Kospi ended on a mixed note. Stock exchanges in Europe were trading in the green in their respective early sessions.

Ambani raises stake in Reliance Industries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani has raised promoter stake in flagship Reliance Industries by 2.71 per cent to 48.87 per cent, according to regulatory filing by the company.

Reliance Services and Holdings Ltd, controlled by promoter group firm Petroleum Trust, acquired 17.18 crore shares of 2.71 per

cent stake in Reliance on September 13, it said.

The acquisition was pursuant to a scheme of arrangement not directly involving Reliance, the filing said without giving details.

Ambani and his private firms held 47.29 per cent stake as on June 30, 2019 in India's second-most valuable company.

As on June 30, FIIs held

24.4 per cent stake in the firm, mutual funds had 4.56 per cent and insurance companies 7.1 per cent. The remaining share was with public.

Earlier in July, Reliance had announced a composite scheme of amalgamation by merging Reliance Holding USA into Reliance Energy Generation and Distribution and the latter with the company itself.

SAT gives 4 weeks more to NSE, others in co-location case

Mumbai (PTI): Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on Wednesday asked NSE and its ex-officials, including the former CEO Chitra Ramkrishna, to file their rejoinders within four weeks in their plea against Sebi that penalised them in the co-location case. The tribunal also fixed November 27, as the date for the disposal of the case and said no further extension will be granted to anyone.

On April 30, market watchdog Sebi had ordered NSE to disgorge ₹1,000 crore, including 12 per cent interest, and had also asked Ramkrishna and three others to pay back 25 per cent of their salaries for the period involving the scam — between 2011 and 2014 — that came to light in 2015. NSE and the people punished, challenged the order at the SAT on May 21. The co-location case dates back to 2015, when a whistleblower wrote to Sebi alleging that NSE was giving a few high-frequency traders and brokers preferential access to its trading platform which benefited both the parties at the cost of others. The whistleblower had alleged that some brokers had figured out that the way to manipulate the system by becoming the first one to connect to the server — preferably the one which was the faster. Sebi said NSE committed fraudulent and unfair trade practice as contemplated under the Sebi PFUTP (prohibition of fraudulent and unfair trade practices) regulations.

RCom RP asked to approach NCLT for refund of ₹577 cr from Ericsson

New Delhi (PTI): The NCLAT on Wednesday directed resolution professional of Reliance Communications to raise demand for ₹577 crore paid to Swiss telecom gear maker Ericsson before the NCLT-Mumbai. Anil Ambani-led RCom is presently going through Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process. A two-member National Company Law Appellate Tribunal bench headed by Chairperson Justice SJ Mukhopadhyaya asked the Resolution Professional to file the claims before the NCLT.

NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY50	10872.80	10885.15	10804.85	10840.65	23.05
TATASTEEL	348.00	361.30	345.35	357.70	12.75
BPL	379.70	388.75	369.05	382.00	13.25
VEDL	146.00	150.50	145.10	150.00	4.60
GAIL	133.10	135.75	131.65	135.55	3.65
SBIN	277.20	282.95	274.40	280.40	6.45
IOC	127.60	128.60	125.30	128.00	2.80
JSWSTEEL	217.50	223.55	217.25	220.90	4.70
INFRATEL	251.30	255.75	249.25	254.70	4.50
TECHM	710.00	718.10	701.90	717.40	11.45
BAJAJFINSV	722.00	738.00	719.00	726.00	10.50
ASIANPAINT	1542.15	1560.95	1535.00	1552.90	22.00
BAJFINANCE	3407.00	3464.50	3388.50	3416.40	48.00
M&M	525.00	531.35	518.20	528.50	6.55
POWERGRID	200.50	203.00	198.25	202.80	2.35
NTPC	121.55	122.85	119.65	122.25	1.35
AXISBANK	645.50	654.50	641.55	647.50	7.05
RELIANCE	1204.95	1216.30	1197.20	1209.00	11.55
KOTAKBANK	1450.00	1478.95	1449.90	1460.95	12.65
TCS	2126.40	2142.95	2113.15	2141.15	18.50
ITC	237.70	242.30	234.05	238.90	1.70
TITAN	1163.00	1168.00	1150.55	1166.60	8.35
LT	1320.10	1328.40	1313.60	1321.00	7.30
HEROMOTORS	2990.00	2617.00	2517.00	2582.10	13.15
TATAMOTORS	125.05	125.90	120.50	122.60	0.60
ADANIPORTS	365.00	368.30	364.20	366.60	1.30
GRASIM	705.85	711.50	701.00	703.15	2.20
ULTRACEMCO	3910.10	3937.95	3885.05	3910.00	9.60
HCLTECH	1059.65	1066.95	1050.65	1058.00	2.15
HINDALCO	198.40	200.80	197.15	198.20	0.25
BAJAJ-AUTO	2798.00	2819.00	2750.10	2775.00	1.85
INDUSINDBK	1340.00	1349.00	1321.80	1333.45	0.85
WIPRO	245.40	245.95	243.30	244.25	0.10
INFY	829.90	832.95	824.00	831.45	0.20
DREDDYD	2739.80	2761.95	2715.15	2737.00	-1.05
HINDUNILVR	1839.50	1843.95	1818.65	1828.25	-2.95
ICICIBANK	405.45	405.45	396.50	399.25	-1.40
HDFC	2010.00	2014.00	1982.40	1988.85	-7.40
MARUTI	6165.00	6211.80	5986.60	6105.00	-25.40
CIPLA	461.40	462.80	454.35	457.00	-1.95
ZEE	338.15	342.30	333.40	335.40	-1.95
SUNPHARMA	565.00	565.00	542.75	559.55	-3.75
SUNPHARMA	423.90	424.60	414.25	417.30	-3.35
YESBANK	66.00	66.45	61.70	64.45	-0.65
HDFCBANK	2217.30	2224.15	2180.00	2188.00	-23.35
BHARTIARTL	341.60	344.15	334.60	336.10	-3.75
EICHERMOT	16500.00	16554.95	15842.00	16043.00	-241.95
ONGC	129.70	129.95	125.95	127.15	-2.55
COALINDIA	198.45	199.20	191.75	192.45	-5.15
IBULHSGFIN	436.00	438.70	411.35	417.20	-11.95
BRIITANNTA	2668.70	2668.70	2588.20	2614.90	-77.55

NIFTY NEXT 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY NEXT 50	26127.30	26193.10	25948.10	26149.90	161.95
NMDC	82.50	87.60	81.80	86.80	4.30
HDFCPETRO	252.55	257.30	248.75	256.50	10.60
DMART	1610.00	1650.00	1605.00	1650.00	46.95
HDFCAMC	2589.60	2658.00	2575.95	2645.00	71.45
DABUR	453.95	462.00	451.95	461.95	10.25
ICIGI	1136.30	1159.00	1132.25	1157.00	23.75
OFSS	2893.15	2940.00	2855.00	2933.00	54.25
PAGEIND	19430.00	20091.35	19000.15	19770.10	356.00
HDFCLIFE	533.85	540.00	533.00	539.75	9.05
HINDZINC	211.20	217.15	208.70	214.00	3.50
PGHIL	1031.00	1049.00	1029.00	1049.00	152.90
ICICIPRULI	418.10	423.35	418.05	422.35	5.90
CONCOR	522.45	530.65	521.20	527.80	7.25
NHPC	23.35	24.20	23.35	23.75	0.30
SRTRANSFIN	1034.80	1042.15	1023.10	1034.80	12.75
DIVISLAB	1612.50	1626.00	1605.00	1617.85	16.45
DLF	155.60	159.35	155.55	157.20	1.60
BANKBARODA	95.90	96.90	94.35	96.10	0.95
CADILAHG	240.00	242.30	236.05	241.20	2.25
INDIGO	1686.00	1720.00	1673.10	1681.95	14.35
SBILIFE	802.10	807.00	798.10	804.00	5.80
GODREJCP	650.45	652.95	637.50	651.10	4.65
L&TH	92.55	93.25	91.55	92.50	0.65
AMBUJACEM	195.00	196.70	194.10	195.70	1.35
MCDWELL-N	601.40	607.00	600.50	603.90	3.90
MRF	58699.00	58699.00	58000.00	58210.05	359.65
COPAL	1327.85	1327.85	1307.70	1314.25	7.45
LUPIN	761.00	762.00	753.00	761.00	3.15
PETRONET	262.00	262.00	262.00	263.95	0.95
HAUOPHARMA	620.00	622.50	609.50	618.80	2.10
AVELLS	649.00	657.50	644.35	650.00	1.05
SIEMENS	1250.00	1259.90	1237.10	1244.05	0.90
MARICO	380.80	381.00	375.30	380.00	-0.05
ACC	1840.00	1855.85	1806.10	1826.00	-0.40
BOSCHLTD	1493.50	1510.00	1488.00	1491.00	-0.65
SAIL	33.80	34.15	32.80	33.35	-0.05
NIACL	106.65	106.80	105.05	105.05	-0.20
BIOCON	230.50	230.50	225.55	227.60	-0.45
SHRECEM	1259.00	1264.40	1237.50	1251.50	-3.85
ASHOKLEY	1892.20	1893.20	1851.58	1863.00	-60.45
BHEL	60.35	60.80	57.45	59.70	-0.25
GICRE	49.90	49.40	48.40	48.50	-0.25
BANDHANBANK	449.80	451.30	441.20	444.05	-2.45
ADB	1333.10	1339.50	1324.00	1326.00	-10.25
PIDILITIND	1307.20	1325.50	1292.00	1310.00	-12.30
MOTHERSUMI	106.85	107.20	100.85	103.90	-2.30
BAJAJHLNG	3252.00	3280.00	3140.00	3150.00	-82.00
IDEA	5.05	5.10	4.80	4.90	-0.20

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	MINDTREE
MARUTI	6164.00	6210.00	5987.40	6093.55	1622.00
YESBANK	65.30	66.90	61.70	64.10	1560.00
ICICIBANK	404.90	404.90	396.70	399.15	56.55
HDFC	2007.00	2012.40	1982.60	1988.75	760.25
TATAMOTORS	122.90	125.55	120.50	121.85	437.00
HDFC	1269.70	1294.60	1175.50	1193.25	50.75
HEG	2215.15	2229.35			

Israel election: Netanyahu, rival tied as majority votes counted

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's ruling Likud party and its main rival Blue and White party are tied at 32 seats each, putting the country's longest serving prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu on a shaky ground with his right-wing bloc falling five short of a majority in the 120-member Parliament.

According to the Times of Israel, Netanyahu's Likud and centrist challenger Benny Gantz's Blue and White stood at 32 seats each after counting of 90 per cent of ballots were completed. The elections were held on Tuesday.

The secular Yisrael Beiteinu

party won 9 seats, making its leader Avigdor Lieberman the kingmaker in the elections, as predicted earlier in the exit polls.

Netanyahu, 69, called the snap election after failing to form a governing coalition with a viable majority after April's vote.

Joint List, an alliance of mostly Arab Israeli parties, stood at the third place with 12 seats, followed by the ultra-Orthodox Shas with nine seats.

United Torah Judaism has 8, Yamina has 7, Labour-Gesher is at 6 and the Democratic Camp has 5.

Lieberman, 61, on Wednesday said that "the pic-

ture is clear... There is only one option and it's a broad liberal unity government" comprising of Likud, Blue and White and his own Yisrael Beiteinu.

Lieberman asserted that he will not join any other coalition.

The news report stated that Netanyahu rejected the idea of a coalition that would include the Joint List as a partner, saying there cannot be a government that relies on "parties that praise and glorify bloodthirsty terrorists who kill our soldiers, our citizens, our children."

Led by Gantz, 60, on Wednesday said supporters that his party's campaign had "completed the

mission."

"We proved that the idea called Blue and White, an initiative that we started a few months ago, is a success, big-time, and it's here to stay," Gantz was quoted as saying by the Times of Israel.

Earlier, the exit polls stated that the right-wing bloc led by Netanyahu is projected to win between 55-57 seats, but his main challenger Gantz's Blue and White party also does not have the possibility of reaching the magical figure of 61 in a 120-member Knesset (Israeli Parliament), making the possibility of a unity government the most likely one.

44 lawmakers urge Trump to reinstate GSP for India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A bipartisan group of 44 influential lawmakers has urged the Trump administration to reinstate India's designation as a beneficiary developing nation under the key GSP trade programme as part of a potential trade deal between the two countries.

The Trump administration terminated India's designation as a beneficiary developing nation under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) in June.

The GSP is the largest and oldest US trade preference programme and is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries.

In a letter to US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, the House members suggest an "early harvest" approach that "would ensure that long-sought market access gains for US industries are not held up by negotiations over remaining issues."

US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet on September 22 in Houston and the two sides hope to announce a potential deal on longstanding trade issues, including GSP, a media report said.

Led by Congressmen Jim Himes and Ron Estes, the letter to Lighthizer has been signed by 26 Democrats and

18 Republicans, showing the strong, bipartisan support for reinstating GSP benefits for imports from India.

"Companies are telling Congress about the American costs - both in dollars and jobs - of lost GSP eligibility for India," said Dan Anthony, executive director of the Coalition for GSP on Tuesday.

"The letter shows Congress' strong, bipartisan support for swift action to reinstate GSP for India and to help constituents that depend on two-way trade," he said.

While GSP often is seen as a benefit to foreign countries, it is American businesses and workers that have suffered most from its termination to date.

Despite facing higher tariffs due to lost GSP, imports from India of (previously) GSP-eligible products increased over 40 per cent in June/July 2019 compared to a year earlier, likely the result of companies shifting sourcing away from China, Coalition for GSP said in a statement.

"Indian exporters are thriving while American companies are stuck paying USD 1 million a day in new tariffs," said Anthony.

The letter notes that costs of GSP termination "are real for our constituents and growing every day". The Coalition for GSP's latest data shows that loss of GSP for India cost American companies about USD 30 million in

July.

In the letter, the lawmakers said that they have a strong desire to see GSP eligibility for India reinstated.

"Should there be progress in negotiations, we hope you will use the tools provided by the GSP statute as warranted, such as partial reinstatement," the letter said.

Just as US industries are harmed by lack of fair and reciprocal access to India's market, American companies and workers also are harmed by new tariffs due to GSP termination, the lawmakers wrote.

"The costs are real for our constituents and growing every day. We urge you to continue negotiations and consider an early harvest to help American jobs that depend on two-way trade between the United States and India," they said.

Observing that the United States has legitimate concerns against India, the lawmakers wrote those policies negatively affect US companies trying to access its market, including a number of longstanding issues that have been subject to inter-governmental talks for years.

"As you know, several US industries filed petitions under GSP's market access criterion, which were accepted for review in April 2018. Ultimately, failure to make sufficient progress on the issues led to termination of India's GSP eligibility on June 5, 2019," they said.

The Congressmen said that they take these complaints seriously and share the administration's strong desire to see them resolved.

"We are encouraged to see continued engagement between the administration and the newly elected Government of India that assumed office in late May, including visits by senior USTR and Indian officials over the summer."

"The change in government provides a fresh opportunity to address outstanding concerns, and we hope that new Indian officials will offer concrete solutions that improve market access for American companies and workers," the Congressmen wrote in the letter.

Under the GSP programme, nearly 2,000 products including auto components and textile materials can enter the US duty-free if the beneficiary developing countries meet the eligibility criteria established by Congress.

India was the largest beneficiary of the programme in 2017 with USD 5.7 billion in imports to the US given duty-free status and Turkey the fifth largest with USD 1.7 billion in covered imports, according to a Congressional Research Service report issued in January.

The Trump administration had launched an eligibility review of India's compliance with the GSP market access criterion in April 2018.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses his supporters at party headquarters after elections in Tel Aviv on Wednesday



Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz and his wife Revital wave to supporters at party headquarters after the first results of elections in Tel Aviv on Wednesday

Indian with fake German passport denied US entry

PTI ■ NEW YORK

A 28-year-old Indian national was refused entry into the US after the border authorities found that he was travelling with a fraudulent German passport.

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers intercepted the Indian national on Monday at the Washington Dulles International Airport.

Authorities declined to prosecute the Indian man, who was refused admission to the United States. Due to privacy laws, the man's name was not released as he was not criminally charged, a CBP release said.

The Indian national arrived from Accra, Ghana and presented the German passport to a CBP officer during inspection.

The officer detected discrepancies in the passport's biographical page and referred the man to a secondary examination, during which CBP officers were unable to access the passport's electronic chip and suspected it to be altered or damaged.

When questioned, the man admitted to purchasing the passport in Ghana. CBP officers seized the passport and refused the Indian national admission to the United States, the release said.

CBP's Director of the Baltimore Field Office Casey Durst said the agency's officers are skilled at detecting impostors and fraudulent identity documents.

"The nation's security is

dependent on CBP officers doing their job, recognizing those who are attempting to enter by illegal means among the millions of travellers who enter the country for legitimate purposes," Durst said.

In screening both foreign visitors and returning US citizens, CBP uses a variety of techniques to intercept immigration violators, narcotics, unreported currency, weapons, prohibited agriculture goods, counterfeit consumer goods, and other illicit products, and to assure that global tourism remains safe and strong.

During 2018, CBP officers and agents intercepted an average of 16 fraudulent documents every day at and between the nation's 328 ports of entry.

Pak urges world to take note of India's stance on PoK

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has urged the international community to take note of India's aggressive posturing about taking "physical jurisdiction" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, warning that such "belligerent" statements have the potential to further escalate tensions and seriously jeopardise peace in the region.

Pakistan's statement came hours after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar asserted that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is India's part and one day New Delhi expects to have "physical jurisdiction" over it.

He also asserted that there is no need to "worry" too much beyond a point about what people will say on Kashmir as it is an internal issue on which India's position

has "prevailed and will prevail."

Addressing his first press conference in New Delhi after assuming the office in the Modi 2.0 government in May, Jaishankar also hit out at Pakistan, saying India has a "unique challenge" from one neighbour and it would remain a challenge until that neighbour becomes a normal neighbour and acts against cross-border terrorism.

Asked about remarks by some Indian leaders that henceforth talks with Pakistan would be only about PoK and not on Kashmir, Jaishankar said, "our position has, and will always be very clear on PoK, that it is part of India and we expect one day we will have physical jurisdiction over it."

Reacting sharply to Jaishankar's statement, Pakistan on Tuesday said it calls on the international community to

take "serious cognisance of India's aggressive posturing" on PoK.

Such "irresponsible and belligerent" statements from India have the potential to further escalate tensions and seriously jeopardise peace and security in the region," Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement.

"We strongly condemn and reject the inflammatory and irresponsible remarks" made by the Indian External Affairs Minister regarding Pakistan and PoK.

"These remarks are an obvious manifestation of India's utter frustration over the continued international censure of its egregious human rights violations in Kashmir," the statement said.

India cannot divert international attention from its crimes against the innocent

people of Kashmir by blaming Pakistan, it said.

Pakistan stands for peace, but would be ready to respond effectively to any act of aggression, the statement said.

Instead of resorting to jingoistic rhetoric, India must rescind its illegal actions, stop forthwith grave human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, refrain from violating international law, and fully comply with UN Security Council resolutions for a final settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, the statement added. Tension between India and Pakistan escalated after New Delhi revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5. Reacting to India's move on Kashmir, Pakistan downgraded diplomatic ties with New Delhi and expelled the Indian High Commissioner.

Pakistan has been trying to internationalise the Kashmir issue but India has asserted that the abrogation of Article 370 was its "internal matter". New Delhi has also asked Islamabad to accept the reality and stop its anti-India rhetoric.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has vowed to raise the Kashmir issue at the UN General Assembly session in New York on September 27. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also scheduled to speak on the same day.

At his press conference when asked whether there could be a possibility of the leaders of India and Pakistan meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA, the external affairs minister commented, "just look at the climate of the relations right now, I think that itself should give you the answer that you are looking at."

Taliban open to US talks

AFP ■ KABUL

The Taliban's chief negotiator has said their "doors are open" to resuming talks with Washington, hours after two attacks by the insurgents killed at least 48 people in war-weary Afghanistan.

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai also defended the Taliban's role in recent bloodshed across the country after US President Donald Trump cited an attack that killed an American soldier as his reason for calling off negotiations earlier this month.

Speaking to the BBC, Stanikzai argued the Americans had also admitted to killing thousands of Taliban during the discussions, and that the insurgents had done nothing wrong by continuing to fight throughout the talks.

"From our side, our doors are open for negotiations," he was

quoted as saying. Trump had said the US was walking away from negotiations after nearly a year of grinding diplomatic efforts to strike a deal that could pave the way for an American withdrawal from Afghanistan following 18 years of war. He declared the talks "dead" on September 10.

But his administration, which has made no secret of its wish to bring troops home, also left the door open for a new attempt, though Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned the Taliban must show a "significant commitment" if talks were to resume.

Tuesday's attacks left at least 26 people dead at a rally for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in the central province of Parwan, while 22 were killed in a blast in Kabul just over an hour later.

They were the bloodiest attacks to hit Afghanistan since the talks fell apart. Dozens more

were wounded in the blasts, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility.

More violence is expected in coming days as Afghans prepare for a presidential election on September 28, which the Taliban have promised to disrupt.

"We already warned people not to attend election rallies. If they suffer any losses that is their own responsibility," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement released after Tuesday's blasts.

The insurgents have said previously that the only other option is to continue fighting.

"We had two ways to end occupation in Afghanistan, one was jihad and fighting, the other was talks and negotiations," Mujahid told AFP earlier this month.

"If Trump wants to stop talks, we will take the first way and they will soon regret it."

Pak court to hear Sharif's appeal

Islamabad (PTI): A Pakistani court will hear on Wednesday the appeal of jailed former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif against his conviction in a corruption case.

Sharif, 69, has been serving a seven-year prison term at the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore since December 24, 2018 when the accountability court convicted him in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills graft case.

A two-member division bench of Islamabad High Court (IHC) comprising of Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani will conduct the hearing.

The same bench will also take up an appeal by the National Accountability Court Bureau, the prosecuting agency

in the case, to increase his sentence.

Sharif was removed as prime minister following a judgement by the Supreme Court on July 28, 2017. The top court also ordered to launch three cases of corruption against Sharif and his family.

Sharif along with his daughter Maryam and son-in-law Mohammad Safdar was convicted in the Avenfield case last year but the sentence was later suspended by the IHC. The case was related to the ownership of the Sharif family's apartments at Avenfield House, London.

He was however convicted in the Al-Azizia steel mill case for owning assets beyond means.

Saudi attacks have global consequences: US official

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities have global consequences and the UN must play its part to address threats to international peace, a senior Trump administration official has said, as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo left for Jeddah for talks with the top Saudi leadership.

Saudi Arabia, a key American ally, leads a military coalition that has been battling the Iran-aligned Huthi rebels in Yemen since 2015.

The Huthis claimed responsibility for Saturday's two attacks on Saudi Arabian facilities, which halved oil output in Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude exporter.

After the attacks, US President Donald Trump said the White House believed it knew the culprit of the strikes, and the US military was "locked and loaded" to take action.

"Saudi Arabia has been attacked, which has global consequences. The UN Security Council was created to address threats to international peace and security, and this attack meets that criteria," the senior administration official said as Pompeo headed to Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi in the UAE.

Pompeo will begin his trip in Jeddah, arriving September 18. "He will meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss the recent attack on the Kingdom's oil facilities and coordinate efforts to counter Iranian aggression in the region," State Department

Spokesperson Morgan Ortugas said. The Secretary will then travel to Abu Dhabi to meet with UAE Prince Mohammed bin Zayed to discuss regional and bilateral issues, she said in a statement.

Some media reports said that the Trump administration was planning a retaliatory action against Iran, as tension escalated in the Middle East in the aftermath of the massive damage to the Saudi oil facilities.

According to the official, the US sees a role for the UN Security Council.

"Iran has a long history of testing its strength. But they never climb too high up the escalation ladder. At a certain point, when the world says enough, they come back down," the official said in response to a question.

US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Iran continues to violate international norms and has chosen to promote instability and danger throughout the region.

The NBC News reported that the Trump administration was weighing a range of options for a retaliatory action against Iran, including a cyberattack or physical strike on Iranian oil facilities or Revolutionary Guard assets. In a national security meeting on Monday, US military leaders provided Trump with a menu of possible actions against Iran.

"But the president, seeking a narrowly focused response that wouldn't draw the US into broader military conflict with Iran, asked for more options," the report said, quoting people who

were briefed on the meeting.

In an interaction with reporters, White House Deputy Press Secretary Hogan Gidley said the president felt as though Iran was likely the culprit of the attack. "I mean, it was an attack on the global economy. The president is dealing with all of our partners and allies in the region. We want to make sure that the evidence and the information clearly points to a culprit here."

"In all likelihood, as the president said, it was Iran. But, when we have a definitive answer on that, we'll let you know," he said, adding that no option is off the table.

Gidley said Trump has been very clear that the US is not going to begin to have conversations with Iran until they change the behaviour that they've been a part of for more than 40 years.

"When you're the world's largest state sponsor of terror, you're going to have to change behaviour if the president of the United States is going to have a conversation with you," he said.

"The president wants to make a deal with Iran. He sees great potential in the country. But, for the better part of 40 years, this kind of behaviour has been well documented, well known across the globe. The president wants to see that kind of behaviour change."

"We've been tougher on Iran than any administration in history with the sanctions we've put on them up to and including yesterday from the briefing room," he said.

We are losing race on climate catastrophe: UN chief

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Tuesday the world was "losing the race" to avert climate disaster, but that greenhouse gas reduction targets were not out of reach yet.

He was speaking during an interview with the Covering Climate Now coalition of media, which includes AFP, days before a UN youth climate summit that will be followed by a meeting with world leaders, where he will urge countries to raise their commitments set under the Paris

agreement. The landmark accord saw countries pledge to limit the long-term rise in the average temperature of the Earth to two degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels, and if possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"What I want is to have the whole of society putting pressure on governments to make governments understand they need to run faster, because we are losing the race," he said, adding: "What the science tells us today is that these targets are still reachable."

Guterres said that inaction

by some key countries, including the US, could be at least partly offset by action at the sub-national level, for example in the carbon neutral pledges made by the states of California and New York.

"I think one of the best things of the US society is the fact that it is a federal country... that decisions are decentralized, so I will be always very strongly in favor of keeping decisions on climate change as decentralized as possible," he said.

He noted that major cities, regions and businesses were taking over, and that banks and

investment funds were pulling out of the coal and fossil fuel sectors.

Guterres also cited the example of the European Union, where only three countries now oppose the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, and said that he felt a "new wind" in the push for renewable energy, especially with the growth of solar in India and China.

Failure to meet the goals laid out under the Paris agreement could lead to the crossing of so-called "tipping points" such as the thawing of the Earth's permafrost that further

accelerate warming, creating a situation where extreme weather events become the norm.

Guterres said he was heartened by growing societal awareness, which meant that hope was not yet lost, "but that requires profound changes in the way we produce food, in the way we power our economies, in the way we organize our cities, in the way we produce energy."

"I feel that more and more people, companies, cities, and governments, are understanding that needs to be done," he said.

EU warns no-deal Brexit imminent if UK doesn't get serious

AFP ■ STRASBOURG

The European Union's two top officials handling troublesome Brexit negotiations warned Wednesday that the risk of a no-deal exit looms large unless Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government offers concrete proposals.

"The risk of a no deal remains very real. That will be the choice of the United Kingdom but never the choice of the European Union," European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker told the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The warning came two days after Juncker and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson met in Luxembourg for talks, just six weeks before Britain is set to exit the bloc.

That trip ended in humiliation for Johnson after he avoided what was meant to be a joint press conference with his Luxembourg counterpart, put off by a small anti-Brexit protest nearby.

Juncker emphasised the UK still has not offered any viable solutions to rewrite a withdrawal agreement struck by Johnson's predecessor but rejected three times by the British parliament.

Juncker said "I am not sure" that a new deal would be reached.

"We have very little time left. But I am sure we must try," said the EU leader, whose mandate ends on October 31 — the deadline for Britain to leave the EU.

The strident message paralleled stepped-up moves by Brussels and London to hand out blame for a chaotic no-deal

Brexit. The EU's pointman in the negotiations, Michel Barnier, told MEPs in Strasbourg that "it is certainly not a question of pretending to negotiate".

He added that "it is our responsibility to pursue this process with determination, with sincerity." His words were taken as a dig at Johnson, who is seen by many in Brussels and London as running down the clock to have Britain exit the EU "with or without" a new deal. If so, Johnson risks falling foul of a law hastily passed by the UK parliament requiring him to ask for another Brexit delay — a third — by October 19 if no new deal is worked out with the EU.

Britain's parliament is currently suspended at Johnson's initiative in a move being challenged in the country's

Supreme Court.

EU leaders are to hold a summit on October 17-18, seen as the last chance to strike a deal. The thorniest issue in the talks between Britain and the EU is that of the "backstop" — an effort to guarantee that no border will spring up between EU member Ireland and the UK's province of Northern Ireland while ensuring that the EU's single market will be protected.

Under the withdrawal deal reached last year, the UK was to stay in the EU's customs union temporarily, in case talks towards a trade deal failed.

But Johnson rejects the guarantee and is reportedly exploring ways that Northern Ireland alone could abide by EU agriculture and food standards without a full-fledged backstop.



European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker (left) speaks with European Union chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier on Wednesday at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. The risk of Britain leaving the European Union without a divorce deal remains "very real", European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker declared as EU lawmakers debated the ramifications of a no-deal Brexit.

UK's Corbyn suggests will stay neutral if new Brexit vote

AFP ■ LONDON

Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of Britain's main opposition Labour party, suggested Wednesday he would remain neutral if there was a second referendum on Brexit.

Labour has promised that if it wins the next election, it will seek a new exit deal with the European Union and put that and the option to stay in the bloc to a referendum.

"Only a Labour government would end the Brexit crisis by taking the decision

back to the people," Corbyn wrote in an article in The Guardian.

"We will give the people the final say on Brexit, with the choice of a credible leave offer and remain."

He added: "I will pledge to carry out whatever the people decide, as a Labour prime minister." Labour has been accused of a confused position over Brexit as it seeks a middle way to avoid alienating voters on either side of the 2016 referendum.

However, as the govern-

ing Conservatives toughen their position under Prime Minister Boris Johnson, pressure is growing for Labour to campaign actively to stay in the EU.

The issue is likely to spark intense debate at Labour's party conference starting this weekend.

Johnson insists Britain must leave the EU on October 31, with or without a deal with Brussels — although he is constrained by a law blocking "no deal" next month.

Meanwhile, the smaller Liberal Democrats agreed at their annual conference last weekend to reverse Brexit if they ever won a majority in the House of Commons.

"We are the only UK-wide party ready to put our trust in the people of Britain to make the decision," Corbyn wrote.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, the leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), tweeted: "Staying neutral on Brexit is a shameful abdication of leadership."

Barnier delivers stark warning

AFP ■ STRASBOURG

EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier warned Wednesday that Britain's appetite for an ambitious trade deal with Europe after Brexit could go badly unsatisfied given Prime Minister Boris Johnson's demands.

Speaking to MEPs in the European Parliament, Barnier regretted that Johnson's new government had expressed its intention to "reverse the commitments" on trade made by his predecessor Prime Minister Theresa May.

These pledges were part of a non-binding "political declaration" on the future relationship between the EU and UK

that stand beside a highly contentious withdrawal deal which has failed to win approval in British parliament.

In addition to rejecting the divorce deal, Johnson's negotiators have asked that Britain be allowed to widely diverge from EU rules after Brexit, all while securing a highly ambitious trade deal with Europe.

Barnier on Wednesday poured cold water on that British request, insisting that a comprehensive trade accord could only come by closely abiding by EU rules.

"The level of ambition of a future free trade agreement that we will have to negotiate... with the United Kingdom will

clearly depend on the guarantees that we have agreed in the social, environmental, competition or state aid fields," Barnier said in Strasbourg.

"This economic relationship must obviously be accompanied by guarantees of a level playing field," he added, referring to a commitment by trading partners to abide by the same norms.

A senior European official told AFP that the EU is not ready to accept Britain's requests.

The official believed Johnson wants the UK to become a "Singapore" of Europe, where multi-nationals can flout EU rules but keep

undisturbed access to Europe's market of 500 million consumers.

"With a large country so close and important like the United Kingdom, which does just over half of its trade with the (EU) single market, an ambitious economic partnership requires a set of common rules of the game," Barnier said.

London and Brussels are struggling to agree changes to the withdrawal agreement, with Britain on course to leave the EU on October 31.

"If the United Kingdom comes out without an agreement, I want to remind you that all these issues do not disappear," Barnier added.

Precious Buddha statues being smuggled from Pak to China seized: Police

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Precious artifacts worth millions of rupees, including statues of Buddha and Kanishka periods, have been seized by Pakistani police in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province while they were being smuggled to China, officials said on Wednesday.

Taj Muhammad Khan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, said that during checking, precious ancient-era artifacts including statues and sculptures of Gautam Buddha era, worth millions of rupees were recovered.

The statues were being smuggled out to China in a truck. The truck was intercepted by the local police at a check post in Charsadda District of the province, Khan said.

The seized antiques were recovered from secret cavities of a truck and stated to be 2000 years old.

The truck driver and smuggler both were arrested, police said.

In 2018, Italian archeologists restored a statue of the Buddha in Pakistan's Swat Valley. It is believed to be the second tallest statue in the region, Dawn News reported.

Outrage over Thai police order on Muslim students

AFP ■ BANGKOK

A Thai Muslim student group Wednesday called for police to drop an order requesting universities to provide "intelligence" on Muslim students and their activities in the Buddhist-majority state.

Muslims make up Thailand's second largest religious group, with the majority residing in its three southernmost states, which since 2004 have been in the grip of a conflict between Malay-Muslim separatist rebels and Thai authorities.

Rights groups have long accused the state of heavy-handed sweeps of the majority Malay-Muslim population in that region — which is under martial law.

Last week the Special Branch Bureau issued a nationwide order to universities to provide "intelligence" on Muslim students and their activities in school, police spokesman Krissana Pattanacharoen told AFP Tuesday, citing "security" concerns.

The news sparked immediate outrage from the community, and the Muslim Students Federation of Thailand on Wednesday called for parliament to "cancel" the request.

The Special Branch's order "is also a form of discrimination that breaches the constitution," president Ashraf Awae said, speaking outside parliament.

Such "groundless accusations... could create divisions among the Muslim students and others in the university and society," he said.

He added the federation had already heard of police requesting information on Muslim student groups from at least three major universities.

Junta chief-turned-prime minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha on Tuesday defended the Special Branch, and denied creating a "database" would be a violation of people's rights.

"We can't arrest anyone if they don't do anything wrong," he told reporters.

Prayut's backing shows an "alarming trend of growing Islamophobia in Thailand," said Human Rights Watch's Sunai Phasuk.

"This is state-sanctioned discrimination," he told AFP, adding that the Thai constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination towards different religions and ethnic groups.

"It could feed into radicalisation of Muslims in the deep south and worsen the conflict," Sunai said.

Suicide bomber detonates inside govt building in Afghanistan

AFP ■ JALALABAD

A suicide bomber has detonated inside a government building in eastern Afghanistan, a provincial official said Wednesday, with casualties feared in the latest violence to hit the war-torn country.

Witnesses and an AFP reporter also described hearing gunshots immediately after the blast at the electronic identification registration centre in Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, where both the Taliban and the Islamic State group are active.

"Security forces are in the area to rescue the staff," said provincial spokesman Ataullah Khogyani.

No group immediately claimed the attack.

It came a day after the Taliban killed nearly 50 people and wounded dozens more in two separate attacks, one near a campaign rally for President Ashraf Ghani in the central province of Parwan, and one in Kabul. The militants have vowed to disrupt the upcoming presidential election, scheduled for September 28.

They have also promised more violence after US President Donald Trump called off talks earlier this month seeking a deal that would have allowed Washington to begin withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, the site of America's longest war.

European parliamentarians back India, slam Pak for terrorism

PTI ■ BRUSSELS

European parliamentarians Eryszard Czarnecki and Fulvio Martusciello have backed India on the Kashmir issue during a special debate of the plenary of the European Parliament by describing it a great democracy and slammed Pakistan for harbouring terrorists.

In the debate on the situation in Kashmir on Tuesday, Czarnecki, the member of EU Parliament and European Conservatives and Reformists Group in Poland called India the "greatest democracy of the world".

"India is the greatest democracy of the world. We need to look at terrorist acts that took place in India, Jammu and Kashmir. These terrorists didn't land from the Moon. They were coming from the neighbouring country. We should support India," said Czarnecki.

Martusciello, a member of EU Parliament and Group of European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in Italy, said Pakistan had threatened to use nuclear weapons which was a concern to the European Union.

"Pakistan is somewhere where terrorists have been able to plan bloody terrorist attacks in Europe," said Martusciello while accusing Islamabad of human rights violations.

Opening the debate on behalf of the vice president of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, EU Minister Tytti Tuppurainen said "no one could afford another escalation in Kashmir."

The EU minister urged India and Pakistan to resolve Kashmir issue through dialogue, seeking a peaceful and political solution, respectful of the interests of the Kashmiri population on both sides of the Line of Control.

"This is the only way to solve the longtime dispute to avoid instability and insecurity in the region, she added," she said. She also called on India to restore means of communications in the Valley.

India revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5. Reacting to India's move on Kashmir, Pakistan downgraded diplomatic ties with New Delhi and expelled the Indian High Commissioner.

Pakistan has been trying to internationalise the Kashmir issue but India has asserted that the abrogation of Article 370 was its "internal matter". New Delhi also asked Islamabad to accept the reality and stop its anti-India rhetoric.

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Duterte warns ex-convicts

AFP ■ MANILA

More than a thousand ex-convicts were prematurely freed under a controversial law in the Philippines if they do not surrender before a Thursday deadline, President Rodrigo Duterte said.

His government is scrambling to track down the former inmates — including convicted murderers and rapists — who were released early due to what he concedes was a wrong application of the law and possible corruption of prison officers.

Earlier this month Duterte set a September 19 deadline for the ex-convicts to return to jail or face the consequences, and put a one million-peso (USD 19,000) price on their heads.

"The one million prize is available to those who can capture them dead or alive," Duterte told reporters on Tuesday night.

"But maybe dead would be a better option. I will pay you smiling," added the president, known for his brutal anti-drug

crackdown that has claimed thousands of lives.

Nearly 2,000 prisoners have been released over the last few years, including those convicted of heinous crimes who were found to be ineligible for a law that rewards good behaviour with shorter jail time.

The law went into effect in 2014, two years before Duterte was elected president.

The premature releases had gone largely unremarked until news broke last month that a former politician convicted in the 1990s and sentenced to

decades behind bars in a notorious rape and murder case was about to get out early for good behaviour.

Earlier this month Duterte fired the prisons chief over the early releases, saying: "The records would show that there has been a wrong committed and maybe corruption." At least 400 ex-prisoners have surrendered over the past two weeks, according to police. Their cases will be reviewed by authorities with a view to returning them to prison.

At one late-night outdoor market stall, a vendor selling imitation designer handbags said her takings were down five-fold from average sales at the start of the year.

With no end in sight, Chiu, the pharmacist, seemed to be torn between his sympathies for the protesters and protecting his livelihood.

"I don't support them damaging facilities, but I feel awful seeing them being beaten by police," he told AFP.

He said he and his staff had left supplies of water outside his shop for protesters during street rallies, knowing other stores had closed.

"I support the youngsters," he said. "But I also have a business to run."

HK's summer of protests leaves economy bruised & battered

AFP ■ HONG KONG

As pro-democracy protests grind on for a fourth month, Hong Kong has been left counting the cost, with the city's tourist industry battered and businesses forced to lay off staff as they struggle to stay afloat.

Images beamed around the world of black-clad demonstrators battling police in full riot gear on streets usually lined with shoppers have led travellers to shun the financial hub.

And with protesters and the government showing no signs of backing down, there are worries things will not improve any time soon.

August witnessed the

biggest fall in overseas visitors since the SARS epidemic of 2003 claimed nearly 300 lives and unleashed widespread panic in the city, according to government data.

Among the worst-hit areas is Causeway Bay, a normally bustling commercial precinct home to a slate of luxury brands where last weekend shoppers and bystanders were caught up as police fired volleys of tear gas at masked youths.

A neighbourhood pharmacist, who asked to be identified only by his surname Chiu, told AFP the overseas customers who accounted for half his sales had slowed to a trickle since the protests began in June.

"The social atmosphere is not good," he said, adding that he has repeatedly had to shut his shop as tear gas canisters bounce down the street. Takings, he says, have tumbled 40-50 percent.

"Local customers also seem to buy less."

He said his business was faring worse than during 2014's Umbrella Movement, which saw the city grind to a standstill after a months-long blockade of busy roads.

Across Hong Kong, on-year tourist arrivals fell 40 percent in the last month, the city's financial secretary Paul Chan said, led by a collapse in visitors from the mainland — by far the largest group. Hotel occupancy rates are

down around half and the retail and dining sectors have been severely impacted.

"It is worrying that so far there is no sign of improvement in the near future," Chan wrote in a blog post.

Adding to the problems for Hong Kong, the long-running crisis has coincided with weak global demand and the grinding China-US trade war.

Earlier this month Fitch downgraded the city's sovereign rating citing the protests.

Seasonally adjusted, the economy contracted by 0.4 percent in the second quarter — most of which came before the pro-democracy rallies began — while Chan also reported a 5.7-percent yearly fall in overall exports in the first

half.

No one is looking forward to third-quarter statistics.

Crucially, the number of visitors from mainland China has tumbled after several full-throated condemnations of demonstrators by Beijing, which has likened the unrest to "terrorism".

The number of mainland tour groups to the city plunged 90 percent on-year in the first 10 days of September, Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong spokeswoman Jessica Wan told AFP.

Hong Kong's flagship airline Cathay Pacific also reported an 11-percent yearly drop in passengers for August, when two occupations of the airport saw the blockade of departure

gates and the cancellation of hundreds of flights.

The airport saw a 12.4-percent monthly drop in passengers — some 850,000 fewer travellers.

Several other businesses told AFP their bottom lines had suffered through the long summer of discontent, sparked by a controversial extradition bill many fear would strengthen Beijing's control over the city and further erode its cherished freedoms.

Since June, when more than a million people marched through the city to protest the measure, the manager of a watch store said he had been forced to lay off half of its workforce.

"You can see if you walk

down the streets, several watch shops have been closed already," said the store's manager, surnamed Wong. "I'm pessimistic. I don't know if we can survive through the new year." The protests tend to break out over the weekends — the two days his shop is usually at its busiest.

On the other side of the harbour in Mongkok, businesses said they were regularly shutting their doors early to avoid melees outside.

The area around the neon-soaked retail precinct has seen escalating violence, with demonstrators barricading main roads and vandalising the local subway station — and officers responding with baton charges.

FROM HERAT TO TAJ

CD Foundation collaborates with the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on its 100th independence anniversary and will host a food and culture festival in the city

CD foundation collaborates with Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Charge d'affaires Tahir Qadiry announced a 15-day long Afghanistan food and culture festival with the foundation in October on the 100th independence anniversary of Afghanistan.

The food and culture festival is one of eight events which will take place during the anniversary celebration. Live Afghani band performance, ghazal performance, cricket match and many more performances will be there. There will be food stalls and live kitchen display of Afghanistani cuisines too. It will also display handicraft and textile exhibition, fashion walks, cultural performances, conferences, workshop, media interactions and meets for three days. Subsequently, the festival will also mark a meet between Afghanistan and Indian film makers.

The festival aims at enhancing the cultural relations between India and Afghanistan. Both the countries are bound in cultural and historical relations. The age old cultural and civilisational ties and the deep-rooted linkages in the fields of music, art, architecture, lan-



guage and cuisine constitute an important bond of friendship between the countries. Therefore, events like this make us celebrate our values together.

Tahir appreciated the

founder director of CD Foundation Charu Das. She said that it is a privilege for her foundation to have the responsibility of this festival. She added that this initiative was mainly taken to meet the commit-

ments made by CD foundation in Kabul during a formal visit of the city by a group of Indian delegation in August.

Her aim for planning this festival is double. On one hand, it is a way to exhibit various

aspects of Afghanistan culture to Indians. On the other, it provides an opportunity for the participants (women entrepreneurs) to get trained in their respective fields by Indian experts and to create a network

for doing future business in India.

Dr Sandeep Marwah, chairman of AAFI and president of Marwah Studio was also present. He extended his support to the festival.

IN SHORT



SPMCIL has been awarded Best in Class for Training and Development in the 18th edition of the Asia Pacific HRM Congress held on Tuesday in Bengaluru. The award was received by BJ Gupta, additional general manager (HR) and Durga A Prasad, manager (HR).



Andhra Association celebrated Ganesh Puja festival at AAD building in the city. Arvind Kejriwal, chief minister and Sanjay Singh, MP (RS) attended the function.



Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) has been awarded the Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar for 2018-19 for implementation of official language policy of Government of India. Home minister Amit Shah presented the award to Santosh Kumar Mall, commissioner, KVS at Vigyan Bhawan on Saturday. KVS was selected for its excellent work in Hindi under the category of 'Boards/Autonomous Bodies/Societies of Govt' in region A by the Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs.

The board meeting of city's Municipal Corporation was boycotted by municipal commissioner Dinesh Chandra as there was a uproar during it.

The dispute started when Municipal Corporation's executive vice president and BJP councillor Sunil Yadav, commented on the work style and behaviour of officials of Pawan Pandey, manager of CLC (urban livelihood development company). Chandra became so uncomfortable and angered by this indecisive behaviour of councillors, that he left the board meeting.

Later mayor Asha Sharma adjourned the meeting indefinitely,

Municipal commissioner boycotts board meeting

repeating all the proceedings. She then had a conversation with councillors of all parties and condemned the behaviour of the city commissioner. She even wrote a letter to the chief minister, contempting the house. In the letter, the chief minister has been demanded to be disciplined against the city commissioner and other officials.

On the other hand, Chandra told that the councillors in the house were using unparliamentary language against the former city commissioners which led them to leave the house



Councillors near the House table

silently. He added that he has not committed any contempt of the house but instead sent the additional municipal commissioner Pramod Kumar to continue the proceedings of the house. But, the councillors continued to create a ruckus even then.

In this sequence, the manager of CLC Pawan Pandey said that he has never behaved indecisively with any Municipal Corporation officials or councillors. He alleged that some councillors are angry as he had not facilitated their misleading work.

SRM students bag good jobs

At the first day of recruitment process at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, four major IT companies offered 4,749 jobs to students from the graduation batch of 2020.

TCS (Ninja) has made 1437 offers, Infosys 1315, CTS 1175 and Wipro 822. Apart from this, TCS has made 183 offers under digital track too (₹7 lakh per annum), said Sriram Padmanabhan, director, career centre at SRMIST. The highest paid offer



was ₹41.6 lakh per annum by Microsoft. More than 120 companies have visited the campus since the commencement of the placement session on July 22. They have made 6000 offers.

Top recruiters include Amazon (18 offers of ₹32 lakh per annum), Barclays (25 offers of ₹10 lakh per annum) and startup Udaan (four offers of ₹30 lakh per annum). Besides this, organisations like Veritas and Pay Pal have made internship offers

Municipal Corporation incorporates steelware-only model

With regard to environmental protection, municipal commissioner Dinesh Chandra has issued instructions to Municipal Corporation establishment heads that refreshments will be provided only in steel utensils at meetings held in all the establishments of the city's Municipal Corporation.

This model was first used in the kavad camps during the kavad yatra and had positive results. Dinesh said that due to the use of banned plastics, the



Municipal Commissioner Dinesh Chandra

city used to get dirt piles during the bhandara and religious events. He added that he made it mandatory to use steel and other metal utensils for all such events.

"Inspired by us, the management committees of the gurdwaras and temples have abandoned steel crockery and made steel utensil banks for the distribution of langar and food offerings," said Dinesh. He added that they have also decided to put hoardings and stalls for publicity so that people are aware of it.

'Industry and academia need to come together'



IT Madras organised a Technology Conclave: Vision New India 2022 with the theme — development for all through technology.

Rakesh Kumar, chairman, Scope and CMD, NLC India Limited addressed the conclave. Arjun Ram Meghwal, MoS, Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises inaugurated the conclave in the presence of Dr Madhukar Gupta, additional secretary, department of Public Enterprises.

Rakesh asserted the need for industry and academia to come together to bridge the skill gap of the talent required by the industry. He pointed out that the ambitious plan of creating a new India through "Strategy for New India @ 75" could only be achieved if the younger generation is equipped with the necessary skills required in the current volatile market environment.

The chief executives from various public sector enterprises and other organisations also participated in varied panel discussions such as role of CSR in technology, leveraging CSR funding for nation building and many others.

Smoking could lead to rheumatoid arthritis

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic inflammatory disorder that occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks the joints leading to pain and inflammation in the tissue surrounding the joints. Women are three times more likely to get diagnosed with RA than men and the disease can impact anyone within the age group of 20 to 50 years.

"Though, there are no exact numbers, we can safely say that RA impacts 0.5 per cent to one per cent of the population. Despite relatively high awareness levels on



RA, there are many myths and misconceptions surrounding the disease which could pose an impediment to the treatment. Some of the common myths like RA only affects people of old age



and that there is no treatment. It can have a negative impact on patients therefore it is important for them to come in for regular check-ups and follow the Rheumatologist's advice," says Dr Himanshu Agarwal, Consultant Rheumatologist, Max Superspecialty Hospital, Vaishali.

"Smoking may contribute towards the increase in RA cases especially among younger population. People with genetic risk factors are also prone to developing the condition. RA causes pain and disability leading to loss of

daily functioning and missing of work schedules. Change in weather also leads to change in barometric pressure which could exacerbate the arthritis. Majority of the patients come in within three months of experiencing the first signs of RA. About 0.5 to 1 per cent of the Indian population is affected with the condition. Education and early detection are crucial to the effective management of RA," shares Dr Sonal Mehra, Consultant Rheumatologist at Jaypee Hospital, Noida.

NHPC INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP

National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) invites applications for the second batch of NHPC Sports Scholarship Scheme for Upcoming Sports persons in five sports — football, kabaddi, boxing, wrestling and para sports. These scholarships are meant for young players of 14-19 years (14-24 years for para sports) with a view to encourage talent and create a pool of sports persons during their formative years of education.

There is a maximum provision of 10 numbers of scholarships with two numbers in each of the five sports. The applications shall be considered for scholarships in two categories — elite scholar and scholar, based on the fulfillment of required criteria. The details regarding the scholarships are available in the career corner of NHPC website. The last date for receiving application forms has been extended till October 17.

God is the seer of past, present and future. He knows the intellect of all human beings. In this regard, god preaches in Rigved mantra that there are people who although sees the literal Vedvani yet ignores it due to lack of the literal knowledge. And then there are people who don't understand it. A few of so-called saints are unknown to the meaning of Ved mantras and Vedic knowledge, and then they misguide people. Whereas they must pay attention to the other mantras where god preaches that if an aspirant understand Vedas, he only receives benefit of it. People listen to Puranas, Bhagwad Geeta and other spiritual books as they are inspired to listen, in the name of faith. They are even explained the meaning of each word in Hindi language, whereas as far as the matter of Vedas, the said practice is not in vogue and hence the prob-

THE SUPREME KNOWLEDGE

lem. So it is clear that until people become aspirants and start understanding Ved mantras, the problem to follow Vedic path will always remain unsolved. Intellectuals should approach the government to do the needful because the most important knowledge to make the future bright is the knowledge of four Vedas, which emanate directly from god. It can't be compared to any other literal knowledge.

Today, Vedas have almost been intentionally disregarded instead of being followed by people. Above quoted matter concludes that illusion, corruption, dishonour to women, violence and several other types of problems exist in world because people are not aware of the Vedic knowl-



edge. Therefore, we will have to pay attention towards Vedas and its literature like Shastras, Upanishads. Kapil Muni states

in his Sankhya Shastra Sutra that there are three types of sorrows, whose total destruction enables a devotee to

attain salvation. First, AdhyatmikDukh, which is generated due to internal reasons. It has two kinds —

Shareerik, due to human body and Manas, due to mind/thought. Second, Adhibhautik, pain and afflict-

tion caused by snake and scorpion's bite due to physical violence and bitter words. Third, Adhidaivik, caused by non-living things like rain, fire, snowfall, lightning, earthquake and sorrows generated by cyclones.

Kapil Muni says that it is not possible to put an end to the sorrows until we follow the Vedas. Undoubtedly, today, most people do not believe in Vedic knowledge but truth prevails. He further adds that the said sorrows can't be separated from the soul. Yes, money should be earned with hard effort. So the learning of Vedas in all circumstances will help to attain salvation.

(The author is Swami Ram Swarup, chief editor of Ved Ishvareeya vani, a bi-annual magazine.)

Trend Slazer

Flawed characters are relatable: Sonam

Actor SONAM KAPOOR AHUJA, who plays the lead role in the forthcoming film, *The Zoya Factor*, says that she finds imperfect and flawed characters more real than those inspirational picture-perfect characters that have been projected in Bollywood for a long time.

Whether it is *Aisha*, *Khoobsurat*, *Dolly Ki Dolly*, or *Veere Di Weeding*, Sonam's characters are typified as flawed.

"I think young boys and girls were not rightly represented in our films for the longest time. When a character is imperfect, it becomes more relatable because, in real life, we are not perfect. Most of the characters I've portrayed are imperfect because they represent us."



'A common language is very important for any country for its development, growth and integrity but unfortunately, such a thing cannot be done in India. Talking about Hindi, so not only Tamil Nadu, but no Southern state will accept the imposition of Hindi. Even some North Indian states wouldn't.'

—Rajnikanth



Actor DIA MIRZA, who also serves as UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador, will be attending UNGA as a UN advocate for sustainable development.



Apart from being a speaker at The Climate Action Summit, Dia will also spend time with the Secretary General of the UN to highlight issues in India. She will interact with the Queen of Belgium and young leaders like Greta Thunberg.

Moore returns to music in 10 years

Singer-actor MANDY MOORE has released her first song in a decade. Titled *When I wasn't watching*, the number is from her new album. Its name is yet to be declared. The album is slated for release early next year.

"The idea of diving back into music after so much time and personal change was really intimidating to me for a while," said Moore.

"But then I finally realised: I'm the only person who can make this move. It all has to start with me," she added.

The actress, who is looking forward to the premiere of her show *This Is Us*, began recording her forthcoming album earlier this year. She wrote the album's lyrics and recorded each song live.



Pregnancy pressure might take a toll on a woman's mental health.

Ovulation predictor kits are offering an easier option to people who have difficulty in conceiving, discovers

AYUSHI SHARMA

Battling infertility, you thought that all roads lead to IVF or surrogacy? But things do not have to always end up at an intensive treatment route. For there are ways to do this in a natural way. The advancement in medical technology means that a clinical device can help you identify and track your fertile window in the comfort of your home.

The need for these arose as the attempt to conceive can be stressful due to rising societal pressure, a ticking biological clock, which, in turn, often leads to repeated clinic visits, blood-drawing and ultrasounds — things, which are not just time-consuming but also expensive.

According to State of World Population Report 2019, the fertility rate per woman was 5.6 in 1969, it dropped to 3.7 in 1994, and is 2.3 in 2019. The changed statistics can be attributed to a variety of reasons, which include lifestyle and behavioural changes. With almost one in six couples facing problems in conceiving and one in two couples tracking their cycles incorrectly, there is a need for proactive measures. With changing lifestyles and associated issues, getting pregnant is not as easy as it used to be which in turn has led to the dip in fertility rates considerably.

These devices are doing away with overwhelming trips to clinics for invasive tests that make you feel like you have a huge fertility problem, even when you don't. Fertility monitors can act as personal assistants that help you understand your body and hormones better. While most women believe that their chances of getting pregnant are highest on the 14th day of their cycle, the truth is that ovulation varies from woman to woman and cycle to cycle. What's more, fertility monitors can help in case of issues like irregular cycles, PCOS, PCOD, thyroid as well, thereby helping you take total control of your fertility, proactively. Taking the guesswork out of the process of conception, it measures estrogen and luteinising hormone levels in your urine to detect peak fertile days in your menstrual cycle.

"The best time to conceive is right before a person ovulates or releases an egg because the internal body temperature fluctuates during the menstrual cycle. But it is possible to get pregnant in the days leading up to ovulation, as sperm can survive for several days inside the female body," says Dr Neena Bahl, director, obstetrics and gynaecology, Fortis



Time the stork's visit

LaFemme, Greater Kailash II. She adds that testing through fertility monitors is just like doing the pregnancy test. An ovulation kit tests your urine sample to detect a surge in LH (luteinising hormone) levels. While the LH is always present in your urine, it increases 34–36 hours before ovulation, which is five times the regular amount. These tests help you find out those days that act as an invaluable tool in your baby-making arsenal. This time is your most fertile window. Having intercourse on those particular days increases your chance of a successful conception.

There are various ways in which one can track fertility. Some ways are as simple as tracking your temperature in the morning as the day your fertile period starts, the temperature goes up by half a degree. Second, to get an ultrasound on any of the 10 days from the ninth day of your period to 19th day, which shows the exact size of the follicle or the egg and once it ruptures, it is the most fertile period to conceive. Third, there are commercially available sticks that tell about the changes in the hormones. It's an indirect way of letting one know that ovulation is going to take place, explains Dr Bahl and tells us that in most cases, ovulation predictor kits provide an accurate forecast of your LH surge and subsequent ovulation. They can be most effective when used together with other monitoring methods. Along with the kits, doctors usually suggest examining the cervical mucus and charting the basal body temperature which is tested the first

thing in the morning. These methods, when combined, can greatly increase your chances of getting pregnant.

As there are advantages and disadvantages of everything, Dr Bahl says, "The pros are that it is a simpler way of knowing the best possible chance of conceiving. Instead of going to the doctor and getting an ultrasound done, you can choose this method but the con is that it is not as sensitive as the latter. Everytime you are testing yourself, your mind is preoccupied and it's obvious when you are trying too hard for something, you get stressed. You do not release happy hormones which in turn affects your ability to conceive. Moreover, your sexual life is timed according to the device and becomes mechanical. It becomes something solely devoted to reproduction. So yes, it can be a rough method but then it's obviously a convenient option."

One of the users of the ovulation predictor kits shares her experience. Shweta Verma, 32, a software engineer from Bengaluru, says that they started their family planning after two years of marriage.

She was, later in the same year, diagnosed with PCOD and was prescribed a medication for six months. After which, they were advised by the doctors to try conception naturally. The doctor recommended the use of the monitor to ease the journey. "I used it for three cycles after which it was discovered that my husband had a low sperm count. I continued using it and even crosschecked the results with ultrasound scans. They turned out to be identical. This strengthened my faith and I finally got the good news," she says and adds that the monitor eases the journey of a woman.

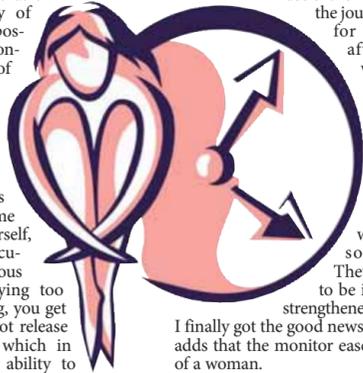
However, these kits do have limitations as they do not work when fertility drugs are present in the system. Moreover, they do not work consistently on women over 40. Some women in their 40s, especially those approaching menopause, have increased levels of LH in their systems at all times, rendering the tests invalid.

But coming to surrogacy or for that matter IVF, these are for people who are infertile or have medical conditions which

do not allow them to conceive naturally. Alisha Mathur, 36, a housewife, feels that the device helps women conceive but "I don't think it can ever replace doctors or labs or even procedures like surrogacy. It works even for irregular cycles and notifies when there is a probability of a fertility condition or issue which requires clinical support. Surrogacy is a different thing altogether. In the rarest of the rare cases, doctors suggest it."

Dr Bahl explains it better when she says, "You can't jump from class one to class 10. Similarly nobody jumps from tracking ovulation to surrogacy. What would a normal healthy couple do? They would try conceiving without any contraception for one year. And 90 per cent of the couples will conceive within one year of married life. So when you don't, you start tracking the fertility manually. But most of the times you would visit a doctor and ask for his/her help. The doctor will then guide the couple about the various methods. Only when they have tried everything and failed does the doctor advise surrogacy. It might be a marketing gimmick that you can avoid surrogacy if you buy this device. However, the trackers just help women conceive quickly."

Using the ovulation predictor kits or so-called fertility monitors provides more privacy as issues like fertility are things that women don't prefer to discuss in public, feel both the users of Inito fertility monitor.



Middle-class hero

Director KRISHNA DK and actor MANOJ BAJPAI tell CHAHAK MITTAL that the web series, *The Family Man* aims to highlight how intelligence officials are never appreciated for their successes but are heaped with blame for their failures



Do you ever come across a simple-looking man sitting adjacent to you in the local train, wearing regular clothes, carrying a suitcase who seems to be a government clerk or a secretary? You might assume that he is just another middle-class man with a family who spends most of his earnings on necessities like food and rent. But then, who knows, if he might have just met a deadly terrorist who was hiding behind the railway station, plotting a devastating attack a few minutes ago. Or he may have just gathered some secret information about a potential terror act in the city.

Directors Krishna DK and Raj Nidimoru's forthcoming web series, *The Family Man*, is about a man who with his camouflaged appearance misleads people who will never know the real job that he is holding — that of an intelligence officer. The series revolves around Srikant Tiwari (played by Manoj Bajpai), a middle-class man who also serves as a world-class spy. He tries to strike a work-life balance as he deals with his familial responsibilities and the highly secretive special cell of the National Intelligence Agency. DK says, "That's what they sign up for. They are very simple-looking people and might not even look like they would be courageous enough to handle those kind of situations."

Much to people's surprise, the idea of creating a web show around this story has been work-in-progress since 2016. However, it's only now that it came into being. "I had this idea for a long time about a common man hero who is doing an extraordinary job. We didn't want to make it as a film. A series has its own language. It focusses on various things which come together as a whole. We also felt that a film might not do justice to subjects like counter-terrorism and geopolitics. So a series made more sense. Thanks to Amazon as when it came into the scene, we actually got a platform to showcase it on. We also had *Stree* amid all of this and then we also took a lot of time to finalise its script," says DK who produced and wrote the film along with his partner, Nidimoru.

In one of the sequences in the trailer, when Srikant's son asks him as to why he wants to continue with his job, his daughter says, "Government job me kuch nahi karna hota na, isliye (It's because there's nothing to do in a government job)." DK explains that this is the very idea that we, as people, hold about the government. He questions, "Isn't

that something that we all think? We think that they're an inefficient organisation and don't really work. Government employees are negligent towards their jobs is an idea that is in-built in our consciousness. Their departments take so much time in processing everything. This idea is rampant. And Srikant's daughter also believes that." However, the series aims to show the efficiency of the intelligence department and how "they work hard to create a safer nation without the common people ever becoming aware of it." DK adds that there is a contrast between the public perception and the nature of their jobs. It is also an answer for "why do these officers risk their lives for the nation when they can easily opt for any other profession or job. Why do they do this after all?"

While the series has a serious message, it also involves some day-to-day humour which reflect upon our everyday struggles. "We tend to bring out everyday human through our writing. And this is what worked for *Stree* as well. Even when there was a terrorist involved, we wanted to show it in a satirical way. When you say something serious through humour, the audience might take that thing home. Otherwise, it might look like preaching in a classroom. They would ignore it. The audience always needs something that they can relate to," says he.

Actor Manoj Bajpai believes that after doing such a role, he has realised how "tricky" the lives of these officers are. "We don't even know how many attacks they have already stopped. They are not given an award or the credit for stopping that damage. However, they would always be criticised for even a single failure," says the actor.

He adds that the biggest thing is when terror attacks take place, peo-

ple always discuss it and blame the government for their inefficiency. Even the trailer has a scene where two men are talking to each other about the failure of the intelligence agencies, pointing out to the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, which were "not" stopped. "26/11 rokte toh baat hoti." However, here, Manoj and DK both believe that it is because we only know about the attacks that have happened because "they were missed. These people could actually be tracking a terrorist under your nose and you'd have no idea. This is the tragedy of their jobs. You never hear about their successes but failures are all over the news. They are brought up long after they actually take place."

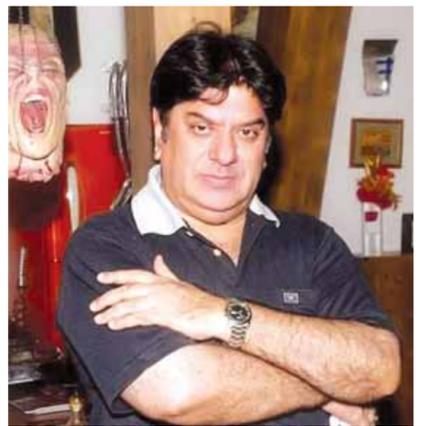
The scenario is much like that of the country's cricket team. They are bashed for losing one match even though they might have won thousands of others. The only difference is that they are appreciated when they win the cup. This is not the case with intelligence officers, points DK.

For Manoj, he saw this role as a chance to make their jobs look real and believable to the common people. "When I read the synopsis, I found it quite unique. I realised that this is something that I have never done. Through this, people would actually come to know about the kind of sacrifices they make. They keep their families happy in their minuscule pay. But they also get the chance to prevent any kind of assault on the nation. I realised that there is a supreme sacrifice linked with an exalted sense of patriotism," says he.

The actor feels that a film wouldn't have done justice to what the series holds. Manoj says, "The only difference between the two is that here, there are a lot of episodes so you get a chance to work on the different facets of the character. Whereas, a two to 2.5 hour-long film does not really focus on the characters but more on the plot."

Recalling an incident in his life, Manoj narrates that he, as an actor, has always wanted to evolve. "When I was in college hostel, my roommates and friends would keep suggesting and forcing me to read their notes and study more. Some were even preparing for civil services exams and would tell me, 'Tu bhi karle yaar thodi si mehnat. Ban jayega kuch. Yeh actor banne ka bhoot utaar de.' And I wouldn't listen because my goals were fixed," he chuckles.

(The series releases on Amazon Prime Video on September 20.)



No more creaking doors

Filmmaker Shyam Ramsay, who made Bollywood horror a cult affair, passed away on Wednesday. He was 67. As per the reports, he was suffering from pneumonia.

Shyam, as part of the Ramsay brothers, made films like *Veerana*, *Purani Haveli* and *Andhera*. Ramsay brothers also consisted of Tulsi Kumar, Keshu, Arjun, Gangu and Karan. Apart from films, Shyam and Tulsi also gave the TV audience *Zee Horror Show*.

Netizens have poured in RIP messages for the director. "Rest in Peace #ShyamRamsay ji. You and your family's stories are inspirational. How your whole family come together to give Indian Cinema a new genre called 'horror' it inspired so many industry people how to work on something, which genuinely believes in," one wrote.

Another went back to her childhood days and wrote, "As a kid, I was always afraid of ghost and horror movies, while my sibling and cousin watched it without batting an eyelid."

Another wrote: "The genre of #horror is as tough as making people laugh, the #RamsayBrothers did it with their own unique ways. RIP #ShyamRamsay. I still remember watching that zee horror show and how that scared the hell out of me."

Filmmaker Vikram Bhatt, who has carved a name as a horror filmmaker in recent times, was also saddened by his demise. The *Raaz* director feels the late filmmaker was innovative, and regaled his audiences with fabulous spooky cinema from time to time.

"Ramsay carried the torch of horror films right through the '70s and '80s. Even amongst the Ramsay Brothers, he was considered to be the leader of the group. He was innovative and regaled his audiences with fabulous spooky cinema from time to time. His passing is indeed a sad and his contribution to the dark films will always be held in high esteem," said Bhatt.

Penalty of drama

Mertens scores from spot to surprise holders; Ter Stegen wins point against Dortmund

AFP ■ NAPLES/LONDON

Holders Liverpool began their defence of the Champions League trophy with a defeat against Napoli on Tuesday, while one missed spot-kick condemned Chelsea to defeat against Valencia and another came to Barcelona's rescue.

Liverpool survived a 1-0 defeat in Naples in the group stage last season to go on and win their sixth European Cup, and this time a 2-0 reverse at the San Paolo made them the first reigning champions to lose their opening game in the competition since 1994.

Both sides had chances in the Group E clash before the hosts won a late penalty with barely 10 minutes remaining when Jose Callejon went down under an Andy Robertson challenge.

Dries Mertens beat Adrian from 12 yards and substitute Fernando Llorente — who played for Tottenham Hotspur against Liverpool in last season's final — then took advantage of a rare defensive lapse by Virgil van Dijk to make it 2-0 in stoppage time.

HAT-TRICK HERO HAALAND

Liverpool must now bounce back in two weeks when they host Austrian champions Salzburg, who made a stunning return to the group stage as teenage forward Erling Braut Haaland netted a hat-trick in a 6-2 demolition of Genk.

Salzburg had fallen in the qualifying rounds in the last seven campaigns but finally progressed this season to the group stage for the first time since 1994-95.

Haaland, the teenage English-born Norwegian striker whose father Alf-Inge played for Manchester City, gave Salzburg a second-minute lead and netted twice more before half-time.

Aged just 19 years and 58 days, Haaland is the third-youngest player to score a Champions League hat-trick behind Wayne Rooney and Raul.

The South Korean Hwang Hee-Chan and Dominik Szoboszlai also struck before the break for Salzburg, while captain Andreas Ulmer completed the rout in the second half.

Jhon Lucumi and Tanzanian striker Mbwana Samatta scored for the Belgian champions.



Barcelona's goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen saves a shot by Marco Reus during the Group F match in Dortmund



Fernando Llorente holds Dries Mertens after he scores from spot against Liverpool

Last season's Europa League winners Chelsea ensured it was two defeats out of two on the night for English sides as they lost 1-0 at home to Valencia. The Spaniards scored in the 74th minute when a Dani Parejo free-kick was converted by Rodrigo Moreno. Chelsea were given a chance to rescue a draw when Daniel Wass was penalised for handball in the box, but Ross Barkley's 87th-minute penalty hit the bar and went over.

FIGURATIVELY

1 Napoli are the first Italian side to win against the European reigning champions in the CL group stages since Juventus, against Chelsea in 2012 (3-0).

19 Erling Haaland, aged 19 years and 58 days, is the third youngest player to score a Champions League hat-trick, behind Raul (18y 113d in 1995) and Wayne Rooney (18y 340d in 2004).

1 Frank Lampard is the first Chelsea manager to lose his first Champions League match in charge, 10 of the previous 11 had won, while Gianluca Vialli drew with Milan in 1999.

12 Lille remain on 12 matches without success in European competition (6 draws, 6 defeats — preliminary rounds included), the worst series of its history.

4 Marc-André ter Stegen has stopped four of the six penalties he has received in the Champions League and is the goalkeeper who has stopped the most in the competition since at least 03/04 alongside Andriy Pyatov

1 Ansu Fati (16 years and 321 days) becomes the youngest player in CL history to play for Barcelona, breaking the record of Bojan (17 years and 22 days).

"You want to have at least a point and we didn't get that because of the penalty. When the player jumps before there is contact it cannot be a penalty. We cannot change that any more, so now we carry on. That's it."

—Jurgen Klopp (Liverpool manager)

"It was just one victory, but yes it has given us confidence, being able to match Liverpool is impressive as for me they are the best team in Europe at the moment."

—Carlo Ancelotti (Napoli manager)

"Given the performances last season, the bar was set high, and people were asking if we could do it again this season. I think a 3-0 victory shows that we can."

—Quincy Promes (Ajax forward)

"It was a difficult game today and I think the result is fair considering what happened."

—Marc Andre Ter Stegen (Barcelona goalkeeper)

"Without a doubt (we deserved more). Probably a win, but at least a draw. We conceded with one shot on target. It's a harsh lesson of Champions League football, a game we've played pretty well in and we lose it."

—Frank Lampard (Chelsea manager)

"We had four or five chances, and if we had taken one of them, we would have won. We said after the draw that we wanted to qualify for the knockout stages. If we continue to play like we did today then there shouldn't be a problem."

—Marco Reus (Borussia Dortmund captain)

"Slavia Prague attacked us with intensity and showed a ruthless streak. We didn't do well in terms of finding the right solutions and struggled too much."

—Antonio Conte (Inter Milan coach)

"Everything is possible. We all saw Ajax last year, it would be nice to be the new Ajax. But we know there are a lot of good teams. It's hard, but everything is possible."

—Erling Braut Haaland (Salzburg striker)



Marcus Rashford, Maic & Juan Mata during training

Man Utd, Arsenal carry English hopes

AFP ■ PARIS

Manchester United and Arsenal headline an English trio that also features Europa League newcomers Wolves while record five-time champions Sevilla figure to be among the primary contenders as the group stage begins today.

Scottish rivals Celtic and Rangers face testing paths to the knockout rounds as bitter foes Roma and Lazio bid to end Italy's two-decade wait for the title.

Porto, PSV Eindhoven and Feyenoord are the other former European Cup winners in a competition that will welcome the eight third-place finishers from the Champions League groups for the knockout phase.

United, Europa League winners in 2017, will host Astana in Group L as Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side face opponents from Kazakhstan for the first time in club history.

They will expect to progress with relative ease from a group that also includes Partizan Belgrade and former finalists AZ Alkmaar of the Netherlands.

Unai Emery's Arsenal return to the competition

after last season's 4-1 defeat by Chelsea in the final in Baku.

The Gunners visit Eintracht Frankfurt to kick off their campaign, with 10-time Belgian champions Standard Liege and Portugal's Vitoria Guimaraes also in Group F.

Wolves, in their first European campaign since 1980, will meet Portuguese club Braga in their opening game at Molineux.

Scottish champions Celtic travel to French Cup holders Rennes in Group E, with Italian Cup holders Lazio and CFR Cluj, the Romanian side to whom they lost in Champions League qualifying, completing a tricky section.

Steven Gerrard's Rangers are at home to Jaap Stam's Feyenoord and will do well to navigate a group with Porto and Young Boys.

Roma will take on Istanbul Basaksehir in their first game while Moenchengladbach host Austria's Wolfsberg.

Austria boast two representatives with LASK Linz among the six debutants — alongside Espanyol, Wolves, Wolfsburg, Olexandriya and Ferencvaros — in the tournament.



Amit Panghal celebrates after winning his last 8 bout against Filipino Carlo Paalam

Panghal, Kaushik assure 2 medals

PTI ■ EKATERINBURG

India were assured of an unprecedented two medals at the World Men's Boxing Championships after Amit Panghal (52kg) and Manish Kaushik (63kg) entered the semi-finals of the marquee event with impressive victories here on Wednesday.

While Asian Games and championship Gold-medallist Panghal defeated Filipino Carlo Paalam 4-1, Commonwealth Games Silver-medallist Kaushik got the better of Brazil's Wanderson de Oliveira 5-0.

Both the boxers sealed their maiden world medals. Before this year, India had never won more than one Bronze medal in a single edition of the world championship.

The overall medal count for the country stood at four Bronze medals claimed by Vijender Singh (2009), Vikas Krishan (2011), Shiva Thapa (2015) and Gaurav Bihuri (2017).

However, Sanjeet (91kg), a former India Open Gold-medallist, and fifth seed and Asian Silver-winner Kavinder Singh Bisht (57kg) bowed out after losing their respective quarterfinals.

While Sanjeet went down 1-4 to Ecuador's seventh-seeded Julio Castillo Torres, a Pan-American Games Silver-medallist, Bisht was beaten by the reigning Commonwealth Games champion Peter McGrail of England 0-5.

The second-seeded Panghal, who had earlier defeated Paalam in the Asian Games semifinals last year, wasn't off to the best of starts and was trailing Paalam at the end of the opening round.

But the Army man from Rohtak didn't take long to get his act together and become the more aggressive one in the next two rounds.

In the last-four stage, the Haryana-pugilist will be up against Kazakhstan's Saken Bibossinov, who stunned Armenia's European Gold-medallist and sixth seed Artur Hovhannysyan in his quarterfinal showdown.

"He is a southpaw and has a long reach, I will work out a strategy for him," the 23-year-old Panghal said.

While next up for Kaushik is Cuban top seed Andy Gomez Cruz, who out-punched Russia's eighth-seeded Ilya Popov.

Cruz was the light welterweight (64kg) category Gold-medallist in the 2017 edition.

Vinesh locks Olympic quota with Bronze

PTI ■ NUR-SULTAN

Indian wrestling had a lot to celebrate on Wednesday as Vinesh Phogat secured Tokyo Olympics qualification and won a Bronze, while Pooja Dhanda put herself one win away from her second medal at the World Championships.

Having endured a medal-less run in three World Championships before, Vinesh finally ended the drought by pinning wrestler Maria Prevolaraki by fall in the Bronze-medal bout.

"It is my first World Championship medal and it is a big thing to win a medal at the Worlds," Vinesh told reporters.

"I had changed my weight category and in just 10 months, I got this medal. It is a thing of great happiness for me. It is the biggest medal of my career till now."

She is only the fifth Indian woman wrestler to win a Worlds medal after Alka Tomar (2006), Geeta Phogat



Vinesh Phogat in action against Yulia Khvaladzhzy Blahinya

(2012), Babita Phogat (2012) and Pooja Dhanda (2018).

Earlier in the day, she had held off world number one Sarah Ann Hildebrandt with some superlative defense in her second repechage round to qualify for the 2020 Olympics.

Vinesh is now one of

India's most successful wrestlers with Gold medals at the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games, already in her cupboard.

Adding to the elation of the Indian camp was a gritty show by Pooja in the 59kg, a non-Olympic category. Pooja reached the semi-

nals with a remarkable come-from-behind 11-8 win over Japan's Yuzuka Inagaki before losing the semifinal by technical superiority to Russia's Liubov Ovcharova, the 2017 European champion.

She will now fight for her second Bronze medal at the Worlds, having won one in 57kg at the 2018 Budapest edition.

Pooja can now become the first female wrestler and only second Indian to win two World medals. Only Bajrang Punia has achieved the feat. He won a Bronze in 2013 and a Silver in 2018.

Seema Bisla though missed Olympic qualification in the 50kg after losing her second repechage round 3-11 to Russia's Ekaterina Poleshchuk.

Much was expected from Sarita Mor after her shock victory over Pooja Dhanda in the trials but she was far from her usual aggressive self.

In the 76kg, Kiran had rattled her German opponent

Aline Rotter Focken to lead 4-0 but lost five points in a row in the second period to lose the opening bout 4-5.

She paid the price for being over-defensive. Since the

German lost her semifinal, Kiran's campaign is over.

Navjot Kaur was also ousted from 65kg after losing her opening bout to Alis Manolova, who later lost her semifinal.

SINGLES

HIMA DAS RULED OUT OF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

NEW DELHI: World junior champion Hima Das has been ruled out of the upcoming World Championship due to a nagging back problem. "Unfortunately Hima will not be able to compete at the World Championships in Doha due to her back injury," Athletics Federation of India (AFI) president Adille Sumariwalla said. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) had on September 9 named seven women, including Hima, for the 4x400m relay and 4x400m mixed relay races at the World Championships to be held from September 27 to October 6 in Doha. Hima has been suffering from a lower back pain after competing at the Asian Games last year. She pulled out of the individual 400m heats during the Asian Championships in Doha in April midway through the race.

PANT, SAINI NAMED IN DELHI SQUAD

NEW DELHI: Wicket-keeper batsman Rishabh Pant and pacer Navdeep Saini were on Wednesday named in the 16-member strong Delhi squad, led by top-order batsman Dhruv Shorey, for the first four games of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, starting September 24. Delhi start their campaign on the opening day against Vidarbha and it is expected that both the players will be available for the initial matches. Saini, who is not in the squad for the Test matches, is expected to be available for the better part of the National one-day championship, while opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan has opted out of the current squad.

FEDEX, PITRO TO PLAY IN BUENOS AIRES

PARIS: Roger Federer and Juan Martin del Potro, who is set to return next month from a knee injury, announced Tuesday they will play an exhibition match in Buenos Aires on November 20. "I just wanted to tell you I'm so excited to come back to Argentina to play my good friend Juan Martin del Potro at Parque Roca," Federer said in a video on Del Potro's Twitter account. The Parque Roca stadium has a capacity of around 15,500 and is primarily used for Davis Cup ties. Del Potro has not played since fracturing his right knee in the Wimbledon tune-up at Queen's in June. He is expected to make his comeback at the ATP tournament in Stockholm, which runs from October 14 to 20, and is also scheduled to compete in Vienna the following week.

MOODY NAMED AS COACH OF OVAL TEAM

LONDON: Former Australia all-rounder Tom Moody and England World Cup winner Lydia Greenway have been appointed as head coaches of the Oval-based men's and women's teams for the new Hundred competition, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced on Wednesday. The 53-year-old's appointment is the final one among the eight men's outfits in The Hundred following the announcements of Stephen Fleming (Nottingham), Mahela Jayawardena (Southampton), Simon Katich (Manchester), Gary Kirsten (Cardiff), Darren Lehmann (Leeds), Andrew McDonald (Birmingham) and Shane Warne (Lord's).



Naomi Osaka celebrates after beating Viktoriya Tomova in straight sets on Wednesday to reach Pan Pacific Open quarters



Aiden Markram of South Africa plays a shot during India A vs South Africa A 2nd Test match in Mysore on Wednesday

INDIA OUTPLAY SOUTH AFRICA

Virat Kohli hits unbeaten 72 runs

PTI ■ MOHALI

Skipper Virat Kohli led India to a resounding seven-wicket win over South Africa in the second T20 International with an unbeaten 72-run knock as the hosts took a 1-0 lead in the short three-match series here on Wednesday.

Kohli (72 not out off 52 balls), who made a memorable 82 not out in his last T20 on this ground more than three years ago, helped India chased down the modest target with consummate ease, getting the team home in 19 overs.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan (40 off 31) too made a significant contribution and shared a 61-run stand with the skipper, who scored his 22nd T20 fifty. His 52-ball knock comprised four boundaries and three sixes.

The solid performance with the bat came after the bowlers restricted South Africa to 149 for five in 20 overs.

The third and final T20 will be played in Bengaluru on Sunday. It effectively became a two-match series after the opening game in Dharamsala was washed out on September 15.

India were always in control of the chase despite losing Rohit Sharma (12 off 12) early. The India vice-captain was trapped in front by Andile Phehlukwayo after he pulled debutant Anrich Nortje for two sixes in the second over.

While it was a treat to watch Kohli, Rishabh Pant (4) threw away his wicket again. India were cruising when he came into the middle and it was an ideal platform for Pant to take the team over the line alongside his captain.

It was an innocuous ball from debutant spinner Bjorn Fortuin but Pant hit it straight to the short fine-leg fielder Tabraiz Shamsi.

Earlier, South Africa captain Quinton de Kock (52 off 37) and debutant Temba Bavuma (49 off 43) played impressive knocks but India managed to limit South Africa to a below-par total.

South Africa did not get the final



India's captain Virat Kohli plays a shot during the second T20 international match between India and South Africa, in Mohali on Wednesday



Virat Kohli congratulates teammate Deepak Chahar after he dismissed Reeza Hendricks

flourish they were looking for.

India bowled well in the death overs, conceding only 24 runs in the final four with pacer Deepak Chahar being the pick of the bowlers, taking two wickets for 22 runs in four overs.

Kohli sent a new-look South Africa in to bat with the visitors picking three debutants in Nortje, Fortuin and Bavuma.

While Reeza Hendricks departed cheaply, de Kock looked in sublime touch from the word go.

He cover drove spinner

Washington Sundar on the first ball he faced before collecting three straight boundaries off pacer Navdeep Saini who was taken out of the attack after conceding 13 runs in his first over.

Bavuma, South Africa's Test specialist, joined de Kock after the fall of Hendricks in the fourth over and he too looked in fine touch. He made his intentions clear by pulling Hardik Pandya over deep square leg for a six.

South Africa made only 39 for one in six overs but their innings picked up momentum after that as they reached 78 for one in 10 overs.

It took a brilliant catch from skipper Kohli to dismiss de Kock and shift the momentum in India's favour.

De Kock mistimed a hit off Saini and Kohli came running from mid-off to pounce on it, brining the crowd back to life. The stand between de Kock and Bavuma yielded 57 runs.

Vice-captain Rassie van der Dussen, South Africa's best batsman in the World Cup, followed de Kock in the dressing room quickly by offering a simple return catch to Ravindra Jadeja in the 13th over, leaving his team at 90 for three.

Runs dried up in the death overs but South Africa got much-needed couple of sixes in the 20th over off Saini which went for 16 runs.

BRIEF SCORES:

South Africa: 149 for 5 in 20 overs (Quinton de Kock 52, Temba Bavuma 49; Deepak Chahar 2/22).

India: 151 for 3 in 19 overs (Virat Kohli 72 not out, Shikhar Dhawan 40; Tabraiz Shamsi 1/19).

HIGHEST SCORES ON DEBUT FOR SOUTH AFRICA IN T-20I

Score	Batsman	Opponent	Venue	Date
78	Rilee Rossouw	Australia	Adelaide	05-11-2014
61	Greame Smith	New Zealand	Johannesburg	21-10-2005
56	Rassie van der Dussen	Zimbabwe	East London	09-10-2018
49	Christiaan Jonker	India	Cape Town	24-02-2018
49	Temba Bavuma	India	Mohali	18-09-2019

FAISEL FEATURES



Shreyas Iyer bats during practice session

BCCI/Twitter

Ganguly demands consistent run for youngsters

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly said that India need to look beyond the upcoming World T20 when it comes to finding young talent and give them consistent runs in the senior squad.

"The most important thing for India is to not look at the World T20 next year. Before the last World Cup there was too much noise about it and that sometimes is not good. What they need to do is pick the best possible players and give them consistent opportunities, as there is some serious talent in the domestic circuit," Ganguly wrote in a column for the *Times of India*.

Ganguly said that the bowling department in particular will be interesting to watch with the likes of Deepak Chahar, Khaleel Ahmed and

Navdeep Saini knocking at the doors. "These guys, with time and maturity, will see (Jasprit) Bumrah, Bhuvu (Bhuvneshwar Kumar), (Mohammed) Shami as their role models and this will be a healthy sign for Indian fast bowling. Spinners like Rahul Chahar, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep (Yadav), (Yuzvendra) Chahal will also keep everyone on their toes," said Ganguly.

He said that K L Rahul will now be under pressure to keep his number four spot in limited overs after losing the Test opening slot. "With Rohit (Sharma) and Shikhar (Dhawan) at the top as the best possible opening pair, K L Rahul will be pushed. He has lost his place in Test cricket due to indifferent form and the likes of Shreyas and Manish Pandey will keep him on his toes if he wants to hold on to the No. 4 slot," he said.



Indian paddler Sharath Kamal in a file picture

Paddlers win Gold in 1st Div at Asian C'ship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian men's team logged their best ever result at ITTF Asian Table Tennis Championships, finishing fifth after beating Hong Kong 3-1 in the classification match here on Wednesday.

The Indian team also defeated Iran 3-0 to clinch the Gold medal in the champions division.

In the classification match, India tried out a new opening with Sharath Kamal, who after the initial struggle, managed to put it across Lam Siu Hang 9-11, 11-6, 7-11, 11-7, 11-7 to provide the lead.

In the second tie, Anthony Amalraj beat NG Pak Nam 9-11, 11-4, 11-6, 11-7, while in the third singles, G Sathyan defeated Kwan Man Ho 11-5, 11-13, 11-7, 14-12.

In the second and fourth games, Sathyan won the last on his second match-point. He was the lone Indian who did not lose a single match in team event, having played all matches from 1st Division to finishing fifth in the Champions Division.

In the final of the 1st Division, Sharath opened again for India and downed Amin Ahmadi 11-5, 9-11, 11-6, 11-6, while both Sathyan and Amalraj were stretched fully. Sathyan beat Air Hossein Hodaie 6-11, 11-4, 10-12, 11-7, 12-10 while Amalraj accounted for Noshad Alamiyan 18-16, 5-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-9 as India won the yellow metal.

India U-23 take on Bangladesh U-23

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

India Under-23 team will take on visiting Bangladesh Under-23 team in the opening One-Day International of the five-match series at the Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana International Stadium on Thursday.

In the last encounter of junior sides, India defeated Bangladesh by five runs to clinch the ACC U-19 Asia Cup final in Colombo. And Bangladesh will definitely looking for a revenge.

The visitor's coach Simon Grant Helmut looked confident of a fine show by the boys. "The series will provide a perfect platform to the players and they have the skills and temperament to produce a good show," he said on the eve of the clash. Playing at home, Indian skipper Priyam Garg said that his side was ready for any challenge that came their way.

Other than Priyam, who is in prime touch himself, Arshdeep Singh, Kartik Tyagi, Aryan Juyal are the players to



Indian team during a practice session at Ekana International Stadium in Lucknow on Wednesday

watch out for.

THE TEAMS (FROM):

India: Priyam Garg (captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Madhav Kaushik, B R Sharath (wk), Samarth Vyas, Aryan Juyal (wk), Ritwik Roy Choudhary, Kumar Suraj, Atit Seth,

Shubhang Hegde, Hrithik Shokeen, Dhruvanti Soni, Arshdeep Singh, Kartik Tyagi, Harpreet Brar
Bangladesh: Mahadi Hasan (captain), Mohammed Saif Hassan, Yasir Ali Chowdhury, Fardeen Hussain Oney,

Mohammad Sabbir Hosan, Mahidul Islam Bhuiyan, Md Ali Amin, Md Zakir Hasan, Jaker Ali Anik, Md Ariful Haque, Tanvir Aslam, Md Manik Khan, Md Shafiqul Islam, Sumon Khan, Robiul Haque.

Belgian title will give me confidence: Lakshya

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rising Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen is hoping to continue the consistency that fetched him the Belgian Open as he looks to break into top 50 in the world ranking, which will help him qualify for bigger tournaments next season.

The 18-year-old from Almora shocked second seed Victor Svendsen of Denmark in straight games to clinch the men's singles title at the Belgian International Challenge last Saturday.

"I think I played consistently well throughout the week and I'm happy with my performance," Lakshya, who didn't drop a single game throughout the tournament, told PTI.

"This win will give me lots of confidence to do well in the coming tournaments," he said. "This year I can play more tournaments than last year in the senior circuit and I hope to prepare well for all the tournaments."

Playing his first full-fledged season in the senior circuit, Lakshya had broken into the top-100 in March this year. The Belgian Open win saw him jump 12 places to grab the World No 67th spot in the latest BWF ranking.

His father DK Sen, a SAI coach, who gave him the early lessons in badminton, said Lakshya will have to quickly get into the top 50 by the year end.

"The target now for him will be to break into the top 50 by end of the year so that he can qualify for bigger tournaments," he said.



Asked about his upcoming tournaments, Lakshya, the reigning Asian Junior Championship winner, said: "I'll be playing the Dutch and SaarLorLux Open next month and then in November, I have Irish and Scottish

Open."

Lakshya, who also claimed a bronze at the World Junior Championship and silver at Youth Olympic Games last year, is currently in Europe playing in the Danish League for Aarhus club.

"It's nice to be in Denmark and the league matches are exciting. It's a new experience for me," he said.

"We are going to be in Europe for 3 months, play the European circuit and the league matches."

"In the first team match, I won against Jan Jorgensen and got 1 point for the team. It was a big match for me," added the Indian, whose next outing in the country will be the Syed Modi World Tour Super 300.

Lakshya, who has been a trainee at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) since 2010, had decided to play in the season circuit after the high in juniors last year.

He began the year well with a semifinal finish at the China Masters Super 100 tournament before reaching the finals at Polish Open. After a few early exits, he suffered an ankle injury in July but recovered well to claim the Belgian Open.

"This year, I twisted my ankle in July. It was not very major but I took two weeks to get back on court. I'm just taking good care and rehab," Lakshya said.

"Mental strength is very important as in senior circuit every match is tough," he signed off.

NEW ■ (IANS)

Ever since making his Test debut in Cape Town in January 2018, Jasprit Bumrah has improved by leaps and bounds and has become an integral part of the Indian team across all formats, especially Test cricket. Bumrah has featured in 12 Test matches so far, in which he has scalped 62 wickets at an average of 19.24, thus becoming the linchpin of Indian bowling unit.

All these 12 Tests have been played on foreign soil (3 in South Africa, 3 in England, 4 in Australia and 2 in West Indies) where wickets naturally assist pacers. In all these places, the right-arm pacer from Mumbai has made a mark and performed brilliantly. However, the real test for him will come up when India take on South Africa in the three-match series at home.

Former Indian pacer Ajit Agarkar feels Bumrah will have an exceptional debut home Test series against the Proteas. "With experience, every-



Jasprit Bumrah in a file picture

IANS. (IPL) and has been instrumental in their success in the league.

"A lot of people tend to forget that Bumrah played quite a lot of first-class cricket before he played for India. He has bowled in these conditions with the SG ball. He knows what to do," said Agarkar.

Agarkar, 41, who played 26 Tests and 191 ODIs for India, also said that Bumrah will be fresh and raring to have the ball in his hand as he has not played much cricket ever since the World Cup. "Since the World Cup, he hasn't played a lot of cricket. He missed (rested) the T20Is and the ODIs and featured in the two Test matches. So, he must be relatively fresh and will be very keen to perform in India as well," he said.

Bumrah played two matches in the Caribbean Islands, in which he picked 13 wickets, including a hat-trick.

"I would not be surprised if he has an exceptional series," Agarkar signed off.

PV Sindhu, Praneeth, Kashyap win in China

PTI ■ CHANGZHOU (CHINA)

Reigning world champion and title favourite P V Sindhu sailed into the pre-quarterfinals with a convincing straight-game win over former Olympic Gold-medallist Li Xuerui at the China Open Super 1000 tournament here on Wednesday.

India's top shuttler Sindhu beat China's Li Xuerui 21-18 21-12 in just 34 minutes to set up a clash with Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong.

Replicating her world championship form, the Olympic Silver-medallist produced another strong performance to get the better of the currently 20th-ranked Chinese, who entered the match with a 3-3 record against the Indian.

Men's singles players, Sai Praneeth and Parupalli Kashyap also progressed to the second round after notching up contrasting opening-round wins.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy too found a place in the pre-quarterfinals after crossing the opening hurdle. However, Saina made an early exit after losing to Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan in the women's singles. The London Olympics bronze-

medallist lost 10-21 17-21 at the hands of the World No.19 Ongbamrunphan in a match that lasted for 44 minutes at the Olympic Sports Center Xincheng Gymnasium. It was the former world number one's second successive loss to the Thai player. The 29-year-old Saina has struggled for form following her recovery from injuries.

The Indian started her season with a win at the Indonesia Masters but has failed to reach another final on the BWF circuit so far. In men's singles, world championships bronze medallist Praneeth had to battle for an hour and 12 minutes to get past Thailand's Suppanay Avihingsanon 21-19 21-23 21-14, while former top 10 player Kashyap beat France's Brice Leverdez 21-12 21-15 in 38 minutes.

Next world no 15 Praneeth will face China's Lu Guang Zu, while Kashyap lock horns with seventh seeded Indonesian Anthony Sinisuka Ginting.

In women's doubles, Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy too crossed the opening hurdle after their opponents Chinese Taipei's Cheng Chi Ya and Lee Chih Chen retired mid way in the second game after lagging 13-21 8-11.