



PRINTED AT : CHENNAI • COIMBATORE • BENGALURU • HYDERABAD • MADURAI • NOIDA • VISAKHAPATNAM • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • KOCHI • VIJAYAWADA • MANGALURU • TIRUCHIRAPPALLI • KOLKATA • HUBBALLI • MOHALI • MALAPPURAM • MUMBAI • TIRUPATI • LUCKNOW • CUTTACK • PATNA

## NEARBY



Tired of convincing Cong. for alliance: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI  
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said he was "tired" of trying to convince the Congress for an alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party. Addressing a rally here, he said: "If there is an alliance, the BJP will lose all the seven Lok Sabha seats it currently holds in Delhi."

DELHI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

## Bihar IAS officer to adopt daughters of slain jawans

PATNA  
A Bihar-cadre IAS officer has offered to adopt the daughters of two CRPF personnel — Head Constable Sanjay Kumar Sinha and Constable Ratan Kumar Thakur — from the State who were killed in the terror attack in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir last week.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 3

DELHI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

## India pitches for global action against terrorism

Saudi Arabia offers intelligence

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI  
Sponsors of terrorism and safe havens for terrorists should face all possible pressure from the international community, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday, welcoming Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during his visit to India.

Addressing a press conference, the visiting dignitary said his country would share intelligence with India and other countries that were willing to fight terrorism.

"In Pulwama, we saw a barbaric attack of terrorism that casts a shadow on humanity, and according to us, terrorists and supporters of

## Anil Ambani, RCom guilty of contempt of court, rules SC

RCom must pay ₹453 cr. to Ericsson in 4 weeks, else Ambani faces jail time

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday found Reliance Communications Ltd. (RCom) and its chairman Anil Ambani and two other group firms guilty of contempt of court, observing that the defendants had adopted a "cavalier attitude" despite the court's best efforts to "lend a helping hand" to pay off dues worth ₹550 crore to Swedish telecommunications equipment major Ericsson.

A Bench of Justices Rohinton Nariman and Vineet Saran ordered RCom to "purge" the contempt by paying a balance of ₹453 crore of dues to Ericsson within four weeks. If not, Mr. Ambani, along with Reliance Telecom Ltd. (RTL) chairperson Satish Seth and Reliance Infratel Ltd. (RITL) chairperson Chhaya Virani, would each have to serve a sentence of three months' imprisonment.

The court said the three chairpersons had given "conditional" undertakings on behalf of their respective companies in order to "wriggle" out of the commitment to the court.

"The undertakings given on the footing that the amount of ₹550 crore would



In the dock: The court said the defendants, including Anil Ambani, adopted a "cavalier attitude." ■ REUTERS

be paid only out of the sale of assets was false to the knowledge of the three Reliance companies," Justice Nariman wrote. "This itself affects the administration of justice, and is, therefore, contempt of court," the Bench held.

### Fine of ₹1 crore

The court also ordered the three companies to pay the Supreme Court registry a fine of ₹1 crore each within four weeks. The money would be paid over to the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee. In case of default on payment of the fine, the chairpersons of the three companies would have to spend a month in jail.

The Bench, in its 41-page judgment, dismissed the defendants' "unconditional apology" for disobeying the court's orders. It said "conditional" undertakings given by the three chairpersons on August 9, 2018, to the Supreme Court to pay the ₹550 crore amounted to "misdeavour". They gave these undertakings despite the court, in an order dated August 3, having given them leeway of a 120-day-period to pay back Ericsson.

"It is clear that the three Reliance companies had no intention, at the very least, of adhering to the time limit of 120 days or to the extended time limit of 60 days plus,

as was given by way of indulgence, by the order dated October 23, 2018," the court said.

Their undertakings had said the money would be paid on condition of the sale of assets of the company. Their action was contrary to earlier unconditional undertakings given by the authorized persons of the three companies to the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) in May last.

The Bench ruled that the chairpersons' undertakings were neither as per the court's orders nor in accordance with the earlier ones given in the NCLAT.

The court also dismissed RCom's argument that the sale of spectrum to Reliance Jio, led by Mr. Ambani's elder brother Mukesh Ambani, had failed to fructify because the Department of Telecommunications had refused to give a no-objection certificate. "It fell through only because the prospective buyer, Reliance Jio, refused to give the undertaking that if called upon, it would pay the erstwhile debts of the seller of the spectrum," Justice Nariman wrote.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10  
RCOM TAPS ALL SOURCES TO SETTLE ERICSSON DUES ▶ PAGE 13

## Bid to communalise post-Pulwama situation'

No major attack on students: Malik

VIJAYITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik said on Wednesday that there were attempts to communalise the situation since the Pulwama terror attack, and denied any serious attack on any Kashmiri student in the past few days.

Mr. Malik told *The Hindu* that arrangements were made to shift stranded students from Jammu to Srinagar, and Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh had asked the CMs of all the States to ensure their safety and security. In the past four months, he said, no one from the State had joined any terrorist group. Only 20-25 JeM terrorists remained active in

Satya Pal Malik

the Valley, and all commanders had been eliminated.

"All this noise is created by some vested interests to vitiate the atmosphere. I didn't get any call from any Kashmiri student seeking help. Some leaders in Kashmir are asking the students to make such calls. Except from Dehradun, no student has returned from anywhere else," Mr. Malik said.

OUR FIGHT IS NOT WITH KASHMIRIS: MALIK ▶ PAGE 10

## ₹48,239 crore package for 12 banks cleared

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre has approved a recapitalisation package of ₹48,239 crore for 12 public sector banks, Financial Services Secretary Rajeev Kumar said on Wednesday.

He said the objectives were to bring the better-performing banks now in the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) category out of the restrictive framework, help those that had come out of the PCA to stay out of it, equip non-PCA banks to meet regulatory requirements, and help the PCA banks to meet their requirements.

DETAILED REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 13



Now you see it: 'Invisible' ink glows, at right, under a particular ultraviolet frequency. ■ V.V.KRISHNAN

in Europe," said Dinesh Aswal, director, NPL. The MVPL, a Karnataka government company, has a monopoly on the manufacture of indelible ink since 1962, and is a major supplier to the Election Commission of India (ECI). It also exports the indelible ink for elections in other countries. C. Hara Kumar, general manager, MVPL, said the 'invisible ink' was only at the discussion stage, and nothing had been firmed up.

The indelible ink was formulated as a deterrent against voting twice. But strangely enough, voters in some countries found the stained finger rather unseemly. "India, we are proud to display our voter's ink, but apparently in some

countries people don't want to display such a mark. So MVPL asked us if there was a solution," said Mr. Aswal.

**Organic-inorganic mix**

The NPL's invisible ink, however, wouldn't be of immediate use to the ECI. The current formulation

washed off in 48 hours."

The ink works on the well-known principle of fluorescence — certain materials emit a characteristic glow when exposed to ultraviolet light. The NPL ink, however, glows only when exposed to a narrow band of frequencies of ultraviolet (UV) light. "Commercial UV markers or inks respond to a very broad spectrum of UV light. So, along with the ink, we'll supply an inexpensive LED (costing no more than ₹30) that would emit a specific frequency of UV," said Mr. Aswal. The NPL's invisible ink experiment is linked to a larger project of creating security inks that could be used to make bank notes and documents, such as passports, more secure.

## Indelible ink's new challenger: invisible ink

But it may not find immediate application, given India's long-drawn election process

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Indelible ink, the purple stain that billions of Indians show off during elections, may face an invisible challenger in the near future. The Delhi-based National Physical Laboratory (NPL), the creator of indelible ink, has a new concoction that, when applied on the finger, doesn't leave a trace — it merely glows a bright orange when a low-intensity beam of ultraviolet light is shone on it.

The NPL prepared the 'invisible ink' as part of a pilot project mooted by the Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd. (MVPL). "The MVPL discussed with us the development of such an ink for use by a client [country]

## Cong. gets 10 seats in T.N., Puducherry

Formalises poll alliance with DMK



Deal done: Mukul Wasnik, M.K. Stalin, K.S. Alagiri and K.C. Venugopal in Chennai on Wednesday. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

B. KOLAPPAN  
T.K. ROHIT  
CHENNAI

The Congress on Wednesday evening signed a seat-sharing agreement with the DMK for the Lok Sabha election, under which it will contest in nine constituencies in Tamil Nadu and in the lone seat in Puducherry.

The DMK will contest in the available constituencies after sharing seats with our [other] alliance partners," DMK president M.K. Stalin told reporters at the party headquarters Anna Arivayam, displaying the agreement signed by him and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K.S. Alagiri. "The DMK will contest in the available constituencies after sharing seats with our [other] alliance partners," DMK president M.K. Stalin told reporters at the party headquarters Anna Arivayam, displaying the agreement signed by him and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K.S. Alagiri.

AICC general secretaries Mukul Wasnik (Tamil Nadu in-charge) and K.C. Venugopal and Congress Legisla-

ture Party leader K.R. Ramasamy were present.

### Talks with other allies

Mr. Stalin said the constituencies to be allotted to the alliance partners would be decided after completing seat-sharing talks with parties that have been friendly to the DMK and working with us in the last two years to highlight people's issues against the government.

"The DMK will contest in the available constituencies after sharing seats with our [other] alliance partners," DMK president M.K. Stalin told reporters at the party headquarters Anna Arivayam, displaying the agreement signed by him and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K.S. Alagiri.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) Laxman Gaur said some inmates, watching television along with Shakir Ullah in a special cell, bashed his head against a stone on the ground after a fight over the TV volume.

Four suspects were being interrogated after a case of murder was filed.

The ATS had claimed in the court that Shakir Ullah was a member of the terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba. He was earlier incarcerated in a Punjab jail, from where he and seven other accused were brought to Rajasthan and arrested on similar charges.

## Ayodhya case posted for hearing on Feb. 26

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday informed that a five-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, is scheduled to hear the Ayodhya title suit appeals on February 26.

The Bench also comprises Justices S.A. Bobde, D.Y. Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer.

The hearing was deferred on January 29 as Justice Bobde was on medical leave. The Bench had recently seen

a change in two of its judges. Justices Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer had replaced Justices N.V. Ramana and U.U. Lalit.

Justice Lalit recused himself from the Bench on January 10 after it was pointed out that he had appeared as a lawyer in a case connected to the Ayodhya dispute in 1997.

Justice Bhushan is the author of the September 27, 2018 majority judgment which refused to refer the question whether prayer in a

mosque is essential to Islam before a seven-judge Bench. He was seconded by the then Chief Justice Dipak Misra, who had led the three-judge Bench.

Justice Nazeer had delivered the dissenting opinion on the three-judge Bench, holding that the question was vital to the Ayodhya case and should be answered by a Constitution Bench.

BENCH MAY FIX SCHEDULE FOR HEARINGS ▶ PAGE 10

DELHI Timings	
THURSDAY, FEB. 21	
RISE 06:55	SET 18:15
RISE 20:16	SET 08:13
FRIDAY, FEB. 22	
RISE 06:54	SET 18:16
RISE 21:22	SET 08:54
SATURDAY, FEB. 23	
RISE 06:53	SET 18:17
RISE 22:24	SET 09:33

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	21	15
Safdarjung	21	15
Palam	21	16

**Delhi Palam Today**  
24°C Rise in day temperatures is likely. There are chances of rain and thundershower at some places.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
25°C Pollution levels are likely to increase. A dry and comfortable weather with a partly cloudy sky is likely.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2018  
All rights reserved.

**THE HINDU**  
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify the matter appearing in this column to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THE HINDU PUBLISHING LTD., the Owner & & Owner of this newspaper does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or for any of the advertiser's products or services. The Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/ company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

## Naveen not interested in Odisha's development, alleges Adityanath

Calls for a change in the government to make the State as prosperous as U.P.

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
BHAWANIPATNA/NACHUNI  
(ODISHA)



U.P. CM Yogi Adityanath at a meeting of BJP workers at Nachuni in Odisha on Wednesday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said that his Odisha counterpart Naveen Patnaik has "betrayed the people" as he is not interested in the development of the State.

Addressing BJP workers at Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district and later at Nachuni in Khurda district, Adityanath called for a change in the State government to make Odisha prosperous.

He said that Odisha can also develop like Uttar Pradesh if a BJP government is installed in the State.

**'Betrayed people'**  
"Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is not interested in development of the State, rather in his personal agenda. He (Patnaik) has betrayed the people of Od-

isha," the U.P. CM said and called upon the people to end the 19 years of BJD rule in order to make the State prosperous.

He also criticised Mr. Patnaik for not implementing the Centre's popular welfare schemes like Ayushman Bharat and PM-Kisan. "The poor people have been deprived of the benefits being given by the BJP-led Central government," he said.

Slamming the Odisha government for its alleged inefficiency, Adityanath said the Naveen Patnaik government has constructed only 17 lakh pucca houses for the people in the 19 years of its rule while the BJP government in U.P. has provided 20 lakh houses to the poor in less than two years.

While lauding the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme,

Adityanath said the Odisha government's KALIA scheme has no stability and is shrouded in corruption from the beginning. He accused Mr. Patnaik of delaying furnishing the list of farmers for the PM-Kisan scheme.

The U.P. CM also criticised the Odisha government for taking credit in providing rice to poor people at ₹1 per kg for which "bulk of the finance was borne by the Centre".

In his speech at both the places, Adityanath praised Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for his work.

"The BJD government is scared that if ₹6,000 is credited into the bank account of farmers, it can not deceive the people any more," he said.

(With inputs from Satyendar Barik)

## Assam man walks free with Supreme Court's help

Sirajul Hoque was detained as foreigner due to a 'mismatched' name

**RAHUL KARMAKAR**  
GUWAHATI

Sirajul Hoque walked to freedom on Wednesday night, two years after two English letters – 'f' and 'm' – sent him to a detention camp in eastern Assam's Jorhat.

A Foreigners' Tribunal in western Assam's Dhubri district had declared Mr. Hoque, 43, a foreigner in 2017 because of a mismatch in his grandfather's name, which read Kematullah in some documents and Kefatullah in some others.

That his grandfather and father Hakim Sheikh lived in different villages gave the Tribunal additional ground to arrive at this conclusion.

Mr. Hoque approached the Gauhati High Court,

which upheld the Tribunal's order on technical grounds. He was sent to Jorhat, one of the six detention centres for foreigners in the State. Faced with the loss of citizenship and possible deportation, he petitioned the Supreme Court.

On February 13, the apex court's Bench of Justice R.F. Nariman and Justice Vineet Saran quashed the Tribunal's order. The judges observed that though the spelling of the name of Mr. Hoque's father and grandfather differed in some documents, there was consistency in the names of his father and great-grandfather Amnullah. They also observed that Mr. Hoque's grandparents were voters of 1966-70 from his birthplace, Sagolchora village in Dhubri.

Further, Mr. Hoque was found to have been issued a PAN card by the IT Department and a photo I-card by the Election Commission.

"We argued that if PAN

card and voter's card are not valid documents, then no other document issued by the government is valid and that no voter's card holder should be allowed to vote," Mr. Hoque's lawyer Pijush Kanti Roy told *The Hindu* from Dhubri town.

The SC judges agreed that it was not possible to state that Kematullah was not the same person as Kefatullah and that the identities of Mr. Hoque's father and grandfather had been established successfully. "Further, the mere fact that the father may later have gone to another village is no reason to doubt this document," the judgment said.

"This is a historic verdict... a person's citizenship has been decided on the basis of PAN and voter's I cards for the first time," Mr. Roy said, adding that the copy of the court order was sent to the Jorhat detention camp on Wednesday for Mr. Hoque's formal release.

## Odisha plans lightning alerting system

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
BHUBANESWAR

Concerned over large number of deaths due to lightning in the State, the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority has decided to establish an intelligent and automated system – outdoor alerting siren system – for quick dissemination of warning.

To begin with, OSDMA, in collaboration with US-based firm Earth Networks, will establish the outdoor lightning alerting system in 14 most lightning-prone blocks of the State on a pilot basis, according to OSDMA Managing Director Bishnupada Sethi.

The blocks chosen are Bhadrak, Remuna, Jaleswar, Keonjhar, Athagarh, Thakurmunda, Tangi-Choudwar, Sulaiapada, Chandbali, Ghashipura, Tangi, Kodina, Sundargarh and Bhogarai.

### Loadful of nothingness



A handcart puller carrying empty drums in Kolkata on Wednesday. ■ DEBJYOTI SARKAR

## JU scuffle to be probed, V-C in a state of shock: Minister

Two groups of students had clashed over meeting the V-C

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

KOLKATA  
West Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee on Wednesday said that Jadavpur University Vice-Chancellor Suranjan Das, who was hospitalised after some students allegedly manhandled him, is in a state of "shock".

Mr. Chatterjee, who visited Mr. Das at the hospital earlier in the day, said that the incident will be probed.

"We have asked for a video footage of the incident. We want to find out who all are behind (the alleged assault). Mr. Das is still in a state of shock," he said.

### 'Verbal abuse'

Stating that Mr. Das was subjected to "verbal abuse", the Minister added, "I have heard about the entire incident from the pro-V-C and Registrar. I will report the



Partha Chatterjee ■ FILE PHOTO

has been kept under observation. His blood pressure had shot up on Tuesday night, but now he is stable, the hospital said.

While the Arts Faculty Students' Union claimed it wanted to find out if the JU executive council had taken up the issue of "inordinate delay" in facilitating elections, the members of the Trimamool Chhatra Parishad said they sought to know about the status of a molestation case. The AFSU and TMCP members have accused each other of starting the scuffle.

After the Tuesday's incident, Mr. Das had said that he felt insulted and humiliated. "This had never happened to me in the past. The students blocked my path and turned aggressive even as I was trying to say that I am ready to speak to them."

A private hospital, where the Vice-Chancellor has been admitted, said in a statement that Mr. Das had to undergo X-ray for injuries he might have sustained and

## Odisha forum comes up with 'six Cs' for voters

**STAFF REPORTER**

BERHAMPUR

Odisha's Jan Jagran Abhiyan has decided to start a State-wide movement to motivate voters to vote for able and non-corrupt candidates without considering their party affiliation or opt for NOTA in the coming elections.

"The JJA is a political organisation with no intention to contest elections. We will not watch the dirty game of electoral politics from the fences but interfere in it by motivating the voters," said JJA's Odisha president Madhusudan Sethi.

The organisation has decided to start a campaign to motivate the voters to choose their candidates

based on six criteria – character, past criminal record, corruption charges against the person, if he/she is anti-caste system, anti-communal and connected to the people. "These are six Cs by which a voter can judge the candidate," Mr. Sethi said.

The JJA has decided to ask the voters to opt for NOTA (None of The Above) in case they do not find any candidate fulfilling the six Cs.

Members of the organisation said voters are falling for big political parties and their charismatic leaders and electing undeserving candidates.

"Let the good people get elected and they can choose an able leader," Mr. Sethi said.

## Tripura gets ₹85-crore mega food park

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

AGARTALA

Tripura on Wednesday received its first major investment after the BJP-led government came to power last year, with the inauguration of a ₹85-crore food park that is expected to generate employment for around 30,000 people, officials said.

The food park is the 18th of its kind in the country and has been set up at Tulkona, near Agartala.

Inaugurating the food park, Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Sadhvi Nirajan

Jyoti said it would provide infrastructural facilities for food processing and allied industries along with the value chain from the farm market and centralised processing centres.

Ms. Jyoti said in 2011, the Centre had given permission to open this mega food park in Tripura, but the previous Left Front government did not take any initiative.

CM Biplob Kumar Deb said, "The project would generate direct and indirect employment for about 30,000 people in food processing, agriculture, etc."

the PRB Act).

AN-NDNE

IN BRIEF



Muzaffarpur sex scandal case rocks Bihar House

PATNA  
The Bihar Assembly was adjourned on Wednesday, the last day of budget session, as the Opposition stalled the proceedings, demanding resignation of CM Nitish Kumar in the wake of an order by a POCO court on Muzaffarpur sex scandal. PTI

Five killed in car-truck collision in Haryana

CHANDIGARH  
Five persons, including four of a family, were killed when their car collided with a truck in Haryana's Jhajjar district on Wednesday, a police officer said. All five people were returning from Delhi to their village Kasni in Jhajjar after attending a marriage, he said. The truck driver fled after the accident. PTI

Man arrested for issuing fake invoices

JAIPUR  
A man was arrested here on Wednesday for issuing fake invoices without supplying goods and availing the Input Tax Credit. The Directorate General of GST Intelligence had initiated a probe in 2018 against Saurabh Chhajer of Jain Enterprises and arrested him on Wednesday. PTI

Two absconders arrested in J&K's Rajouri

JAMMU  
Two persons, evading arrest for several years, were on Wednesday held in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, the police said. Maneer Hussain, wanted in a criminal case, was evading arrest since 2014. Shahid Parvez, was wanted in case of voluntarily causing grievous hurt. PTI

Three killed as truck rams shop in U.P.

PRATAPGARH  
Three members of a family were killed when a speeding truck overturned and rammed into their shop housed in a tin shed, police said. The incident happened on Tuesday night at Tina village on the Lucknow-Varanasi road. PTI

## Gehlot demands ₹1,000 crore from Centre for NREGS

CM steps in after Deputy CM put in similar request in Jan.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

After a request from Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot to the Centre failed to elicit any response, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has demanded that the Union government release ₹1,000 crore under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) to continue the flagship programme in the State in the remaining period of the current financial year.

In a letter to Union Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Mr. Gehlot said

## Badals destroyed Punjab: CM

Assembly passes resolution seeking British apology for Jallianwala massacre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday accused the Badals of "complete destruction of all institutions of governance in the State" and alleged that no rules, regulations, laws or constitutional principles and provisions were followed during the Shiromani Akali Dal-BJP regime.

Captain Amarinder also condemned the way Finance Minister Manpreet Badal's budget speech was disrupted by the SAD-BJP members on Monday for "petty political gains".

**CM's dig at Sukhbir**  
The Chief Minister took a dig at SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal, asking whether the party had any leader since "Mr. Sukhbir" seemed to be always missing from



Chief Minister Amarinder Singh arrives at the Assembly as Akali Dal legislators stage a walkout, in Chandigarh on Wednesday. ■ AKHILESH KUMAR

the House".

Captain Amarinder, who listed out the progress made by his government in reversing the "pathetic situation" in which the SAD-BJP combine had left the State across all sectors and segments, pointed out that ₹5 crore were being given to every

sub-division for development work. He slammed the Opposition for alleging that only Congress MLAs were getting development funds and said if they needed to get some work done they should submit their project proposals to the Deputy Commissioner concerned.

Earlier in the day, the State Assembly unanimously passed a resolution seeking a formal apology from the British government for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

The resolution was moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Brahm Mohindra and passed unanimously by the members through voice vote.

Mr. Mohindra said it was a dastardly act perpetrated upon innocent people who had converged at the Jallianwala Bagh on the fateful day of Baisakhi on April 13, 1919, to protest against the oppressive Rowlatt Act of the Imperial rulers. "Even the British government of the time had realised the gravity of the irresponsible act, as evident from the premature supernumerary of General [Reginald] Dyer from the British Army," said Mr. Mohindra.

## Low-intensity explosion in Kalindi Express near Kanpur

No casualties, injuries reported; police suspect Jaish link

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A low-intensity blast took place on board the Kanpur-Bhiwani Kalindi Express near Kanpur on Wednesday. No casualties or injuries were reported in the incident, said officials.

The explosion occurred in the washroom of a general compartment of the train when it stopped at Barrapur station, 30 km from Kanpur, around 7.10 p.m., railway officials said.

According to Additional Director General of Police (Kanpur zone) Avinash Chandra, some material apparently belonging to the Jaish-e-Mohammad terror outfit was recovered from

Some handwritten pamphlets in illegible writing containing threats have been recovered from the blast site

AVINASH CHANDRA

Additional DGP (Kanpur zone)

teams as a precautionary measure before allowing the train to leave for its desired destination," he said.

A railway spokesperson said the Anti-Terrorism Squad was at the spot and the cause of the blast was yet to be ascertained.

He had earlier said, "Prima facie the explosion seemed to have been caused by crackers as the damage was not much".

The incident comes six days after 40 CRPF personnel were killed by a Jaish-e-Mohammad suicide bomber in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district.

(With PTI inputs)

## Pilgrims' progress



Religious fervour: Devotees carry holy water during the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Wednesday. ■ PTI

## Fearful of SP-BSP, BJP forming alliances: Mayawati

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Wednesday took a dig at the BJP saying the party was so scared of the tie-up between her party and the Samajwadi Party that it was forced to form alliances in hopelessness.

Her remark came after the BJP formally announced its alliances in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra for the upcoming Lok Sabha election with the AIADMK and the Shiv Sena respectively.

Ms. Mayawati wondered if formalising alliances in Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in a state of prone "hopelessness" reflected the "strong leadership" of

the BJP. In reality, the BJP is "so fearful" of the SP-BSP alliance that it has to run from pillar to post to form alliances, she said on Twitter.

Her reference was to the BJP having to placate its allies in the build-up to the general election.

Ms. Mayawati said no matter how much the BJP scrambles during election time, since many were suffering due to its anti-poor, anti-labourer, anti-farmer and anti-people policy and arrogant attitude, the 130 crore people of the country "won't forgive it any cost". "People will crush their arrogance during election and this government will have to go," said Ms. Mayawati.

## MLA makes way for Kamal Nath's election

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BHOPAL

Congress MLA Deepak Saxena on Wednesday resigned as Chhindwara MLA, clearing the way for Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath to contest the by-election from this Assembly seat.

Mr. Nath had taken oath as the Chief Minister of the State on December 17 last year. As per the rules, he has to get elected to the Assembly within six months.

Mr. Saxena said, "I have resigned as MLA from Chhindwara to make way for Nathji to fight the by-poll." "I tendered my resignation to the Assembly Speaker today," he added.

Mr. Nath, the nine-time MP from Chhindwara, was earlier thinking of contesting the by-poll from Sausar in Chhindwara district, his aide said.

## 'In principle' nod for EWS quota in M.P.

Chief Minister said a Cabinet sub-committee will be constituted on the issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BHOPAL

The Congress government in Madhya Pradesh told the Assembly on Wednesday that it has "in principle" agreed to provide 10% reservation in jobs and education to the economically poor in the general category.

Making an announcement of this effect, Chief Minister Kamal Nath said a Cabinet sub-committee will be constituted on the issue.

The announcement came after the BJP demanded implementation of 10% quota in jobs and education for general category poor candidates. A law in this regard was enacted by the Centre last month.

**Cong. discriminating**  
BJP members alleged the ruling Congress has been discriminating against the youths of unreserved categories by not providing them



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath

reservation.

Just after the Question Hour, Leader of Opposition Gopal Bhargava asked the State government to clarify its stand on the issue and sought implementation of the quota law for economically poor in accordance with the 124th Constitutional Amendment Bill passed by the Parliament.

Reacting to Mr. Bhargava's demand, Mr. Nath announced that his government has "in principle" agreed about giving reserva-

tion to the poor from the general category.

Saying this was a part of the Congress manifesto, Mr. Nath said a Cabinet sub-committee will be formed to look into the upper-caste quota law implementation in the State. However, this announcement did not satisfy BJP members.

Narottam Mishra (BJP), a former Minister, said this is an important issue associated with the youth of the State. He alleged the Congress government has been discriminating against the general category youth under a "conspiracy".

Speaker N.P. Prajapati tried to pacify Opposition MLAs by saying the issue will be discussed separately.

Talking to reporters later, Mr. Bhargava said it seems the Congress government is not interested in extending the 10% quota benefit to the youth in Madhya Pradesh.

## Rajasthan notifies quota in govt. jobs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAIPOUR

The Rajasthan government has issued a notification providing 10% reservation in government jobs for the economically backward in the general category.

The State's Department of Personnel issued the notification on Tuesday night, saying that the quota for direct recruitment shall be in addition to the existing reservation.

Families in the general category earning a gross annual income of ₹8 lakh or more will be excluded from the quota. Also excluded are people whose families own five acre or more of agriculture land.

CM YK

# Thousands of farmers in State to repeat historic 'Long March'

Nearly a year on, demands unmet and parleys with government fail to deliver

AJEET MAHALE  
MUMBAI

Thousands of farmers assembled at Mumbai Naka in Nashik on Wednesday to repeat the historic 'Long March' to Mumbai, that took place less than a year ago.

The farmers will begin their march on Thursday morning and aim to arrive in Mumbai on February 27 as farmers from across the State continue to reach the starting point, said Dr Ajit Navale, general secretary of the Maharashtra Kisan Sabha. The Nashik police, however, has refused permission for their march.

"We have been given permission to have a demonstration but they have stated that they will not allow the long march. However, if our demands are not met, the long march will start as planned," Ashok Dhawale, president, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), said. Water Resources and Irrigation Minis-



**Back to Basics:** Farmers gather in Nashik to start another long march to remind State about pending demands. ■ VEERU KADAM

ter Girish Mahajan will be going to Nashik to negotiate with leaders of the protest.

Earlier in the day, thousands of farmers traveling to Nashik to participate in the March were detained by the police and were not allowed to proceed. These farmers were mainly from Thane and Palghar districts.

"Is this the kind of democ-

racy that we live in? Thousands were simply stopped by the police at places such as Dahanu and Kasara. It's only after the news came out in the media did they allow a few of us to proceed," Mr Dhawale said.

The AIKS has 15 key demands, including the utilisation of river water flowing into the Arabian Sea such as

Narpur and Damanganga, to meet the water requirements of local farmers, provision of drought relief to the extent of Rs. 40,000, and employment creation that could yield Rs. 300 per day.

Mr Dhawale said that AIKS held two meetings with the Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Mr Mahajan earlier this month. "The first one was an informal meeting, which was held on February 11, where we asked for a more formal meeting. The formal meeting was held on February 17, where after three hours there was no progress," Mr Dhawale said. The decision to conduct a second long march was decided after these talks failed.

The farmers want the State to stop declaring farmers ineligible under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, citing flimsy grounds, and stop the acquisition of farmer's land for projects like the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train.

## Not desperate for power, but want equal share of CM post: Shiv Sena

Takes on BJP claim that party with more seats to get top job

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

Two days after the Shiv Sena and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced their intent to contest the assembly and general elections together, the parties appeared to be on different pages on a key tenet underpinning their renewed alliance – sharing the Chief Minister's post.

Reacting sharply to BJP leader and Revenue Minister Chandrakant Patil's remark on Tuesday that the partner winning more seats would get the CM's job, Sena leader Ramdas Kadam said they will call off the alliance if that were to be the case.

Mr Kadam, who is the State's Environment Minister, said that as per the pact worked out after parleys between BJP president Amit Shah and Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray on Monday, all constitutional posts would be equally shared.

"This means the CM's post will also be equally shared. If this formula isn't acceptable to BJP leaders, we will ask Uddhavji to call off the alliance. We are capable of contesting polls alone," he asserted.

If the BJP does not wish to fulfil its commitment, it is free to break the pre-poll alliance immediately," he said.

On Tuesday night, Mr Thackeray had told party workers that he had rejected the formula proposing that the party winning maximum number of seats in assembly elections would get the post of chief minister.

This formula was used by both parties (Sena and BJP) in the last 25 years. I have rejected it. What I have demanded is that both the parties get to share all posts equally," Mr Thackeray said.

**Not hankering for power**  
Mr Kadam stressed that the Sena is not desperate for power and did not make any compromises to secure the alliance, echoing an editorial in party mouthpiece *Saamna*. Arguing that the

party has turned the wind in its favour, even though the direction of winds in the country will be known tomorrow, the editorial noted: "Our sword is as sharp as always and we have not kept it locked in scabbard."

The answers to several questions being raised – like why did it ally with the BJP despite differences in 2014, will the Ram temple be constructed, will there be a Sena CM – are "positive", the editorial underlined.

Although Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's "progress card" has improved much since 2014 and he now has sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's support, the two cannot match Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the editorial said. Terming political opponents questioning the alliance as insects that will be crushed, it concluded: "Instead of replying to questions on the alliance, it is better to take forward the arrangement made for Maharashtra's benefit."

## Ex-sarpanch arrested for remarks on Pulwama attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDNAGAR

A former village head in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra has been arrested for allegedly making objectionable comments on the Pulwama terror attack, the police said on Wednesday.

"A candlelight march was taken out on Monday evening in Vispur village to protest against perpetrators of the attack," said inspector Rajendra Padwa of the Belwadi police station.

The police said that Vispur's former sarpanch, Sayyad Jabbar Amir, had to flee from the march after other participants raised objections to his alleged statements against the Indian government.

Later, locals filed a police complaint and Mr. Amir was arrested on Tuesday night and booked under Section 153-B (imputations and assertions prejudicial to national integration) of the Indian Penal Code. A probe is on in the case.

## Cong., NCP seat-sharing talks still on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDNAGAR

Seat-sharing talks between the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) are still on in Maharashtra, Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil said on Wednesday.

Discussions were still continuing over five to six Lok Sabha seats, including Ahmednagar, Mr Vikhe Patil told PTI. The NCP has been contesting the Ahmednagar Lok Sabha seat since 1999.

## Nanar refinery plan to be scrapped soon

CM assures Sena on second day of Saudi Arabia Crown Prince's bilateral visit

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra will nullify the notification to acquire land for the proposed oil refinery at Nanar in coastal Ratnagiri district before the code of conduct for Lok Sabha polls kicks in.

Prospects for a new alternate site within the State appear dim for the Rs 3 lakh crore project for which Saudi Aramco had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with three Indian public sector oil firms on April 11, 2018.

Mr Kadam said that scrapping the Nanar project be-

cause of locals' opposition to the plan, was one of the first demands put forward by Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray for sealing a poll pact with the BJP.

"The project requires a seashore and I can assure you that this project will not be set up at any of the coastal districts of Maharashtra. I do not know what is the future of this project, but I can guarantee that it will not be set up in the state," he said.

A delegation of Konkan Refinery Prakalp Virodhi Sangharsh Sangathan,

which is spearheading the anti-refinery protests, had met Mr Thackeray on Tuesday. The convener of the anti-refinery protests, Satyajit Chavan had said the project will only be nullified when a notification issued by the industry department, under which farm lands are being declared 'industrial', is scrapped.

Villagers from Nanar also burnt an effigy of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday, the day he arrived in India.

IN BRIEF



Pinarayi calls on slain CRPF jawan's family

KALPETA  
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday visited the family of Central Reserve Police Force jawan V.V. Vasanthakumar, who was killed in a suicide bomb attack at Pulwama on February 14. Accompanied by wife Kamala Vijayan and Ministers Kadannappally Ramachandran and E.P. Jayarajan, Mr. Vijayan spent about 15 minutes in the morning at the house of Vasanthakumar at Makkamkunnu in Wayanad.

Girl attacked by stalker discharged from hospital

HYDERABAD  
After battling life-threatening injuries at a corporate hospital in Malakpet for nearly two weeks, the second-year Intermediate student from Barkatpura who was brutally attacked by a stalker, was discharged on Wednesday. The 17-year-old girl suffered severe injuries after 19-year-old Chitkuri Bharat attacked her with a sickle on February 6, for allegedly turning down his proposal, while she was on her way to college.

# Karnataka MLA wanted in assault case nabbed in Gujarat

Ganesh allegedly attacked his fellow legislator Anand Singh at a resort in Bidadi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Congress MLA from Karnataka J.N. Ganesh, on the run since January 20 after allegedly assaulting his fellow legislator Anand Singh at a resort in Bidadi, was nabbed by the police near the Somnath temple in Gujarat on Wednesday.

Mr. Ganesh was picked up by a special team of the Bidadi police at a hotel when he arrived there for lunch. The Bidadi police had registered an FIR against the legislator from Kampli on January 21, a day after the assault, and booked him for attempt to murder. He had since been on the run. The Congress had suspended him after the incident.

Home Minister M.B. Patil, confirming the arrest of Mr. Ganesh, said, "He will be brought to Bengaluru and will be produced before a Ramamangaram court on Thursday."

**FIR registered**  
Mr. Ganesh had been "missing" ever since the Bidadi police registered an FIR against him on January 21, a



J.N. Ganesh

day after he assaulted Mr. Singh at Eagleton resort. All the Congress MLAs had been herded to the resort in an attempt to thwart the alleged efforts of the BJP to lure them to its side with inducements of money and ministerial posts. The two legislators had got into an altercation there on January 20, resulting in Mr. Singh suffering injuries and getting hospitalised.

Following the incident, Mr. Ganesh was booked under IPC Sections 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Mahesh E. Kumathalli, Congress MLA from Athani constituency, personally appeared before the Karnataka High Court on Wednesday and denied the allegations made in a *habeas corpus* writ petition that he was kept under "illegal

means), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) and 506 (criminal intimidation).

Mr. Ganesh was changing locations frequently, while the police were tracking his locations based on his call records for a month before pinning him down on Wednesday.

He was produced at a local court in Gujarat before being escorted back.

Inspector-General of Police (Central Range) B. Dayanand said Mr. Ganesh would be brought to Bidadi and taken into custody for investigation after producing him before court. Based on the

detention" in Mumbai by Ramesh Jarkiholi, Congress MLA from Gokak constituency.

In an affidavit, he said that he had attended programmes in his constituency on January 26, and had also attended a session of the Assembly on February 13 and 14.

inputs after questioning, the further course of action would be decided, he added.

**Singh's complaint**

Mr. Singh, in his complaint, had stated that Mr. Ganesh was angry over not helping him financially during the Assembly election.

"He abused me using filthy language and assaulted me with a wooden log and flower pot, threatening to kill me. The other MLAs rushed to my help and rescued me, otherwise he would have killed me," Mr. Singh had stated in his complaint.



Mega feast: Women in large numbers preparing the sweet dish 'Pongala' at Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. ■ S. MAHINSHA

## Thousands of women offer 'pongala' at Attukal temple

Annual ritualistic offering made to the goddess

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Tens of thousands of women flocked to Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday for the Attukal 'Pongala', the ritualistic offering made annually to the presiding deity of the Attukal Bhagavathy temple.

The offering – a sweet pudding made from rice, jaggery, coconut gratings, banana and ghee – was prepared in earthen and metal pots on makeshift brick stoves. Early on Wednesday, they queued up at the Attukal temple to offer prayers to the deity – popularly called 'Attukal Amma' – before preparing the 'Pongala' offering.

At 10.15 a.m., the 'Pandra Aduppu' was lit after

which the flame was briskly passed down to the stoves of the devotees.

In a short while, Attukal and other main festival areas – Fort, Thampanoor and Statue included – were engulfed in smoke rising from the cooking pots.

The ritual concluded at 2.15 p.m. with the sanctification of the 'Pandra Aduppu.'

Soon after, 250 junior priests toured the city sprinkling the water on the devotees' hearths. This year's festivities will conclude with the 'Kappu Azhippu' and 'Kuruthi Tharpanam' ceremonies on Thursday.

The mammoth event had entered the Guinness Book of Records in 2009 for being the largest gathering of women.

Government departments had made elaborate arrangements for the smooth conduct of the festival.



## Nobody can stop business under guise of hartal: HC

'Protesters cannot take the law into their hands and compel others to stop vehicles or shut shops'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court has reiterated that under the guise of hartal, nobody has any right to prevent other citizens from exercising their fundamental right to carry on business or trade anywhere in India and move freely.

Justice Sunil Thomas,

while granting anticipatory bail to 24 persons accused in cases registered in connection with the hartal held on January 2, said hartal seekers were only intended to withdraw themselves from their work and persuade their fellow men to follow them. That did not give them the freedom to take the law

into their hands and compel others to stop vehicular traffic or compel anybody to close down shops.

**'Unlawful assembly'**

According to the prosecution, the petitioners, who hailed from Thrissur, formed themselves into an unlawful assembly for protesting

against the entry of women into the Sabarimala temple and obstructed roads besides asking shopkeepers to close down shutters.

They committed mischief and wrongfully restrained the police from discharging their official duties.

The court directed the petitioners to appear before

the investigating officer within 10 days for interrogation.

The court ordered that if they were arrested, they be released on bail on their executing a bond for ₹40,000 each with two sureties for the like sum each. The petitioners should deposit ₹3,000 each with the magistrate court concerned.

## Video edited to defame me, says A.P. MLA

STAFF REPORTER  
ELURU

Denduluru TDP MLA Chinntamaneni Prabhakar, whose video clip containing comments against the Scheduled Castes went viral, lodged a complaint on Wednesday with the Additional SP seeking an inquiry.

The 16-second clip showed Mr. Prabhakar saying politics was not meant for SCs. He said the clip was the edited version of his speech in a meeting held about six months ago. Mr. Prabhakar accused the Opposition party and a section of the media of hatching a conspiracy to defame him.

Tension prevailed at the Fire Station centre in the town when activists of the TDP and the YSRCP entered into a heated argument over the comments.

## Fire fury



**Big fight:** Fire tenders engaged in dousing a massive fire that broke out at a building housing a footwear godown in Ernakulam on Wednesday. No one was injured in the blaze, which was brought under control by engaging 50 fire tenders. ■ H. VIBHU

## 'Aseel cock rearing can be economically viable'

A chicken breed once reared for fighting abilities is now sought for its looks

S. MURALI  
ONGOLE

Eggs that fetch between ₹1,000 to ₹2,500 each and cocks that cost as much as ₹1.5 lakh may sound like a flight of fancy but these are not ordinary hens and roosters that breeders are rearing.

With fans of the Aseel – a chicken breed once reared for its fighting abilities and now sought for its looks – ready to pay for birds sporting well-bred parrot beaks and peacock tails, a breeder from remote Cumbum village, near Markapur town in Andhra's Prakasam district, is running a roaring business by rearing roosters.

Chilakacherla Krishnamachari took to breeding exotic indigenous chicken varieties in a small way in the 1990s, impressed by their build and warrior-like appearance.



An Aseel breeder shows his prized possession in Cumbum village. ■ KOMMURI SRINIVAS

"I got two pairs from the Bobbili royal family in Vizianagram and slowly developed the farm over the years," he says, recounting how it all started.

Now well-connected with customers on social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube, he mints money selling Aseel eggs and chicks to bird lovers within the country and abroad at fancy prices,

while retaining the breeder cocks and hens.

While a well-bred 40-day-old chick fetches ₹20,000, the cost goes up as the chicks get older. An 18-month Aseel commands as much as ₹1.25 lakh, he says after concluding a business deal with an Aseel admirer from Udupampet in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

**Beauty contests**  
The fascination for Aseels among enthusiasts has pushed up the price of roosters since 2015. Aseel lovers now hold beauty contests at periodic intervals, says the breeder, showing the medals won by his pets in a competition held in Dindigul last year.

For centuries, the ferocious Aseels were reared for their fighting abilities during gladiator events and to in-

spire soldiers from retreating during a war. "But I rear the birds with short beaks and long tails only to showcase them to bird lovers during beauty contests," the 50-year-old breeder says, gearing up for participation in such events in Chennai in March.

Showing a well-bred red-faced majestic cock of 26-inches height and 6.5 kg weight with a warrior gait, he says "I can give chicks any number of combinations of primary and secondary colours desired by customers by mating the right pairs."

He also says he avoids using an incubator for hatching, even though more eggs can be hatched in a shorter period. To protect his precious birds, he deploys two ferocious guard dogs that maintain a strict round-the-clock vigil on the farm.

## Ghost nets, plastics pose threat to seabirds

Last year's flood has washed a huge amount of plastics from land into the sea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The unprecedented August 2018 flood has washed out a huge amount of plastics from the land and rivers into the ocean, threatening marine life and underwater ecosystems. Now, scientists have come across evidence that migratory birds are also victims of the discarded plastic.

Nisanth, a research scholar working on pelagic birds of Kerala, has documented the serious implications of plastics on seabirds visiting Kerala in this season. He recorded the case of a Lesser Black-backed Gull or Heuglin's Gull (*Larus fuscus heuglini*) with a plastic bottle ring caught in its beak. The species is a winter visitor and was seen at Ponnani.

The ring had pierced the bird's beak and formed a



A Lesser Crested Tern entangled in a gill net.

ring around its eyes, obstructing its vision during flight. According to Mr. Nisanth, the ring could have become tangled with the bird's beak while it was feeding on fish from the sea or picking worms from the beach. Heuglin's Gull breeds in the tundra of northern Russia and migrates south to southwest Asia, including India, during winter.

Scientists feel that nylon fishing nets thrown back into the ocean, often referred to as ghost nets, or carried out to the sea during the flood, could also pose a serious hazard for marine life. A Lesser Crested Tern (*Thalasseus bengalensis*), a winter visitor to Kerala and found at Thottappally in Alappuzha, was documented with a discarded gill net wrapped around its beak, limbs and wings.

"In both cases, the plas-

tics found on the body of the bird seemed to have affected their behaviour, as they have to feed on the discarded food from other birds in the flock," Mr. Nisanth says.

"This seems to have forced them to depend on other members of the same species or even different species for food, and to escape from predators."

**'Concerted action needed'**  
The sight of seabirds ingesting plastics is on the increase in Kerala, especially during November to February when migratory species visit the State.

"We need concerted action to manage plastic pollution in our coastal waters," said A. Biju Kumar of the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, who supervised the research.



**Uttarakhand HC rejects Asaram's appeal**

NAINITAL  
The Uttarakhand High Court on Wednesday dismissed an appeal by jailed "godman" Asaram seeking reallocation of a piece of land in Rishikesh for his ashram, paving the way for the forest department to take over it. The plea seeking reallocation of the land in Muni-ki-Reti area of Rishikesh was rejected by a Division Bench of the court. PTI

#### One drowns, another missing in Hooghly

KOLKATA  
One person was killed and another went missing after a group of nine people were swept away by high tide while taking a dip in the Hooghly, the police said on Wednesday. The incident took place at around 11 p.m. on Tuesday when they went to take a dip in the river after performing the last rites of a kin, the police said. PTI

#### Two die after falling off train in Pratapgarh

PRATAPGARH  
Two persons died after falling off a moving train near Jagesar Ganj railway station on the Lucknow-Pratapgarh rail route, a GRP officer said on Wednesday. The deceased were part of a group of devotees returning to Punjab after visiting Patna Sahib, he said. PTI

#### Odisha doctors to get at least 3 promotions

BHUBANESWAR  
Government doctors in Odisha would now compulsorily get at least three promotions during their service period after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday approved a new scheme for government physicians. PTI

## IN BRIEF

# Centre wanted 'secret killings' to continue: Tarun Gogoi

Former Assam CM claims he resisted NDA govt.'s pressure; BJP, AGP rubbish charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Former Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi claimed on Wednesday that the previous NDA government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpeyi had pressured him to continue with "secret killings". He accused his predecessor Prafulla Kumar Mahanta of having pursued the practice during 1996-2001 to break the backbone of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).

The ruling BJP said Mr. Gogoi's allegation was "baseless" while Mr. Mahanta retaliated by saying "extrajudicial killings" had started in Assam under the Congress rule.

Mr. Gogoi, whose 15-year rule ended in 2016, claimed that Lal Krishna Advani, the then Union Home Minister,



Mr. Gill," Mr. Gogoi said. He said the stiff resistance put by his government prevented Mr. Advani from sending Mr. Gill, an IPS officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, to Assam.

"*Guptahoitya*" refers to a phase in the late 1990s when masked men, allegedly sponsored by the government, killed suspected ULFA militants and their kin.

"The secret killings happened when Mr. Mahanta was in power. The BJP was in power at the Centre then. Now, Mr. Mahanta says that he did it on instructions of the Centre," Mr. Gogoi said.

#### Baseless allegation

BJP's Assam unit president Ranjeet K. Dass rubbish the accusation, saying his party favoured dialogue with the ULFA as has been

wanted to send former Punjab police chief K.P.S. Gill to Assam as Governor to quell insurgency with the formula that helped tackle the militancy in Punjab.

"We were pressured to continue with *guptahoitya* (extrajudicial or secret killings), but we did not do it. When I took over (in 2001), the BJP wanted the secret killings to continue through

the case with National Socialist Council of Nagaland.

"He is trying to cover up for something the Congress was adept at," he said. Party's Assam unit general secretary Dilip Saikia said:

"We have always believed in the integrity of India but not at the cost of secret killings of innocent people. Why did he not order an enquiry on secret killings if he was honest? He is doing cheap, divisive politics," he said.

#### Saikia blamed

Mr. Mahanta, the former chief of Asom Gana Parishad, a BJP's ally until January this year, blamed the practice on his predecessor Hiteswar Saikia, who headed the Congress government during the Assam agitation (1983-85) and 1991-1996.

## Resident certificate issue hotting up in Arunachal

48-hour shutdown from today to protest govt.'s move to grant PRC to six communities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The issue of providing a permanent resident certificate (PRC) to six communities that do not enjoy Scheduled Tribe status is hotting up in poll-bound Arunachal Pradesh.

At least 18 student and civil society organisations in the State have come together for a 48-hour shutdown from Thursday to protest against the Bharatiya Janata Party government's alleged move to grant PRC to the six communities classified as non-Arunachal Pradesh.

During a public rally at Vi-

jaynagar in Changlang district on December 14 last year, Mr. Khandu had said that his government was looking into the possibility of granting PRC to the non-APST groups. At the same time, he said the interest of the indigenous communities would not be compromised with.

In another public rally, Deputy Prime Minister Chowna Mein had also said the PRC would be the government's New Year gift for the six communities. The government later clarified that there was no such move but local NGOs have not been

convinced, particularly after a joint high-power committee submitted a report on the issue a few days ago.

#### Motive doubtful

"The recommendations in the report, whose motive is doubtful, need to be scrapped," the NGOs said in a joint statement. These organisations include the Arunachal Law Students' Union, All Papum Pare District Students' Union, All Nyishi Students' Union, United Arunachal Indigenous People's Forum, All Tagin Students' Union, and Arunachal Anti-Corruption Union.

## Merger of six JVM(P) MLAs with BJP upheld

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
RANCHI

Jharkhand Assembly Speaker Dinesh Oraon on Wednesday said he found the merger of six Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajatantrik) MLAs with the BJP four years ago legal, while rejecting the petition of the party demanding their disqualification under the 10th Schedule.

The ruling came after JVM(P) president Babulal Marandi and Legislative Party leader Pradip Yadav filed the petition with the Speaker saying these MLAs had fought the 2014 Assembly elections on party tickets and attracted disqualification from the House under the 10th Schedule.

Prima facie, on February 10, 2015, it was found that the merger by the six MLAs with the BJP was legal and they were allowed to sit with the (ruling) BJP, a senior official with the Assembly secretariat said, quoting the Speaker's ruling.

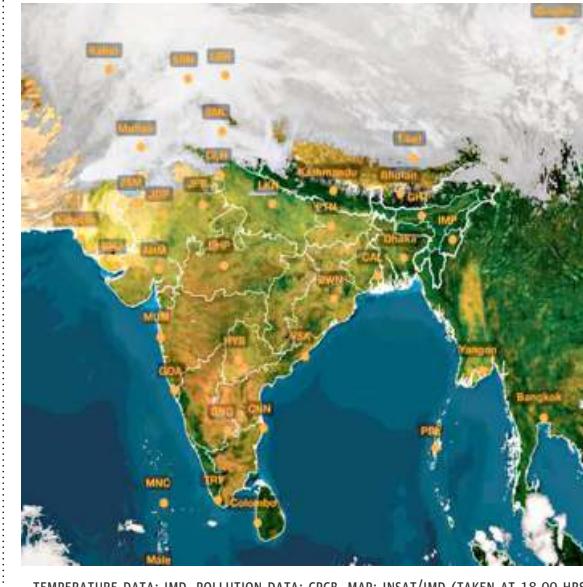
After the subsequent hearing on the petition, the Speaker said he went through all the legal points and found that their merger with the BJP was as per the law.

The six MLAs are Amar Kumar Bauri (Land & Revenue Minister), Randhir Kumar Singh (Agriculture Minister), Naveen Jaiswal, Ganesh Ganju, Janki Yadav and Alok Kumar Chourasia.

Mr. Marandi, who headed the BJP-led NDA after Jharkhand was carved out from Bihar on November 15, 2000, later quit the BJP and floated JVM.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Thursday:** Heavy rain/snow likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Thunderstorm accompanied with hailstorm/lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, east Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	....	29.2...	16.0	Kozhikode	....	36.0...	25.5
Ahmedabad	....	36.0...	15.2	Kurnool	....	36.8...	24.2
Aizawl	....	30.6...	—	Lucknow	....	26.4...	14.8
Allahabad	....	31.3...	13.4	Madurai	....	35.6...	24.6
Bengaluru	....	32.1...	20.5	Mangaluru	....	35.5...	22.0
Bhopal	....	33.3...	14.4	Mumbai	....	31.4...	18.2
Bhubaneswar	....	35.9...	20.4	Mysuru	....	33.6...	19.4
Chandigarh	....	22.4...	13.1	New Delhi	....	21.2...	14.5
Chennai	....	32.2...	25.6	Patna	....	29.4...	13.8
Coimbatore	....	34.1...	23.7	Port Blair	....	31.4...	25.2
Dehradoon	....	21.5...	10.6	Puducherry	....	32.4...	24.2
Gangtok	8.5	—	7.3	Pune	....	37.5...	14.2
Goa	....	31.3...	21.0	Raipur	....	33.6...	19.1
Guwahati	....	22.4...	15.4	Ranchi	....	30.0...	14.8
Hubballi	....	34.0...	21.0	Shillong	....	19.9...	9.0
Hyderabad	....	33.2...	20.9	Shimla	....	12.1...	3.8
Imphal	....	24.5...	8.6	Srinagar	....	7.9...	1.8
Jaipur	1...	26.8...	17.6	Trivandrum	....	38.2...	25.5
Kochi	....	33.2...	25.6	Tiruchi	....	34.6...	24.8
Kohima	....	23.2...	6.3	Vijayawada	....	33.2...	23.5
Kolkata	....	32.6...	21.9	Visakhapatnam	....	32.0...	23.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

#### Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	48	109	28	.123	....	■■■
Bengaluru	....	7	.47	.91	.55	■■■
Chennai	53	.15	.56	.49	....	■■■
Delhi	10	115	.63	.305	.244	■■■
Hyderabad	..2	.98	.26	.79	.90	■■■
Kolkata	14	.81	.26	.282	.166	■■■
Lucknow	10	.64	.75	.366	....	■■■
Mumbai	29	.37	.90	.134	.159	■■■
Pune	36	.17	.43	.160	.130	■■■
Visakhapatnam	.6	.29	.26	.68	.81	■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■■ Moderate ■■■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Talcher, Odisha recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 349 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Vijayawada recorded a healthy AQI score of 50

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

NEARBY



Alliance talks with DMDK hit roadblock

CHENNAI  
The seat-sharing talks between the AIADMK-BJP alliance and the DMDK hit a roadblock. The DMDK insists that it be treated on a par with the PMK, which has been allotted seven seats and one Rajya Sabha seat. Senior DMDK leaders said general secretary Vijayakant was not willing to settle for anything less than the number of seats given to the PMK.

One jawan killed, five missing in avalanche

NEW DELHI  
One soldier was killed and five went missing after an Army patrol deployed in the Shipkila sector of Himachal Pradesh, along the China border, was hit by an avalanche on Wednesday. The incident occurred while the patrol was moving between posts. Extensive search and rescue operations were on to locate the missing personnel.

Out-of-court settlement with Nissan Motor likely

CHENNAI  
The Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday told the Madras High Court that an out-of-court settlement was likely in its long-running dispute with Japanese automaker Nissan Motor over \$770 million in alleged unpaid incentives to the company pursuant to the establishment of a motor vehicle manufacturing plant in Oragadam.

Helping passengers with hidden disabilities

NEW DELHI  
British carrier Virgin Atlantic has launched a unique initiative to assist passengers with hidden disabilities such as dementia or autism without them asking for help. The airline has designed a special symbol, which when worn as a pin badge or carried as a bookmark inside a passport, will alert the airline staff that a passenger needs special attention.



Ruling the air: (from left) Aircraft performing aerobatics during Aero India 2019 in Bengaluru on Wednesday; a Rafale fighter jet doing a manoeuvre and team Sarang helicopters doing a stunt. ■ BHAGYA PRAKASH, K.

## 'BIGGER ever' Aero India opens with tribute to deceased pilot

12th edition brings back civil aviation to the largely military show

MADHUMATHI D.S.  
BENGALURU

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman rolled out a red carpet of opportunities in local defence and aerospace manufacturing to global investors as she launched Aero India 2019 here on Wednesday.

As the 12th edition of the biennial international military and civil expo and air show opened at the Air Force Station Yelahanka, the gathering and airmen showered tributes to Wing Commander Sahil Gandhi, who was killed during a rehearsal on Tuesday.

"Aero India 2019 endeavours to put India as the global runway of a billion opportunities," Ms. Sitharaman told a gathering of a few thousand invitees. Ministers, heads of global defence aerospace companies, corporate and government policy-makers, military brass, entrepreneurs, delegates and exhibitors from across the world were at the event.

The chiefs of the three Armed Forces – Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa, Admi-



Cheering on: Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at Aero India 2019 in Bengaluru on Wednesday. ■ AFP

rал Sunil Lamba and General Bipin Rawat – were in attendance at the show.

After many years, the edition brings civil aviation back to a largely military show. The Ministry said it was the biggest so far, with

403 exhibitors and 61 aircraft in static or flying displays.

**Missing man**  
Three IAF fighter jets and a Rafale aircraft paid an aerial tribute to Wing Commander

### MoUs signed by copter firm

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Russian Helicopters signed Memorandum of Understanding with five Indian companies to localise components for the Kamov-226T utility helicopter. However, price negotiations for the final contract are yet to begin, a company official said.

The MOUs were signed with Elcom, Valdel Advanced Technologies, Dynamatic Technologies, Integrated Helicopter Services and Bharat Forge, covering assemblies such as fuselage, blades, radio stations and landing gear.

Sahil Gandhi. The Indian jets Tejas, Sukhoi Su-30MKI and Jaguar flew past in a formation called Missing Man. The pilot of a French Rafale fighter in a flying demonstration made a sombre flypast for the killed airman.

## Tejas, world's lightest fighter, is 'battle ready'

Bags final operation clearance certificate



Making a mark: A Tejas aircraft flies over the U.S. Air Force's Boeing C-17A Globemaster III on Wednesday. ■ AP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Mark I (MkI) Tejas, the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) designed and developed in India, on Wednesday overcame its last hurdle by finally bagging what is called the FOC certification.

The FOC or final operational clearance, coming on the first day of Aero India 2019, certifies that the world's lightest fighter plane is "ready for battle."

As its stakeholders stood in front of an LCA prototype, endorsements of the LCA's fire power came in from none other than its prospective user – the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Birendra Singh Dhanoa – who said, "It is ready, it

behaved like a true fighter. This is the proof of the pudding." The Indian Air Force (IAF) would look beyond MkI, too.

Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra hoped that the LCA-MkI would soon be inducted into the IAF.

Ready to start

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is also ready to start producing 16 LCAs in the improved FOC version, HAL Chairman and Managing Director (C&MD) R. Madhavan said. The first 16 are almost fully delivered.

With an LCA prototype in the background, Secretary, Defence R&D, Dr. G. Sathesh Reddy, declared the aircraft FOC compliant.

## Lockheed pitches F-21

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

U.S. aircraft manufacturer Lockheed Martin unveiled an F-21 fighter, an upgraded variant of the F-16 fighter jet, at Aero India on Wednesday, pitching it for the Air Force tender for 114 jets.

"The F-21 is different, inside and out," said Dr. Vivek Lall, vice-president, Strategy & Business Development, Lockheed Martin, announcing the new variant at Aero India.

## Transparent deal: Trappier

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

Eric Trappier, chief executive officer, Dassault Aviation, said there was "no scandal" and the company was prepared to deliver more Rafale aircraft, if the Indian government wanted them.

"There is no scandal with Rafale...the Supreme Court said in a certain way that this deal is transparent and clean," Mr. Trappier said, talking to reporters on the sidelines of Aero India 2019.

## Leopard makes a visit to Thane mall, hotel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

The popular Korum Mall in Thane had an unusual visitor on Wednesday: a leopard.

Fortunately, the big cat came visiting before the mall opened for business. It later moved to the basement of a hotel in the vicinity, from where it was rescued subsequently.

According to forest officials, the male leopard, around six years of age, was spotted at the mall by some persons in the early hours of Wednesday.

They alerted the police control room and the fire brigade. But by then the feline had moved out of the mall and entered the basement of Satkaar Residency hotel.

"All concerned agencies, including the Forest



A video grab of the leopard at the mall.

Department, police, fire brigade and local NGOs were mobilised and a full fledged rescue operation commenced around 8 a.m., a forest officer said.

"After an hour-long search, we pinpointed its location and used mild firecrackers to direct it towards the teams. As soon as one of our teams spotted it, they managed to tranquillise it," Pawan Sharma, wildlife warden, Thane, said.

"When we'll ask the

## Where are the green crackers: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Four months after it banned polluting firecrackers, the Supreme Court on Wednesday realised that the concept of non-polluting 'green crackers' remains a non-starter, while its ban has affected the livelihood of four lakh workers and resulted in the closure of 974 firecracker units in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, alone.

"Where are the green crackers," a Bench, led by Justice A.K. Sikri, asked the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) and the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI).

The court refused to accept submissions that the finalisation of the formula



for green crackers and passing it on to manufacturers would take another three months.

Justice Sikri said the October 23 ban and the insistence on green crackers were meant to stop pollution and, at the same time, ensure that livelihoods were not affected. He observed that the court had ordered the ban under the belief that a formula for

non-polluting crackers was in place.

The case was scheduled urgently for post-lunch, and the court asked the Central government to be present.

However, at 2 p.m., the case was adjourned to February 26.

On October 31, the Supreme Court had, on an application from Tamil Nadu, clarified that only green crackers could be made henceforth across the country. This meant that no polluting crackers could be made after the factories sent out the existing stock.

The mandatory manufacture and sale of green crackers was implemented in the National Capital Region with immediate effect from last year itself.

## 'Sunny Leone' top ranked for junior engineer's post

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

Will Sunny Leone work as a junior engineer for the Bihar government?

If the merit list of candidates who had applied for about 200 posts, uploaded on the website of the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), is to be believed, the name of the actor figures as the top ranker with 98.5 points. Her father's name is registered as Leona Leona in the list.

Another candidate named 'bvxczbnb' with his father's name as 'mngvghnnnn' has come third, with 92.89 points.

When the issue was brought to the notice of PHED Minister Vinod Narayan Jha, he clarified that it was a "provisional list".

"When we'll ask the

## SC judge recuses self

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Justice L. Nageswara Rao on Wednesday recused himself from hearing the contempt plea filed by the CBI against West Bengal Chief Secretary Malay Kumar De, DGP Virendra Kumar and Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar.

The Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi adjourned the case to February 27 before an appropriate Bench not comprising Justice Rao.

The CBI has alleged that the State police obstructed its officers on February 3 from questioning Mr. Kumar in connection with its probe into ponzi scheme cases.



## The big fight

For the AIADMK, the Assembly bypolls are more important than the Lok Sabha election

In Tamil Nadu, political alliances for the Lok Sabha election are falling into place as in a jigsaw. The real fight, as it has been over the last four decades, is between the two major regional parties, the AIADMK and the DMK; but the BJP and the Congress have ensured that they have skin in the game, giving the contest a national flavour. While the BJP virtually forced its way into the AIADMK camp, the Congress drove a hard bargain for seats in the DMK-led alliance. Through four elections from 1996 to 2004, the AIADMK had switched between the Congress and the BJP, before contesting 2009 and 2014 without either of them for company. In 2014, the go-it-alone strategy yielded rich dividends: the party won 37 of the 39 seats. For the party to now give away five seats to the BJP and another seven to the Pattali Makkal Katchi is therefore a climbdown. But the AIADMK is more interested in retaining power in the State. The party is running the government on a wafer-thin majority after a revolt by the faction led by T.V. Dinakaran. Alongside the Lok Sabha election, by-elections to 21 Assembly constituencies are likely to be held. For Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, winning these seats is more important than a few more Lok Sabha constituencies in Tamil Nadu. With the BJP on board, the AIADMK can hope to have a stake in a government at the Centre, but even more important for the party is the tie-up with the PMK. With its concentrated support base in the northern districts of the State, the PMK could be of immense help in at least eight seats where by-elections are due.

The alliance with the BJP and the PMK also helped the AIADMK win the battle of perceptions with Mr. Dinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam. In the public eye, the AIADMK, as a sought-after ally, is now the bigger of the two parties. For the DMK, the tie-up with the Congress is part of its visualisation of a larger national canvas. In India's coalition era, the DMK has had an important role to play: the party was part of governments led by different combinations of parties. If indeed the AIADMK government lasts its full term until 2021, the DMK would very much like to have some levers of power at the Centre. The party was in power either at the Centre or in the State for most of the 15 years from 1996 till 2011, and it would like to avoid a second consecutive loss in the Lok Sabha election after two successive defeats in the Assembly elections. Moreover DMK president M.K. Stalin knows this is his first big test after the passing of his father and party patriarch M. Karunanidhi. For him, the stakes are just as high in the Lok Sabha election.

## With reservations

It's not clear if the 103rd Amendment will protect the new quota for Gujjars in Rajasthan

With leaders of the Gujar agitation for reservations calling off their stir, the Rajasthan government has averted what could have been a prolonged crisis. There is a sense of *déjà vu* amid all this. Gujar leaders have held various rounds of protests over the last decade and a half, demanding reservations in educational institutions and employment in a separate backward category that is apart from the existing 21% set aside for Other Backward Classes in the State. Despite governments bringing in legislation towards this end, they have been struck down on the grounds that the additional quota would take the quantum of reservation above the 50% limit set by the Supreme Court in the *Indra Sawhney* judgment. On Wednesday, the Rajasthan State Assembly passed legislation providing 5% reservation to Gujjars and four other nomadic communities, classifying them as "extremely backward classes". But this time, the circumstances have arguably changed with the passing of the 103rd Amendment to the Constitution that allows for a 10% quota for the economically backward among communities that do not enjoy any form of reservation. The State government has also added a line to the Bill explicitly referring to the amendment, which effectively breaches the 50% limit set for reservations by the Supreme Court. It remains to be seen how the judiciary will tackle this question in light of the 103rd amendment, the constitutionality of which is under challenge.

The demand by Gujjars has a specific context. In Rajasthan, the community is currently eligible for reservations as an OBC community. They had in the mid- and late-2000s agitated for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe category, in keeping with the way they are classified in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. This demand was denied because tribal status, as defined in the Constitution's Fifth Schedule, involves identifiable characteristics such as lifestyle, culture, inaccessibility and backwardness, and not just economic underdevelopment. Since then, the largely pastoral community has pressed for reservations under a separate backward class category, arguing that inclusion of Jats in the OBC list has crowded Gujjars out of the benefits of reservations. Clearly, the decision to accommodate a demand from one politically dominant community (Jats) has come to haunt administrators in the State as this has fanned Gujar agitations on and off. Multiple commissions appointed by State governments have recommended the implementation of the 5% quota on the basis of the community's "extreme" or "most" backward nature. But the lack of adequate data in the absence of a proper socio-economic caste census to prove this has led to the policy's undoing in judicial orders. More important, the repeated agitations are an indication of the shortfall in adequate, gainful and secure job opportunities in States such as Rajasthan.

# The employment test

The labour force may have actually shrunk while the Modi government has been in office



PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

**A**ttuned as we have become to political grandstanding on the purpose of democracy, we may not have imagined that something so prosaic as statistics can alter our perception of how it is actually working for us. The emergence over the past few months of data on employment, speaking precisely the lack of it, cannot but have an influence on our assessment. They paint a picture of an economy that is widely out of line with the government's pronouncements on its performance. These have generally avoided any reference to employment, except to say that there is a lack of reliable data on it, for the rectification of which the government itself has done very little.

Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister for the greater part of this government's tenure, has claimed that it has coincided with a degree of macroeconomic stability that has not been surpassed. Perhaps he had in mind the combination of falling inflation and declining Budget deficits since 2014. However, while this has indeed transpired, it is important to note that these trends had commenced even before. Moreover, after repeatedly expressing a commitment to fiscal consolidation, the government did not hesitate to swerve from the path of rectitude to finance an income support programme for farmers in an election year.

### Silence on jobs

But of greater significance is the fact that neither he nor the Prime

Minister has had anything to say about employment. In this the BJP is not unique. Employment does not usually figure in the public discourse orchestrated by political parties, either at the Centre or in the States. This must change, for steady employment is the citizen's aspiration, to realise which she elects representatives. Governments in India must therefore be routinely subjected to an employment test which gauges their success in generating and sustaining high employment. In his election campaign in 2014 Narendra Modi had announced that he would generate.

Employment data from government sources (Labour Bureau) for about half a decade up to 2015 and from the independent agency Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) for the period since give us a reasonably good idea of the progress made with respect to employment. When supplemented with other information, these sources also suggest to us the proximate factors responsible for that history. The evidence they provide tell two stories. First, the Modi government has had next to no success in generating employment, notwithstanding its promises at election time. A development that may require some effort to understand fully, but which nevertheless it is important for the citizen to do, is that the labour force may actually have shrunk while it has been in office. The labour force is the sum of the employed and those unemployed who are seeking employment. A shrinking of the labour force is most unusual in an economy with a growing population, and thus a growing working age cohort.

### The demonetisation effect

While this decline had already emerged in 2015, it became pro-



nounced after demonetisation in 2016. We owe to CMIE, a private Indian body, both this finding and the articulation of the precise mechanism at work. A section of those hitherto willing to work may have simply dropped out of an already challenged labour market. This possibility is recognised in macroeconomics as the 'discouraged-worker effect' and has been observed in Western economies. The loss of skill that can accompany being unemployed even temporarily, and the consequent loss of long-run output for the economy, is the basis of the argument that public policy must respond with alacrity to growing unemployment. No such sensibility has infused the government, which appears not to have noticed the decline in the labour force itself, a development that occurred very early in its tenure. It has instead congratulated itself on having delivered macroeconomic stability. We are now able to see that whatever may have been the acclaimed beneficial impact of demonetisation in terms of raising direct tax compliance, it has caused demoralisation among a section of the already unemployed who may have given up all hope of finding employment.

The second of the two histories referred to, seen in the reports of one of the government's agencies, is that of a rising unemployment rate from 2011 onwards. This point

has political significance as we stay poised for the general election. This is that while the Modi government may have run amok with the demonetisation, India's unemployment challenge predates this episode and evidently runs deeper. Labour Bureau data show that the unemployment rate almost doubled between 2011 and 2015. It is surprising that the government's own reports did not flag this. The economic, as opposed to the political, message is that the recent history of unemployment has been impervious to the political formation governing India.

If we are to move beyond just wringing our hands at the existant unemployment, an understanding of what underlies it is necessary. Actually, no more than standard macroeconomic analysis is needed in this regard. Both output growth and employment are under normal circumstances associated with capital formation. Capital formation as a share of output has been declining since 2011-12. Unlike consumption expenditure, capital expenditure is unique in expanding both the supply and demand sides of the economy. Despite the declining capital formation, neither United Progressive Alliance (UPA) II nor National Democratic Alliance II considered it necessary to respond to it by stepping up public investment, the obvious thing to do in the prevailing circumstances.

The clue to this inertia may be found in the political economy. For UPA II the success of its first term in office must have looked like the perfect opportunity to expand its political base by legislating rights and reciting the mantra "inclusive growth". Then came Narendra Modi, who somewhat incongruously for an avowedly nationalist politician, embraced the dogma of the Washington Consen-

sus. Popular in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it extolled small government and asserted the capacity of the market mechanism to deliver an optimal outcome. There was in this scheme of things no place for any involuntary unemployment. So, whatever may have been the calculation of the two political formations, employment generation just took a back seat in their respective programmes.

### Cost of failure?

We have adopted representative democracy as our form of government because we cannot in isolation achieve the outcomes we desire even when they are exclusive to us. Employment is one example of this. Though it manifests itself as jobs for individuals, it is determined by macroeconomic factors which individuals cannot influence on their own. The Great Depression in the 20th century and the Great Recession in the 21st, both which have originated in the U.S. but quickly spread across the world, testify to this helplessness of individuals in the face of market forces. In a democracy, it is left to elected representatives whether to pursue macroeconomic policies conducive to the generation of employment. India's political parties have for close to a decade now failed to either willingly or out of neglect. However, when elected to govern, they are given a chance to create the conditions that enable Indians to lead flourishing lives, which includes being meaningfully employed during their working age. India's political parties must pass 'the employment test'. When they fail they must vacate the stage.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor, Ashoka University, Sonipat and Senior Fellow, IIM Kozhikode

## More symbolic than punitive

India's trade-related action will encourage informal trade and propel Pakistan to look for markets beyond South Asia



SEEMA BATHLA & ABHISHEK JHA

**I**ndia's decision to withdraw the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan means that India will not treat Pakistan on an equal footing in trade as is expected of fellow members of the World Trade Organisation. The move comes after the attack on a Central Reserve Police Force convoy in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir.

### Just a dent

It does not strictly fall under the 'beggar-thy-policy', often used in international trade through which one country tries to resolve its economic problems by means that worsen the economic problems of its neighbours or trade partners. The moot point therefore is the sensitivity of the impact of the MFN status on Pakistan in terms of its trade with India. It can only be a pressure tactic and do little unless stringent actions are taken to stop informal trade that has been going on between the two countries for long.

Besides China, India and Pakistan are the two largest economies in the South Asian region. Being

dominant constituents of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, both countries have immense potential for intra-regional trade. Trade now takes place using three channels: the official route; the illegal (informal) route, through smuggling along porous India-Pakistan land borders and also Afghanistan, which may not be accounted for in the national income; and lastly, through mainly Dubai and Singapore, which have free ports and accommodate legal agents of traders from India and Pakistan.

Informal trade generally takes place due to restrictions on import of specific items on grounds of health and religious beliefs; high tariff barriers or transportation costs, making it cost effective to smuggle goods in the country; imposition of non-tariff measures (NTMs); weaknesses in the 'rules of origin' resulting in 'trade routed through a third country'; leakages in transit trade; and distortions in domestic policies such as the absence of or relatively low indirect taxes, creating an incentive to transport items illegally to neighbouring countries. Traders carry out informal trade between Pakistan and India through the exchange of goods at the border as well as through the personal baggage scheme' through "green channel" facilities at international airports or railway stations. 'Infor-

mal trade has also taken place through Afghanistan where goods are exported officially from India and later smuggled into Pakistan. Indian-made goods smuggled into Pakistan include cosmetics, liquor, stainless steel utensils, ayurvedic medicines, videotapes/CDs, confectionery/cashew nuts, tea, coffee, live animals and spices'.

### Trade data

From 2011-12 to 2017-18, India's formal trade with Pakistan increased from \$1.94 billion to \$2.41 billion. Of this, the share of exports stands at almost 80% and has been fairly stable over the years (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India). In 2012-13, informal trade between India and Pakistan – estimated in a study (ICRIER, N. Taneja and S. Bimal, 2016) – was \$4.71 billion, which was double when compared to formal trade. India's informal export share to Pakistan was again much higher at \$4 billion while its import share was low at \$0.71 billion.

After the Pulwama attack, the

follow-up measure to raise tariff duty on imports to 200% can again be trivial. So would be the NTMs, if increased, as India's imports from Pakistan are reasonably low at \$0.488 billion. Besides, imports from Pakistan grew at a lower rate (1.04%) compared to exports (1.32%) per annum from 2011-12 to 2017-18. Major exports from India that would hard hit would be cotton (not carded or combed) valued at \$0.273 billion, p-Xylene (\$0.082 billion), polypropylene (\$0.063 billion) and single yarn (\$0.088 billion). Pakistan's loss from major exports to India would be much less – from dates (\$0.13 billion), portland cement (\$0.078 billion), other petroleum oil (\$0.055 billion) and light oils and preparations (\$0.028 billion).

Thus Pakistan is an important export destination for India but not vice-versa. This is despite the fact that Pakistan imposes a large number of NTMs (143) on Indian exports, the major ones being export related measures (25.2%); technical barriers to trade (24.5%); and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (22.4%). These are 'concentrated on agriculture, plants, and food-related products and operate as bans that shut competitors out of its market. Pakistan's NTMs are blunt instruments; it is difficult to use them to provide targeted protection to the strategic industries. In contrast, India's NTMs are

soft barriers which operate as delays or bureaucratic hurdles rather than bans. Pakistan's NTMs focus on general categories of goods whereas India's NTMs are on particular industries and trading partners. The widely used NTMs India uses include defence procurement procedure, preference to domestically manufactured electronic goods in government procurement and a ban on goods largely manufactured within the country.

The sense is that Pakistan may not face an exacerbating situation with India withdrawing the MFN status and raising the import duty. Informal trade may proliferate, which might not be in India's interest and an appropriate strategy is required to bring it to a halt. Also, under the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) 2004, Pakistan's share in external trade is less than 10%, while India's share is more than 70%. Such steps may propel Pakistan to look for new markets beyond SAFTA, corroborated by the recent meeting held with Saudi Arabia and growing prospects of trade through a third country, mainly via Dubai.

Seema Bathla and Abhishek Jha are Professor and Research Scholar, respectively, at the Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Electoral alliances

There cannot be a more opportunistic alliance than the one formed between the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the PMK (Page 1, "AIADMK signs pact with BJP, PMK, February 20"). It was only recently that some in the PMK complained about the AIADMK's alleged corruption. One wonders what happened now. The PMK is too naive to take people for granted. One hopes that people recognise and reject the opportunistic politics behind such alliances.

T. ANAND RAJ,  
Chennai

■ The PMK allying with the AIADMK is an unanticipated move given that that party has been critical of the AIADMK administration ever since Jayalalithaa was in power in Tamil Nadu. The BJP joining hands with the

AIADMK is another game of opportunism.

N. VISVESWARAN,  
Chennai

■ Politics makes strange bedfellows and the seat-sharing accord reached between the AIADMK, the BJP and the PMK is proof that parties with disparate ideologies that have been spewing venom at each other can come together to fight elections by swallowing the insults. What is really puzzling though is the PMK hitching its wagon to the AIADMK star.

C. V. ARAVIND,  
Bengaluru

■ The PMK allying with the AIADMK is an unanticipated move given that that party has been critical of the AIADMK administration ever since Jayalalithaa was in power in Tamil Nadu. The BJP joining hands with the

### Pakistan's response

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan may have broken his silence after the Pulwama attack, and he has only shocked us (Page 1, "Pakistan will hit back if India strikes, says Imran", February 20). He has just repeated the usual statement one gets out of Pakistan, which is nothing but an evasive tactic. What more proof does he require? It is amusing that the Pakistan government, which is unable to control terror activities on its soil, is now talking about retaliation.

D. SETHURAMAN,  
Chennai

■ The Pakistan Prime Minister should realise that he sounds silly and ridiculous. The world knows he is a puppet in the hands of his military masters. He has the audacity to say this when Pakistan is the 'poster boy' of terrorism. Mr. Khan is

not only a neophyte in politics but also equally untrustworthy.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,  
Noida

■ Mr. Khan's response is hardly surprising. With Pakistan already bleeding financially, India's pressure could weaken it further. India appears to be adopting a clever strategy of not letting anyone know what its next move could be. Wearing down the enemy silently is a tactic with potential.

R. SIVAKUMAR,  
Chennai

■ The Pakistan Prime Minister should realise that he sounds silly and ridiculous. The world knows he is a puppet in the hands of his military masters. He has the audacity to say this when Pakistan is the 'poster boy' of terrorism. Mr. Khan is

this abhorrent practice is wiped out through suitable enactment of anti-torture laws.

B. GURUMURTHY,  
Madurai

■ Punishments are meant to infuse fear in the person who commits a crime with the expectation that it will act as a deterrent. But one needs to draw the line as far as having severe custodial punishment is concerned. The reasons

and the circumstances under which a person may commit a crime have to be well-studied, and in this science and psychology play a key role. Individuals identified as a risk must be helped and their rehabilitation must be thought of. Deficiencies in the justice system must also be overcome.

VINOD SANTHANAM,  
Tysons, Virginia, U.S.

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:  
[www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/](http://www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/)

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:**  
In the Life page report on Hyperloop (Feb. 20, 2019, early editions), the second deck heading erroneously said the proposed system would cut travel time by one fifth to 30 minutes. Actually, the travel time is going to be cut to 30 minutes - that is one-fifth the current duration of travel. The error was corrected in

# A modern story of Ekalavya

The education system continues to exclude many people's histories, world views and cultures



SUNDAR SARUKKAI



"Our society is filled with committed teachers, but they are all silenced by the powers that run education as a handmaiden for their personal and political ambitions." A classroom in Mandawa, Rajasthan. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTO

It is difficult being a teacher these days. The dismantling of institutions, which seems to be the prime concern of this government, began with education. The attack on premier public universities through motivated hiring, questioning reservation, and creating a climate of fear and intimidation has continued. This is a time when many teachers are forced to rethink the meaning of teaching.

#### The place of the teacher

This has also led to a climate of suspicion about teachers in general, in schools, colleges and universities. Teachers are constantly under attack by systems which want to protect students (especially because students are nowadays seen as paying 'consumers'), by parents who decide what and how a teacher should teach, by a government which humiliates and uses teachers, and by private managements which see teachers as a necessary 'evil' to put up with. Our colleges and schools even today are places of feudal authority and oppressive labour conditions. In such a climate, for the first time in my life, I am beginning to ask whether it is worth teaching at all.

It was not easy being a teacher earlier too. The pay was quite abysmal and the work that it entailed, particularly the grading of hundreds of exam papers, was not necessarily enjoyable. But there was something different; there was a sense of service and commitment to the act of teaching, somewhat similar to the medical profession then. There was an underlying notion of respect for teachers, even from students.

In India, there are many stories of teachers who sacrificed much in order to teach. Teaching meant inspiring students, making them better human beings, and enabling them to go up in life. A good mathematics teacher always taught more than mathematics. What students learnt with every good teacher was not just subject matter but ways of being in the world.

The first disintegration of this

world of teaching came when teaching became equivalent to 'giving tuition'. And then came other major problems that have contributed to this suspicion of teaching. In a digital world, the role of a teacher is more and more unclear. There is a lack of clarity on what exactly a teacher is supposed to teach: the content, or diverse ways of thinking, or learning together with others?

Related to this issue is the continued lack of equal access to education. We have spent more money and effort keeping people out of the education system than trying to bring them in – much of this is done through dubious concepts called intelligence and merit, operationalised by examinations. It is not a surprise then that our gross enrolment ratios for all levels of education are quite low, because the aim of the system right from the beginning was to find ways to control who would enter the portals of education. This is a continuation of the Ekalavya complex, and it is possible because we have created a system in which the excluded find little representation of their lives, their world views and their articulations in what is taught.

**A story of caste and learning**  
In the midst of this existential crisis, I watched a new Tamil movie called *Sarvam Thala Mayam*. It is a movie which has been criticised for its avoidance of caste issues even though it is primarily about Carnatic music's

relation with caste. While that may be true, here I am more interested in what it says about the nature of teaching and learning. It is a modern Ekalavya story in a Tamil mainstream idiom and, like Ekalavya's story, which is about caste and privilege, at its core it is about the processes of teaching and learning.

The story of Ekalavya is well known and has been used as a powerful metaphor to highlight problems of exclusion in education – about how the privileged monopolise learning even though others may be far better. This movie makes us ask: What would Ekalavya do today if Drona refuses to teach him?

The modern Ekalavya, Peter Johnson, is the son of a mridangam maker. He is very talented. When he accidentally listens to a mridangam vidwan, Vembu Iyer, he is mesmerised. But this Chennai Ekalavya cannot easily become a student of this vidwan and much of the obstacle is related to their caste differences. These differences are most tellingly articulated by the boy's father who creates these instruments but also seems resigned to the fact that he will not be allowed to play them.

However, the modern Ekalavya does not give up when Vembu Iyer refuses to take him as his student. He persists and is finally taken as Iyer's student because Iyer sees Peter's passion and genuine commitment. Peter is like Ekalavya in his complete devotion to his guru, but due to a misun-

derstanding, the teacher banishes Peter for no fault of his. Their reconciliation is really the heart of the story, for it is not just a negotiation between people of different caste hierarchies but also between the hierarchy of teacher and student.

If Arjuna was the counterpart to Ekalavya in the original story, there is an equally powerful counterpart in this modern version. This is in the form of a fair-skinned, Tamil Brahmin NRI, who has been admitted to a PhD programme at Harvard University. He comes with more privilege than Arjuna! But Peter is unfazed. He takes on the traditionalists in their own game. In the climax of the movie, his strength is shown to lie in his own historical and cultural consciousness. Peter changes due to his encounter with his guru but he also changes the instrument and the classical music tradition which uses it.

Vembu Iyer epitomises all the struggles of a teacher, one who belongs to an exclusive tradition but with an ideal of learning that transcends that exclusion. A teacher is one who is able to go beyond his or her tradition and comfort zone for the sake of a true seeker. The film reminds us that a teacher is incomplete without good students, but good is not intellectual competence alone; it is something more. The last scene of the film, when the teacher accepts the student as someone who can not only carry on the tradition but also bring his own modifications to it, captures one of the central ethical principles of teaching.

**Need for an inclusive system**  
What this movie reminds us is that the present-day education system is based on the qualities, attributes and desires of a dominant community. It is not inclusive, since it does not have space for truth, knowledge and the qualities of learning based on the diverse strengths of different cultures and histories like those of Peter. But Peter's struggle should remind teachers that teaching is a service, not a transaction. Our society is filled with countless such committed teachers, but they are all silenced by the powers that run education as a handmaiden for their personal and political ambitions.

Sundar Sarukkai is Professor of Philosophy at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

# Splurging in the time of debt

Andhra Pradesh's government continues to launch populist schemes despite its poor financial situation



K. VENKATESWARLU

share in the debt, accounting for 60%. The outstanding debt includes the un-apportioned amount of ₹23,483 crore between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The debt accounts for 28.79% of the State GDP and the government says it is forced to raise loans as no special funds are flowing from the Centre beyond the Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

#### Dealing with the financial crisis

Yet the government insists that it has "converted the crisis into an opportunity". Despite structural challenges, the Budget boasts that the State is counted among the best economic performers with an average growth of 10.66% compared to the all-India growth rate of 7.3% (June 2014–December 2018).

How is the State overcoming the problems of a low tax base, deficit rainfall, an "uncooperative" Central government, and the hurdles mounted by bifurcation and a predominantly agriculture economy? Government officials say the State is not only controlling revenue expenditure by cutting administrative costs, plugging revenue leakages, minimising transaction costs and rationalising the tax structure, but also using more technology across the board.

Presenting the vote-on-budget in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, Finance Minister Y. Ramakrishnudu said the government had successfully launched the Comprehensive Financial Management System, which is in operation now. This, he said, not only improved "effectiveness of budget, expenditure and cash management", but also brought about a sea change in government transactions. The government, he said, saved ₹2,585 crore through Aadhaar seeding in the Public Distribution System by using technology to plug leakages. And it has managed to increase tax revenue from ₹38,038 crore in 2014–15 to ₹75,438 crore in 2018–19.

Although it claims to have done well in managing the available resources, the government seems unable to resist the temptation to launch more populist schemes in total disregard for the State's fragile financial condition. After spending over ₹22,000 crore on crop loan waivers, it announced ₹5,000 crore in the Interim Budget for Anna-dha Sukhibhava, an economic support scheme for farmers; doubled social security pensions; and increased the unemployment allowance. It also increased the pay scales of employees, the wages of Anganwadi workers and village revenue assistants, and the allocation for various welfare schemes.

How can a government indulge in financial profligacy while alleging a virtual funds freeze by the Centre?

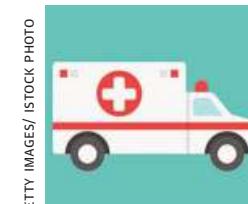
venkateswarlu.k@thehindu.co.in

#### SINGLE FILE

## The private sector in public health

It can provide services and capital

RUHA SHADAB



The healthcare panel at the recent India Conference hosted by students of the Harvard Kennedy School and the Harvard Business School discussed the role of the private sector in augmenting public healthcare services. Goal 3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages". India has a mammoth role in helping the world attain SDG-3 as global health indicators cannot improve without India making giant strides. In providing healthcare, the Indian government has led the way, as it should, given that India is a welfare state.

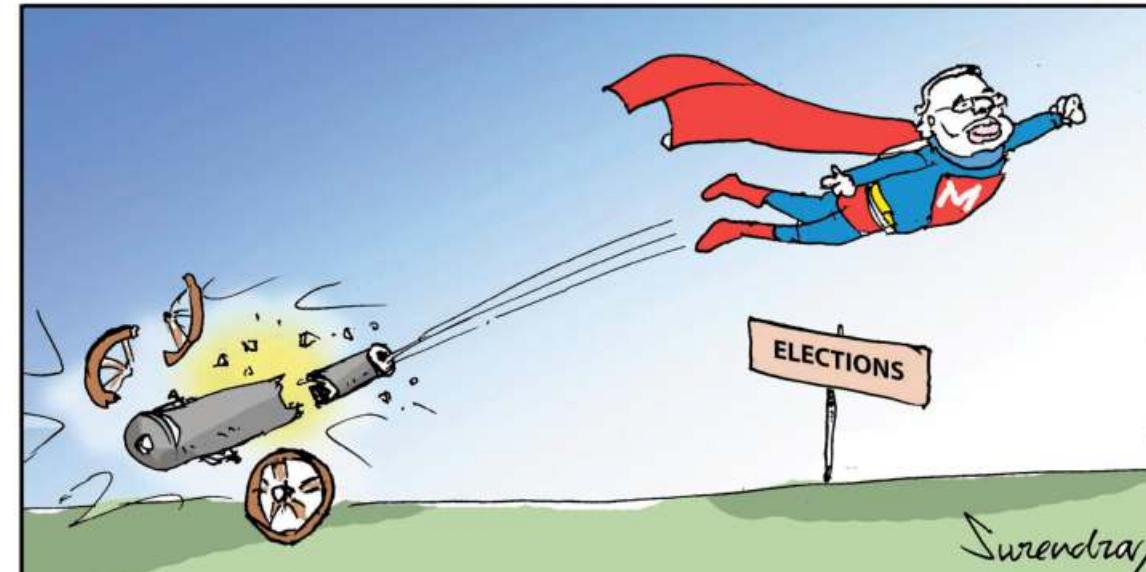
Over the past decade, courtesy changing demographics and lifestyles, India has been witnessing shifting disease prevalence in terms of the largest causes of morbidity and mortality. This requires that we give our health delivery system a re-look. The Harvard panel dove in to how the private sector can be leveraged for this purpose. The precondition is to create an ecosystem where partnerships between the private and the public sector can thrive. This must start with trust and stated common objectives. Once the ecosystem is more conducive, complementarities need to be identified.

While one may not foresee a great presence of the private sector in providing primary healthcare services, areas such as ambulance services and value-based care delivery can be promoted through this sector. Ayushman Bharat seeks to improve the network of the government's first-point-of-contact health centres. For higher levels of services, the private sector can be incorporated by creating linkages between public health infrastructure and private providers through a hub-and-spokes model.

Besides services, the private sector is also a source of capital. A legally mandated way to provide this is through Corporate Social Responsibility. Companies above a certain annual turnover (₹1,000 crore), net worth (₹500 crores) or annual net profits (₹5 crore) have to earmark 2% of their net profits of the past three years to CSR projects, which may include healthcare projects. CSR has not yet reached its full potential. However, it is encouraging to see the merging of initiatives. This is seen in the government directing companies, albeit public sector ones, to the focus districts of the Aspirational Districts programme, which was started in 2018 to improve governance and service delivery across six sectors including health and nutrition.

At the end of the day the lesson was clear: as India strives to ensure availability, affordability and accessibility to quality healthcare for its people, both private and public stakeholders need to come together.

The writer is a doctor pursuing a Master's degree in Public Policy at Harvard University



#### FAQ

### Inflation pressure eases

The Indian economy benefits from the fall in global oil prices

T.C.A. SHARAD RAGHAVAN

#### Why has inflation been falling?

Inflation at both the retail and wholesale levels has been falling for the last 4-5 consecutive months. Inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which captures retail inflation, and the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) has been falling in general for the last year or so. The CPI, for example, was as high as 5.21% in December 2017, following which it fell quite steadily (except for a mid-year blip in 2018) till it reached 2.05% in January 2019, the lowest it has been in 19 months. The WPI has similarly seen an overall decline, but has been more volatile than the CPI.

The main reason why inflation has been falling is the drop in global oil prices. After rising in the middle of 2018 to average \$80 a barrel in October, the Indian basket of crude oil prices fell to \$57 a barrel in December 2018. It was \$59



in January 2019. Prices in February have been slightly higher than that, but the increase is not much.

#### What does this mean for the economy?

The nature of the Indian economy is such that a change in oil prices has knock-on effects on almost every sector such as food, manufacturing, transport and infrastructure. Any sector that uses fuel or energy as an input is affected by global oil prices because India is still overwhelmingly dependent on imported oil to meet its needs.

When global oil prices fall, inflation falls across the board, most notably in energy-intensive sectors.

And within this, falling prices in each of these sectors have an impact on the other sectors dependent on them. For example, falling inflation in the transport sector means that every sector that needs to transport goods will also benefit.

Another aspect of falling inflation is that the Reserve Bank of India has more leeway to go easy on interest rates, one of its key inflation targeting tools. In its last Monetary Policy Review, the central bank cut the benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points. Some experts feel there is scope for even more cuts. Politically, low and falling inflation is always to the benefit of the government. This is especially noteworthy in the run-up to the general election. In contrast, the CPI inflation averaged about 7.6% in the three months leading up to the 2014 elections.

Why do WPI and CPI inflation diverge?

Economists have pointed out the divergence for quite some time now. The main reason behind it is that the two indices measure different products and assign each of the categories different weights in the calculation of the overall index.

This divergence has intensified since the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax because the new tax system affects retail inflation far more than it does wholesale inflation, since it is included in the final price of the product.

#### What is the outlook ahead?

The outlook on oil prices is a stable one. The consensus is that crude oil prices will remain in the range of \$55-65 a barrel for the next three to four quarters. Given how important this is for inflation in India, experts feel retail inflation will remain subdued at 2-3% and wholesale inflation at 3-4% in the near future.

#### FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 21, 1969

Mujibur Rahman let out on parole

The prospects of political talks between President Ayub Khan and the Opposition brightened today [February 20, New Delhi] with the release on parole of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, principal accused in the Dacca Conspiracy Case. There were rumours that the Government might be willing to drop the conspiracy case, but there was no official statement on the circumstances under which Mr. Rahman, who had earlier refused to accept parole. As word of Mr. Rahman's release reached Rawalpindi, the eight-party Central Democratic Action Committee resumed discussions on Mr. Ayub Khan's invitation for talks to resolve the political crisis. The D.A.C. convenor, Nawabzada Nasimullah Khan, told newsmen in Rawalpindi that Mr. Rahman would reach there from Dacca to participate in the D.A.C. discussions.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 21, 1919

Affray in a Train.

The murderous affray in a compartment of the Quetta Mail train which left Karachi on Tuesday morning [Feb. 18] has resulted in the death of two persons. A Punjabi Mohammad named Haji Almadin belonging to Lahore, who for the last five years has been a sweetmeat seller in Karachi, entered a third class compartment of the train at Junnshahi. Fourteen passengers were already in the compartment. He asked one seated near the window to surrender his seat, but the man refused whereupon the Punjabi drew a large knife and stabbed him in several places finally throwing him out of the window. Another man interfered and was also attacked, but took refuge in a lavatory where he smashed the window and jumped from the train... The Punjabi continued his attacks on other passengers and altogether one man was killed on the spot and eight severely injured.

#### CONCEPTUAL Acid test ratio

FINANCE

This refers to a financial metric that is used to measure the ability of a firm to meet its various short-term obligations. It is calculated by dividing the sum of a firm's most liquid assets like cash and short-term receivables by its short-term liabilities. Other short-term assets like inventory, which are not readily convertible into cash, are usually not included in the calculation of this ratio. The acid-test ratio is used by analysts as an important measure of a firm's liquidity position. There is considerable leeway involved in the calculation of the ratio since analysts may differ in their opinion about the actual liquidity of a firm's various assets.

#### MORE ON THE WEB

Video: Aero India Show kicks off

<http://bit.ly/AeroShowVideo>

CM YK

AN-NDNE

FROM PAGE ONE

## Anil Ambani, RCom guilty of contempt: SC

Senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi, who appeared for Mr. Ambani, told the court: "we respect the judgment, we will honour it."

The court, however, dismissed Ericsson's contempt plea against the State Bank of India chairperson, who had headed the joint lenders' forum comprising of 46 financial creditors of the RCom group.

It held that the "contempt petition against the Chairman of SBI would not lie inasmuch as the Ericsson transaction and the sale of assets by the joint lenders' forum are completely independent of each other".

## Congress gets 10 seats in T.N., Puducherry

"We have not held any secret discussion in a hotel, but had an open meeting in our party headquarters," Mr. Stalin said, mocking the AIADMK-BJP-PMK alliance that was finalised at a star hotel in Chennai on Tuesday.

Asked whether the DMK front would have any specific name since the AIADMK alliance had called itself as "people's welfare alliance", Mr. Stalin retorted that people were calling the AIADMK alliance as "money-driven alliance."

"Let them first announce the date for the by-election for 21 Assembly constituencies," he said, while responding to a question on whether any discussions were held about it.

Asked about the possibility of bringing actor Vijayakanth's DMDK to the DMK alliance, he said, "We will inform you if it happens." The DMDK, wooed by the AIADMK-BJP, is sulking over the single-digit seats being offered to it.

To a question whether the DMK's election manifesto would be released on March 1 which coincided with his birthday, Mr. Stalin said he had decided not to celebrate his birthday since a year had not passed after the death of party leader M. Karunanidhi.

He dismissed as "mere

**People want a change all over India, especially in Tamil Nadu**

K.C. VENUGOPAL  
AICC general secretary

speculation" that he was criticising the PMK since his effort to bring the party into the DMK fold failed.

**Country needs this'**  
Expressing happiness over the agreement, Mr. Venugopal said the country very much needed the alliance.

"AICC president Rahul Gandhi has given us a clear direction and we had talks with the DMK in the last three-four days and finally we reached an agreement. The alliance will give a boost to the anti-BJP and anti-Modi mood at the Centre," he said.

The entire nation was disappointed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi because he had not fulfilled any of the promises made to the people. "On the other hand, the government is troubling the common people. All the people are fed up with the BJP government and the AIADMK government in Tamil Nadu. People want a change all over India and especially in Tamil Nadu. The way in which the alliance is going with the DMK, we will get 100%," he added.

He dismissed as "mere

## India pitches for global action against terrorism



President Ram Nath Kovind with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. ■ PTI

The MEA announced that on request from the Indian leader the Crown Prince ordered the release of 850 prisoners from Saudi jails before his visit came to an end.

The Crown Prince said, "We have also diversified to the petrochemical sector in India. Since 2016, we have achieved many goals with India and we think there is a potential for investing \$100 billion." Prime Minister Modi praised the Saudi role as a crucial energy supplier to India and said that both sides are moving towards sustainable energy.

A joint statement issued at the end of the visit, agreed to expedite the work for the \$44 billion West Coast Refinery and Petrochemical Project.

The visit is the first by the Saudi dignitary who is known to have brought in a new vision to the oil-rich economy.

Mr. Modi described Saudi Arabia as one of India's most valuable strategic partners. Responding to India's po-

sition on Pakistan, the Saudi side said that it will support India's security needs. "We will share intelligence with India and other countries to prevent terrorism," said Mohammed Bin Salman, even though he did not mention cross-border terrorism from Pakistan during his press conference.

The joint statement urged for early adoption of the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and pitched for "comprehensive sanctioning of terrorists and their organisations by the UN."

Both sides also resolved to create a "Comprehensive Security Dialogue" consisting of National Security Advisers and set up a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism. Both sides also launched a Strategic Partnership Council that will be led by the Prime Minister and the Crown Prince.

During the visit of Mohammed Bin Salman, Saudi Arabia joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

## Terror attack horrible: Trump

U.S. administration offers full support to India to combat such incidents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has described as "horrible" the deadly terror attack by the Jaish-e-Mohammed in Pulwama, as his administration offered full support to India to combat terrorism and asked Islamabad to punish anyone responsible for the "heinous act".

Mr. Trump told pressersons at the Oval Office of the White House that it would be "wonderful" if the two South Asian neighbours got along.

"I have watched. I have got a lot of reports on it. We will have comment [on it] at an appropriate time. It would be wonderful if they [India and Pakistan] get along," Mr. Trump said in response to a question.

"That [the terrorist attack] was horrible situa-



Making a point: U.S. President Donald Trump speaking at the White House in Washington on Tuesday. ■ REUTERS

tion. We are getting reports. We will have a statement to put out," Mr. Trump said.

### Strong support

At a separate news conference, the State Department said the U.S. had been in close communication with the Indian government "to

express not only our condolences but our strong support."

"We're committed to working with the Indian government to combat terrorism in all of its forms," State Department Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino told reporters.

The U.S. had a close, cooperative relationship with India, a security relationship, and that included counter-terrorism operations, he said. "So we are committed to working with India, the Indian government, and on these counter-terrorism efforts, both bilaterally and multilaterally, including at the United Nations," Mr. Palladino said. He said the U.S. had been in contact with Pakistan.

## French envoy confirms push against Jaish chief

Second attempt by Paris at UN

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL  
BENGALURU

Ambassador of France to India Alexandre Ziegler on Wednesday said that his country was pushing to put Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar on the UN sanctions list.

This will be the second time that France will put forth its proposal at the United Nations.

In 2017, France, supported by the United States and the United Kingdom, had moved a proposal at the UN Sanctions Committee 1267 to get Azhar declared as a global terrorist, but it was blocked by China.

"We are very much pushing in that direction. It has been two years that we are trying to put him on the UN sanctions list," Mr. Ziegler said at the five-day Aero India



Alexandre Ziegler  
2019 show which began here on Wednesday.

India's attempts to list Azhar at the UN Security Council have been repeatedly blocked by China at the best of Pakistan.

JeM had claimed responsibility for the February 14 Pulwama terror attack in which 40 CRPF personnel lost their lives.

## IN BRIEF



Cong. 'appeasement' to blame for terrorism: Yogi

BHUBANESWAR  
Terrorism in India is an outcome of the appeasement policy adopted by the Congress, said Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday. The BJP didn't follow such a policy or let anybody play with India's security, he told booth-level workers at Bhawanipatna.

**BJP politicising Pulwama attack, says CPI(M)**

HYDERABAD  
The CPI(M) has criticised the BJP for its efforts to "politicise" the Pulwama attack. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury faulted BJP president Amit Shah for claiming that "we will teach the rest of the world about Pakistan's role in the Pulwama attack," an official said.

## Wuzhen meet to discuss attack

China promises constructive attitude

ATUL ANEJA  
BEIJING

India and China are expected to hold their first high-level talks on the Pulwama terror attack on February 27, when External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj meets her counterparts from Beijing and Moscow in Wuzhen, a diplomatic source said.

An official source told *The Hindu* that so far, Chinese officials had interacted with their Indian counterparts in the UN to discuss the Pulwama incident.

On Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, stressed that the three Foreign Ministers would pursue the "consensus" reached in November by the leaders of the three countries during their informal meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Argentina.



Asked what additional proof China required to impose a UN ban on JeM leader Masood Azhar, Mr. Geng said: "I have answered many questions regarding this. We know that 1267 committee of the Security Council has clear rules of procedure when it comes to designation of terrorists and terrorist organisations, and on this issue, we will adopt a constructive attitude to work with all sides."

## NIA takes over Pulwama case, names Jaish in FIR

High Commissioner meets Rajnath on diplomatic campaign

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) took over the probe in the Pulwama terror attack case on Wednesday and named Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in the First Information Report.

A senior official said Jaish chief Masood Azhar has not been named in the FIR as yet, as it was only a preliminary report and the NIA was only re-registering the case filed by the J&K police. His role in the attack is being actively investigated.

Meanwhile, India's High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria met Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday and is learnt to have briefed him about the efforts made by India to isolate Pa-



Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria leaving South Block. ■ PTI

kistan globally in the wake of the terror attack that killed 40 CRPF personnel on Februry 14.

"The Director-General of NIA and a team of senior officers visited the place of occurrence. The officers of CRPF and local police were

also present. He was briefed by the officers about the progress made in the investigation so far," an NIA spokesman said.

Another official said the suicide bomber was driving a Maruti Eeco car and not an SUV as reported earlier but "expert opinion was awaited."

Mr. Bisaria was called back by the government for consultations after the Pulwama attack.

"There is no point in giving any more dossiers to Pakistan on the involvement of Pakistan-based terror outfits in attacks here. In the past, they have not acted on any such document. We will convince the rest of the world about Pakistan's role in the Pulwama attack," an official said.

## Our fight is not with Kashmiris: Malik

No student from Aligarh Muslim University has returned, says J&K Governor

VIAJITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik said on Wednesday that the country's fight is with Pakistan and terrorists and not with Kashmiris.

Mr. Malik attributed the return of Kashmiri students from across institutions in north India to a sense of insecurity and not due to any serious physical violence.

Asked why over 300 students had returned to the Valley, Mr. Malik told *The Hindu*, "They are returning

because their colleges are shut. May be some feel insecure. We have made arrangements for their stay and travel."

Apprehending physical and verbal attacks from some groups in the wake of the Pulwama attack, Kashmiri students from various col-

leges across north India, mostly from Dehradun in Uttarakhand, returned to the Valley.

Mr. Malik said around 1,200 students from Kashmir are studying in Aligarh Muslim University and none of them have come back.

"We appointed 11 liaison officers across the country for the welfare of Kashmiri students last year. Our fight is with Pakistan and terrorists. Some political leaders want to use the incident (of students fleeing) to fuel a communal divide. There

were many attempts to deliberately stoke the issue but we didn't let anything happen," said Mr. Malik.

He said the Army, the police and the Central Armed Police Forces were working in synergy and it was bringing good results.

"Officers are leading from the front. Their morale is high and they are not putting the personnel in the front to face the bullets. The Brigadier who was injured in the Pulwama encounter on Thursday had cancelled his leave," he said.

## Security of 18 separatists downgraded in J&K

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

The Governor's administration in J&K on Wednesday downgraded the security provided to 18 separatist leaders, including Syed Ali Shah Geelani of the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat and Yasin Malik of the JKLF.

Besides, the security provided to 155 "political persons" – including the 2010 IAS topper Shah Faesal who later quit the service – was withdrawn.

This comes days after the security of top four separatist leaders, including Mir-

waiz Umar Farooq, was withdrawn in the wake of the Pulwama terror attack.

"It was felt that providing security to separatist leaders is a wastage of scarce state resources, which could be better utilised elsewhere," said the State Home Department spokesman.

"Over 1,000 police personnel and over 100 vehicles are freed to do regular police work," the spokesman said.

JKLF's Malik said, "I and Geelani enjoyed no security. The announcement is aimed to mislead."

## 'Pak. has no case against Jadhav'

It has convicted him on the basis of an extracted confession, ICJ told

VIDYA RAM  
THE HAGUE

The judicial review process available to Kulbhushan Jadhav in Pakistan was "hopelessly insufficient," while Islamabad was basing its case entirely on claims around a passport and an "extracted confession," India's counsel Harish Salve told the International Court of Justice on Wednesday.

**Sharp attack**  
He began the second round of oral arguments in the hearings, with a sharp attack on the tone and content of Pakistan's presentation on Tuesday. Concluding the session, Joint Secretary Deepak Mittal called on the court to adjudicate on an "egregious" breach of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and to order that Mr. Jadhav be given consular access. And if the court was not able to annul the verdict of

the military court and order his release, he called on it to annul the military court verdict and order a civilian trial through the ordinary courts, after excluding the extracted confession from evidence and providing him with consular access.

India insists that contrary to Pakistan's contention, the Vienna convention is not subject to exceptions on any grounds – including national security and espionage. Speaking outside the court, Pakistan's counsel

ahead of the hearings, and would still be able to continue to participate by watching recordings or reading transcripts of the case. However, he left open the possibility of a replacement at a later stage should Mr. Jadhav still be unable to attend.

Mr. Salve accused Pakistan of failing to accord the proceedings with due "dignity" and "solemnity," and criticised the strong language that had been used. "India takes exception to being addressed in this fashion in this court," he said, pointing to some of the phrases that had been deployed including the use of words such as "arrogance," "ridiculous," and "disgraceful."

"Humpty Dumpty has no place in this court", he said, pointing to a reference made by Mr. Qureshi to the nursery rhyme, accusing India of building a "flimsy wall of lies."

## Bench may fix schedule for Ayodhya hearings

It may also peruse report on records

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, which will hear the Ayodhya title suit appeals on February 26, is supposed to fix the time and schedule for future hearings.

The Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi,

INTERVIEW | ADEL AL-JUBEIR

# 'Crucial for India, Pakistan to work closely together to go after terrorists'

Relationship with India is strategic, historic and critically important to us; Pakistan is also a friendly country, says Saudi's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

SUHASINI HAIDAR

After visiting Pakistan and India in quick succession, Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir, in an interview, called for a "de-escalation" of tensions between the two countries in the wake of the Pulwama attack. Notwithstanding strong words from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on making Pakistan accountable, the Saudi delegation led by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman clearly signalled it aims to maintain the balance in its ties in the region.

You have said that the Crown Prince hopes to de-escalate tensions in the region. Did he discuss this with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and how do you see the situation in the region after the talks?

■ I did not say we would de-escalate tensions, but that we hope the situation can be de-escalated and that the two sides can sit at the table and resolve their differences peacefully. We have friendly

relations with Pakistan and friendly relations with India, and our relations are historic. We see India as one of our eight strategic partners in implementing our vision 2030.

Pakistan is also a friendly country to us, and we believe that stability and prosperity in Pakistan helps the region, so we have great ties with both countries and if our friends want us to play a role [between them] we will consider it.

But we will not insert ourselves in the middle of the conflict between the two

countries even though both are friendly to us. HRH made this point to Indian officials and said, both countries are important to us and if you want us to do something, we will consider that.



We will not insert ourselves in the middle of the conflict between the two countries. Both are important to us

[Jaish e Mohammad chief Masood Azhar] that has claimed credit lives openly in Pakistan, and was seen being released in exchange for hostages 19 years ago. So, will Saudi Arabia make specific requests to Pakistan on this case?

■ We have communications with India through security channels dealing with counter-terrorism, intelligence and with regards to pursuing and extraditing subjects, which have been very helpful to both our countries in fighting terrorism and extre-

mism. Those conversations are ongoing, but in the security channel, not the diplomatic channel.

Diplomatically too, there

tries would want other countries to be designated this way.

So that was the meaning of politicisation, not the one case you referred to.

At the end of your visit and talks in India and Pakistan, how do you see the situation... are you worried about a possible conflict?

■ I hope not. I think the leadership in both countries is wise. We have a lot of respect for Prime Minister Modi and we have a lot of respect for Prime Minister Imran Khan and that the two leaders would be able to de-escalate and avoid any conflict.

Political listings means picking up names of people at random and saying, this is a terrorist, designate, designate. Because, so many coun-

tries would want other countries to be designated this way.

So that was the meaning of politicisation, not the one case you referred to.

At the end of your visit and talks in India and Pakistan, how do you see the situation... are you worried about a possible conflict?

■ I hope not. I think the leadership in both countries is wise. We have a lot of respect for Prime Minister Modi and we have a lot of respect for Prime Minister Imran Khan and that the two leaders would be able to de-escalate and avoid any conflict.

■ We have communications with India through security channels dealing with counter-terrorism, intelligence and with regards to pursuing and extraditing subjects, which have been very helpful to both our countries in fighting terrorism and extre-

Because, so many coun-

## Why grand welcome to Salman, asks Cong.

Party to break self-imposed gag, ask government questions on 'lapses' that led to Pulwama attack

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday questioned the "grand welcome" accorded to Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who had praised Pakistan's anti-terror effort just a day after the Pulwama terror attack.

The party asked if this was how Prime Minister Narendra Modi remembered the Pulwama martyrs.

Breaking the self-imposed gag on not attacking the Modi government over the terror attack, Congress communication chief Randeep Surjewala said time had now come for the government to



The Congress questioned the 'hugplomacy' of Narendra Modi with Mohammed bin Salman. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

answer questions.

The Congress has not yet finalised its next course of action, but party president Rahul Gandhi could be doing

another press conference on the Pulwama attack.

Unlike the last one where he stood behind the government, Mr. Gandhi this time

could ask why the government agencies failed to gather prior intelligence of such a major terror attack.

"National interests v/s Modiji's 'hugplomacy' breaking protocol, grand welcome to those who pledged USD 20 billion to Pakistan and praised Pakistan's 'anti-terror' efforts. Is it our way of remembering martyrs of Pulwama?" Mr. Surjewala tweeted.

### 'Show courage'

The Congress leader said Mr. Modi should show "courage" and ask Mr. Salman to undo their joint statement with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan that talked about "the need for avoiding politicisation of the UN listing regime."

"Modiji, Is asking for a terrorist to be designated as such politicisation of UN listings? Would you show courage to ask Saudi Arabia to undo their 'Joint Statement' with Pak virtually rejecting India's demand for designating Masood Azhar as a 'global terrorist?'" he said.

A week after the tragedy, a section of the Opposition is ready to question the government, including on the standard operating procedure of moving troops in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Kashmiri students are safe, no one harassed: Javadekar

Large-scale eviction of students from Uttarakhand reported



Prakash Javadekar

At least 300 students studying in colleges in Uttarakhand fled to Jammu and Delhi following large-scale evictions from campuses and hostels, *The Hindu* reported.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration confirmed that a large number of distress calls had been received from students in Uttarakhand.

The Home Ministry on Saturday issued an advisory to all States and Union Territories to ensure the safety and security of Kashmiris.

## Rahul, Priyanka meet kin of CRPF jawans

Say they understand their pain and sadness; offer support to the families

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

Congress president Rahul Gandhi and his sister and party leader, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, were in Shamlı district of Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday to visit the homes of two CRPF jawans killed in the Pulwama attack.

The Congress leaders travelled by road to visit the family of constable Amit Kumar Kori on Mohalla Road and constable Pradip Kumar at Banat.

Accompanied by Raj Babbar, Congress State president, and Jyotiraditya Scindia, general secretary in charge of western Uttar Pradesh, they also attended a prayer meeting in Shamlı.

### Prayer meet

Addressing a gathering after the prayer meeting, Mr. Gandhi offered support to the families of the jawans, and said he understood their pain. "My sister said that in a



Sharing the grief: Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at the residence of the slain CRPF jawan Pradeep Kumar in Shamlı. ■ PTI

way, the same happened to our father [Rajiv Gandhi]. So we understand the pain and sadness in your hearts," he said.

He thanked the families of the two jawans, and those of the others killed, for their valour.

"There is no force in the world that can push back

this country," he said. "This is a country of the brave," he said, adding that the CRPF jawans had set an example of it.

Mr. Gandhi also stressed that India belonged to all and was a "country of love and brotherhood."

Ms. Vadra met the mother of Amit Kumar Kori, while

### Appointment of Priyanka aide cancelled in 24 hours

NEW DELHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday cancelled the appointment of an office-bearer — Kumar Ashish — attached to his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in less than 24 hours. Mr. Ashish was appointed as Ms. Priyanka's aide on Tuesday. Though no reason was officially mentioned, party sources said that Mr. Ashish was alleged to have been involved in an examination paper leak case that was more than a decade old.

Mr. Gandhi offered support to the father of Pradip Kumar, who has two grandchildren. On their way to Shamlı, Ms. Vadra and Mr. Gandhi stopped at a dhaba in Kairana where they had tea and snacks.

Ms. Vadra interacted with the local people, especially children.

2 minor incidents of intimidation reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

The J&K police have raised an alarm over the 'reprisal attacks' on non-locals living in Kashmir, after the reports of intimidation of non-local workers in Srinagar's Kara Nagar and Bandipora areas.

A senior police officer said the situation was "being monitored closely as a few incidents of intimidation has started pouring in."

"There were two minor incidents of intimidation in Srinagar and Bandipora. Some bike-borne youth tried to intimidate non-local workers. However, locals intervened and doused the sit-



Non-locals staying in Kashmir holding a demonstration to end the attacks on Kashmiris outside the State. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

nation," said the police officer. Viral videos of alleged violence emerging from across the country against Kashmiri students and traders "are fuelling tension and anxiety in Kashmir Valley," the police said.

Meanwhile, scores of non-locals staying in Kashmir held a demonstration in Srinagar and demanded an end to such attacks," one of the traders said.

## PDP delegation meets J&K students in Uttarakhand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DEHRADUN

A delegation of Peoples Democratic Party from Jammu and Kashmir visited Uttarakhand for a first-hand assessment of the situation here on Tuesday following reports of alleged harassment of Kashmiri students after the recent terror attack in Pulwama.

The delegation comprising Rajya Sabha member Faiyaz Ahmed Mir, former MLA Ajaz Ahmed Mir among others interacted with Kashmiri students studying here and returned after expressing satisfaction over their safety, IGP (Garhwal) Ajay Rauteela said. The PDP leaders also took along some of the students who expressed a desire to go home, the IGP added.

## ELSEWHERE



## Uganda party endorses Museveni for re-election

KAMPALA  
The executive committee of Uganda's ruling National Resistance Movement has endorsed President Yoweri Museveni as its candidate in the next presidential election due in 2021, potentially extending his tenure to 40 years. Mr. Museveni, 74, has held office since 1986 when he took power after a five-year guerrilla war, making him one of Africa's longest-ruling leaders. **REUTERS**

## Egypt hangs nine for murder of prosecutor

CAIRO  
Egypt hanged nine men on Wednesday for the 2015 assassination of Prosecutor-General Hisham Barakat, judicial sources said, bringing to 15 the number of executions it has carried out this month. Barakat was killed in June 2015 when a car bomb struck his convoy in Cairo following jihadist calls for attacks on the judiciary to avenge a crackdown on Islamists. **AFP**

## U.S. sanctions a terrorist act, says Rouhani

LONDON  
Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday relations with the United States had rarely been so bad and that sanctions imposed by the Trump administration targeting Tehran's oil and banking sectors amounted to "a terrorist act". "The U.S. pressures on firms and banks to halt business with Iran is one hundred percent a terrorist act," he said. **REUTERS**

## Venezuela suspends links with Dutch-controlled island

## Curaçao was to be used for aid shipment

+ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
CARACAS  
Venezuela's military said on Tuesday that it was on alert at its frontiers following threats by U.S. President Donald Trump. The country also suspended air and sea links with the island of Curaçao ahead of a planned aid shipment.

Opposition leader and self-declared interim President Juan Guaidó has vowed to bring aid in from various points on Saturday "one way or another" despite military efforts to block it.

But commanders doubled down on their allegiance to President Nicolás Maduro after Mr. Trump

## Putin threatens West with new missiles

Warns the U.S. against deploying any new weapons in Europe after the collapse of the INF treaty

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened to deploy new missiles against Western capitals as he delivered a state of the nation address on Wednesday aimed at boosting falling approval ratings.

Washington was the first to announce its withdrawal, accusing Moscow of developing new weapons that violated the treaty, but Mr. Putin on Wednesday dismissed the U.S. claims as "far-fetched".

The long-time Russian leader warned Washington against deploying any new missiles in Europe following the collapse of a key Cold War-era treaty, saying Moscow would consider it a "severe threat".

"I'm saying this clearly and openly, Russia will be forced to deploy weapons that can be used... against the decision-making centres that are behind the missile systems which threaten us,"

The tough talk on missiles seemed aimed at stirring up patriotic support for Mr. Putin, who won re-election last year with more than 76% of the vote but has been recently struggling with dropping poll numbers.

A survey by Russia's independent Levada Centre released in January found his approval rating at 64% – a figure many Western leaders could only dream of, but Mr. Putin's lowest in five years.



**Standing firm:** Russian President Vladimir Putin delivering his annual state of the nation address in Moscow. **AFP**

Most of Wednesday's speech focussed on promises to address poor living standards, a key source of frustration for many Russians nearly 20 years after Mr. Putin came to power.

"We cannot wait, the situation must change for the better now," Mr. Putin told assembled lawmakers from Russia's lower house State Duma and upper house Federation Council. "Within this year (Russians) should feel changes," he said.

Mr. Putin lamented that

some 19 million Russians were living below the poverty line, saying: "This is too much... the state should help." He focused in particular on help for Russian families, pointing to a demographic crisis that has seen birth rates fall drastically since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

Last year, the government's statistics agency said the country's birth rate had fallen by 11% in 2017 to the lowest level in a decade. "The incomes of Russian families should of course rise," he said, promising new child benefits and lower taxes for larger families.

Mr. Putin touched on several other issues of national concern during his 90-minute speech, including a waste-management crisis that has seen Russians outside Moscow protesting at plans to send rubbish to provincial landfills.

## 3 Tory MPs quit over govt's Brexit approach

Join group of rebel Labour lawmakers

REUTERS  
LONDON

Three lawmakers from Britain's governing Conservatives quit over the government's "disastrous handling of Brexit" on Wednesday, in a blow to Prime Minister Theresa May's attempts to unite her party around plans to leave the European Union.

Heidi Allen, one of the three Conservative MPs who quit the party. **REUTERS**

March 29. But the resignations put Ms. May in an even weaker position in Parliament, where her Brexit deal was crushed by lawmakers last month when both eurosceptics and EU supporters voted against an agreement they say offers the worst of all worlds.

"The final straw for us has been this government's disastrous handling of Brexit," the three lawmakers, Heidi Allen, Anna Soubry and Sarah Wollaston, said in a letter to Ms. May.

## Jaffna journalist assaulted by policeman

Nadarajah Kugaraj was reporting on a petrol bomb blast

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

A recent incident of a cop physically assaulting a Jaffna-based journalist, causing injury, has raised concern over press freedom in the war-affected region.

Following a tip-off on Tuesday, about a petrol bomb explosion in Kopay, about four km from the Jaffna city centre, local broadcast journalist Nadarajah Kugaraj rushed to the spot

with his camera. As Mr. Kugaraj positioned his camera to begin filming near the area – where a petrol bomb had exploded, gutting a van and two motorcycles – a policeman walked up to him and asked him not to film.

**Full moon day**  
The police officer was in civil costume as it was poya day [full moon day, a public holiday in the country]. I was some 30-40 metres

away from the spot where the vehicles were gutted. I did not enter the actual scene of crime," he told *The Hindu*. However, as he tried to explain that he was only doing his job, the policeman pushed his camera and punched his face, causing a bleeding injury in his mouth.

"I spoke to my editor and then rushed to the hospital," said Mr. Kugaraj, an employee of the privately-owned DAN TV.

## Tibet closed to foreigners till April 1

Move comes ahead of 60th anniversary of an uprising against China in 1959

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIJING

the ban started, although some monitoring groups said it began this month.

The ban was confirmed by the online customer service portal of the Tibet Youth International Travel Service, as well as staff at the Tibet Vista and Go to Tibet travel agencies. Both are based in the southwestern city of Chengdu – the main jumping-off point for visits to Tibet. March 10 is the 60th anniversary of an abor-

tive 1959 uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet, while anti-government riots occurred on March 14, 2008, in the regional capital Lhasa.

**Annual occurrence**  
Although the foreigner travel ban is an annual occurrence, the occasion of the 60th anniversary is drawing added attention.

Amid heavy security on the ground, Tibet is almost entirely closed to foreign

journalists and diplomats and information about actual conditions there is difficult to obtain. In 2017, more than 25 million trips from around the world were made to Tibet, an increase of 10.6% over the year before, generating 37.9 billion yuan (\$5.6 billion) in revenue, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Numbers of visits rose again last year to more than 33 million, a rise of 31.5%, Xinhua said.

## China's ex-Chief of Staff sentenced to life in prison

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

Fenghui was convicted of accepting and offering bribes, and having an unclear source of assets, Xinhua said.

A military court sentenced Fang to life in prison, stripped him of political rights, and ordered the confiscation of all his personal assets, said Xinhua.

## Kim's envoy visits Hanoi ahead of summit

Vietnam is preparing for the high-profile meet to be held on February 27 and 28

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HANOI



**Meeting of minds:** A South Korean soldier, right, and North Korean soldier shake hands as they meet to open a road connecting the two sides across the demilitarised zone. **AP**

Mr. Kim Hyok-chol is expected to meet with his U.S. counterpart Stephen Biegun, who is heading to Hanoi, later in the week to lay the groundwork for talks between Mr. Trump and Mr.

Kim in the Vietnamese capital on February 27-28.

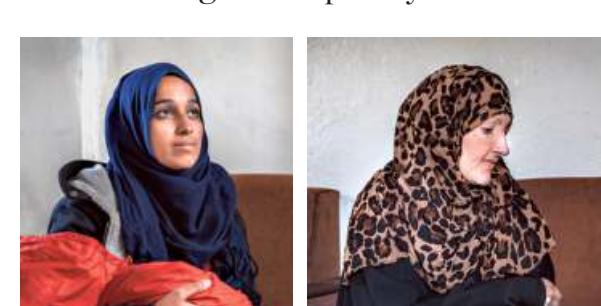
Mr. Biegun and Mr. Kim Hyok-chol met in Pyongyang earlier this month to hammer out the U.S. and North Korean positions on denu-

clearisation ahead of the much-anticipated meeting. Mr. Trump said on Tuesday that while he hoped his next meeting with Mr. Kim would yield progress, he was also in "no rush" for results. "I'd like to see ultimately denuclearisation of North Korea," Mr. Trump told reporters.

Vietnam is feverishly preparing for the high-profile event, Mr. Trump's second visit to the country and the first for a North Korean leader since Mr. Kim's grandfather Kim Il-sung travelled to the nation in 1964. Mr. Kim's de-facto Chief of Staff Kim Chang-son, dubbed his 'butler', was in Hanoi over the weekend to discuss protocol and security matters with the U.S. team.

## Apologetic American wives of IS men want to return home

They are now detainees at a refugee camp in Syria



**Seeking redemption:** Hoda Muthana and Kimberly Polman at the Al-Hawl refugee camp in Syria. **NYT**

joined there by another woman, Kimberly Gwen Polman, 46, who had studied legal administration in Canada before joining the caliphate and who possesses dual U.S. and Canadian citizenship.

Both women, interviewed by *The Times* at the camp, said they were trying to figure out how to have their passports reissued, and how to win the sympathy of the two nations they scorned.

"I don't have words for how much regret I have," said Ms. Polman, who was born into a Reformed Mennonite community in Hamilton, Ontario, to an American mother and Canadian father

and who has three adult children. Ms. Muthana, who attended high school in Hoover, Alabama, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, said she was first drawn to the IS in high school, reading Twitter and other social media posts. "I can't believe it. I ruined my life."

A small number of Americans – about 59 – are known to have travelled to Syria to join the IS. Nearly all the American men captured in battle have been repatriated, but it is unclear why some of the American women and their children – at least 13 known to *The Times* – have not been.

## British teen who joined IS 'shocked' at losing citizenship

Shamima Begum has appealed for compassion

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

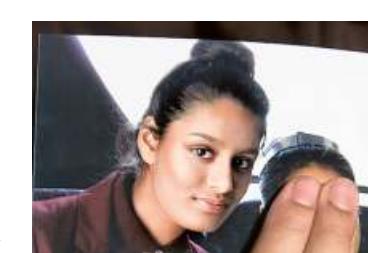
A British teenager who joined the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria in 2015 said on Wednesday that she was shocked by a government decision to revoke her citizenship.

Shamima Begum, who now wants to return home after giving birth in a refugee camp in Syria last weekend, said the order was "unjust". "I am a bit shocked," she told *ITV* News after learning of the move, which was announced in a letter on Tuesday from Britain's Interior Ministry to her mother in London. "It's a bit upsetting and frustrating. I feel like it's a bit unjust on me and my son."

**Fled home four years ago**  
Ms. Begum's fate has stirred controversy since she and two friends fled her east London home to join the terror network four years ago when she was aged just 15.

The case highlights a dilemma facing many European countries, divided over whether to allow jihadists and IS sympathisers home to face prosecution or barring them over security concerns as the so-called "caliphate" crumbles.

A spokeswoman for the Interior Ministry said on Tuesday that it would not comment on individual cases, "but any decisions to deprive individuals of their citizenship are based on all available evidence and



A photo of Shamima Begum. **AP**

not taken lightly". She added that Interior Minister Sajid Javid was intent on prioritising "the safety and security of Britain and the people who live here". "In order to protect this country, he has the power to deprive someone of their British citizenship where it would not render them stateless."

Ms. Begum gave birth to her third child at the weekend, and appealed to British authorities to show "compassion" by allowing her to raise the baby in Britain – while expressing no regret over having joined IS.

In the Ministry's letter sent to Ms. Begum's mother, it said the teen had the right to appeal the order. Ms. Begum, who is of Bangladeshi heritage, was born in Britain, has never had a Bangladeshi passport and is not a dual citizen, according to Tasnine Akunjee, a lawyer for her family.

**Deeply sorry**  
That was more than four years ago. Now, after being married to three IS fighters and witnessing executions like those she had once cheered on social media, Ms. Muthana says she is deeply sorry and wants to return home.

She surrendered last month to the coalition forces fighting the IS, and now spends her days as a detainee in a refugee camp in northeastern Syria. She is

## MARKET WATCH

	20-02-2019	% CHANGE
Sensex	35,756	1.14
US Dollar	71.11	0.32
Gold	34,470	-0.60
Brent oil	66.88	0.85

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	354.75	15.20
Asian Paints	1396.90	19.05
Axius Bank	700.35	7.30
Bajaj Auto	2774.70	-13.15
Bajaj Finserv	5984.45	28.70
Bajaj Finance	2606.15	46.35
Bharti Airtel	309.00	5.30
BPCL	341.10	5.85
Cipla	541.10	1.45
Coal India	214.95	0.70
Dr Reddys Lab	2525.15	-11.75
Eicher Motors	20528.55	118.75
GAIL (India)	329.70	9.45
Grasim Ind	730.70	12.35
HCL Tech	1057.95	18.90
HDPC	1870.50	17.05
HDFC Bank	2108.35	24.30
Hero MotoCorp	2623.75	-13.10
Hindalco	193.00	6.45
HPLC	220.95	6.15
Hind Unilever	1733.50	-4.45
Indiabulls HFL	645.20	30.90
ICICI Bank	345.20	1.95
IndusInd Bank	1480.80	0.30
Bharti Infralet	318.20	-0.25
Infosys	740.70	16.40
Indian Oil Corp	129.30	3.70
ITC	275.85	-0.05
JSW Steel	274.05	7.20
Kotak Bank	1289.75	9.30
L&T	1276.55	18.25
M&M	633.55	0.95
Maurti Suzuki	6849.90	45.35
NTPC	137.20	3.50
ONGC	144.05	4.90
PowerGrid Corp	181.80	2.35
Reliance Ind	1234.35	18.25
State Bank	267.70	4.80
Sun Pharma	422.35	8.70
Tata Motors	164.80	1.05
Tata Steel	491.15	20.20
TCS	1914.75	9.95
Tech Mahindra	812.40	21.40
Titan	1032.75	3.95
UltraTech Cement	3573.35	105.75
UPL	822.75	6.30
Vedanta	160.25	7.15
Wipro	372.20	8.75
YES Bank	217.85	5.00
Zee Entertainment	445.05	-1.40

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	70.91	71.23
Euro	80.37	80.73
British Pound	92.32	92.74
Japanese Yen (100)	63.99	64.28
Chinese Yuan	10.55	10.60
Swiss Franc	70.84	71.17
Singapore Dollar	52.45	52.69
Canadian Dollar	53.77	54.02
Malaysian Ringgit	17.42	17.52

Source: Indian Bank

## BULLION RATES CHENNAI

	February 20 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses
Retail Silver (1g)	44.1... (43.6)
22 ct gold (1g)	3226... (3211)

## Jet may see turnaround in 6-9 months

Resolution plan projects airline to report profit from Oct.-Dec. quarter; network to be pruned further

MANOJ SAHA  
LALATENDU MISHRA  
MUMBAI

The Bank-led Resolution Plan (BLRP) for troubled carrier Jet Airways, which will be taken up for shareholders' approval at an EGM on Thursday, has projected that the airline will start turning in net profits from the October-December quarter of 2019-20.

According to people familiar with the restructuring, the resolution plan states that the turnaround would happen in the next six to nine months. The company is expected to report positive EBIDTA in the second quarter (July-September) and net profit in the subsequent quarter. As per the BLP, lenders will convert a part of their ₹8,200 crore debt into equity such that they will collectively have 51% stake initially in the company just for ₹1, as per RBI norms.

It is not known how much of the debt is getting converted into equity and at what price, but according to analysts, conversion is happening closer to ₹150 a share.

## Cleared to land

It is unclear how much of the debt will convert to equity. But, the conversion is expected to occur closer to ₹150 a share

- Expected to turn EBITDA positive in the September quarter and report net profit in December quarter
- Post conversion of debt into equity, stakes of Naresh Goyal and Etihad to fall by half to 25.5% and 12% respectively
- Fresh funds of ₹8,500 cr. required, ₹4,000 cr. to come from rights issue and strategic investor, ₹3,000 cr. from sale of aircraft and fresh advance of ₹1,000 cr. from banks
- Post-rights offer and funds infusion from strategic investor, banks' stake to fall to 30-32% while Etihad's stake to rise to 24%. Goyal expected to hold 20%



After conversion of debt into equity, the holding of promoters and existing shareholders would be reduced by half.

Therefore, Naresh Goyal's stake would fall from 51% to 25.5%, Etihad's from 24% to 12% and the general public holding from 25% to 12.5%.

The remaining part of the debt will be restructured

with a longer tenure for repayment, providing a breather to the airline. "Only the unsustainable part of the debt will be converted into equity," said a person privy to the development.

**Rights issue**  
With the airline estimating fresh funding requirement of ₹8,500 crore, there will be a

rights issue soon after a new investor comes on board.

It is believed that Etihad Airways will subscribe to the rights offer such that its stake will rise to 24%, while Mr. Goyal will participate to a limited extent.

Banks will, of course, stay away from the rights issue as it would force them to part with more money.

After the resolution plan is implemented post the rights issue and fresh fund infusion, the shareholding of banks will fall to 30-32% from 51% while Goyal's shareholding will be around 20%. Etihad will be at 24% and the new shareholder will have around 15%.

The public is expected to be left with around 10%. According to the resolution plan, fresh capital infusion by the new shareholder and the funds raised via rights issue will be around ₹4,000 crore, while ₹3,000 crore will come from the sale of aircraft. Banks will extend fresh advance of ₹1,000 crore.

"Once the money comes, it will take care of the overdues. The problem with Jet is

that the cost structure has become very high. They were able to manage till fuel prices were low," said a person having knowledge of the recast plan.

The person said that several cost control measures were being explored. For example, Jet would reduce the distribution cost as it had a huge network of travel agents as compared with competitors. The airline would also look at rationalising some sectors and stop flying in non-profitable routes.

An email to Jet Airways seeking a response remained unanswered till the time of going to press. Ambareesh Baliga, an independent analyst, said that the projected turnaround was subject to capital infusion and business environment remaining conducive. "Today, for Jet, the biggest issue is balance sheet. Post fund infusion, the business environment needs to be conducive to achieve the milestones. The dues to lessors, vendors and employees have to be cleared immediately to provide comfort to customers."

## Down a precipice



- Financial creditors oppose Ericsson petition, claim first right to asset sale proceeds
- Ericsson moves SC, agrees to one-time settlement for ₹550 crore to be paid by Sept. 2018
- RCom fails to pay as its deal with RJio is delayed
- In Oct. 2018, Ericsson moves SC for contempt. SC gives RCom 3 months
- RCom fails to pay again, as deal with Reliance Jio falls through
- Ericsson files second contempt plea in Jan. 2019

## RCom taps all sources to settle Ericsson dues, avoid jail term for Anil

Company banking on two I-T refunds

PIYUSH PANDEY  
MUMBAI

Anil Ambani's almost-bankrupt Reliance Communications (RCom) will have to pay ₹571 crore to Swedish telecommunications equipment maker Ericsson within four weeks, failing which the Reliance Group chairman will have to face a three-month jail term. But, where the money will come from is the million-dollar question now.

RCom has already deposited ₹118 crore net of tax with the Supreme Court registry, which will be given to Ericsson within a week, according to sources in the know of the development.

Of the remaining ₹453 crore, the company is banking on two income tax refunds of ₹129 crore and ₹134 crore to pay Ericsson.

"₹260 crore collected"  
A source told *The Hindu*, "We have already collected ₹260 crore and [this] is lying in RCom's bank account to

## Centre clears ₹48,239 cr. recapitalisation package for PSBs

Four non-PCA banks PNB, Union Bank, Andhra Bank, and Syndicate Bank will get a total of ₹14,879 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government has approved the disbursal of a recapitalisation package of ₹48,239 crore for 12 public sector banks, Financial Services Secretary Rajiv Kumar announced on Wednesday.

He said that this package had a fourfold objective: (i) bringing the better-performing banks currently in the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) category out of it, (ii) helping those that have re-

cently come out of PCA to stay out of it, (iii) equipping non-PCA banks to meet regulatory requirements, and (iv) helping the remaining PCA banks to meet their requirements as well. Towards this, a total of ₹15,982 crore is to be disbursed to Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank, both of which fall within the first objective. Bank of India and Bank of Maharashtra, which recently exited the PCA category, are to receive a total of ₹4,843 crore. The

bulk of this ₹4,638 crore is allocated for Bank of India.

Four of the non-PCA banks (Punjab National Bank, Union Bank, Andhra Bank and Syndicate Bank) will get a total of ₹14,879

crore. The largest share of this, of ₹5,908 crore, will go to PNB. The last category – of PCA public sector banks looking to meet their regulatory requirements – will get a total of ₹12,535 crore.

These banks are Central Bank, United Bank, UCO Bank, and Indian Overseas Bank. "It should be taken as a supplement to the earlier package of recapitalisation, which was much bigger," D.K. Srivastava, chief policy advisor, EY India, said. "We

need to also take this in the context of growth picking up. Usually, when growth starts to become better, then those NPAs which have an economic reason behind them automatically get out of their NPA status. So, given that growth is improving and that this is a supplementary amount, it may be considered a timely intervention."

The Centre had infused ₹28,615 crore into 7 banks via recapitalisation bonds in December 2018.

## Dr. Reddy's re-launches generic version of Suboxone in U.S.

Move after U.S. Supreme Court turns down Indivior's plea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

A day after the U.S. Supreme Court turned down a plea for stay filed by Indivior, pharma major Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has re-launched in the U.S. its generic version of the British drugmaker's opioid dependence treatment drug Suboxone.

The re-launch, announced by Dr. Reddy's late on Wednesday, follows the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (CAFC) vacating the District Court's preliminary injunction that prohibited DRL from selling the generic.

Indivior had subsequently approached the Supreme Court seeking a stay on the CAFC ruling in the case related to one patent of Suboxone.

One statement from Dr. Reddy's said the Federal Circuit's decision became effective Tuesday and the company had resumed shipping the product - Buprenorphine and Naloxone Sublingual Film - a therapeutic equivalent generic version of Suboxone.

The CAFC, the company said, had concluded that Indivior had not shown that it was likely to succeed on its



claim that Dr. Reddy's product infringed U.S. Patent No. 9,931,305.

"We are pleased with the decision of the appellate court in Dr. Reddy's favour," CEO of North America Genetics Marc Kikuchi said.

Earlier in the day, Indivior said DRL was "no longer prevented from selling, offering to sell, or importing their generic buprenorphine/naloxone sublingual film products."

For DRL, Suboxone is one of the drugs that could deliver a blockbuster impact on the revenues. A slice of that was evident when the firm sold the product briefly, before a U.S. court, in June last year, passed a temporary restraining order on the sale in response to a plea by Indivior in a patent case.

The government has categorised the group companies into green, amber and red, based on their respective financial positions.

## IN BRIEF



## PNB Metlife likely to go public next fiscal

MUMBAI State-run Punjab National Bank may look at listing its life insurance arm next financial year and is currently in the process of selling its 4% of 30% stake in PNB Metlife to discover price. The insurance company has been talking about the initial public offer since 2016 and the issue is necessitated by the American financial services major and its partner Metlife Inc.'s plans to exit the company. PTI

## Vivo expands portfolio with V15 Pro launch

NEW DELHI Chinese handset maker Vivo is strengthening its portfolio in the ₹20,000-30,000 smartphone segment to drive growth in the hyper-competitive Indian market, a top company official said. Vivo, which ranks among the top five smartphone players in the country, on Wednesday launched its V15 Pro in India featuring a 'pop-up selfie camera' and triple-rear camera priced at ₹28,990. PTI

## Shiksha Financial Services raises ₹55 crore

CHENNAI City-based education finance company Shiksha Financial Services India Pvt. Ltd. has raised ₹55 crore to provide financial aid to educational institutions and school children, said a top official. "The funds would be used to provide working capital to educational institutions and to parents as non-collateral loans to pay school education fees," said V.L. Ramakrishnan, founder director and CEO, Shiksha Financial Services.

# Nasscom halts practice of giving guidance

Industry body is cautiously optimistic about pace of growth in 2019 following its survey of CEOs

PIYUSH PANDEY  
MUMBAI

Amid growing uncertainties, information technology (IT) industry body National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) has stopped giving guidance for the sector. Instead, it has come out with a CEO survey for FY20, in which 51% of CEOs said they felt that the year ahead would be similar or somewhat lower than 2018 in terms of growth.

**'In transformation'**

Confirming the development, Nasscom president Debjani Ghosh said, "The narrative is significantly changing as the industry is in transformation. In 2019, we still see growth across, but not at a pace as in 2018, so we are cautiously optimistic for



**Ebb and flow:** Nasscom chairman Rishad Premji and president Debjani Ghosh in Mumbai on Wednesday. ■ PAUL NORONHA

2019. On March 29, there is the Brexit decision; U.S.-China trade war and the technology regulations are new challenges. They are fundamentally changing the scope of businesses."

On breaking its tradition

of providing guidance for the industry's growth for the upcoming financial year, Ms. Ghosh said, "Guidance looks at the past, we are now looking at the future. Providing guidance is not the right way to indicate growth. We have

to look at the industry with a new lens. The way we looked things at the past is not going to hold true for the future. We should start looking at what the future should look like."

According to Nasscom, 2018-19 was an 'exciting' year for the industry as the export sector crossed \$137 billion in revenues and marginally grew above the Nasscom guidance of 7.9%.

**Growth driver**

Interestingly, the industry's sub-sectors have also expanded beyond IT Services and together are almost half the industry's revenues in 2018-19. Digital was the growth driver for the year, growing at 30% and is estimated at \$33 billion in FY19.

Growth in the start-up sec-

tor was another key highlight of the year, as India witnessed eight unicorns being born and start-up funding reached an all-time high.

As per the CEO survey, global economic uncertainties are leading to a cautious outlook among CEOs, but they expect digitisation initiatives to continue with the same momentum in the next fiscal.

Rishad Premji, chairman, Nasscom, said, "The IT-BPM industry, with a revenue of \$180 billion, continues to be a key catalyst for India's growth. During the year, the industry's performance also showcased a changing narrative for the sector, a sector focused on internal transformation and driving transformation for its clients globally and in India."



**On the dot:** GoAir was the most punctual with 75.9% of its flights departing and arriving on time. ■ KAMAL NARANG

## Domestic air traffic growth slows to 9%

Demand expected to pick up in March

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The growth in domestic aviation traffic slowed down further in January and registered a 9% rise as compared to the same month last year, according to government data.

Indian carriers altogether ferried a total of 1.26 crore passengers, marginally higher than 1.14 crore passengers in January 2018.

The ebb in passenger traffic began in October when the growth rate dropped to 13.34% from 18.95% in September. In the following months, growth has ranged between 11% and 13%.

"The percentage of growth has been affected due to unprecedented flight cancellations by various airlines impacting the overall capacity and hence market growth adversely," said Sharad Dhall, COO (B2C), Yatra.com.

Besides, the board of the bank fixed March 11, 2019, as record date for issuing and allotting equity shares of the Bank of Baroda to the shareholders of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank.

This scheme may be called the Amalgamation of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda Scheme, 2019, BoB said citing the notification.

**Unprecedented flight cancellations hit overall capacity**

SHARAD DHALL  
COO (B2C) Yatra.com

respectively. Jet Airways was close behind with 11.9% share in its kitty.

Low-cost carrier SpiceJet continued to display the highest passenger load factor, an industry measure for how full a flight is, at 90.9%. It was followed by Air Asia (88.4%), Go Air (87.4%) and IndiGo (86.4%). On-time performance of all airlines at the four metro airports took a beating, possibly due to poor visibility, hampered by fog in Delhi and consequential delays. GoAir was the most punctual with 75.9% of its flights departing and arriving on time. It was followed by Vistara (75.3%) and SpiceJet (69.2%).

IndiGo, an airline that prides itself for punctuality, registered its worst on-time performance in recent months with an average flight punctuality of 64.0%. More than 2,60,000 passengers were affected due to delays and over 37,000 due to cancellations. Airlines spent more than ₹3 crore to compensate such travellers.

## Tata Motors bets on electric buses to lift share in commercial vehicles market

Manufacturer sees potential in public transport network

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Tata Motors Ltd. is hopeful that its commercial vehicle (CV) segment market share will get boosted by its electric vehicle (EV) business, a senior company executive said. The company currently has 45% share in the CV segment.

Rohit Srivastava, product line head - passenger commercial vehicle, Tata Motors Ltd., said that a boost (to its market share) was likely from the emerging EV business. The company had won the single largest order of 80 electric buses from West Bengal. He said that the company was also in talks with corporates for supplying the



**All charged up:** The firm will help set up charging stations and train the drivers to operate the vehicles. ■ PAUL NORONHA

vehicles. Tata Motors has developed a complete range of electric buses of various sizes, including low-floor mini-buses. Mr. Srivastava said

that the company was not looking at exports for now. "We are now focussing on India," he said.

Highlighting the potential

of the electric bus market, he said that at present about 1.5 lakh buses were plying on the country's public transport network. This provided a very big opportunity for electrification, he said.

**Tenders received**

Tata Motors has won tenders from six States for supplying 255 buses. These orders, received since February last, are likely to be executed shortly. The company will also help set up charging stations and provide training for drivers to operate these auto transmission vehicles.

The company is participating in tenders for 1,000 more buses, floated by nine States, officials said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Bank of Baroda on Wednesday said the merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with itself would be effective from April 1 as per the scheme of amalgamation approved by the government.

Besides, the board of the bank fixed March 11, 2019, as record date for issuing and allotting equity shares of the Bank of Baroda to the shareholders of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank.

This scheme may be called the Amalgamation of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda Scheme, 2019, BoB said citing the notification.

# 'Destination not more important than journey'

World No. 1 Djokovic feels surgery should be the last resort in an athlete's career

## LAUREUS AWARDS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR  
MONTE CARLO

Monica Seles nearly blushed.

The former World No. 1 and nine-time Grand Slam singles champion may not have quite expected to hear so many nice words about her from Novak Djokovic when she presented him the Laureus Sportsman of the Year at the Sporting Club here on a chilly winter night. He spoke about how much he idolised her as a young boy.

Seles wasn't the only woman he paid a tribute to. He said he was grateful to his wife Jelena for the support she gave during his fightback against career-threatening injuries.

The women, who know a thing or two about playing tennis at the highest level, have high regard for Djokovic, too. Earlier this month, Chris Evert and Lindsay Davenport – both World No. 1 in multiple years – hailed him as the greatest player of all time.

Davenport pointed out that neither Roger Federer nor Rafael Nadal could ever hold the four Slams at the same time, something Djokovic did in 2016.

The Serb is also in a position to do it again – he has won Wimbledon, US Open and, just three weeks ago, the



**Paying tribute:** Novak Djokovic, who revealed that he idolised Monica Seles, right, as a young boy, credited his wife Jelena, left, for supporting him during his fightback against career-threatening injuries. Tennis legend Boris Becker is also in the frame. ■ ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

Australian Open. But he may not have played any of those. He had seriously considered quitting the sport.

### Natural healing

Djokovic initially didn't consider surgery as an option to his elbow problems. "I am a big believer in natural healing," the 31-year-old Serbian

said shortly after receiving what was his fourth Laureus award. "I believe if we treat our bodies rightly, our bodies have the capacity to heal. When everything you've tried doesn't give you the results you want, then surgery is okay as a last resort."

He said the last 12 months were quite transformational

for him. "I'm really pleased with the way the surgery went," he said.

"It allowed me to be back on the court just five weeks later. I was very anxious to be back on court and compete. I was very impatient as I was not ready, emotionally, and my game was not there... not even close."

Djokovic said he wasn't thinking much about winning his next Slam. "Probably one of the biggest lessons I've learnt is that the destination is not more important than the journey; it's the other way around," he said.

"My aim is to win as many Grand Slams as possible, and fight for the No. 1 spot. But, at



the same time, my bigger goals are to stay mentally healthy and balanced. I know that with an optimal, functional state of mind, body and soul, I will have a better chance of achieving those goals."

(The writer is in Monte Carlo at the invitation of Laureus)

# Alone, you are nothing: Wenger

Former Arsenal manager surprised by Mourinho and the award

P.K. AJITH KUMAR  
MONTE CARLO

Arsene Wenger once called Jose Mourinho a specialist in one.

gone to a more deserving man. But, he wasn't expecting it. "The award is even more surprising than the one to Mourinho," he said.

"The lifetime achievement awards are usually for Pele, Maradona and Beckenbauer, but tonight it is for a little player from a village. But I represent all coaches. It's good that coaches are rewarded in our game."

It is good, too, that he received it here in Monaco. AS Monaco was one of the first teams he coached.

Looking back at his decision to move to England, he said he wanted to do certain things. "The first was to show people that we can win," he said. "And I think I opened the door a little bit for all the managers from foreign countries, because there used to be a belief that a foreign manager cannot be successful in England."

Wenger said it was important for a young player to have a proper mentor or a coach. "I believe successful lives are always a meeting between people who have an attitude, a desire, and somebody who believes in them and gives them a chance, in any job," he said.

"Alone, you are nothing. In the case of football, the position on the field is always to be adjusted to the psychological profile of the player. So, sometimes just changing the position makes a difference."

(The writer is in Monte Carlo at the invitation of Laureus)



**More than just Arsenal:** Arsene Wenger is credited for bringing positive changes in English football. ■ AFP

# Champions League: Barcelona draws blank to leave tie open



**Stand-out performance:** Goalkeeper Anthony Lopes repeatedly denied Barca's formidable attack to keep Lyon's hopes alive going into the second leg. ■ AFP

Bayern, Liverpool have all to play for after Anfield stalemate

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LYON

Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde shrugged off his team's struggles in front of goal as it was held to a 0-0 draw away at Lyon in the first-leg of its Champions League last-16 tie on Tuesday.

The Spanish side had most of the chances at the Groupama Stadium, with Luis Suarez firing just wide in the second half, although it was Lyon which came the closest when Martin Terrier hit the bar early on.

Barca was once again left frustrated on the road at the business end of the competition, and has now gone six away matches without winning in the knockout rounds, scoring just a single goal in that time. It is a run that goes

back three years.

Desperate to end Real Madrid's recent European dominance, Barca must now finish the job when the teams meet again at the Camp Nou on March 13.

Barcelona's form needs to improve between now and then, though it has drawn four of its last five matches in all, and has scored just once, from a penalty, in its last three outings.

"We played good football, but you have to hit the target as well, and we didn't," Valverde said.

"We are on the right road, though, and the tie is still up in the air. We will try to win it in front of our fans."

He added: "I am not happy with the result, but I am happy with the performance and

with what we created.

"We didn't score, but that is how it is. It is not easy to win away from home in the Champions League."

Liverpool's undemanded defence held out for a precious clean sheet but Bayern Munich will also be confident of progress to the quarter-finals after a 0-0 draw in the first-leg of their last 16 tie at Anfield.

Sadio Mane wasted the best chance for the host when the Senegalese forward fired wide during an open first 45 minutes, but a cagey second half left it all to be decided when the sides meet again in Munich on March 13.

**The results (last 16, first-leg):** Liverpool 0 drew with Bayern Munich 0; Lyon 0 drew with Barcelona 0.

# Harmanpreet out of ODI series

G. VISWANATH  
MUMBAI

Ahead of the crucial three-match ICC Women's Championship series against England at the Wankhede Stadium, starting on Friday, India's powerful middle-order batsman Harmanpreet Kaur was ruled out because a left ankle injury. She has been replaced by Himachal Pradesh's Harleen Deol.

The ODI team vice-captain, Harmanpreet felt uncomfortable while taking part in the training and practice sessions on Tuesday, but an MRI scan confirmed damage to her left ankle.



An ankle injury has sidelined Harmanpreet Kaur. ■ REUTERS

Harmanpreet is the third highest scorer (2244, 93 matches) among Indians in ODIs, after Mithali Raj (6622, 200 matches) and Anju

Chopra (2856, 127 matches). In the recent three-match series in New Zealand, Harmanpreet did not get to bat in the first two matches in Napier and Mt. Maunganui, and made 24 in the third match at Hamilton.

A press release from the BCCI said: "Harmanpreet Kaur suffered an ankle injury after returning from New Zealand and is ruled out of the three-match ODI series against England. She was unable to participate fully in the team training session because of pain and she will now head to NCA in Bengaluru for rehab."

The 1975 edition, the inaugural men's World Cup, saw West Indies captain Lloyd make a superb century during a 17-run win in the final against Australia.

"It was the first World Cup – there'll never be another first – and having won it in front of a large West Indian contingent, it was quite exciting," Lloyd told AFP.

Clive Lloyd  
start of the 2019 World Cup in England and Wales.

But unlike all the England cricketers past

# Aussies get down to business right away



**Gearing up:** Australia captain Aaron Finch at a practice session on Wednesday. ■ V.S. GIRI

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

Aaron Finch-led Australian cricket team had a full-length training session at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium here on Wednesday evening.

Coach Justin Langer, batting coach Graeme Hick and spin consultant and former India left-arm spinner and spin consultant S. Sriram monitored the sessions out there in the main stadium and also at the nets outside the venue.

The Aussies are in the city for practice sessions for three days before flying to Vizag for the first T20 international on February 24.

From the pattern of training,

the emphasis seems to be more on tackling spin as both Lyon and leggie Adam Zampa had long spells and even Sriwan was seen rolling his arm over.

Hard-hitting batsman Glenn Maxwell was seen playing the big strokes and was often seen trying to play the scoop behind the stumps off both pace and spin.

There was no media interaction as the Aussies were determined to have a long session before they take on the Virat Kohli-led Indian team. HCA curator Y.L. Chandrasekhar and his team of groundstaff have ensured that the best practice facilities are in place for the visitors.

# Advantage India Under-19

M.R. PRAVEEN CHANDRAN  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Matthew Montgomery did everything right he could as captain. He won the toss, bravely chose to bat and when his turn came, grafted a half-century. Yet it was India Under-19 that held the advantage after the opening day's play of the first Test at the KCA-St. Xavier's College ground here on Wednesday.

The South Africa innings – sandwiched between two half-century partnerships and regular loss of wickets – ended at 197. In reply, India was 95 for three at stumps with opener Divyaansh Saxena unbeaten on 44.

South Africa's rot began in the first over when Anshul Kamboj yorked Thamsanga Kumalo for nought. The visitors lost three wickets for 39 inside the first hour when the conditions were ideal for swing bowling before Montgomery checked the damage.

Then Luke Beaufort (0) shouldered arms to a straight ball from medium-pacer Sabir Khan. Soon South Africa was 139 for seven when Suraj Ahuja pulled off a smart stumping to dismiss Marco Jansen off Beaufort off the impressive left-arm medium-pacer Marco Jansen as India slipped to 36 for two.

After a slow start Saxena got into his groove and played a few rasping back-foot drives off both medium-pacers and spinners.

**The scores:** South Africa Under-19 197 in 67.5 overs (Bryce Parsons 58, Matthew Montgomery 57, Bonga Makhakha 31, Hrithik Shokeen four for 50) v India Under-19 95 for three in 19.2 overs (Divyaansh Saxena 44 batting).



**Incisive:** Off-spinner Hrithik Shokeen swung the momentum India's way. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# World Cup 'firsts' still vivid for Lloyd

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

The children playing cricket in the unlikely setting of London's Trafalgar Square could have been forgiven for not knowing the identity of the grey-haired gentleman loping between the wickets.

Yet, even wearing a heavy coat to guard against the chill of an English winter morning, the tall, bespectacled and slightly stooping figure of Clive Lloyd was still instantly recognisable to generations of cricket fans.

Lloyd was in London on Tuesday at an event marking 100 days until the



JACK THOMAS/GETTY IMAGES

start of the 2019 World Cup in England and Wales.

But unlike all the

England cricketers past

and present also involved, including Nasser Hussain, Graeme Swann, Alastair Cook and James Anderson, Lloyd knows what it is to be a World Cup-winner, having led West Indies to victories in Lord's finals in 1975 and 1979.

The 1975 edition, the inaugural men's World Cup, saw West Indies captain Lloyd make a superb century during a 17-run win in the final against Australia.

"It was the first World Cup – there'll never be another first – and having won it in front of a large West Indian contingent, it was quite exciting," Lloyd told AFP.

From the pattern of training,

stand before the latter was run-out. South Africa lost the remaining two wickets without any further addition to the total.

Lifan Nanzi rearranged Vanu Nayanar's stumps in the first over to give the visitors a great start. Vathsal Govind struck a few crisp boundaries off the erratic Nanzi to seize control but soon fended a catch to wicketkeeper Beaufort off the impressive left-arm medium-pacer Marco Jansen as India slipped to 36 for two.

After a slow start Saxena got into his groove and played a few rasping back-foot drives off both medium-pacers and spinners.

**The scores:** South Africa Under-19 197 in 67.5 overs (Bryce Parsons 58, Matthew Montgomery 57, Bonga Makhakha 31, Hrithik Shokeen four for 50) v India Under-19 95 for three in 19.2 overs (Divyaansh Saxena 44 batting).

**Incisive:** Off-spinner Hrithik Shokeen swung the momentum India's way. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## TV PICKS

**Syed Mushtaq Ali T20:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m. & 1.30 p.m.  
**South Africa vs Sri Lanka:** 2nd Test, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.  
**ISL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**Europa League:** Sony Ten 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Friday)

## IN BRIEF



Mulder replaces Philander

DUBAI  
South Africa fast bowler Vernon Philander has been ruled out of the second and final Test against Sri Lanka due to a grade one hamstring strain. Uncapped all-rounder Wiaan Mulder is likely to be named as replacement. ANI



Federer to play on clay at Madrid Open

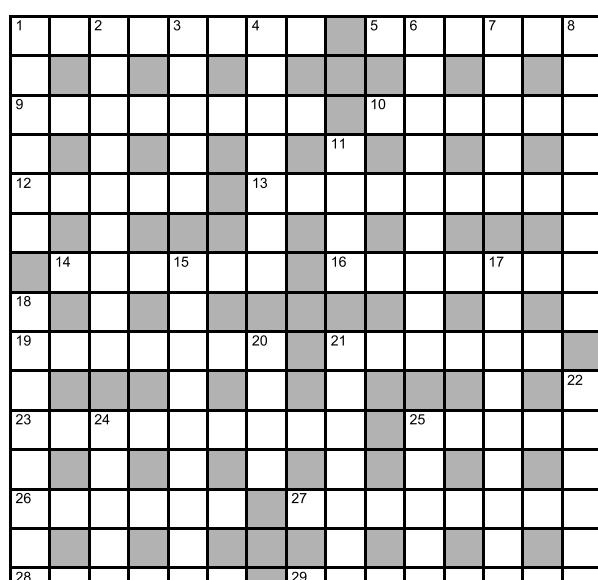
MADRID  
Roger Federer's comeback on clay will feature a return to the Madrid Open for the first time since 2015, it was confirmed on Wednesday. For the last two years, the 37-year-old has chosen to skip the clay-court season completely to preserve energy for tournaments on his preferred surfaces of grass and hard.

## Towering show



The marauder is back: It rained sixes in Bridgetown with opener Chris Gayle smashing a dozen in his 135 (129 balls) as West Indies posted a mammoth 360 for eight against England in the first ODI on Wednesday. ■AP

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12555



## ACROSS

- Excellent spinner cut (3-5)
- Delivery of drink around morning (6)
- Not spiritual, four getting into revelry (8)
- Support overwhelms firm – it could bring good luck (6)
- Big oriental ship missing tip (5)

13 Made tulip arrangement in abundance (9)

14 Respect flir with difficulty (6)

16 Typical of young woman interrupting commander in chief (7)

19 Outlast heat, reach hidden auditorium (7)

21 Emperor threw a royal case (6)

23 Speak for salesmen with grudge (9)

25 Style of European shoe – hollow (5)

26 Measure energy with trap inside machine (6)

27 Indifferent head missing success by chance with agency (8)

28 Scribble on sheet's top inch (6)

29 Instrument with small slow drip (8)

## DOWN

1 Essay (story) without chapter on king (6)

2 Bird on segment of raised surface (9)

3 Not beginning to co-exist? Its branch could foster peace (5)

(set by Lightning)

4 Extraordinary race had become a farce (7)

6 Get rid of aid – create confusion (9)

7 Pharma cautioned somewhat in this island (5)

8 Cut down resistance on English Channel (8)

11 Endlessly show Mahabharata, say (4)

15 Kin he won't blend with privy to special information (2,3,4)

17 Informal conversation at track outside shopping complex (5,4)

18 Say consumed top of red snapper filleted and flipped for appetizers (8)

20 Regular cricket side left Engineer out (4)

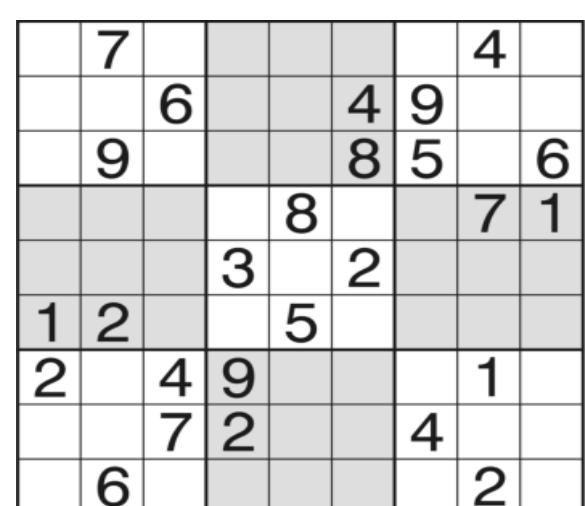
21 Feline costume? (7)

22 Remain without a settler describing one puzzle (6)

24 Attendant with right mobile device (5)

25 Fuel emission contained resin (5)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12554

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

H	D	S	S	A	S	O
D	E	L	I	E	N	C
L	S	N	A	T	A	C
I	G	G	B	R	D	W
G	O	O	R	O	A	Y
O	P	E	E	R	W	A
P	E	X	A	R	N	D
E	R	C	I	C	O	S
R	A	T	C	A	K	O
A	R	T	O	P	O	L
T	O	P	O	L	O	G
O	P	L	A	L	E	
P	L	A	T	E		
L	A	T	E			
A	T	E				
T	E					
E						

## Fans' support played a big role: David Lee

S. PRASANNA VENKATESAN

CHENNAI

Kochi Blue Spikers' David Lee said "crowd support" played a big part in Chennai Spartans' victory in the semi-finals of the Pro Volleyball League here on Wednesday.

The official attendance for the match was 3,943, the majority being Spartans' fans. "It was a fantastic experience overall. Right now, I'm feeling a little down. I feel we should've won the game 3-0," said Lee after the match.

Spartans' captain Sheldon Moses agreed the crowd support helped and Ruslans Sorokins hoped that it would also help in the final against the unbeaten Calicut

Heroes on Friday.

Blue Spikers skipper Ukkrapandian picked the play in the fourth set as a crucial moment of the match. The team called for super point 6-7 down when Spartans' Kapil Dev hit a super serve.

The coach M.H. Kumara also picked it as a crucial moment. He had a special mention for Sorokins, who won the man-of-the-match award.

Ukkrapandian said Calicut Heroes' "great servers", captain Jerome Vinith, Paul Lotman and Karthik, will be key to the team's chances in the final.

## ISL: Pune holds NEUFC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GUWAHATI

NorthEast United will have to wait till the conclusion of its league engagements to know if it has qualified for the Indian Super League playoffs after it was held to a 1-1 draw by FC Pune City here on Wednesday.

The home side could have sealed a place among the top four with a victory but the draw in a closely-fought clash at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium meant that it has to wait further to know its fate.

Rowlin Borges' 47th-minute strike looked to have given NorthEast three points and a spot in the final four.

But Pune equalised through Adil Khan who volleyed home in the 69th minute before NorthEast was reduced to 10 men after Jose Leudo was sent off for violent conduct.

The midfielder caught Carlos with his elbow in the 89th minute and was shown a straight red.

The result saw Pune's mathematical chances of reaching the playoffs snuffed out while NorthEast, placed third with 28 points, will have to win the concluding league clash against Kerala Blasters.

The result: NEUFC (Rowlin Borges 47) drew with FC Pune City 1 (Adil Khan 69).

## Southee and Taylor shine for New Zealand

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DUNEDIN

Tim Southee snared a six-wicket haul and Ross Taylor tore up the record books as New Zealand dominated Bangladesh to seal a 3-0 series whitewash with an 88-run victory in the final One-Day International here on Wednesday.

Sabbir Rahman's gallant maiden ODI century saved Bangladesh from total humiliation after it lost three wickets

with just two runs on the board chasing New Zealand's imposing target of 331.

The tourists were 242 all out in 47.2 overs after the Black Caps were sent into bat and made 330 for six at University Oval.

It was final New Zealand outing before the Cricket World Cup and players were desperate to impress coach Gary Stead even though the fixture was a dead rubber.

Paceman Tim Southee,

overlooked in New Zealand's past six ODIs, took six for 65, to guarantee himself almost certainly a berth at the tournament.

Ross Taylor became New Zealand's highest-scoring One-Day International batsman as his 69 off 81 balls took him past 8,000 runs in th 50-over format. His 47th ODI half-century saw Taylor reach 8,026 runs, overtaking Stephen Fleming's previous record of 8,007. The 34-year-

old, who made his ODI debut in 2006, reached his milestone in 203 innings with a superb average of 48.34.

"I definitely would have taken that when I played my first match donkey's years ago," he said.

The scores: New Zealand 330 for six in 50 overs (Henry Nicholls 64, Ross Taylor 69, Tom Latham 59) bt Bangladesh 242 in 47.2 overs (Sabbir Rahman 102, Mohammad Saifuddin 44; Tim Southee six for 65).



Ross Taylor. ■ DIANNE MANSON/GETTY IMAGES



Tim Southee. ■ AFP

## Belenus and Gallantry may fight out the finish

MACGYVER.

4 BRAVE HUNTER PLATE

4 (2,000m), Cl. V, rated 4 to 30, 4:00; 1. Sixth Emperor (2)

4. Khartoum (4) Akshay 58, 5. Flying Visit (5) R. Downey 56.5,

6. Questionable (3) Chouhan 56, 7. Saffat (2) Peter 55.5.

1. SPITFIRE, 2. FLYING VISIT.

3 BLURR PLATE DIV.II

3 (1,200m), Cl. V, rated 4 to 30, 3:30; 1. Ame (II) Sandesh 59.5, 2. W. Shabnam 59.5, 3. Rapid Girl (9) Ayay 59, 4. Andalucia (5) Ajinkya 58, 5. Nightfall (4) Zeehan 56.5, 6. Highwind (12) Chouhan 56, 7. Golden Tower (6) Raghuvir 55.5, 8. Bohemian (13) Peter 54.5, 9. Macgyver (3) Nazil 53.5, 10. Top Wizard (1) Bhawani 51, 11. Olly Boy (14) Malam 50, 12. Devoted (2) Alfat 49, 13. Forever Free (10) S. Amit 49 and 14. Wizard of Odds (10) Nazil 49.

1. ARRECIFE, 2. FANFARE, 3. SAVAGE KINGDOM.

5 RED BUTTONS PLATE

5 (1,200m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46, 4:30; 1. Philadelphia (3)

2. Neeraj 60.5, 2. Slam Dunk (6)

3. Zervan 60.5, 3. Orion's Belt (4)

4. Aniket 60, 4. Malavika (7) Ayay 59.5, 5. Ridgewood Star (5)

Sandesh 58, 6. Royston Rock (1)

Zeehan 56.5, 7. Untitled (4)

Humanut 56.5, 8. Moneywise (8)

Jaykumar 56, 9. Skysurfer (11)

Kuldeep 56, 10. Adele (10) Trevor

50. Parimar 61.5, 11. Arrecife (2)

Peter 61, 4. Smart Vision (3)

Bhawani 61, 5. Swiftness (8)

Sunil 61, 6. Benevolence (9)

Sandesh 60, 7. Fanfare (11)

Ajinkya 60, 8. Savage Kingdom (6)

L. Roche 60, 9. Dazzle N Daze

1. Shubham 56.5, 10. Golden

Orchid (4) Chouhan 52.5, 11. His

Master's Vice (7) S. Amit 50 and 12. Wizard of Odds (10) Nazil 49.

1. ARRECIFE, 2. FANFARE, 3. SAVAGE KINGDOM.

5 RED BUTTONS PLATE

5 (1,200m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46, 4:30; 1.

## Prajnesh advances

SPORTS BUREAU  
BANGKOK

Prajnesh Gunneswaran beat Denis Yevseyev of Kazakhstan 7-5, 3-6, 6-4 in the second round of the \$54,160 Challenger tournament here on Wednesday. The results:

**\$651,215 ATP, Delray Beach, US: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Marcello Arevalo (Esa) & Jamie Cerretani (Us) bt Tim Smyczek (Us) & Ramkumar Ramanathan 6-4, 6-2.

**\$54,160 Challenger, Bangkok, Thailand: Singles (second round):** Prajnesh Gunneswaran bt Deniz Yevseyev (Kaz) 7-5, 3-6, 6-4.

**Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Francis Casey Alcantara (Phi) & Bernardo Saraiwa (Por) bt Jonathan Erlich (Isr) & Saketh Myneni 7-6(4), 7-6(4).

**\$25,000 ITF men, Aktope, Kazakhstan: Singles (first round):** Niels Lootsma (Ned) bt Sidharth Rawat 7-5, 6-4.

**Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):**

Marco Bortolotti & Francesco Vilardo (Ita) bt Kunal Anand & Sidharth Rawat 7-5, 3-6, [10-7].

**\$15,000 ITF women, Nanchang, China: Singles (first round):** Sici Qao (Chn) bt Natasha Palha 6-2, 6-0.

## Coach Ansari banned for 10 years

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DUBAI

The ICC on Wednesday banned UAE-based coach Irfan Ansari for 10 years after he was found guilty of making a "corrupt approach" to Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed in 2017.

The ban came after the ICC Anti-Corruption Tribunal found him guilty of breaching three counts of the Anti-Corruption Code during a hearing here.

Ansari had approached Sarfraz during Pakistan's series against Sri Lanka in the UAE in October 2017.

## A tune-up for the next IPL

Mushtaq Ali tournament will see top teams fight it out with debutants

AYAN ACHARYA  
CUTTACK

India's domestic T20 tournament for the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy gets underway from Thursday with Cuttack's Barabati stadium and DRIEMS ground hosting the Group D encounters.

Unlike the previous three editions, where the competition was organised just before the Indian Premier League auction, this edition might have lesser relevance for IPL scouts with the auction getting over in December.

But in a crammed domestic calendar the domestic T20 competition retains importance for the likes of Wriddhiman Saha and Mayank Agarwal, who will use it as a tune-up for the IPL.

Saha, returning to competitive cricket after being out of action for nine months with a shoulder surgery, will be hoping to get some runs under his belt.

The Bengal wicketkeeper-batsman had to undergo an extensive rehabilitation programme and was forced to miss the complete England tour, the home series against the West Indies and India's campaign down under.

Meanwhile, Agarwal, who had a dream debut series in Australia, struggled for runs in the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Saurashtra. He will be eyeing a rewarding run here.

Odisha left-arm spinner Pappu Roy, too, will be a player to watch out for. Roy made headlines last year when he was named in the India C squad for the Deodhar Trophy. This came close on the heels of an impressive Vijay Hazare 2018-19 campaign where he snapped up 14 wickets at an average of 18.42 and an economy rate of 3.79.

This will also be the nine



**Opportunity:** The competition provides Wriddhiman Saha, returning after a long injury lay-off, a chance to get back into the groove. ■ FILE PHOTO: AP

new teams' – Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim and Uttarakhand – maiden tryst with the 'powerhouses' of domestic cricket.

The introduction of the first-timers from the Northeast in the Indian domestic

calendar has raised eyebrows once again, especially after the quality of cricket on display in the just-concluded Ranji Trophy.

Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh lost seven of their eight matches. The only game they didn't lose was the one where the sides

squared off against each other and shared the spoils. But BCCI GM (cricket operations), Saba Karim, had argued that "T20 is the best format to introduce them (new teams) to the big league."

Mizoram will open its campaign against Bengal on Thursday while Arunachal takes on Haryana.

### Big-ticket clash

A big ticket clash on Friday will see heavyweights Bengal and Karnataka lock horns at the DRIEMS ground.

Karnataka will be without the services of off-spinning all-rounder K. Gowtham, who has been ruled out of the tournament with a shoulder injury, and seamer Romin More, who has been rested.

All eyes will be on India international Agarwal whose penchant to score quick runs at the top can be a cause of concern for opposition bowlers.

Bengal, on the other hand, will be bolstered by the return of Saha, with skipper Manoj Tiwary, Abhimanyu Easwaran and Shreevats Goswami adding meat to the batting.

## Mushtaq Ali Trophy 2019 edition

### THE GROUPS

**Group A:** Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Manipur, J & K, Kerala and Delhi

**Group B:** Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Vidarbha, Gujarat, Bihar, Rajasthan and Meghalaya

**Group C:** Railways, Sikkim, Saurashtra, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Goa and Mumbai

**Group D:** Odisha, Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Assam, Haryana, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka

**Group E:** Hyderabad, Tripura, Puducherry, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya

### THE FORMAT

■ The league phase will be held from February 21 to March 2.

■ Two teams from each group will qualify for the Super League (March 8 to 12)

■ From the 10 teams divided into two groups, the toppers will make it to the final (March 14)

### THURSDAY'S FIXTURES

#### Group A (at Mysore):

Delhi vs Jharkhand; J & K vs Nagaland; Kerala vs Manipur

**Group B (at Surat):** Gujarat vs Meghalaya; Tamil Nadu vs Rajasthan; Himachal Pradesh vs Vidarbha

**Group C (at Indore):** Railways vs Saurashtra; Madhya Pradesh vs Punjab; Mumbai vs Sikkim

**Group D (at Cuttack):** Assam vs Karnataka; Bengal vs Mizoram; Haryana vs Arunachal Pradesh; Chhattisgarh vs Odisha

**Group E (New Delhi):** Baroda vs Tripura; Services vs Uttarakhand; Hyderabad vs Puducherry; Maharashtra vs Uttar Pradesh

#### Group A (at Mysore):

Delhi vs Jharkhand; J & K vs Nagaland; Kerala vs Manipur

## I was desperate for a medal'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

"It hurt a little bit more because I belong to the armed forces," said Indian boxer Amit Panghal as he dedicated his gold medal at the prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament to the CRPF personnel who lost their lives in the Pulwama terror attack.

The Asian Games gold-medallist claimed a second consecutive top finish when he outpunched Karnataka's lock horns at the DRIEMS ground.

Karnataka will be without the services of off-spinning all-rounder K. Gowtham, who has been ruled out of the tournament with a shoulder injury, and seamer Romin More, who has been rested.

All eyes will be on India international Agarwal whose penchant to score quick runs at the top can be a cause of concern for opposition bowlers.

Bengal, on the other hand, will be bolstered by the return of Saha, with skipper Manoj Tiwary, Abhimanyu Easwaran and Shreevats Goswami adding meat to the batting.

## Bagan writes to AFC

Wants the Asian body to release roadmap for Indian football

AMITABA DAS SHARMA  
KOLKATA

with delegates from FIFA and AFC held on September 14, 2017 at our club.

"In the meetings, it was discussed that FIFA and AFC will help develop a roadmap for Indian football," said the letter written by Debasish Dutta, a Bagan director.

### Several requests

"We have requested the AIFF on several occasions to inform us about the status/report of the proposed roadmap but we have not received any reply till date.

"It would be highly appreciated if you could kindly throw light on the status of the proposed plan. We seek your valued assistance in the matter as it will guide us to prepare for the future," the letter said.

Bagan has also sent copies of the letter to Nic Coward, consultant to the world body FIFA, and Alex Philips, the head of UEFA-AFC affairs.

## NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

### Dhruvpal on song for Warriors

Dhruvpal Godara scored four goals to guide Sahara Warriors to a 7-6 victory over Garcha Group-Aravali Polo in the league phase of the La Pegasus Northern India polo championship at the Jaipur Polo ground here on Wednesday.

In the Army polo championship at the Army Equestrian Centre, Delhi Cantonment, 61st Cavalry set up a title clash with Army Service Corps (ASC).

**The results (league):** La Pegasus Northern India polo championship: Sahara Warriors 7 (Dhruvpal Godara 4, Matthew Pery 2, Siddhant Sharma) bt Garcha Group-Aravali Polo 6 (Ravi Rathore 3, Manuel

Llorente 2, Satinder Garcha). Jindal Panther 13 (Tom Brodie 3, Dhananjay Singh 3, Simran Shergill, handicap 6) bt Sona Polo 10 (Abhimanyu Pathak 5, Basheer Ali 3, Gaurav Sahgal 2).

**Army polo championship (semifinals):** 61st Cavalry 9 (Vishal Chauhan 7, Anant Rajpurohit 2) bt Territorial Army (Combined) 4 1/2 (Raghavraj Singh 2, Tarsem Singh, handicap 1 1/2).

ASC 8 1/2 (GS Pandher 3, Ravinder Mang 2, Sunil Kumar 2, handicap 1 1/2) bt Artillery 3 (Ashish Samantaray 2, J.S. Shekhawat).

### Pran Nath battles its way into semifinals

Pran Nath Club battled past Air Force 28-26, 25-23 and reach the semifinals of the YMCA volleyball tournament on Wednesday.

In the semifinals, Pran Nath will play Rajputana Rifles, and host YMCA will clash with Master Academy.

Master Academy made the women's semifinals as well, and will meet Jaunti Club. The other semifinal will be between Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Indraprastha College.

**The results (quarterfinals):** Men: Pran Nath Club bt Air Force 28-26, 25-23; Rajputana Rifles bt Aryan Club 25-20, 25-23; YMCA bt Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium 25-21, 25-12.

**Women:** Indraprastha College bt YMCA 25-5, 25-11; Jaunti Club bt Uvas Academy 25-23, 25-13; Master Academy bt Janaki Devi Mahila College 25-18, 25-23; CRPF bt Lakshmi Bai College 25-18, 25-21.

## A chance to finetune for World Cup

Shooters give final touches to their preparation

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

The stage was beautifully set, especially in the Final Hall, as the shooters from around 50 countries went through the rigours of giving final touches to their preparation for the World Cup at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Wednesday.

While the secretary general of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), D.V. Seetharama Rao, said that it was not that big a challenge to host a World Cup in rifle and pistol, as India had already hosted many bigger international events, the Administrator, Manjushree Dayanand stressed that every effort had been made to make the shooters feel at home, by providing every conceivable facility.

Even though the cream of world shooting, with a bunch of World and Olympic champions had descended

on the arena looking to bag the 16 Olympic quota places for the 2020 Tokyo Games, the non-arrival of two Pakistani shooters continued to stay as a topic of discussion.

"They are supposed to come today. We had done everything from our side. Things are beyond our control and it is for the government to decide what is best. Even if the Pakistanis get the visa, it depends on their mental state to come for the World Cup. If they don't want, they can shoot the next World Cup," said the NRAI secretary general.

The Indian shooters went about their task unaffected by all the confusion around them. "I have prepared well. I know what I can shoot. If I qualify for the final, definitely I will do my best to get the quota place," said Olympian rifle shooter Sanjeev Rajput, who had a memorable season last year.

On her part, former

## ISSF looking to get visas for Pakistanis

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) has been dealing with the issue of Pakistan's shooters not getting a visa for the World Cup being staged here.

"The ISSF and the Organising Committee are taking all efforts to solve the problem and avoid discrimination of the Pakistan team," said a statement from the ISSF. While admitting that two Pakistan rapid fire shooters have not been granted visas the ISSF also issued a warning, stating that it would discuss the possible consequences for India as a host country in all sports."

Manu Bhaker, the teen sensation who had won the World Cup gold medals among the women and juniors last year, said that she had prepared "very hard" and was looking forward to the challenge "with an open mind," not putting any pressure on herself.

## Kashif Ali and Yashika Bhayana triumph

### CROSSMINTON

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Kashif Ali edged out Mirza Mushabbir Baig 16-14, 13-16, 19-17 for the men's title in the Crossminton National championship here.

Played with a squash racket, and a shuttlecock, with surface dimensions of a tennis court, but without a net, Crossminton is a popular game that has the tennis ace Maria Sharapova among its practitioners.

Matjaz Sustersic of Slovenia who conducted a clinic with the umpires and officials, won the over-40 open event.

Yashika Bhayana won the women's and girls under-18 titles apart from the women's doubles title with Maryam Masood.

In fact, Yashika played a significant role in Delhi



**Well done!** Delhi team which won the overall title in the National Crossminton championship. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

emerging the overall champion with seven gold and four bronze medals.

**The results: Men (final):** Kashif Ali bt Mirza Mushabbir Baig 16-14, 13-16, 19-17; **Third place:** Siddheswaran Rajendran & Gnana-prabhu bt Salman & Senaram

16-13, 11-16,

## IN BRIEF



Film on INSV Tarini crew on Nat Geo soon

NEW DELHI

The inspiring story of the 254-day maritime odyssey of six women naval officers, who became the first all-woman Indian crew to travel around the globe, is set to be showcased in a documentary that will premiere on National Geographic on March 8. A trailer of the film was shared on Twitter by the Indian Navy. PTI



Eating nuts may slash heart disease risk

BOSTON

Eating a handful of tree nuts daily may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease among people with type 2 diabetes, scientists reported in a study published in the journal *Circulation Research*. The study was based on the responses of 16,127 men and women, who were tracked over several years. PTI



Milan Fashion Week to pay tribute to Lagerfeld

MILAN

The ongoing Milan Fashion Week promises to be a tribute to Karl Lagerfeld, who died on Tuesday. French designer Jean Charles de Castelbajac said he hoped to emulate at fashion firm Benetton what Lagerfeld did at Fendi and Chanel: keep himself in the background "to reveal the DNA of the houses". AP

# Forbidden City offers rare glimpse of China's past

For the first time since 1925, the former home of emperors opened its doors to visitors at night to showcase a light festival

CLAIREE FU

BEIJING

The Forbidden City has not really been forbidden to the public for decades, except in one respect. It was closed at night to all but the privileged few – until this week.

For the first time since 1925, when the former home of the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties became a museum, the Forbidden City has opened its doors to the public at night for two days this week, allowing visitors the chance to see its palaces and temples bathed in ethereal lights.

The idea proved to be a hit. A web page that the museum created for people to register for free tickets



Imperial theme: The Meridian Gate of the Forbidden City and, right, a walkway illuminated with lanterns. ■ NY TIMES/GILLES SABRIE

crashed because of traffic. The museum ultimately gave away 500 tickets for people to join 2,500 invited guests on Tuesday, and another 3,000 tickets for Wednesday

night. Soon, tickets were being scalped online.

Two sellers reached by phone offered tickets for 4,000 yuan each, or ₹42,200.



Those who managed to get into the event saw an array of light displays and projections, as well as a performance by the Peking Opera staged at the Belvedere of

Pleasant Sounds, the Forbidden City's largest theatre.

The music could be heard throughout the complex, which was far less crowded than it normally was during

the day. Illuminated red lanterns were hung along walkways and a wall that surrounds the complex, which was also recently opened to visitors.

The museum said in a statement that the Forbidden City had not opened at night before because of the cost and complexity of providing security for relics in nearly 1,000 buildings spread over 180 acres.

The new move is part of an effort to revitalise the image of a museum complex that has been notoriously conservative. "The more the Forbidden City does, the more influential it will be," said the museum's director, Shan Jixiang. NY TIMES

Iceland sets new whaling quotas

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

REYKJAVIK

Iceland has set new quotas for its controversial minke and fin whale hunt for the next five years despite declining profits recently, a decision bound to anger environmentalists.

Fisheries and Agriculture Minister Kristjan Thor Juliusson said that whalers would be authorised to harpoon 209 fin whales and 217 minke whales annually until 2023, stressing the numbers were sustainable.

The government said the decision was based on recommendations from Iceland's Marine Research Institute.

## Notes of harmony



Music binds: Performers recording a video calling for a peaceful election in Nigeria. Faced with an election that could spiral into violence, performers in the Hausa-language film industry assembled this week to shoot the video appealing for harmony. ■ AP

# Queen, Lady Gaga to bring musical vibes to the Oscars

Feb. 24 event will be the first since 1989 to go without a host

REUTERS

LOS ANGELES

There won't be a host and Sunday's Oscars ceremony won't open with the traditional monologue in which celebrities and politicians are skewered.

Yet, with rock band Queen, pop superstar Lady Gaga and two musicals in the race for 'Best Picture', the highest honours in the movie industry will have an unusually strong music vibe as the Oscars seek to regain television audiences.



Lady Gaga

liams, *Black Panther* star Chadwick Boseman and comedians Tina Fey and Amy Poehler.

British band Queen, featuring Adam Lambert as lead vocalist, will open the February 24 show with a live performance celebrating the box-office success of 'Best Picture' nominee *Bohemian Rhapsody*, said a representative of the band.

### Serena to attend

Bette Midler, Jennifer Lopez and record producer Pharrell Williams are also set to attend or present, along with James Bond actor Daniel Craig, tennis champion Serena Wil-

liams and scrapped plans to hand out four of the 24 Oscars during commercial breaks. In 1989, the last time there was no host, the telecast opened with an 11-minute song and dance number featuring Rob Lowe and an actor dressed as Snow White that was widely derided.

**Targeting eyeballs**  
Under pressure to deliver a compelling show for viewers after last year's TV audience hit an all-time low, producers have made the most of the best original song contenders.

Lady Gaga and actor-director Bradley Cooper will perform a live duet of her hit song "Shallow" from their best picture contender *A Star is Born*, while Jennifer Hudson has been tapped to sing "Fight" from documentary *R.B.G.*

Organisers have not revealed whether rapper Kendrick Lamar will perform his Oscar-nominated song "All the Stars" from superhero movie *Black Panther*.

# Hanoi barber offers free Trump, Kim hairdos

Giveaway is to celebrate the U.S. and North Korean leaders' proposed meeting in Vietnam next week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HANOI

Shorn on the sides, thick on top for the Kim Jong-un look; bright and blonde for the Donald Trump-loving customers: a creative Hanoi barber is offering free cuts ahead of the leaders' meeting in the Vietnamese capital next week.

Barber Le Tuan Duong has been overrun with customers since word got out about his free dos, a gesture he's offering out of sheer excitement for the February 27-28 meeting in Hanoi.

### More Kim-style cuts

But one style has come out on top. "Over the past three days, I have made 200-Kim style haircuts, but only five for Trump," he said in his cramped Tuan Duong beauty academy in Hanoi. He



Just like them: Men in Hanoi, Vietnam, getting their 'Kim' and 'Trump' haircuts earlier this month. ■ AP

would normally charge a whopping \$43 for the Trump dye-job, a steep fee in a city where most haircuts cost a few dollars. No matter that Mr. Trump's infamous coif has come under fire, some Hanoians are delighted with the do. "I want the Vietnamese to know more about Trump, through my hairstyle. For me, Trump is an excellent man and that's why I want this hairstyle," a freshly dyed Vuong Bao Nam said.

The barber is not the only artist in Hanoi paying tribute to the leaders. Painter Tran

Lam Binh has been busy churning out technicolour peace portraits of the men, including one emblazoned with red hearts and the word "L-O-V-E". His colour palette may not be true to life, but Mr. Trump's blonde locks and Mr. Kim's full cheeks in the 10 or so paintings he has created so far are unmistakable.

### Portraits for gifting

"I really want the two leaders, or just one of them, to come and see my works here... I dream of giving one of the portraits to them," Mr. Binh said from a Hanoi cafe where he has been working on the series.

The self-proclaimed Trump obsessive started painting the American President after the election, and has about 50 portraits of him

in his studio – some that he displayed in the U.S. capital outside the White House in 2016.

"When I paint him, I feel like I understand his inner feelings through his eyes, his face," the 36-year-old artist said, standing next to several easels displaying his technical works.

He has even sculpted a nearly two-metre statue of the U.S. leader, and while Mr. Binh's admiration for the reclusive Mr. Kim has been slower to emerge, he has grown fond of him. "I like his humour and his exhibitionist nature," he said.

The meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim is aimed at building on their summit in Singapore in June, the first ever face-to-face between sitting leaders from the U.S. and North Korea.

# Michelin-star chefs join green cuisine crusade

Sustainable food guide released

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS

In a city famed for foie gras and filet mignon, some of the world's top chefs gathered Tuesday in Paris to showcase the green side of gastronomy, for the planet and our palettes.

Future 50 Foods, a joint guide from food giant Knorr and conservation group WWF that was released on Tuesday, highlighted ingredients such as lentils and cabbage and the role they can play in feeding mankind in future.

To showcase their potential, Michelin-starred French chef Gregory Marchand was on hand with a seven-course tasting menu based on the list. "As chefs and restaurateurs we ought to support sustainability and offer more plant-based



menus, and that can be challenging," he told diners on the top floor of Paris' Pompidou Centre. "When I received the list [of ingredients] it was a little bit like opening your fridge on a Sunday night and deciding what you are going to eat."

Despite a lack of meat products, Mr. Marchand and his team were able to rustle up salsify tagliatelle, spelt risotto, and bean ragu with a roast vegetable dish, all topped off by a sweetened green lentil puree.

# Meet the sea squirt that sucks plastic particles from the ocean

Creature can help scientists measure pollution accurately

REUTERS

EILAT

A rubbery sea creature with an irritating habit of clinging to ships and invading beaches could help measure plastic pollution as it can filter tiny particles from the ocean and store them in its soft tissue.

Israeli researchers have found that ascidians – round, palm-sized animals also known as sea squirts – can thrive in dirty industrial areas and pristine waters alike, allowing them to detect and analyse waste and its impact in various regions.

**One truck every minute**  
A staggering amount of plastic flows into the ocean each year. The United Nations says it is as if a garbage truck



An Israeli researcher holding a sea squirt removed from the Red Sea. ■ REUTERS

understood. "[Sea squirts] just sit in one place all their life and filter the water, like a pump," said Gal Vered, of Tel Aviv University, who co-published the researchers' findings in the journal *Marine Pollution Bulletin*. "They can really give us a picture of what the whole reef, the whole ecosystem felt during its life."

As a bonus, sea squirts are related in evolutionary terms to human beings. So studying them and the plastic inside them could be more insightful than looking at creatures like fish. "Although we don't look alike at all, we have similar systems," said Noa Shenkar, of Tel Aviv University's zoology department and museum of natural history.