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NEARBY



Aqua Line inaugurated; services start today

GREATER NOIDA
Union Minister Hardeep Puri and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the Noida-Greater Noida metro line on Friday. Passenger operations on the roughly 30-km-long corridor will start at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

DELHI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

Ayodhya Bench to have two new judges

NEW DELHI
The Constitution Bench hearing the Ayodhya title suit appeals on January 29 will have two new judges on it. Justices Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer will replace Justices N.V. Ramana and U.U. Lalit.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

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Ground Zero
Kyasanur's ticking time bomb

Reckless human forays into eco-sensitive forest areas and lax public health monitoring have led to a deadly outbreak of Kyasanur Forest Disease, or Monkey Fever, in Karnataka's Shivamogga district, disrupting life and the local plantation economy

OP-ED PAGE

DELHI METRO ▶ 4 PAGES

Gurugram land scam: CBI books ex-Haryana CM Hooda

At least 30 locations, including the Congress leader's premises, searched

DEVESHE K PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday searched the premises of former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and about 30 other locations in connection with the alleged irregularities in the acquisition of 1,417 acres of land in Gurugram between 2009 and 2012. The land was later released and development licences were issued to real estate firms, which had bought plots at lower rates.

The agency alleged that at least 15 private builders conspired with Mr. Hooda, who was also the Minister in charge of the Directorate of Town and Country Planning (DTCP), and others to get the acquisition orders issued. This triggered distress sale of land to private developers at

The land trouble

The CBI has registered a case alleging irregularities in acquisition of 1,417 acres of land in Gurugram

THE ACCUSED

- Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda

- Senior IAS official Trilok Chand Gupta

- 15 major real-estate developers, including DLF

THE CHARGES

- The private developers conspired with Mr. Hooda, the then Chief Minister, to get a land acquisition order issued in June 2009

- Land owners were allegedly

compelled to sell properties to the developers at rates lower than the pre-notification market price

- The government then released the land from acquisition process and issued licences or letters of intent for grant of licences to the companies

OTHER CASES AGAINST HOODA

- The former CM is being probed in two other cases of land acquisition in Manesar and the re-allocation of a Panchkula plot to Associated Journals Limited



BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA

cheaper rates than the market prices.

"The FIR has been lodged following a preliminary enquiry initiated in January 2018 on the Supreme Court's directive in November 2017. The searches were carried out in Delhi, Gurugram, Roh-

tak, Mohali and Chandigarh," said an official.

The CBI has also named senior IAS official Trilok Chand Gupta, then Chief Administrator of the Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA), as accused.

The notification was is-

sued on June 2, 2009, for setting up a land bank to ensure availability of developed land at affordable prices to the weaker sections. However, the objective was not met, said the agency.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Bharat Ratna for Pranab, Deshmukh, Hazarika

Modi lauds their contributions to nation



Pranab Mukherjee

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI
President Ramnath Kovind on Friday conferred the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian honour, on former President Pranab Mukherjee, along with social activist Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumous), and Assamese musician Bhupen Hazarika (posthumous).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first to congrat-

ulate the awardees. "Pranab Da is an outstanding statesman of our times. He has served the nation selflessly and tirelessly for decades,

leaving a strong imprint on the nation's growth trajectory. His wisdom and intellect have few parallels," he tweeted.

Of Nanaji Deshmukh, a senior RSS leader who also

referred to as the "father of the Indian RSS".

He said Bhupen Hazarika popularised India's musical traditions globally. "The songs and music of Shri Bhupen Hazarika are admired by people across generations. From them radiates the message of justice, harmony and brotherhood."

The awards have political significance, with Nanaji Deshmukh being a nod to the larger ideological family of the BJP.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

PADMA AWARDS FOR 112 ▶ PAGE 9

to the downtrodden. He is a Bharat Ratna in the truest sense."

He said Bhupen Hazarika popularised India's musical traditions globally. "The songs and music of Shri Bhupen Hazarika are admired by people across generations. From them radiates the message of justice, harmony and brotherhood."

The awards have political significance, with Nanaji Deshmukh being a nod to the larger ideological family of the BJP.

The law was passed by Parliament, and received the President's assent. A

SC upholds bankruptcy code, cites improved financial flows

Clear message that India is no longer 'defaulter's paradise'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

In a whoo of victory for credit markets and entrepreneurship, the Supreme Court on Friday upheld the constitutionality of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), saying the law sends a clear message that India is no longer "the defaulter's paradise."

"The defaulter's paradise is lost. In its place, the economy's rightful position has been regained," a Bench of Justices Rohinton Nariman and Navin Sinha gave the IBC the thumbs-up in their 150-page judgment. The Code consolidates disparate bankruptcy and insolvency laws of the past under one umbrella.

"We are happy to note that in the working of the Code, the flow of financial resource to the commercial sector in India has increased

Decoding the code

A look at what Justice Nariman said about the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)



- First and foremost, it is a code for reorganisation and insolvency resolution of corporate debtors

- Quick reorganisation and insolvency resolution maximise value of the assets of corporate debtors and promotes entrepreneurship

- When a resolution plan takes off and the corporate debtor is brought back into the economic mainstream, he is able to repay his debts, which, in turn, enhances the viability of credit in the hands of banks and financial institutions

- As a legal framework, IBC will help to develop the credit markets

exponentially as a result of financial debts being repaid," the judgment observed.

It said the liquidation value of 63 of the 80 cases resolved through the acceptance of resolution plans was ₹29,788.07 crore. But the amount realised from the resolution process was ₹60,000 crore, that is, 202% higher than the liquidation value.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

10% reservation for the poor challenged in SC

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, refused to stay it on Friday.

The Act amended Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution by adding clauses empowering the government to provide reservation on the basis of economic backwardness.

The petitions in the court said the Act violated the Basic Features of the Constitution.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

JNU clean chit to prof. challenged

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the response of the Jawaharlal Nehru University administration on a plea by eight women students challenging the clean chit given by the university's Internal Complaints Committee to Professor Atul Johri in sexual harassment cases.

DETAILS ▶ DELHI METRO PAGE 1

+ DELHI METRO ▶ 4 PAGES

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DELHI Timings	
SATURDAY, JAN. 26	
RISE 07:12 SET 17:55	
RISE 23:38 SET 11:01	
SUNDAY, JAN. 27	
RISE 07:12 SET 17:56	
RISE 00:00 SET 11:38	
MONDAY, JAN. 28	
RISE 07:12 SET 17:57	
RISE 00:37 SET 12:16	

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 19 10
Safdarjung 19 10
Palam 19 10

Delhi Palam Today
19°C Shallow fog/mist will persist. Day will be pleasant with light winds and partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
19°C Dry weather with a fall in night temperature may occur. Day will be pleasant. Pollution level will be poor.

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Swine flu: infant dies in H.P., toll rises to four

A two-year-old girl died of swine flu at a hospital in Himachal Pradesh, taking the death toll in the State to four, doctors said on Friday. A resident of Bilaspur's Bamta village, Priyanka died here on Thursday. She was admitted to the hospital on Sunday. PTI

Congress slams Yogi govt. over 'encounter killings'

U.P. has become victim of 'muscular' govt.: Chidambaram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Former Union Minister P. Chidambaram on Friday attacked the BJP for alleged encounter killings in Uttar Pradesh and claimed that the State has become a victim of a "muscular government" after Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Chidambaram, who had handled the Union Ministry of Home Affairs during the UPA rule, cited news reports about 78 people being killed in "encounters" by the Uttar Pradesh Police in the first 16 months of Yogi Adityanath helming the BJP government in the State. Mr. Adityanath took charge as the Chief Minister on March 19, 2017 and the data in question was recorded between March 2017 and July 2018.

In a series of tweets, he targeted the Uttar Pradesh government for the "encounter killings".

If encounters are the sole target of an elected government in a democracy, then God help our country

ANAND SHARMA

Congress leader

they want to make it a national campaign. We are a rule-based country where there is a rule of law and everybody has their rights. Nobody can be killed and encounters are not sanctioned by law. It is against the basic tenets of natural justice," said senior Congress leader Anand Sharma.

"When the history of this period is written, time will say what damage they have done to the governance in Uttar Pradesh. If encounters are the sole target of an elected government in a democracy, then God help our government."

"The culture of false encounters and killing people comes from Gujarat. Now

Justice Rajan Gupta said the special investigation team (SIT) formed by the Punjab government would probe the incidents.

A bunch of petitions challenging the findings of the commission had been filed by former Moga SSP Charanjit Singh Sharma, his gunman, former Mansa SSP Raghbir Singh, and SHOs Amarjit Singh and Shamsher Singh.

The petitioners had demanded a CBI probe into the incidents of desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib and related police firings.

They had also challenged

Desecration of religious texts: no CBI probe, says HC
'SIT formed by govt. to do the job'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Friday dismissed petitions seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the desecration of religious texts and police firing incidents in the State in 2015 and challenging the findings of Ranjit Singh Commission into the incidents.

Justice Rajan Gupta said the special investigation team (SIT) formed by the Punjab government would probe the incidents.

Last year, the State government added names of the four police officers in an FIR registered at Baja Khana police station, under IPC sections for murder and attempt to murder, on the recommendation of the commission report on police firing at Behbal Kalan, following which the officers had challenged the report.

a Punjab Assembly resolution passed in August last year for taking back investigation of the incidents from the CBI.

With the dismissal of the petitions, the interim stay granted on proceedings against police officers for their alleged role in firing on protesters at Behbal Kalan in 2015 where two people died, stands vacated.

Punjab Advocate General Atul Nanda said, "Our stand has been that the findings of the [Ranjit Singh] commission are meant for the information of the government. These are not findings of the court of law as such."

The petitioners had demanded a CBI probe into the incidents of desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib and related police firings.

They had also challenged

Punjab Cong. revokes suspension of Zira MLA

Was suspended for his public outburst

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Congress on Friday reinstated party legislator Kulbir Singh Zira, days after he was suspended for indiscipline following his public outburst at an event. "The party has revoked the suspension of Kulbir Singh Zira," Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar said here.

Reacting to the development, Mr. Zira said he was thankful to Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, Mr. Jakhar and Punjab Congress in-charge Asha Kumari.

The suspension was re-

voked ahead of a meeting of Punjab legislators, office-bearers and leaders here to chalk out the party's strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

On January 16, taking serious note of his public outburst, the Punjab Congress had suspended the lawmaker representing Zira constituency for indiscipline. The action was taken a few days after the MLA had left the party red-faced with his remarks at a district-level function to administer oath to newly elected sarpanches and panches in Ferozepur.

Congress in poll mode in Punjab, CM hits out at BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Claiming that the Congress would win all the 13 Lok Sabha seats in the State, Captain Amarinder urged party workers to expose the propaganda of the SAD-BJP combine. "The SAD and BJP

sion. Claiming that the Congress would win all the 13 Lok Sabha seats in the State, Captain Amarinder urged party workers to expose the propaganda of the SAD-BJP combine. "The SAD and BJP did nothing for the farmers during their 10-year rule in the State and are now creating misconceptions in the minds of the people with their baseless claims and allegations," he alleged.

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Share Cert No. 205373 and 73181 for 39 shares bearing distinctive nos. 981221-981250, 2335640-2335648 all inclusive under ledger folio no.R00509 in the name of Mrs. Tara Ram (deceased), the claimants who made the request and Vipin Kumar Mahajan residing at F-1/12, Krishna Nagar, Delhi-110051, Mr. Naveen Kumar Mahajan S/o Hari Chand Mahajan residing at F-2/10, Krishna Nagar, Delhi-110051 and Mr. Sanjay Lal Mahajan S/o Hari Chand Mahajan residing at Flat No. 26, Eka Apartment, Geeta Colony, Delhi-110031.

The Public are hereby warned against purchasing or dealing in any way with the above share certificates. Any person(s) who has/have any claim in respect of the above share certificates should adduce such claim in writing to the Company at the address mentioned above within 21 days from the date of publication of this notice, after which no claim will be entertained and the Company will proceed with the issue of duplicate share certificates.

For MRF Limited,
S. Dhavanthi Kumar
Company Secretary

Place: Delhi
Date: 26.01.2019

Form no INC-26
Advertisement to be published in the newspaper for change of registered office of the company from one state to another Before the Regional Director, Northern Region, A-14, Sector-I, PDIL Bhawan, Noida, UP

In the matter of the Company Act, 2013 Section 13(1) of Companies Act, 2013 & Rule 30(6) (a) of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014 AND

In the matter of Rajat Tubes Private Limited having its registered office at 2862, Sikriwan, Hauz Qazi

T-10006 _____Petition

Notice is hereby given that the Company proposes to make application to the Regional Director under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra ordinary general meeting held on 31/12/2018 to enable the company to change its Registered Office from "State/UT of Delhi to "State of Haryana".

Any person who has claim in respect of said shares should lodge a complaint to company at its Registered Office within 21 days from the date also the Company will issue a Duplicate Certificate to the aforesaid applicant without any further intimation.

Folio No 0131383

Name of Shareholder Sudha Kumar

No. of Shares 100

Dist. No. 102639 to 18070751 to 18070850

Certificate No. 18070751 to 18070850

For and on behalf of the Applicant

Harish Kumar Bansal
Director DIN : 01240378

Address : H. No. 139, Sector-13, U.E.

Kukretshala - 136118

Date : 26.01.2019

Place: Kurukshetra

Current Registered office of Company : 2862, Sikriwan, Hauz Qazi, Delhi - 110006 Petitioner

Name of Shareholder : Sudha Kumar

R/o C-507 Sheikh Sarai, Phase I

New Delhi-110017

Notice with a copy of the application

company at its registered office at the address mentioned below:

For and on behalf of the Applicant

Harish Kumar Bansal
Director DIN : 01240378

Address : H. No. 139, Sector-13, U.E.

Kukretshala - 136118

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HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY

Manipur parties demand State consent clause in citizenship Bill

Lawyers stage sit-in in Imphal; CM calls another meeting on Monday; security beefed up for Republic Day

IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM

IMPHAL

In the wake of the call for boycott of the Republic Day celebrations given by many sections of people in the State over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Friday convened a meeting of Ministers and MLAs in his office to take stock of the situation.

Government sources said the meeting resolved to urge the Centre to include a

clause in the Bill saying that no citizenship can be granted without the consent of the State government. It also resolved to urge the Centre to give the President's assent to the Manipur People's (Protection) Bill, 2018, which has already been passed by the Assembly.

Mr. Biren has called another meeting of all political parties in the State on Monday (January 28).

Though political parties are yet to react to the invita-

tion, the Janata Dal (United) has announced that it will not take part in the discussions.

'Too late'

State JD(U) president Hank-hampao T. said: "There is no point in participating in the meeting as it is too late. The Chief Minister did not listen to the orchestrated demand of the political parties to summon an emergency meeting of the Assembly to pass a resolution on the con-

tentious Bill. The BJP-led coalition government may be planning to go ahead with the Bill while befooling the people of the State."

On Friday, lawyers of the High Court and other district courts staged a sit-in protest in Imphal condemning the Bill.

Some lawyers said since it concerns the very existence of communities in the North-east, the Bill should not be passed.

All Manipur Students' Un-

ion president Manjot Sarang-tham said: "Six students' organisations will boycott the Republic Day celebrations. Since it concerns the posterity of the north-east region, all sections of people should cooperate."

The United Committee Manipur, All Manipur United Clubs, Organisations, students' groups and some civil society organisations have also called for boycott of the Republic Day celebrations. These civil society organisa-

tions are also convening a public meeting on Sunday to chalk out their future course of action.

Many rounded up

The police and paramilitary forces have beefed up security in the State.

A large number of men and women have been rounded up and those who do not possess proper identification papers are being taken to the police stations for further verification.

Two nursing students suspended for 60 days

Accused of killing 16 puppies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA

The West Bengal government on Friday suspended for 60 days the two nursing students who were accused of killing 16 puppies in the compound of a State-run hospital.

"The two students have been suspended for 60 days on grounds of moral ethics and grave indiscipline," a senior official of the Health

Department said.

Moutusi Mondal and Soma Burman of Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital here were arrested on January 15. They were released on bail after which they attended their classes.

Union Minister Maneka Gandhi had called up senior officials of the college last week and asked them to immediately suspend the two nursing students.

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&

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Directors, Renaura Wellness

Developed India's first hard water shampoo

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PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Ms. Cliff Exports Mrs. Mahima Goyal W/o Mr. Rav Goyal R/o Flat No. B-11666, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070 am the owner of Flat No. 1601, Ground First Duplex Sector-8, Pocket-4, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070 vide DDA's File No. F128316083/SFSV/VIII-Dated 6.5.99. The Original DDA all Documents are Lost as Possession Slip. Possession Letter, Bank challans, Agreement to sell & purchase, Sale Deed, General Power of Attorney , Electricity and water connection of the above said property have been misplaced. An information report of this effect has been lodged in Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No. 4130/2019 on 24.01.2019 Any person(s) having any right, interest, having any objection or for any possession of all original Documents, may write contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9899560155 within 7 days From the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received, permission to registry will be granted and executed accordingly in favor of Smt. Swati Naryan. Application regarding the Registry of aforesaid property has been applied to Noida Authority. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection should file objection with documentary proof in writing, in-person to Noida Authority or above named person Smt. Swati Naryan at above address within 7 days of publication of this notice. If no objection is received, permission to registry will be granted and executed accordingly in favor of Smt. Swati Naryan.

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This is to inform general public at large, that Smt. Swati Naryan W/o Sh. Naryan Resident of NGB-094, B-Block, DLF New Town Heights, Sector-90, Gurgaon-122005 has purchased a property detailed as FLAT NO. 166D, BLOCK B-10, UDAIGRI- II, SECTOR-34, NOIDA, GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-201301 from Smt. Ramesh Rani Chugh W/o Sh. Subhash Chugh Resident of C-24, Sector-10, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, U.P-201301 with the virtue of GPA of the above said property in favour of Ms. Swati Naryan. Application regarding the Registry of aforesaid property has been applied to Noida Authority. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection should file objection with documentary proof in writing, in-person to Noida Authority or above named person Smt. Swati Naryan at above address within 7 days of publication of this notice. If no objection is received, permission to registry will be granted and executed accordingly in favor of Smt. Swati Naryan.

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e-Procurement Tender Notice

Tender ID No. 2019_NDMC_166544_1

Name of Work: 9-B Suspense Stock during 2018-19.

Sub-Head: Supplying and Stacking of Coarse Sand.

Estimated cost: ₹11,24,505/-

Date of release of tender through e-procurement solution

23.01.2019

Last date/time for receipt of tenders through e-procurement solution

31.01.2019 upto 04:00 PM

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

Note: To participate in e-tender in NDMC, registration with e-tendering system, Govt. of NCT of Delhi is mandatory.

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NOTICE INVITING OFFERS FOR REGISTRATION FOR SALE OF IMF, WINE AND BEER TO KSBC UNDER RATE CONTRACT

The Corporation invites e-Tender offers for Rate Contract through the Kerala Government e-tender portal <https://tenders.kerala.gov.in> from "Manufacturers owning a Distillery / Brewery / Blending Unit / Winery" for registration and for entering into rate contract with the Corporation for sale of IMF, WINE and BEER to the Corporation for a period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 or for such period or until further notice. Separate e-Tender offers and prescribed EMD are to be submitted for IMF, Wine and Beer. Only offers submitted through the Kerala Government e-tender portal <https://tenders.kerala.gov.in> will be considered. The last date for submission of e-Tender offers is 4.00 P.M. on 25.02.2019. The offers will be opened at 10.30 AM on 01.03.2019. Tender Notice, Terms and Conditions governing the offers and other documents can be downloaded from the Kerala Government e-tender portal <https://tenders.kerala.gov.in>.

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कोहरे के दौरान 'फॉग लाइट' का इस्तेमाल करें।

IN BRIEF

Noted Hindi writer
Krishna Sobti dies at 93

NEW DELHI
Eminent Hindi author and essayist Krishna Sobti passed away on Friday morning in a Delhi hospital, family sources said. She was 93. Born in 1925, Ms Sobti was known for her writing on issues of female identity and sexuality. She was a recipient of many awards, including the Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith awards, and was also offered the Padma Bhushan, which she had declined. (See also *Delhi Metro Page 4*)

Razing of Nirav's seaside bungalow begins

MUMBAI
The Raigad Collectorate Friday afternoon began demolishing Nirav Modi's sprawling seaside mansion in Kihim in Alibaug. District Collector Vijay Suryawanshi issued the demolition orders after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) handed over the property, situated in the neighbouring Raigad district.

Leopard runs amok in Nashik city, injures four

PUNE
Nashik in north Maharashtra was in the grip of fear after a stray leopard ran amok in a crowded locality on Friday, injuring four persons, including two presspersons and a Shiv Sena corporator, before being caught by forest authorities. This is the second incident in the district in less than a fortnight.

Nominations invited for ACJ award

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI
The Media Development Foundation has invited nominations for the Asian College of Journalism Award for Investigative Journalism 2018.

MDF, the trust that administers the college, said journalists and news organisations can send entries for the award, which carries a prize money of ₹2 lakh. Awards will be given for work(s) in the print/on-line category on May 3, the World Press Freedom Day, a press release said.

The submitted work must have been published in 2018. Entries can be sent by post or online.

For details, visit <http://asianmedia.in/acj/acj-awards-2/acj-awards-overview/> or contact 9611511159/ 0442254 2840.

ESI gains 1.8 crore subscribers, EPF adds 73.5 lakh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) added 73.5 lakh subscribers between September 2017 and November 2018, according to government data released on Friday.

The EPFO is a retirement fund for employees in the formal sector. All firms employing more than 20 workers are required to subscribe to the scheme.

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIS) gained more than 1.8 crore new subscribers over the same 15-month period. The ESI insurance scheme is applicable to firms with more than 10 workers each.

The data was released on Friday by the Central Statistics Organisation (CSO) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

"The present report gives different perspectives on the levels of employment in the formal sector and does not measure employment at a holistic level," the CSO said in the statement.

Chances of overlap
It added that "since the numbers of subscribers are from various sources, there are elements of overlap and the estimates are not additive."

Labour and employment experts have also warned against using EPFO and ESIC data as a direct indication of job growth.

Taking to the skies

The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation on Friday awarded 235 new air routes to 11 airlines under the third round of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS), which has been termed as UDAN 3.0.

Proposals received
Airports Authority of India (AAI), the implementing agency of UDAN, received

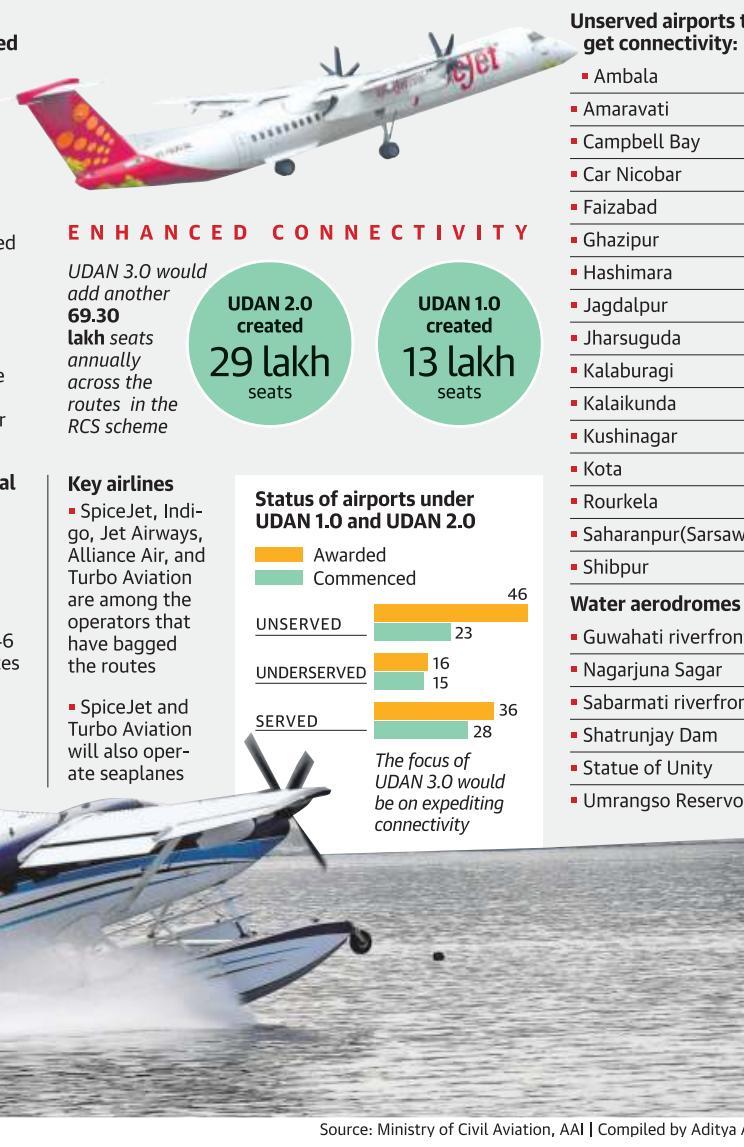
111 initial proposals
17 counter proposals from 15 bidders covering more than 350 routes

Proposals connecting 13 water aerodromes and more than 40 tourism routes were also received as part of the bidding process

Airports to be connected

Currently 16 unserved airports, 17 underserved airports, 6 water aerodromes and 50 served airports (for a total of 89 airports) would be connected based on the proposals identified for connectivity.

Geographical spread
235 routes comprising 189 RCS routes and 46 tourism routes connecting across **29 States**



Source: Ministry of Civil Aviation, AAI | Compiled by Aditya Anand

'SAARC nations must have synergy'

Panel wants negative discourse on region driven out of public domain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR
The conundrum of South Asian identity, involving the challenges posed by the 1947 Partition, internal politics of each country and meddling by the U.S. and China, could be resolved if the "negative discourse" on the region was driven out of the public domain and the borders were rendered irrelevant, a panel of diplomats, essayists and foreign policy experts said here on Friday.

The panel comprising former Ambassador and National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon, Pakistan's former diplomat Husain Haqqani, Singapore-based economist Prasenjit Basu and Canadian essayist of Nepali descent Manjushree Thapa was in conversation with Suhasini Haider, Diplomatic Affairs Editor of *The Hindu* at the Jaipur Literature Festival here.

The experts said in the JLF session on "South Asia: Walls and Bridges" that the region's future lay in cooperation among the eight SAARC nations and strengthening of bonds with emphasis on common ethnicity, culture, traditions,



(From left) Former Ambassador and NSA Shivshankar Menon, economist Prasenjit Basu, Suhasini Haider, Manjushree Thapa, and Husain Haqqani in Jaipur on Friday. ■ ROHIT JAIN PARAS

languages and religions. The panel felt the focus of South Asian discourse needed to shift away from the perception of India's dominance in the region.

Mr. Menon said the walls in South Asia were political, whereas the bridges could be built in every domain. The SAARC could play a meaningful role, as there were no security or financial dilemmas among the member countries, except between India and Pakistan, he said, and added that there was no need to panic on interference by countries such as China and the U.S.

Ms. Thapa pointed out that when Nepal looked to-

wards India with an "emotional response" for emulating the values of secularism, institutional independence and women's empowerment, the new trends of majoritarianism were sending across confusing signals. "The 2015 Constitution has declared Nepal [to be] a secular State. We expect India to be our role model," she said.

Ms. Haider made observations about the role of SAARC in the changing geopolitical scenario and stressed the need to go a step ahead of the use of "soft power" and bring the South Asian nations together to ensure regional cooperation.

The May 2017 tweet sent many looking for a dictionary.

"I didn't realize in my flaming rage that the words weren't widely understood. I had used the word since my college days," he said.

The May 2017 tweet sent many looking for a dictionary.

'Farrago' tweet done in rage, says Tharoor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JAIPUR

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has cleared the air on his famous 2017 'farrago' tweet which catapulted him to social media fame.

Mr. Tharoor speaking at the Jaipur Literary Festival said in Jaipur he posted the tweet in a "flaming rage" without realising that a large part of it could be incomprehensible to his followers. He had written, "exasperating farrago of distortions, misrepresentations and lies being broadcast by an unprincipled showman masquerading as a journalist".

"I didn't realize in my flaming rage that the words weren't widely understood. I had used the word since my college days," he said.

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"I didn't realize in my



A friendly fight

The pre-poll rivalry between the Congress and the TDP will not prevent a post-poll friendship

A divorce need not always be an unhappy mess. In Andhra Pradesh, the Congress and the Telugu Desam Party have agreed to go their separate ways, but remain friends. While deciding against any form of an alliance for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, they have agreed to work closely in the post-poll scenario at the national level. Going by the disastrous results of their alliance in Telangana, where they lost heavily to the Telangana Rashtra Samithi recently, this arrangement is the best for both. Indeed, the TDP, trying to retain power against a resurgent YSR Congress Party, may do better without the Congress, which is still blamed in Andhra Pradesh for the bifurcation of the State in 2014. The Congress, to the benefit of the TDP, could cut into the vote share of the YSRCP, a breakaway party led by the son of former Congress Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy. Traditionally, the Congress and the TDP have been bitter rivals, but the bifurcation dramatically changed the political equations. The Congress vote bank collapsed in Andhra Pradesh as the Congress-led government at the Centre was seen as the architect of the bifurcation. In Telangana, the TDP, which vacillated on the division, suffered a massive erosion of votes. Thus, for the first time, the Congress and the TDP no longer had geographically overlapping support bases. While the leadership of both parties saw in this an opportunity to work together, the ground beneath had shifted. The vote banks of the Congress and the TDP did not add up in the recent Telangana Assembly election. Voters in the new State saw the alliance between the foes-turned-friends as opportunistic and returned the TRS to power with a bigger majority.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, while not keen on an alliance with the Congress, wants the two parties to work together at the national level against the Bharatiya Janata Party. Much of Mr. Naidu's political campaign is directed against the BJP-led government at the Centre for not granting special category status to Andhra Pradesh. Installing a non-BJP alternative political formation at the Centre is integral to the TDP's vision for the State. For its part, the Congress, which is in the process of finding new allies in different States to cut into the BJP's share of the seats, is content with the TDP as a post-poll ally. The tactic of fighting the elections separately need not stop them from forming a government together. In the eyes of the Congress, a post-poll coalition in Andhra Pradesh is just as good as a pre-poll alliance. What matters is the number of seats that parties opposed to the BJP may get in the Lok Sabha. If the disbanding of the alliance makes any difference to that end, it can only be a positive.

Crisis in Caracas

Venezuela plunges from one catastrophic crisis to another

The political crisis in Venezuela took a dangerous turn when Juan Guaidó, the new head of the National Assembly, declared himself "acting President", challenging the authority of President Nicolás Maduro. Soon after Mr. Guaidó's announcement, the U.S., Canada, Brazil and a host of other Latin American countries recognised the 35-year-old leader from the Popular Will party as interim President. A furious Mr. Maduro cut diplomatic ties with the U.S. and ordered American diplomats to leave in 72 hours. Venezuela has grappled with an economic and political crisis of its own making for almost two years now. When oil prices started falling from its 2014 highs, it badly hit an economy that was over-reliant on petroleum exports and was borrowing heavily to fund its over-spending on social welfare programmes, which former President Hugo Chávez liked to describe as a "Bolivarian revolution". Mr. Maduro's government was clueless when the economy started collapsing. At least 90% of the people now live below the poverty line, inflation is forecast to touch 10 million per cent this year, food and medicine shortages are widespread, and the economic woes have triggered a massive migrant crisis – nearly three million are estimated to have fled the country in recent years.

The opposition, whose attempts to overthrow the Socialists, including the 2002 coup against Chávez, had failed in the past, launched protests against Mr. Maduro. The government used brute force to suppress them, while the economic situation deteriorated. This left Venezuela in a constant state of economic hardships and violent street protests over the past two years. The main opposition boycotted last year's presidential election, which Mr. Maduro won with 67.8% vote. Mr. Guaidó's claim is that the election was not free and fair and therefore Mr. Maduro is not the legitimate President – a claim that the U.S. and its allies back. While Mr. Maduro shares a lot of the blame for the mismanagement of the economy, forcibly removing him from power with support from foreign nations may destabilise the country further, even leaving aside the legality of such a move. Mr. Guaidó may have hoped that by anointing himself a rebel President with backing from the U.S., he could win the support of sections of the armed forces, without which he cannot unseat Mr. Maduro. But that plan appears to have failed with the military declaring its loyalty to President Maduro. To be sure, the people of Venezuela deserve a better deal from a government that has led them to untold suffering and forced millions to flee the country. Destabilisation by interfering in the political process is not the solution, however. What is required is a coordinated international effort to restore some degree of economic and political normalcy. In the long run, it is up to the people of Venezuela to decide their own political destiny.

Examining farm loan waivers

The solution lies in better schemes that ensure universal coverage for small, marginal and medium-sized farmers



R. RAMAKUMAR

To do or not to do? According to reports, the Central government is discussing a scheme to waive outstanding farm loans in the aftermath of widespread farmers' protests between March and December 2018. Till now, at least 11 States have announced schemes to waive outstanding farm loans: Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Assam and Rajasthan. The pitch for waivers among States has added to the pressure on the Central government for a nationwide farm loan waiver.

Divided opinion

Economists and bankers are sharply divided on whether farm loan waivers are desirable. One section of economists and hard-nosed bankers argues that loan waivers represent poor policy for a variety of reasons. First, loan waivers have "reputational consequences"; that is, they adversely affect the repayment discipline of farmers, leading to a rise in defaults in future. Second, earlier debt waiver schemes have not led to increases in investment or productivity in agriculture. Third, after the implementation of debt waiver schemes, a farmer's access to formal sector lenders declines, leading to a rise in his dependence on informal sector lenders; in other words, waivers lead to the shrinkage of a farmer's future access to formal sector credit.

These arguments need careful

and critical assessment. To begin with, there have only been two nationwide loan waiver programmes in India after Independence: in 1990 and 2008. The accompanying image gives data on agricultural non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks before and after the 2008 waiver, and throws up two conclusions.

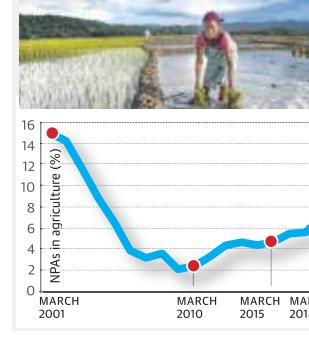
First, farmers are most disciplined in their repayment behaviour. In September 2018, agricultural NPAs (about 8%) were far lower than in industry (about 21%). Furthermore, agricultural NPAs were on a continuous decline between 2001 and 2008. Second, there is no evidence to argue that the 2008 waiver led to a rise in default rates among farmers. The lowest of all NPAs after 2001 was recorded in March 2009 (2.1%), which was just after the implementation of the 2008 scheme. The reason was the government's cleaning up of the account books of banks. Once this was complete, it was totally expected that NPAs would rise again to settle at a slightly higher level. This was exactly what had happened: agricultural NPAs rose and settled at about 5% by 2011.

For two reasons, the rise of agricultural NPAs, from 2% to 5%, is no evidence for indiscipline in farmer repayment behaviour. One, NPAs in agriculture remained stable at around 4 to 5% between 2011 and 2015. This was despite the fact that agricultural growth averaged just 1.5% between 2011 and 2015. Two, D. Subbarao, the former Reserve Bank of India Governor, had pointed out in a 2012 speech that the rise in agricultural NPAs between 2009 and 2011 was due to the "general economic slowdown" after 2009 and the introduction of new norms in the "system-wide identification of NPAs".

Agricultural NPAs began to rise

At the grass-roots

NPAs in agriculture fell after 2001. While they did not rise abnormally after the 2008 waiver, they have begun to rise after 2015.



again after 2015. There is enough evidence to suggest that this rise was not the result of any moral hazard; it was real, policy-induced and a direct consequence of acute agrarian distress that spread across rural India after 2015. In particular, the demonetisation of November 2016 aggravated already brewing agrarian distress by sucking cash out of the rural areas, crashing output prices and disrupting supply chains.

The second argument – that loan waivers do not promote investment or raise productivity – is a bit absurd because nowhere has investment or productivity figured as the official objectives of these schemes. The third argument – that loan waivers shrink access to formal credit sector for farmers – is only partly true. But the culprits here are banks and not farmers. After every waiver, banks become conservative in issuing fresh loans to beneficiaries, as they are perceived to be less creditworthy. For instance, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the waiver in 2008 found that 34.3% of the beneficiaries were not issued debt relief certificates after the

waiver, which meant that they could not avail of a fresh loan the following year. As a result, the scheme's objective of expanding the issue of fresh loans to farmers was not fully achieved. But to cite such opportunistic actions of banks to deny fresh credit to farmers would be perverse policy.

For every economic enterprise, it is only natural that when the bottom-line shrinks, a reduction of debt burden becomes inevitable. This is applicable for both (non-agricultural) firms and farms. Firms have always received debt waivers, though they are tactfully termed as "loan restructuring" or "one-time settlements". Just as for firms, farms also need a reduction of debt burden, followed by fresh infusion of credit, when their economic cycle is on a downturn. The demand for loan waivers in India is absolutely logical when viewed from such a standpoint.

On the other hand, to consider loan waivers as a panacea for the agrarian distress would also be wrong. To begin with, access to India's rural banks is skewed in favour of large farmers. While public banks actively service the credit needs of large farmers, a majority of small and marginal farmers are not proportionately included. The latter are forced to rely on informal sources, particularly money-lenders, for much of their credit needs. As a result, the benefits of loan waivers accrue disproportionately to large farmers while only marginally benefiting the small and marginal farmers.

The Kerala blueprint

But is this a good reason to disallow a loan waiver scheme, as the Prime Minister suggested in a recent interview? No. The solution lies in carefully designing waiver schemes that ensure universal coverage for small, marginal and me-

dium-sized farmers while covering both the formal and informal sources of debt. The Kerala Farmers' Debt Relief Commission Act, 2006 is an excellent model in this regard. This scheme defines debt as "any sum borrowed by a farmer from the creditor", with the creditor defined as "any person engaged in money lending, whether under a licence or not". The commission's mandate included the right "to fix, in the case of creditors other than institutional creditors, a fair rate of interest and an appropriate level of debt, to be payable..." That is, the commission could waive, reschedule or reduce any debt on a need-basis after a detailed hearing of both the parties. Legislations such as Kerala's are blueprints to design comprehensive, inclusive and less-leaky loan waiver schemes in other States.

Finally, while loan waiver schemes are like a band-aid on a wound, it is the larger agrarian distress that demands urgent policy attention. Unless there are steps to raise productivity, reduce costs of cultivation by providing quality inputs at subsidised rates, provide remunerative prices following the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission, ensure assured procurement of output, expand access to institutional credit, enhance public investment for infrastructural development, institute effective crop insurance systems and establish affordable scientific storage facilities and agro-processing industries for value addition, farmers will continue to be bonded to low income equilibrium and repeated debt traps.

R. Ramakumar is the NABARD Chair Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. The views expressed are personal

A failed coup in Venezuela

The country was once the heartbeat of leftist assertion. But with change in the Americas, matters are now complex



VIJAY PRASHAD

The fulcrum of geopolitical tension sits on Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. An attempted coup on January 23 has failed. The U.S. decided to recognise a member of the Opposition, Juan Guaidó, as the President of Venezuela. U.S. officials called upon the military to rise up against the government of President Nicolás Maduro. This was against the charters of the United Nations and of the Organisation of American States (OAS). None of that mattered. The drumbeats sounded from Washington to Caracas. There was a minor drum playing from many Latin American capitals, those whose governments had joined the Lima Group – set up in Peru in 2017 to overthrow the government of Venezuela.

There is little respite for the country, where tension sits heavily from one end to another. Thus far, the government of Mr. Maduro remains in power, and the military has pledged its fealty to the re-elected president. It is unlikely that the Venezuelan Opposition –

controlled by the old oligarchy – will be able to engineer a coup from within the country. It tried such a political manoeuvre in 2002, which failed. This time it has failed again.

Venezuela's Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, 45, has been understandably busy on the day after the attempted coup. The U.S. tried to isolate the Maduro government. The OAS met in Washington DC, where the U.S. government tried to get it to unanimously vote against Mr. Maduro. Even that meeting could not go as scripted. A veteran activist from Code Pink, Medea Benjamin, sneaked into the room and chanted slogans against the attempted coup. Many Latin American states, despite intense pressure from the U.S. government, either voted against the OAS motion or abstained. Mr. Arreaza watched these developments and more.

When I asked him about the coup, he went back to 2017, the last time that the oligarchy tried to wrest control of the government from the socialists. The socialists, led by Hugo Chávez, came to power in 1999. After the U.S. attempted to overthrow Chávez and the socialists in 2002, things calmed down. Oil prices rose and the U.S. was distracted by events in Iraq and Afghanistan. For a decade, Venezuela was able to lead a regional process of integration on an anti-

imperialist foundation. But, when Chávez died in 2013, the experiment began to unravel. Oil prices fell dramatically, and the U.S. had already turned its attention to Latin America. A coup in 2009 overthrew the democratically elected government of Honduras. The gunsights turned toward Venezuela. The oligarchy, backed fully by the U.S., attempted to foment trouble in 2017.

Mr. Arreaza recalled one man, Orlando Figuera, 21, who was going through an Opposition stronghold in May 2017. "He was accused of being a government supporter and brutally beaten by masked protesters who then soaked him in gasoline and set him on fire," Mr. Arreaza told me. He brought up this story to offer an illustration of the character of the Opposition. Mr. Arreaza called this a 'violent fascist movement'. He wanted to make it clear that the coup at-

tempt was a part of that movement – one that is less interested in democracy and more interested in power and wealth.

Steeded in trouble

Venezuela is in trouble. No one doubts that. Oil prices have fallen to half of what they were at the highpoint of Chávez's government. Since the treasury of Venezuela is almost entirely replenished by the incomes from oil sales, the collapse of oil prices means the collapse of Venezuela's public finances. Unable to borrow easily, the country faces serious economic difficulties. Sanctions by the U.S. and the seizure of refining sites in the Caribbean put the country into a situation of great crisis. No wonder that people are leaving the country, fleeing their homeland as it is suffocated for political purposes by the U.S. and its Latin American allies in the Lima Group.

Colombia's Iván Duque and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro are both right-wing politicians who control the governments of Venezuela's neighbours. They have committed themselves to the overthrow of the Venezuelan government. Mr. Arreaza told others in Venezuela told me that Mr. Duque, Mr. Bolsonaro and U.S. President Donald Trump have overplayed their hands. After the attempted overthrow in 2017, the Venezuelan government tried

to deepen public participation by the formation of a Constituent Assembly. It is true that the oligarchy hated this idea and that the western press amplified its views about this being anti-democratic. But, as many Venezuelans say, the Constituent Assembly and the many elections for candidates and referendums that came before 2017 have sharpened their political consciousness. It will be hard to befuddle them with talk of dictatorship.

The isolation of Venezuela is remarkable. Not long ago, the country was the heartbeat of the leftist assertion in the hemisphere. Now, with the emergence of right-of-centre governments in Latin America and with an explosive energy for regime change in Washington, matters are more complex. Mr. Arreaza said that Mr. Maduro had invited the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to visit Venezuela. She has yet come. Mr. Maduro, he said, wanted the UN to host a dialogue with the Opposition to restore some balance to the politics in the country. No such assistance has been provided. A hand is outstretched from Caracas, Mr. Arreaza said. It is waiting for someone to take hold of it.

Vijay Prashad is Executive Director, Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research

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.

The ICICI case

The move by the Central Bureau of Investigation to file a case against high profile banker Chanda Kochhar, Videocon head, January 25. She was considered a role model for women entrepreneurs but lost her way by doing the unthinkable – of promoting her husband's business interests. Whatever be the final outcome, nothing can take away from the able leadership she gave to the bank she once headed. While there appears, prima facie, a question of conflict of interest, it also brings to the fore the role of the board which ratified the decisions taken by those within the bank who sanctioned loans. Can only a few individuals be singled out when the joint stock system works under the

principle of collective responsibility? What effective checks and controls are there in place to deter such transgressions from happening? Banking authorities have to frame suitable guidelines for accountability and transparency in operations. The statutory auditors have also failed to bring to the notice of shareholders the conflict of interest while certifying the corporate governance report forming part of the annual report.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

Rights and regulations
The right to life, granted under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, does not mean having a mere animal existence. It includes the right to working in safe, secure and humane conditions. Rat-hole mining in Meghalaya is nothing but a disregard for human life that is over-

ridden by the overpowering need for economic gains. Mining must be regulated. After all, what is the use of land and forest resources if we lose precious lives (Editorial page, "A tragedy that was long in the making", January 25).

DIVYA SINGLA,
Patiala, Punjab

■ The tragic incident is a reminder that public interest should outweigh corporate interests. It also shows that our disaster response agencies need to be much better equipped and better coordinated in order to pull off a rescue mission despite many odds and within a limited window of time. The efforts taken by Delhi-based lawyer Aditya N. Prasad are commendable especially in a world where being humane and showing a humanity streak in oneself is a dying virtue.

AGNIVESH MISHRA,
New Delhi

■ It is heart-rending to see a State such as Meghalaya, renowned for its scenic beauty and pristine nature, being "defiled". The incident also shows the appalling apathy towards disaster preparedness. How can a State government remain stoic while people are busy flouting the rules? Will there be a political will now to come up with strict regulations?

KEMAR DUKOM,
Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh

■ The blatant disregard by the state for the working class and socially backward groups is at the core of the incident. The problem in our country is the lack of implementation of constitutional principles. Even in the case of environmental degradation, there is a failure by the state machinery to act. When we celebrate Republic Day today, let us ensure that the values enshrined to us by the

Constitution reach the last citizens.

KAVIN CASTRO,
Tiruchirappalli

ISRO aces it again
The Indian Space Research Organisation has achieved yet another significant milestone (Inside pages, "ISRO tastes first success of 2019", January 25). The encouragement ISRO has given to students should encourage them to carry out more science experiments.

M. JAYARAM,
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

Fighting cancer
The report, on actor, politician and cancer survivor, Nafisa Ali, doing her bit to focus attention on the need for early diagnosis is a report that should have been published on the front page. Depression and anxiety are some of the many emotions a person experiences when fighting the disease. Such positive

<p

A dusty road that snakes through areca nut plantations and forests leads one to Jegala, a hamlet wedged between the Sharavathy hydel reservoir and the hills of the Western Ghats in Karnataka's Shivamogga district.

Late on Christmas eve, Shwetha J.S., 17, a student and resident of the neighbouring town of Sagar, came up this road to spend the holidays with her family. In the morning she was at their plantation, taking photographs with her father, Devraj, 42, who was a farmer, and the farm help, who shimmied up the slender areca tree trunks to harvest nuts. There was also something more – the faint smell of rotting carcass, but this did not dampen her joy.

Shwetha had her examinations coming up in the next few months. She was aware that she could be the first in the family to enrol in an undergraduate course. Her ambition was to get a doctorate degree in agriculture to help her father fight the diseases that often ravaged their plantation.

After she left for Sagar on December 27, her family scoured the plantation and the nearby woods for the putrid odour that had by then become unbearable. Their search led to a highly decomposed carcass of a monkey in a ditch nearby. State forest department and health officials then burnt it and doused the area with a strong insecticide. By this time, however, nymphs, or young ticks, that had feasted on the monkey before its death had already spread.

On December 28, Shweta was admitted to a hospital in Sagar as she was running a high fever. She was diagnosed with Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), a viral haemorrhagic disease endemic to the region. Better known as 'Monkey Fever', KFD is primarily transmitted through ticks – in short, a tick-borne zoonotic disease. Doctors treat only the symptoms, for KFD has no known cure.

Shwetha's mother Lata, 37, a tailor and beautician, was trying hard to control her panic. Devraj had been diagnosed with KFD too, and was also suffering from bacterial leptospirosis (rat fever). He was taken to Manipal hospital, 150 km away, while Lata devoted her time tending to Shwetha, who seemed to be recovering.

On January 2, Lata arrived in the hospital in the evening, planning to spend the night with her daughter. But, says Lata, choking on her words as she struggles to talk through uncontrollable sobs, "Shwetha looked at me, and said 'Amma, you're here'. Then she collapsed."

Shwetha went into a coma. On January 4, she was pronounced dead.

A day after Shwetha's visit to the plantation, the Aralagodu Gram Panchayat, which encompasses multiple hamlets including Jegala, registered its first case of Monkey Fever death. Shwetha was the sixth victim in Aralagodu. The toll has since risen to eight.

An old menace

In the current outbreak in the State, at least 65 people have tested positive for KFD, but the number of suspected cases – awaiting confirmation through blood tests – has touched 204. At least 38 monkeys have died in the plantations. Aralagodu is the epicentre of the outbreak, but infected areas are also being reported in villages across four districts of Karnataka (Shivamogga, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, and Uttara Kannada) – and in Kerala (Wayanad) and Maharashtra (four cases).

KFD virus is no stranger to Shivamogga, first reported in Kyasanur village in this district, about 30 km from Jegala, back in 1957. The virus belongs to the Flaviviridae family, whose other members are responsible for causing Yellow Fever, Zika and Dengue. Multiple species of ticks of the genus *Haemaphysalis* are the principal vectors. Infections peak between November and March, which coincides with the larvae-nymph cycles of ticks.

But little else can be said with certainty. Since 1957, it has flared up in sporadic outbreaks Post-2013, it has even expanded its range, with fatal consequences in Maharashtra, Kerala and Goa. According to State data, in the past 15 years, KFD has infected 2,067 people and killed 42. (The International Society for Infectious Disease estimates 3,836 infections and 98 deaths between 1999-2017 through the country.) The horrific spike in the number of deaths in one village/district in Karnataka, in the last one month, has taken the civic administration completely by surprise.

As uncertain as KFD's spread may be, what is increasingly clear is that the outbreak in Aralagodu was aggravated by systemic failures and lax monitoring of a disease that has lurked in Shivamogga's fragmented forests for over six decades.

Back after 12 years

Visitors to Aralagodu village are greeted by posters that warn them about Monkey Fever. A habitation of barely 3,000 people, located a few kilometres from the Jog falls, it has been hit hard by the disease. Ambulances ferry those with persistent fevers every day to hospitals 150 km away. Government vans zip around, reaching out to villagers in remote hamlets to identify and test fevers that could potentially be KFD.

Such is the fear that between January 5 and 15, none of the 49 school-going children showed up at the government



An epidemiological view: "Despite the threat of Kyasanur Forest Disease looming over the district for decades, official responses have been purely reactive." Picture shows an expert team drawing samples from a rat in the Tirthahalli forest area of Shivamogga district. ■ VAIDY

Kyasanur's ticking time bomb

Reckless human forays into eco-sensitive forest areas and lax public health monitoring have led to a deadly outbreak of Kyasanur Forest Disease, or Monkey Fever, in Karnataka's Shivamogga district, disrupting normal life and the local plantation economy. **Mohit M. Rao** reports from Aralagodu, the epicentre of the outbreak



their first dose, while one had been administered the second dose. The demographic group most vulnerable to KFD are people more than 40 years old. But three out of the seven dead are between 17 and 31 years, suggesting an incredibly high viral load.

A State Health Department official sums up the situation bluntly: "After the fire has broken out, we're now searching for water to douse it." Interviews with villagers, experts and government officials reveal that the inflammable cinders of this 'fire' were sighted nearly a year ago.

Protocols that failed

In April 2018, one person tested positive for KFD, in Bidar village. As in established protocol, everyone within a 5 km radius needed to be vaccinated. However, officials drove down 5 km from the infected spot, which, in the undulating landscape, led to the identification of just 500 people. Bidar was fortified against the outbreak, but Aralagodu, on the other side of the hillock, was left unprotected against a ticking time bomb.

Despite the threat of KFD looming over the district for decades, official responses have been purely reactive. The KFD field station was set up in Sagar to monitor monkey deaths and to randomly test ticks. Started by the Rockefeller Foundation and researchers of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), immediately on discovery of the disease, it transitioned from a research station to a surveillance station in the years since. But three posts in this field station have been lying vacant for nearly a year. The post of 'District Epidemiologist', who tracks diseases in populations, is being filled only now. Instead, junior officers – unvaccinated and untrained – have been pressed to the front lines.

While vaccines provide only a certain level of protection, they are an important preventive measure. The KFD vaccine, which causes acute pain and is not very efficient, has not been improved upon since the 1990s. Its only manufacturer is the Institute of Animal Health and Veterinary Biologicals in Bengaluru, which otherwise specialises in livestock vaccines. Until September, only 35,000 vials had been procured by the district administration. Junior officials assumed that Bidar's infection had been dealt with. Now, containing the outbreak is the responsibility of Kiran S.K., a Taluk Health Officer in neighbouring Thirthahalli, who was recently put in charge of the KFD field station in Sagar. His mobile phone rings incessantly as local leaders who are clearly panicky, demand that their villages be vaccinated on priority. "We don't have enough vaccines to do this," says the soft-spoken officer.

Last year, when Thirthahalli was the focus of a minor outbreak, about 23,000 vials that are needed for a booster dose (it bumps up immunity to 82%) were procured. But the KFD spectre at Bidar was lost in paperwork.

Now, the demand is for 70,000 vials. But officials have only 16,000 vials at hand, with monkey deaths and new infection areas being reported daily. Says Kiran, "We just can't vaccinate a 5 km radius any more. We are instead focussing on a core area of 2 km radius to prevent further outbreaks."

It was only in January that nearly one lakh vials were procured from the Bengaluru institute. Now they are being tested for potency at the Virus Diagnostic Laboratory in Shivamogga. The hope and prayer is that the worst is over, as these vaccines will be available only in February.

The genesis

Barely 30 km as the crow flies from Aralagodu, a clump of houses separated by a road marks where Kyasanur is, which is well aware of its association with KFD. As it happens, the village is not much older than the disease itself. Huchappa, 77, was a boy of 10 when his father carved out a small piece of land from the Kyasanur forests to set up a house and a paddy field. Says Huchappa, "Our previous village had become crowded and my father's generation had no land to till. We had to find a new home."

Eventually, the hamlet grew in size as the forests receded, giving way to paddy fields and plantations, and the deer scampered away. The monkeys, however, stayed. But by 1957, they were dying in the hordes.

American and Indian scientists thronged the village, believing that these could be the first cases of yellow fever in India. When vaccinated researchers started contracting haemorrhagic fevers, it soon became clear that the affliction was something else. KFD was discovered, and by 1958, 681 persons were confirmed to have been infected. Studies estimate that between 1957-2017, 9,594 persons were infected in 16 districts along the Western Ghats in five States.

Huchappa was infected in the early outbreaks and spent more than a month in the hospital. He says, "I had high fever, I was bleeding, I lost weight. I thought I was going to die." For reasons unknown, the disease vanished from the hamlet three decades ago and found pastures elsewhere. He adds, And yet, people think this is the village that started this scourge."

Until 2013, the disease was largely confined to Shivamogga and its neighbourhood. Since then, it has broken out in Wayanad (Kerala), North Goa, and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra. While the 'how' and the 'why' remain unclear, can the future be predicted?

Tapping the virus reservoir

The first rays of the day penetrate the dense canopy of forests that surround Kudige village, a hamlet close to Thirthahalli town. The 'rodent team' sets out on the chilly morning along a forest path where metal boxes laced with sweets serve as bait-and-cage. The village has 60 such traps spread across

plantations, harvested paddy fields, and around homes.

Says Abhijit Kumar, a research assistant with the Bengaluru-based Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), "Monkeys are a good reservoir for the virus. But rodents could be the maintenance hosts, ensuring that the virus remains in the ecosystem through the year."

Five white-bellied rats and shrews are trapped. An anaesthetic knocks out the rodents providing the team a two-minute window to tabulate physical attributes, draw blood, and collect ticks.

Kudige village, categorised by the team as 'severe' (which denotes more than 10 cases of KFD in five years) for its recent trysts with KFD, is among the 42 sites to be sampled in the region under the Indo-UK MonkeyFeverRisk project.

This collaborative initiative of 10 private and government research institutes and the State Health Department seeks to optimise forest benefits while minimising the impact of KFD. Microbiologists, entomologists, epidemiologists, animal health specialists, and social scientists are working together for a better understanding of KFD.

Says S.L. Hoti, Director, ICMR-National Institute of Traditional Medicine, Belagavi, and Principal Investigator of the project, "Different angles are being looked at: from the effect of rodents and ticks on livestock to human behaviour in forests. It is a complex disease and needs a multi-disciplinary effort."

The 'tick team' had first carried out a 'drag-and-flag' operation in Kudige. This involves research associates dragging white sheets of cloth over leaf litter and shrubs. Every 10 metres, they peer into the dirt-covered sheets to check for ticks, which are then collected. They also collect data on temperature, humidity, habitat type, and the presence of invasive plant species known to host ticks in large numbers.

C "It is a complex disease and needs a multi-disciplinary effort."

S.L. HOTI, Director, ICMR-National Institute of Traditional Medicine, Belagavi

K.S. Manjappa, 55 looks on at the process with some curiosity. A decade ago he cleared out a half-acre of forests for his acre plantations, while the forests themselves remain part of his daily routine. Like most villagers, his plantation is technically considered forest land. He says, "We've applied to regularise the land. We've been given assurances from politicians, but nothing has happened so far."

Praying for the rain

At the heart of the Monkey Fever story is a cautionary tale of repeated human incursions into eco-sensitive, ecologically-rich areas. Says Bethan Purse, Principal Investigator and scientist at the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Wallingford, UK, "KFD emerged when the forests

were cut down for roads, mines and plantations. This brought people into closer contact with the virus that was cycling naturally between wild animals and ticks in the forest."

Nearly every study on the disease so far has highlighted the role of forest degradation in the spread of KFD. Kiran, who has helmed multiple research papers on KFD, says that villagers living near highly-fragmented forests are more susceptible to the disease. He says, "Tick densities remain high in these forests, and with the presence of monkeys, peacocks, rodents and other reservoirs, there is always a chance of the disease spilling over to the village. This risk factor is not given its due in the health response to KFD."

Shivamogga district has a dismal record when it comes to forest degradation. About 156 sq km of forests were lost here between 2003 and 2017, according to the Forest Survey of India. The district accounts for 70% of Karnataka's denotified forest land and a third of the regularisation applications seeking the reclassification of forest land as agricultural land. Mass approval of such applications is a politically lucrative move that has made the careers of many a politician.

The scope of the MonkeyFeverRisk project is ambitious: over 15,000 ticks are to be sampled and tested, data from hundreds of rodents collected, hundreds of pages of social surveys, and creation of land-use maps, micro-climate data to be worked on, and so on, with each element contributing a piece in the complex jigsaw puzzle.

A preliminary risk map – a map of the region where the risk of a KFD outbreak is shaded differently depending on the various risk factors – has been prepared and is being verified. As data pour in, Purse hopes that they can determine which communities are at risk when, where and why.

For now, each day presents a new challenge for those in charge of containing the 2018 outbreak. At Aralagodu, villagers are advised to liberally apply insect repellent oil on their bodies before venturing out. There is a ₹500 reward for anyone offering information on monkey deaths.

But anger is rising and protests for compensation erupt each day. The State government has formed an expert committee to investigate lapses and officials have been suspended. Village leaders have submitted petitions demanding the culling of monkeys.

Agriculture, their mainstay, has come to a halt and vast swathes of plantations remain unharvested. Says Mahabala Giri, 58, "People are scared to enter plantations, and we do not want to take the risk either." He estimates that he stands to lose about ₹3 lakh on account of the unharvested areca nut on his 5 acre farm. He does not know why KFD has taken Aralagodu hostage this year. But he knows when it will end. "We will pray for early rains. If it pours, the ticks go away."

FROM PAGE ONE

CBI books former Haryana CM Hooda

Among the companies arraigned in the FIR are Emaar MGF Land, Ansal Properties and Infrastructure, DLF New Gurgaon Homes Developers, JMD, R.S. Infrastructure, Martial Buildcon, Marconi InfraTech, Commander Realtors, SU Estates, Buzz Hotels, Krish Buildtech, Gupta Promoters, HS Realty, DSS Infrastructure and Sana Realtors.

During the preliminary inquiry, the CBI found that in most instances, the accused firms managed to get the order issued for acquisition of scattered plots located in pockets that were sandwiched between licensed land, areas for which licences had already been applied, and the land under revenue roads and drains, which were of no use to HUDA. The plots were located

in sectors 58 to 63 and 65 to 67 in Gurugram.

Another notification was issued for acquisition of 850.10 acres of land on May 31, 2010.

However, as alleged by the CBI, during the notification period, about 616.40 acres were released in favour of the companies.

"Preliminary Inquiry further *prima facie* established that the lands in question were released from acquisition process in spite of deviation and the licences were fraudulently obtained by the above said accused companies in the names of their collaborators and the land was released from acquisition process irregularly in connivance with public servants namely: Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Trilok Chand Gupta," said the FIR.

SC upholds bankruptcy code, cites fund flows

"Approximately 3,300 cases have been disposed of by the adjudicating authority based on out-of-court settlements between corporate debtors and creditors which themselves involved claims amounting to over ₹1,20,390 crore," the judgment added.

The court noted that IBC has witnessed an improvement in the total flow of resources to the commercial sector, both bank and non-bank, and domestic and foreign (relatable to the non-food sector) has gone up from a total of ₹14,530.47 crore in 2016-17 to ₹18,469.25 crore in 2017-18 to ₹18,798.20 crore in the first six months of 2018-19.

"These figures show that the experiment conducted in enacting the Code is proving to be largely successful," Justice Nariman wrote.

The judgment, however, partially reads down Section 29A. This provision disqualifies certain kinds of persons from submitting a resolution plan. The court

said the very purpose of Section 29A is to ensure that the "persons responsible for insolvency of the corporate debtor do not participate in the resolution process".

However, the court interprets clause (j) of Section 29A to hold that the "mere fact that somebody happens to be a relative of an ineligible person cannot be good enough to oust such person from becoming a resolution applicant, if he is otherwise qualified".

The court upheld certain relaxations given to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) under Section 29A of the Code. It the MSME form the "bedrock of our economy" and stringent restrictions through the IBC would adversely affect them. That is, instead of resolving crisis, it would lead to the untimely liquidation of MSMEs.

The court said the relaxation for MSMEs is proof that the legislature is alive to the anomalies within the Code and is taking steps to rectify them.

10% reservation for the poor challenged in SC

The petitioners argued that the 50% ceiling on quota has been "engrafted as a part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution's equality code" by the Supreme Court.

The Bench, also comprising Justice Sanjiv Khanna, issued notice to the government and ordered it to reply in three weeks.

One of the petitions, filed by Youth For Equality, represented by advocates Senthil Jagadeesan and Gopal Sankaranarayanan, contended that the Supreme Court, in a nine-judge Bench judgment in the Indira Sawhney case, had already settled the law that eco-

nomic backwardness cannot be the sole basis for reservation. The plea argued that the Act was "vulnerable" and negated a binding judgment of the top court.

The petition contended that the amendments exclude the OBCs and the SC/ST communities from the scope of the economic reservation. This, it said, "essentially implies that only those who are poor from the general categories would avail the benefits of the quotas." It said the high creamy layer limit of ₹8 lakh per annum ensures that the elite capture the reservation benefits.

Bharat Ratna for Pranab, Deshmukh, Hazarika

Gandhi lauded Mr. Mukherjee.

"Congratulations to Pranab Da on being awarded the Bharat Ratna. The Congress Party takes great pride in the fact that the immense contribution to public service & nation building of one of our own, has been recognised & honoured," he tweeted. He also expressed his happiness that Mr. Hazarika and Mr. Deshmukh had been honoured posthumously.

Mr. Mukherjee took to Twitter to thank "the people of India" for the award. "It is with a deep sense of humility and gratitude to the people of India that I accept this great honour," he said.

Mr. Hazarika's award appears to be a nod to the importance the North East has been accorded by the current government amid huge unrest following the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill being pushed. Mr. Hazarika had also contested and lost the Lok Sabha poll from Guwahati in 2004, on a BJP ticket.

Mr. Mukherjee, whom Prime Minister Modi termed as being "like a father" to him has been awarded for public service, but did evoke controversy last year as he addressed the RSS cadre in Nagpur and created a debate on political dialogue.

Congress president Rahul

CM YK

Audit report on Rafale deal not yet complete, says CAG**Glaring mismatch**

The Centre's argument in the Supreme Court that CAG report on Rafale was shared to the Public Accounts Committee does not hold.

Centre's submission to SC:

The pricing details have, however, been shared with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and the report of the CAG has been examined by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

**CAG's response to an RTI query on Jan. 21:**

Audit Report is under preparation. Therefore, no information can be provided in this stage

Why did Rahul meet Chinese Ministers?**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday questioned Congress president Rahul Gandhi on his Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in September last year, after the latter rekindled the controversy with a reference to his meeting with Chinese officials, while addressing a public meeting in Odisha.

At a rally in Bhubaneswar on Friday, Mr. Gandhi said he had met with two Chinese Ministers during his visit to Kailash Mansarovar and discussed job creation. Mr. Gandhi said, "We have to compete with China. We have to accept that the single biggest challenge is China's ability to produce jobs after jobs. I met a couple of Chinese Ministers ... and discussed job creation with them."

BJP spokesperson fielded its national spokesperson Sambit Patra to take on Mr. Gandhi.

"Rahul Gandhi had earlier said he will not be meeting Chinese Ministers or officials during his tour. Today he has admitted it while the Congress has been denying it. Why didn't he inform the Ministry of External Affairs? Why was the Indian embassy kept out of the loop? What was the interaction about," Mr. Patra asked.

Ashok Bhushan, Abdul Nazeer to replace two others who recused on January 10

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Constitution Bench hearing the Ayodhya title suit appeals on January 29 will have two new judges on it.

Justices Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer will replace Justices N.V. Ramana and U.U. Lalit. Justice Lalit chose to recuse 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.

It is not known why Justice Ramana is not part of the Bench anymore.

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 then Chief Justice Dipak Misra, who had led the three-judge Bench.

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

On January 29, the altered Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and comprising Justices S.A. Bobde and D.Y. Chandrachud along with Justices Bhushan and Nazeer is likely to fix the time and schedule for future hearings in the appeals.

Under lock and key

The Bench will also peruse the report prepared by the Supreme Court Registry on the state of the entire case records of the Ayodhya case. These papers have been lying inside 15 sealed trunks in a sealed room of the court for the past several years.

Arun Jaitley in good health, recovering rapidly, says Goyal**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Piyush Goyal, who now holds the Finance portfolio, said on Friday that Union Minister Arun Jaitley was in good health and was recovering rapidly.

"I had a chance to talk to him late last night and actually even early morning today. He is in good health, recovering very rapidly," Mr. Goyal said at the International Customs Day function organised by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs. "And I am sure all



of you will join me in wishing him the best of health and many many years of service."

Speaking at an event or

RTI activists say this erodes the basis of the SC judgment in the Rafale case

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) has not yet completed its audit report regarding purchase of the Rafale aircraft, according to its response to an RTI query this week. This erodes the basis of the Supreme Court's December 2018 judgment on the Rafale case, according to RTI activists.

On December 14, the Supreme Court refused to embark on a judicial review into the deal for procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets. One paragraph of its judgment, however, caused considerable

controversy. The verdict said, "The pricing details have, however, been shared with the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG), and the report of the CAG has been examined by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Only a redacted portion of the report was placed before Parliament and is in the public domain."

The Centre petitioned for a correction of the statement, saying that the court had "misinterpreted" its submission. It said that while the government had already shared pricing details with the CAG, the CAG's report is

examined" by the PAC, referring to the procedure which would be followed as and when the CAG report is ready.

In the wake of the controversy, National Campaign for People's Right to Information co-convenor Anjali Bhardwaj filed an RTI request to the CAG asking about the dates on which its report on purchase of Rafale aircraft was finalised, submitted to the government, and tabled in Parliament.

In a response dated January 21, the CAG replied: "Audit Report is under preparation. Therefore, no

information can be provided in this stage."

An RTI query to the Lok Sabha regarding the dates on which the CAG report was tabled in Parliament and examined by the PAC was also transferred by the Lok Sabha Secretariat to the CAG, as the relevant public authority.

"This RTI response is an official verification by the CAG that no report has been prepared till date. The report and that it was placed before PAC and Parliament was partly the basis of the SC's judgment," said Ms. Bhardwaj, making a case for a review of the verdict itself.

IN BRIEF**Row over BJP leaders' remarks against Priyanka**

PATNA The disparaging remarks by senior State BJP leaders and Ministers in Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's Cabinet over Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's political debut led to a controversy on Friday with leaders across party lines condemning them and demanding action.

Ex-MP Lovely Anand, son join Congress

PATNA Lovely Anand, former MP and wife of imprisoned don-turned politician Anand Mohan Singh on Friday joined the Congress along with her son Chetan Anand at the party's State headquarters Sadaqat Ashram in Patna. She is likely to be the Congress candidate from the Sheohar Lok Sabha seat in the upcoming Parliamentary poll.

Former Gujarat CM Vaghela to join NCP

AHMEDABAD Former Gujarat Chief Minister and Union Minister Shankarsinh Vaghela, who had left the Congress ahead of last year's Assembly polls, is set to join the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Mr. Vaghela said Mr. Pawar would make a formal announcement on this in the next few days.



Pre-poll trip: Congress chief Rahul Gandhi at a meeting in Bhubaneswar. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

been through very hard situations. That has brought us very close."

"Our way of operating is we give each other space. When I say to my sister that I want that space, my sister would tell the space is yours. If my sister says she wants that space, then I would tell that the space is hers. There is a give and take going on between us," he said.

At a public meeting, Mr. Gandhi announced farm loans would be waived within 10 days of the party coming to power in Odisha – a key election promise that had helped the party wrest

control of three Hindi heartland States in the recent Assembly elections. Mr. Gandhi promised to hike the minimum support price of paddy to ₹2,600 a quintal in the eastern State. "I want to assure the farmers of Odisha that they should not panic. Only two to three months are left. As soon as the Congress forms the government here, farm loans will be waived within 10 days."

During the morning interactive session, the Gandhi scion accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik of running bureaucracy-led goVERNMENTS and charged that both of them were scared of meeting the people.

"The BJP model and the BJD model are the same. The so-called Gujarat model is basically a very simple deal. The bigger industrialists of the State fund the marketing of the Chief Minister. And the Chief Minister hands over the State to a couple of key bureaucrats to run it. And the voice of the people is not included in the conversation. That is very different from the way the Congress runs the States. We don't want a bureaucratic dictatorship," Mr. Gandhi said.

CBI, ED seek custody of Chidambaram

Former Minister being evasive'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) told the Delhi High Court on Friday that they required custodial interrogation of former Finance Minister and Congress leader P. Chidambaram in the INX Media case.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the agencies, asked the court to allow the agencies to exercise their "statutory right to arrest" and interrogate Mr. Chidambaram in custody.

The court, which was hearing Mr. Chidambaram's plea for anticipatory bail, reserved its order, and said

the interim protection from arrest would continue till further decision. "He [Chidambaram] is evasive and the answers are factually incorrect. For ends of justice, he needs to be examined in custody," Mr. Mehta said.

The CBI registered an FIR on May 15, 2017 against alleged irregularities in the FIPB clearance to INX Media for receiving overseas funds of ₹305 crore in 2007 when Mr. Chidambaram was Finance Minister.

During the hearing, Mr. Mehta opposed the anticipatory bail plea. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Mr. Chidambaram, said his client was not named as an accused in the FIR.

NDA most likely to win, says Prashant Kishor**APPAJI REDDEM**

HYDERABAD

Prashant Kishor, political strategist-turned-politician and Janata Dal(U) vice-president, says the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has a higher probability of winning the Lok Sabha election and coming back to power at the Centre.

As far as the political situation in Andhra Pradesh is concerned, he feels the people may give YSR Congress president Jagannath Reddy a chance.

Speaking to *The Hindu*

ganised by the Customs Department, Mr. Goyal called for increased simplification of rules, transparency and the use of latest technology to further smoothen the tax filing process.

"It is necessary to make the compliance simpler for the honest taxpayers and ensure best use of the money so collected through taxes for the welfare of the public at large," Mr. Goyal said.

The Minister also urged the business community to do business "ethically and straight."

Speaking to *The Hindu*

here on State and Central

855 police personnel to get medals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As many as 855 police personnel were selected for awards on the occasion of Republic Day.

Pradip Kumar Panda and Rajendra Kumar Nain, Central Reserve Police Force constables, have been selected for the Kirti Chakra posthumously. Assistant Commandant Zile Singh has been selected for the Shaurya Chakra for showing exemplary bravery during a *fidaeeyan* attack on a CRPF camp at Lethpora in Awantipura district of Kashmir on the December 30, 2017.

Mohammad Yaseen, Borse Dinesh Dipak and Jaspal Singh, CRPF constables, have been selected for the President's Police Medal for Gallantry posthumously.

The Police Medals for Gallantry will be given to 146 personnel, President's Police Medals for Distinguished Service to 74 and the Police Medals for Meritorious Service to 632.

Among those selected for the gallantry medal, 41 are from the CRPF, 26 from the Odisha police, 25 from the Jammu and Kashmir police, 14 from the Chhattisgarh police, 13 from the Meghalaya police, 10 from the Uttar Pradesh police, eight from the Border Security Force, four from the Delhi police and three from the Jharkhand police. One each is from the Assam Rifles and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

Recognising courage
Assistant Commandant Anurag Kumar Singh of the ITBP has been selected for the gallantry medal as he was part of the team that killed Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Abu Dujana in J&K in 2017. CISF constable Sushil Bhoi was awarded the 'Jeevan Raksha Padak' for rescuing a 14-year-old boy trapped in a crevasse in a high-rise building in Ghaziabad. Eight-six personnel have been selected for the Fire Service Medals. As many as 58 will be given the Home Guard and Civil Defence Medals.



Down to earth: Schoolchildren presenting a cultural show on the eve of Republic Day in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Get out and vote, says President

Ram Nath Kovind says this year's election will shape the future of India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday called upon citizens to perform the "sacred" act of voting, and described this year's election as a "once-in-a-century moment" that will shape the future of India.

Addressing the nation on the eve of the 70th Republic day, the President said the "Indian model" rested on the tripod of diversity, democracy and development.

In an indirect reference to the 10% quota for the economically weaker sections, President Kovind mentioned that the recent Constitution amendment to provide special facilities for talented children from poorer families was another step towards achieving Mahatma Gandhi's dreams.

The President advocated the need for having conversations with groups which had been historically disadvantaged.

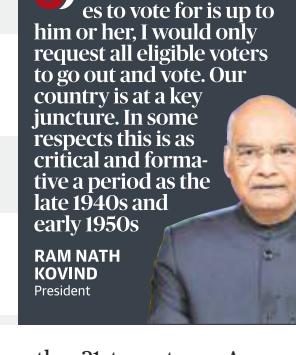
Calling first-timers
He observed that people born in the 21st century would vote for the first time, and called the elections a "collective call to wisdom and collective action and not just a political exercise".

"An election is a collective

'Once-in-a-century moment'

The President devoted a good part of his address to the coming election

- Perform the 'sacred' act of voting
- This year's elections are a 'once-in-a-century-moment' that will shape the future of India
- People born in the 21st century will be voting for the first time
- Elections are a call to collective wisdom and action, not just a political exercise



call to wisdom and a collective call to action. It represents a renewal and a commitment to the goals and hopes of a shared and egalitarian society. It represents the diverse and yet singular urges of the people and the Republic of India. This makes the very act of voting a sacred act. Please perform this act," Mr. Kovind said.

"Who the voter chooses to vote for is up to him or her, I would only request all eligible voters to go out and vote. Our country is at a key juncture. In some respects this is as critical and formative a period as the late 1940s and early 1950s. Decisions and actions of today will shape the India of the remainder of

the 21st century. As such, this is not just a once-in-a-generation moment – it is a once-in-a-century moment," he said.

Stressing the importance of an inclusive and pluralistic growth model, he said: "This country belongs to each of us and to all of us – every group and every community, every region and every identity. It belongs to every citizen and every individual. India's pluralism is its greatest strength and its greatest example to the world."

He said while physical infrastructure such as roads, ports, railways and metro services were all integrating India like never before, the

best indicator of social change was society's attitude towards gender equity and providing equal opportunities to women.

While the President noted the contribution of successive generations towards nation building, he reminded people that "our voyage is far from complete".

Miles to go

"There are still waters to cover, still gaps to fill and still tears to wipe. We have to re-calibrate our yardstick of achievement and success – from quantity to quality; from a literate society to a knowledge society; from a nation that has room for all segments and all communities to a family that invokes, encourages and celebrates the uniqueness and potential in each person – each daughter and each son," he said.

President Kovind reminded the nation that 2019 marked the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and it will be followed by the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution.

"In [B.R.] Ambedkar's honour and in our Constitution's honour, the nation will celebrate Constitution Day this year in an appropriate manner," he said.

"Since his enrolment in the Army, Lance Naik Nazir

This year, the President has approved the names of 112 winners for the Padma awards. The list comprises four Padma Vibhushan, 14 Padma Bhushan and 94 Padma Shri awards. Twenty-one

of the winners are women. The list includes 11 persons from the category of Foreigner/NRI, three posthumous and one transgender.

John Chambers, chairman of IT major Cisco, who participated in Vibrant Gujarat summit last week, was selected for the Padma Bhushan.

Former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, lawyer for 1984 Sikh riots victim H.S. Phoolka; cricketer Gautam Gambhir; composer Shankar Mahadevan; and actor Prabhu Deva were among the Padma Shri recipients.

Former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, lawyer for 1984 Sikh riots victim H.S. Phoolka; cricketer Gautam Gambhir; composer Shankar Mahadevan; and actor Prabhu Deva were among the Padma Shri recipients.

Former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, lawyer for 1984 Sikh riots victim H.S. Phoolka; cricketer Gautam Gambhir; composer Shankar Mahadevan; and actor Prabhu Deva were among the Padma Shri recipients.

Jain, social worker from Haryana; Ashok Laxmanrao Kukade, for services in healthcare; Kariya Munda, former Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha; Budhaditya Mukherjee, sitar artist; V.K. Shunglu, former civil servant; Hukumdev Narayan Yadav of BJP; and mountaineer Bachendri Pal.

Dheli surgeon Dr. Sandeep Guleria, actor Manoj Bajpayee, physicist Rohini Godbole, former ASI chief K.K. Muhammad and actor Kader Khan (posthumously) were selected for the Padma Shri, as also writer Gita Mehta, sister of Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik.

The others named for the Padma Bhushan are Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Akali Dal leader; Pravin Gordhan, South African Minister; Mahashay Dharam Pal Gulati of MDH spices; Darshan Lal

and distinguished service medals. These include one Ashoka Chakra, four Kirti Chakra, 11 Shaurya Chakra, 28 PVSMs, three Uttam Yudh Seva Medals, 51 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals, 10 Yudh Seva Medals, 122 Vishisht Seva Medals, 109 Sena Medals (gallantry), two Vayu Sena Medals (gallantry), 40 Sena Medals (devotion to duty), nine Nao Sena Medals (devotion to duty) and 14

Vayu Sena Medals (devotion to duty). The Kirti Chakras were awarded to Major Tushar Gauba and posthumously to Sowar Vijay Kumar, Constable Rajendra Kumar Nain and Constable Pradip Kumar Panda.

In a rare honour, Army chief finds a place on medal list

411 gallantry, distinguished service awards to be given away

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a rare gesture, the Chief of the Army Staff, General Bipin Rawat, has been awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM) for distinguished service on the eve of the 70th Republic Day.



Bipin Rawat

Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani has been posthumously awarded Ashok Chakra, India's highest peace time gallantry award. Kashmir's first Ashok Chakra winner was awarded the Sena Medal in 2007 and 2018. The award will be presented by President Ram Nath Kovind to his wife, Mahajabeen, at the Republic Day parade.

The President approved the award of 411 gallantry

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOI)

Govt. of Kerala & KSIDC invite Expressions of Interest (EoI) from companies / institutions to partner with Govt of Kerala and KSIDC to participate in the bid invited by Airports Authority of India for the operation, management and development of Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. The EoI document with the terms and conditions can be downloaded from www.ksidc.org. The EoI may be submitted latest by 5.00 pm on 1st February 2019.

Managing Director

Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation Ltd. T.C.XI/266,Keston Road, Kowdiar, Thiruvananthapuram -695003 Ph: 0471-2318922. Fax: 0471 2315893



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CIN No.: L93901N1995G0103507, Website: www.nlcindia.com

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (ICB) BRIEF NOTICE INVITING BID THROUGH e-TENDER

Online Bids in English are invited by NLC India Limited, Neyveli for the following:

(1) Tender No.: CO CONTS/0003H/RT/UCG Pilot Project / Gujarat / 2019, dt.21.01.2019

Name of the Work: TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY STUDY AND UNDERGROUND COAL GASIFICATION PILOT PROJECT IN UCG LIGNITE BLOCKS viz. DPSIDE TADKESHWAR & DUNGRA AND DIPSIDE OF VALIA & RAJAPADRI IN GUJARAT.

(2) Tender No.: CO CONTS/0004H/TPS-I SWITCHYARD Modification works e-Conts/2019, dt. 24.01.2019

Name of the Work: SUPPLY OF 220KV/33KV/63/75MVA POWER TRANSFORMERS-2 Nos. CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SWITCH YARD CONTROL BUILDING WITH SCADA FACILITY AND OTHER MODIFICATION/RETROFITTING WORKS AT THERMAL POWER STATION-SWITCH YARD.

B.G.Amount: Sl.No.1: ₹ 50 Lakh (or) US\$ 70050 (or) EURO 61560;

Tender Fee: Sl.No.1: ₹ 15,000/- (or) US\$ 210 (or) Euro 185; Sl.No.2: ₹ 10,000/- (or) US\$ 24 Lakhs

Sl. No. Last date of remitting tender fee & Registration Tender document sale period Last & Time for receipt of bids Date & Time of opening Bid/Opening Part-II

1 27.03.2019 05.02.2019 to 28.03.2019 29.03.2019 at 14.30 hrs. Upto 14.30 hrs.

2 01.03.2019 31.01.2019 04.03.2019 at 14.30 hrs. Upto 14.30 hrs.

Pre bid conference at 11.00 Hrs.: Sl.No.1: On 05.03.2019 at Conference Hall of Corporate Contracts Division, Corporate Office, NLC India Limited, Neyveli. Sl.No.2: On 14.02.2019. The points for discussion shall be furnished in advance both in hard and soft copy to the undersigned and also to the following e-mail id: gmconts.co@nlcindia.in

For Sl.No. 1&2: For further details contact: The Chief General Manager/Contracts, NLC India Ltd., Corporate Office, Block - 1, Neyveli - 607 801. (Phone: 04142 - 252210 & 251620; Fax: 04142 - 252026 & 252645/252646)

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR SUPPLIES

Sl.No. Tender Ref./Scope of supplies & Qty. reqd.

1. UNIT: M.M. COMPLEX : e-Tender Notice :18-19/004268/MM11(02) dt.22.01.2019 : Procurement of Electrode - E7018-1 (4 items) on Rate Contract basis.

Due date of opening: 18.02.2019

2. ENQ/18-19/004314/MM18(06) dt.24.01.2019: Material Code: 259999999; Supply of Daily required medicines in generic name (branded generics/unbranded generics). Qty.:1 No.

B.G.Amount: ₹ 70,000/-

Sl.No. Tender document cost Last date for receipt Date & time of opening

2 ₹ 1000/- 25.02.2019 Upto 12.00 Hrs. 25.02.2019 at 15.00 Hrs.

FOR e-TENDER DOCUMENTS/DETAILS/CORRIGENDUM VISIT: www.nlcindia.com

PUBLIC SECTOR IS YOURS : HELP IT TO HELP YOU

112 persons named for Padma awards

Nambi Narayanan, Kuldip Nayar, Shankar Mahadevan on list

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former ISRO scientist S. Nambi Narayanan, who was falsely accused by the Kerala police of spying, was selected for the Padma Bhushan on the eve of Republic Day.

Teewan Bai, Chhattisgarh folk artist; Ismail Omar Guellah, President of Djibouti; Anilkumar Manibhai Naik, executive chairman of Larsen and Toubro, and Balwant Moreswar Purandare, theatre artist from Maharashtra, were named for Padma Vibhushan.

Former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, lawyer for 1984 Sikh riots victim H.S. Phoolka; cricketer Gautam Gambhir; composer Shankar Mahadevan; and actor Prabhu Deva were among the Padma Shri recipients.

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Trump aide arrested in Mueller probe

Roger Stone was charged with seven counts, including making false statements and witness tampering

MARK MAZZETTI
EILEEN SULLIVAN
WASHINGTON

Roger J. Stone Jr., a longtime informal adviser to President Donald Trump, was charged as part of the special counsel investigation over his communications with WikiLeaks, the organisation behind the release of thousands of stolen Democratic emails during the 2016 campaign, in an indictment unsealed on Friday.

Mr. Stone was charged with seven counts, including obstruction of an official proceeding, making false statements and witness tampering, according to the special counsel's office.

FBI agents arrested Mr. Stone before dawn on Friday at his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and he was expected to appear in a federal courthouse there later on Friday. FBI agents were also seen carting hard drives and other evidence from Mr. Stone's apartment in New York City.

The indictment is the first in months by the special counsel, Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 election and possible coordination with Mr. Trump campaign associates. Citing details in emails and other forms of communications, the indictment suggests that Mr. Trump's campaign knew about additional stolen emails before they were released and asked Stone to find out about them.

'Not guilty'
Mr. Stone denied lying to the House Intelligence Committee and said he will plead innocent to the charges filed



In the dock: Roger J. Stone Jr., first from left, is being investigated over his communications with WikiLeaks during the 2016 election campaign. ■ NYT

against him by Mr. Mueller. "I will plead not guilty to these charges. I will defeat them in court," Mr. Stone told reporters after he was released on bail. "There is no circumstance whatsoever under which I will bear false witness against the President."

ROGER J. STONE JR.
Former Adviser to Donald Trump

ment, between June and July of 2016, Mr. Stone told "senior Trump campaign officials" about the stolen emails in WikiLeaks' possession that could be damaging to Ms. Clinton.

Stolen emails

On July 22, WikiLeaks released its first batch of Democratic emails. After that, according to the indictment, the Trump campaign sought more.

"A senior Trump Campaign official was directed to contact Stone about any additional releases and what other damaging information Organisation I had regarding

the Clinton campaign," the indictment said, referring to WikiLeaks.

The indictment did not make clear who directed the senior campaign official to reach out to Mr. Stone, although it left open the possibility that it was Mr. Trump. White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders sought to broadly distance Mr. Trump from the charges. "The charges brought against Stone have nothing to do with the President," she told CNN.

Asked whether he directed a campaign aide to contact Mr. Stone about the WikiLeaks emails, she repeated that the charges did not involve the President.

Information on Clinton
In June 2016, days before Russia was publicly identified as having stolen the emails, senior Trump campaign officials and Mr.

Trump's son Donald Trump Jr. had a meeting with a Kremlin-linked attorney about getting information that could be damaging to Ms. Clinton. It is illegal for a political campaign to accept foreign aid, and Mr. Trump and his son have said they did nothing wrong because they did not receive any damaging materials because of that meeting.

Mr. Stone has said publicly that he was in contact with WikiLeaks and suggested on Twitter that additional damaging information would be coming. The indictment said that Mr. Stone was contacted by senior Trump campaign officials to inquire about future releases.

Role in election

Mr. Stone's brash behaviour made him less of a subject of news media scrutiny than other current and former aides to Mr. Trump – like the character in a whodunit whom readers immediately dismiss as too obvious to have committed the crime.

But the special counsel's investigators spent months encircling Mr. Stone, renewing scrutiny about his role during the presidential race.

Three senior Trump campaign officials have told Mr. Mueller's team that Mr. Stone created the impression that he was a conduit for inside information from WikiLeaks, according to people familiar with their witness interviews. One of them said that Mr. Stone not only seemed to predict WikiLeaks' actions but also that he took credit afterward for the timing of its disclosures that damaged Hillary Clinton's candidacy. ■ NY TIMES

More than 350 protesters detained this week: UN

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CARACAS

Backed by Venezuela's military, President Nicolas Maduro went on the offensive against an opposition leader who declared himself interim President and his U.S. supporters, setting up a potentially explosive struggle for power in the crisis-plagued South American nation.

A defiant Mr. Maduro called home all Venezuelan diplomats from the U.S. and closed its embassy on Thursday, a day after ordering all U.S. diplomats out of Venezuela by the weekend because U.S. President Donald Trump had supported the presidential claim of Juan Guaido. Washington has refused to comply, but ordered its non-essential staff to leave the tumultuous country, citing security concerns.

The Trump administration said Mr. Maduro's order isn't legal because the U.S. no longer recognises him as Venezuela's legitimate leader.

"They believe they have a colonial hold in Venezuela, where they decide what they want to do," Mr. Maduro said. "You must fulfill my order from the government of Venezuela."

Meanwhile, all eyes were on Mr. Guaido, whose whereabouts have been a mystery since the 35-year-old was symbolically sworn in on Wednesday before tens of thousands of cheering supporters, promising to uphold the constitution and

rid Venezuela of Mr. Maduro's dictatorship.

Amnesty offer

Speaking from an undisclosed location, Mr. Guaido said he would consider granting amnesty to Mr. Maduro and his allies if they helped return Venezuela to democracy. "Amnesty is on the table," said Mr. Guaido, who just weeks earlier was named head of the opposition-controlled congress.

"Those guarantees are for all those who are willing to side with the constitution to recover the constitutional order."

Besides the U.S., Canada and numerous Latin American and European countries announced that they recognised Mr. Guaido's claim.

Mr. Trump promised to use the "full weight" of U.S. economic and diplomatic power to push for the restoration of Venezuela's democracy.

Mr. Maduro has been increasingly accused of undemocratic behaviour by his opponents, and has presid-

ed over skyrocketing inflation, a collapsing economy and widespread shortages of basic goods.

Meanwhile, Russia, China, Iran, Syria, Cuba and Turkey have voiced their backing for Mr. Maduro's government.

China's Foreign Ministry called on the U.S. to stay out of the crisis, while Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister warned the U.S. against any military intervention in Venezuela.

Alexei Pushkov, chairman of the information committee at the Russian Federation Council, called Mr. Guaido's declaration "an attempted coup" backed by the U.S.

Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, said on Friday that more than 350 people have been arrested this week during demonstrations against Mr. Maduro's government.

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Taliban appoints top leader to talk with U.S.

Negotiations are under way in Doha

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

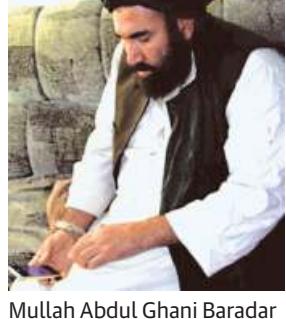
The Taliban has appointed one of its co-founders as the new head of the group's political office in Doha, where talks have been held since Monday with U.S. officials seeking to end 17 years of conflict in Afghanistan.

"The esteemed Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar has been appointed... head of the political bureau," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

This step has been taken to strengthen and properly manage the ongoing negotiations process with the U.S., he added.

The announcement comes as the insurgents said on Thursday they had held four straight days of talks with U.S. officials in Doha. It was not immediately clear if the negotiations were ongoing on Friday.

The duration of the talks, described as "unprecedent-



Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar

ed" by analysts, has raised hopes of an imminent agreement that could pave the way to peace talks.

But Washington, which confirmed on Tuesday that talks were being held in Qatar between its envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and representatives of the Taliban, has made no comment since. Afghan officials, who have complained previously about being cut out of the talks, also warned that any deal would need their endorsement.

ELSEWHERE



\$1 mn in cash stolen from Mugabe's house

HARARE

Nearly a million dollars in cash was stolen from a suitcase owned by ousted Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, State media reported on Friday, as three suspects, including a relative of the former leader face trial for the theft. AFP

Chinese officials probe 2 explosions in northeast

BEIJING

Chinese authorities are investigating two explosions in a basement car park and a 30th floor apartment in northeastern China that left one person dead and one injured. Police said that the blasts were being probed as criminal acts. AP

Greek Parliament approves Macedonia name-change deal

Clears decks for the country to join NATO and the EU

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ATHENS

Greek lawmakers ratified an agreement on Friday to end a nearly three decade-long dispute over neighbouring Macedonia's name, a landmark vote intended to clear the small country that will be renamed North Macedonia on the path to NATO membership.

The deal passed with 153 votes in the 300-member Greek Parliament, two more than needed. It had faced fierce opposition and cost Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras his parliamentary majority after a right-wing partner in the governing coalition quit in protest.

Tsipras' left-wing Syriza party holds 145 seats in parliament; independent law-



Alexis Tsipras

makers provided the votes needed for ratification.

Under the deal, Macedonia changes its name to North Macedonia and Greece will drop its objections to the country joining NATO and eventually the European Union.

Tsipras' left-wing Syriza party holds 145 seats in parliament; independent law-

numerous street protests, some of which turned violent.

Greece has long argued use of the term Macedonia implied territorial claims on its own northern province of the same name. The issue has been a contentious one for decades, and has whipped up nationalist and patriotic sentiment in both countries.

Opposition was particularly fierce in the northern Greek region of Macedonia, which borders the former Yugoslav republic that claimed the same name after declaring independence in 1991. Critics claimed the deal signs away their identity and a cultural heritage dating back to Alexander the Great more than 2,300 years ago.

Pak. eases visa rules to boost tourism

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has announced plans to ease visa restrictions for tourists from 90 countries, including the U.S. and Europe, in a bid to revive its tourism sector, decimated by years of negligence and problems with militants.

Cabinet Minister Fahmida Mirza pledged authorities would do everything possible to ensure the safety of visiting tourists.

Ms. Mirza said citizens of 175 countries will be able to obtain visas electronically. She said visitors from 50 countries will be able to get their visas on arrival.

Pakistan has K-2, the world's second-highest mountain, scenic valleys and beautiful deserts but its tourism has suffered because of violence.

Backed by Army, Venezuela's Maduro hits back at rival

More than 350 protesters detained this week: UN

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CARACAS

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MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	36,026	-0.47
US Dollar	71.17	-0.14
Gold	33,300	0.27
Brent oil	61.26	0.46

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	373.85	-7.10
Asian Paints	1372.15	-29.70
Axis Bank	669.75	6.10
Bajaj Auto	2626.35	-25.30
Bajaj Finserv	6321.55	-85.75
Bajaj Finance	2599.55	-36.10
Bharti Airtel	307.50	5.85
BPCL	357.45	3.50
Cipla	507.65	6.95
Coal India	220.95	-2.90
Dr Reddy's Lab	2672.40	3.95
Eicher Motors	20049.95	-65.65
GAIL (India)	334.90	1.30
Grasim Ind	759.60	-26.20
HCL Tech.	969.40	22.95
HDFC	1977.80	6.70
HDFC Bank	2096.00	-6.25
Hindalco	204.45	-0.60
HPLC	241.80	-1.30
Hind Unilever	1756.80	-2.70
Indiabulls HFL	444.50	-29.00
ICICI Bank	357.20	-7.60
IndusInd Bank	1484.90	-5.40
Bharti Infralet	279.75	16.75
Infosys	730.35	-1.65
Indian Oil Corp	137.75	0.95
ITC	279.20	0.30
JSW Steel	274.65	-9.00
Kotak Bank	1266.15	-1.60
L&T	1285.45	-9.90
M&M	682.50	-13.80
Maurti Suzuki	6513.40	-527.20
NTPC	138.30	-1.75
ONGC	142.00	0.30
PowerGrid Corp	185.85	-0.90
Reliance Ind	1246.00	-1.45
State Bank	285.40	-2.65
Sun Pharma	422.40	-0.60
Tata Motors	173.25	-2.15
Tata Steel	452.90	-7.85
TCS	1920.80	19.25
Tech Mahindra	729.05	1.30
Titan	978.00	8.35
UltraTech Cement	3510.80	-279.90
UPL	753.10	5.75
Vedanta	194.70	1.20
Wipro	353.45	1.70
YES Bank	219.60	4.20
Zee Entertainment	318.40	-115.45

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 25		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	70.98	71.30
Euro	80.51	80.87
British Pound	92.94	93.36
Japanese Yen (100)	64.63	64.92
Chinese Yuan	10.50	10.55
Swiss Franc	71.21	71.53
Singapore Dollar	52.32	52.56
Canadian Dollar	53.31	53.56
Malaysian Ringgit	17.20	17.28
Source: Indian Bank		

BULLION RATES CHENNAI		
January 25 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses		
Retail Silver (1g)	42.2...	(42.1)
22 ct gold (1 g)	3092	(3089)

'Quid pro quo in ICICI Bank issue not established'

Bank was part of a lender consortium to Videocon: RBI

VIKAS DHOOT

MUMBAI

The Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) FIR alleging criminal conspiracy and cheating in loans extended by the ICICI Bank to the Videocon Group does not appear to have factored in a key point flagged by the central bank in its initial probe into the allegations of misdeemeanour in extending the loans.

As pointed out by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) then, ICICI Bank was just one of 20 banks that were part of a consortium led by the State Bank of India that extended loans to the Videocon Group. The bank's share in the consortium's loans to the group, which were declared non-performing assets in 2017, was less than 6%.

In its FIR against ICICI Bank's former managing director and CEO Chanda Kochhar, her husband Deepak Kochhar and Videocon Group managing director Venugopal Dhoot on Thursday, the CBI's chief contention against the Kochhars was Ms. Kochhar used her official position to approve loans to the Videocon Group firms, and received 'illegal gratification and undue benefit through her husband.'



argument, the undue benefit refers to Nupower Renewables Private Limited (NRPL), a firm founded by Mr. Kochhar as a joint venture with Mr. Dhoot, that also got a ₹64 crore capital infusion loan from a firm owned by Mr. Dhoot, months after he had handed over control of the firm to Mr. Kochhar.

NEWS ANALYSIS
The CBI has also implicated other top officials, whose roles in the process of extending the said loans worth ₹3,250 crore, may be probed. These include K.V. Kamath, ICICI Bank's former chairman, and others who were part of the bank's credit committee once chaired by Mr. Kamath such as Sandeep Bakshi, the bank's current CEO and MD.

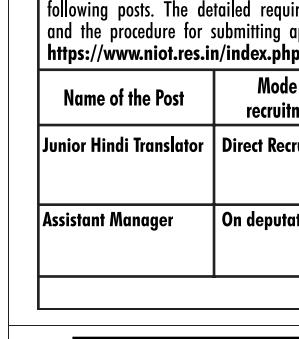
Complaint to PMO
Ms. Kochhar took charge of the bank's MD and CEO on May 1, 2009. The RBI's final position on this case, first flagged as a complaint to the Prime Minister's Office by a 'whistleblower' Arvind Gupta in 2016, is not known. However, when Mr. Gupta's complaint was forwarded by the government to RBI, the 'quid pro quo' link between ICICI Bank loans to Videocon and the transfer of

ownership in Nupower Renewables Private Limited (NRPL) to Mr. Kochhar, now being cited by the CBI, was firmly dismissed by the central bank.

"As reported in our scrutiny note, the loan sanctioned by ICICI Bank was a part of the debt recapital programme of ₹20,195 crore by a consortium of banks led by SBI where ICICI's share was ₹1,750 crore. The 'quid pro quo' could not be established as ICICI Bank had to take a share like other banks in the consortium..." the RBI said in a missive to the Finance Ministry in late December 2016. The central bank's communiqué on this has been reviewed by *The Hindu*.

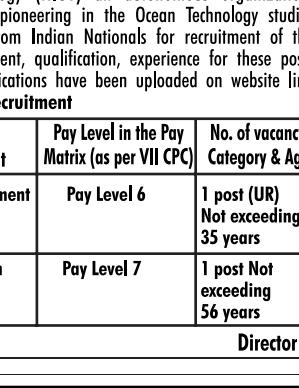
The transfer of ownership of NRPL by Videocon, the RBI had deemed, was 'an unrelated event' outside the banking domain and thus, its regulatory purview. This aspect, it had told the Finance Ministry, can be probed by market regulator SEBI, to whom the original complaint was also marked, as well as the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). It is not clear from the CBI's FIR if SEBI and MCA had examined these transactions.

An official aware of the case also pointed out that ICICI Bank and Videocon's banking ties go back longer than Ms. Kochhar's tenure and the bank, in fact, lowered its outstanding exposure to the group from about ₹3,350 crore in December 2011 to ₹2,850 crore by March 2018. By contrast, the overall exposure of the banking system to the troubled Videocon Group had risen from ₹33,000 crore to about ₹55,000 crore between December 2011 and September 2017.



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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEAN TECHNOLOGY
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Name of the Post **Mode of recruitment** **Pay Level in the Pay Matrix (as per VII CPC)** **No. of vacancy, Category & Age**

Name of the Post	Mode of recruitment	Pay Level in the Pay Matrix (as per VII CPC)	No. of vacancy, Category & Age
Junior Hindi Translator	Direct Recruitment	Pay Level 6	1 post (UR) Not exceeding 35 years
Assistant Manager	On deputation	Pay Level 7	1 post Not exceeding 56 years

Director



ICMR-VECTOR CONTROL RESEARCH CENTRE
INDIRA NAGAR, PUDUCHERRY – 605 006.

VACANCY CIRCULAR

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Classification	: Group 'A' Ministerial
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Eligibility	: (a) Holding Analogous Post or Section Officer in Central/ State Govt./ Autonomous organization / PSU with 05 years service and (b) Two years working experience in Budget/Finance/Accounts.
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Location	: Puducherry

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Website : www.sundaram-clayton.com Email : corpsec@scl.co.in

CIN : L35999TN1962PLC004792

STATEMENT OF UNAUDITED STANDALONE FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER & NINE MONTHS ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2018

S. No	Particulars	Quarter ended	Nine Months ended	Quarter ended	Year ended
31.12.2018	31.12.2018	31.12.2017	31.03.2018		

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IN BRIEF



Jawa bike deliveries to begin by March-end

CHENNAI Classic Legends Pvt. Ltd., a subsidiary of M&M, will start delivering Jawa motorcycles from March-end, said CEO Ashish Joshi. Currently, the company has stopped accepting online booking for Jawa and Jawa 42 motorcycles. However, customers can book these two-wheelers at dealers' showrooms for a refundable deposit of ₹5,000.

Sundaram Clayton third quarter profit jumps

CHENNAI Sundaram Clayton Ltd. has reported an over fiftyfold rise in third quarter standalone net profit to ₹50.28 crore against ₹97 lakh in the year-earlier period on higher sales volume. It posted total income of ₹527.40 crore against ₹459.24 crore. The board appointed Vivek S. Joshi as CEO and announced re-appointment of Sudarshan Venu as joint MD for a period of five years from September 11, 2019.

GlaxoSmithKline-HUL merger gets CCI nod

NEW DELHI GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare (GSKCH India) said on Friday its merger deal with Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) has been approved by the fair trade regulator CCI. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the scheme of amalgamation between the two companies, through an-all equity deal, valuing the total business of the latter at ₹ 31,700 crore. PTI

L&T Q3 net rises 37% to ₹2,042 cr.

The firm's performance comes on the back of strong execution drive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

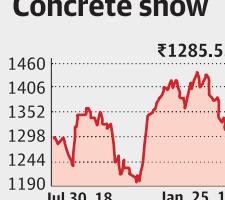
MUMBAI

Engineering and construction major Larsen and Toubro Limited (L&T) reported 37.05% growth in its December quarter net profit to ₹2,042 crore on the back of a strong execution drive.

Revenue during the quarter grew by 24.22% to ₹35,709 crore riding on strong execution in project businesses coupled with noteworthy performance in service businesses. International revenue stood at ₹11,476 crore.

Commenting on the results, L&T MD & CEO S. N. Subrahmanyam said, "Hydrocarbons vertical has done well for us. In India, we bagged contracts from Indian Oil and HPCL. Globally, we bagged contracts from Saudi Aramco and ADNOC."

Concrete show



India eyes dominance; New Zealand aims to stay afloat

Indian spinners chomping at the bit to have another go at home batsmen; Pandya may be available only from third ODI

INDIA IN NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MOUNT MAUNGANUI

After a near perfect beginning, India would look to tighten the noose around a struggling New Zealand with a barrage of spin in the second One-Day International here on Saturday.

The New Zealand batsmen looked all at sea against India's spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal in their own backyard following a fiery spell from pacer Mohammad Shami in the opening ODI on Wednesday.

The host seemed rusty against a team coming off a historic tour of Australia and know beating an in-form India will be a steep climb at the Bay Oval here.

Before the sun stopped play for more than 30 minutes in the series-opener, the Indian bowlers made merry with Kuldeep and Chahal sharing six wickets. The wrist-spinners would be itching to have another go at the Black Caps.

India is unlikely to tinker much with the playing eleven. Hardik Pandya will join the squad in New Zealand, af-



Warm welcome: Team India was accorded a traditional reception at the Bay Oval. • COURTESY BCCI

ter the Committee of Administrators revoked the interim suspension on him and K.L. Rahul, but he will most likely be available only from the third ODI.

The team management played pace all-rounder Vijay Shankar at McClean Park but depending on the condi-

tions, it may bring back Ravinder Jadeja.

Ambati Rayudu, who

scored an unbeaten 13 off 23

on Wednesday, is expected

to get another opportunity

following a not so productive

run in the ODIs against

Australia.

For India, the biggest plus

to come out of the first ODI

was Shikhar Dhawan regaining form following a lean run down under.

The southpaw scored an

unbeaten 75 in the team's

comprehensive win and in

the circumstances, it was a

crucial knock. "It was a very

important innings for Dha-

wan. We spoke about how he

needed to finish games for

India, to keep his confidence

and if he's in that mindset, he

can be a great asset," said

skipper Virat Kohli after the

eight-wicket win.

More changes can be ex-

pected in the eleven after

Kohli takes a break following

the third ODI on January 28,

creating an opening for the

likes of Shubman Gill.

Outplayed

New Zealand won the previous home series against India 4-0 but could be heading

towards a reverse if it doesn't

up its game.

Stat Attack

1 India will be playing at this venue for the first time

4 Teams batting first have won four out of the seven games at Mount Maunganui

10 Runs needed by Ravinder Jadeja to reach 2000 in ODIs

100 Bhuvneshwar Kumar is all set to complete a century of ODIs

265 The average first Innings score at Mount Maunganui in seven completed ODIs

371 New Zealand's score when it last played on this ground, against Sri Lanka

It seemed captain Kane Williamson was batting on another surface as the batsmen struggled at the other end.

The teams (from):

India: Virat Kohli (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, M.S. Dhoni (wk), Kedar Jadhav, Dinesh Karthik, Vijay Shankar, Shubman Gill, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Siraj, Khaleel Ahmed, Ravinder Jadeja and Hardik Pandya.

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (Capt.), Ross Taylor, Tom Latham, Martin Guptill, Colin de Grandhomme, Trent Boult, Henry Nicholls, Doug Bracewell, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Colin Munro, Ish Sodhi, Mitchell Santner and Tim Southee.

Match starts at 7:30 a.m. IST.

Australia noses ahead

LANKA IN AUS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRISBANE

Half-centuries from Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne and a last-ball strike by Pat Cummins put Australia firmly in command of the day-night Test against Sri Lanka at the Gabba in Brisbane on Friday.

Head hit a Test best 84 and Labuschagne posted 81 as Australia amassed 323 to hold an imposing 179-run innings lead over the Sri Lan-

ka after the second day.

Sri Lanka lurched into further strife losing the wicket of Dimuth Karunaratne on the last ball of the day by Cummins for three as the tourists had to negotiate a tricky six overs facing the pink ball under lights.

162 behind

Karunaratne was snapped up behind by Tim Paine as Sri Lanka reached stumps at 17 for one to trail by 162 runs overall and battling to avoid defeat with three days left.

India-A shows Lions no mercy

Rahane and Vihari fall just short of centuries

A. VINOD

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Ajinkya Rahane and Hanuma Vihari blinked at the wrong moment, missing what would have been a deserving century for each. But, India-A cruised to a rousing 138-run win over England Lions at the Sports Hub, Kariyavattom, on Friday.

The win puts the Indians 2-0 up in the five-match one-day series, the third to be played on Sunday at the same venue.

The loss of Anmolpreet Singh early on did not put the brakes on the Indian innings as Rahane and Vihari got together in an entertaining 180-run second-wicket partnership lasting 29.5 overs.

Runs flowed as the duo, after the Indians were put in, attacked the bowling with gusto and sent the ball to all parts of the ground.

However, they were unable to ensure personal mil-



Hanuma Vihari. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the two, however, did not stop the flow of runs as Shreyas Iyer built on the platform to hammer a quick-fire 65 (47b, 5x4, 2x6). His contribution took India-A's total to 303 for six.

Lions failed to get partnerships going and could not meet the asking rate of over six runs an over.

Billing goes early

The big blows were the exit of skipper Sam Billings, centurion two days ago, for just 12 and Sam Hain and Ollie Pope back without scoring.

Only opener Alex Davies (48) and Lewis Gregory, in the middle-order, put up some resistance before the Indian bowlers wrapped up the contest with 12.2 overs to spare.

The scores: India-A 303 for six in 50 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 91, Hanuma Vihari 92, Shreyas Iyer 65) bt England Lions 165 in 37.4 overs (Alex Davies 48, Lewis Gregory 39, Mayank Maranke three for 32).

Imam hits ton

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE CENTURION

Imam-ul-Haq hit a measured century – and delivered a message to his critics – as Pakistan piled up 317 for six in the third ODI against South Africa here on Friday. Imam shared partnerships of 132 for the second wicket with Babar Azam (69) and 84 for the third wicket with Mohammad Hafeez (52).

Imad Wasim finished the innings with a flourish with an unbeaten 43 off 23 balls, putting on 52 off 31 balls with Shoail Malik (31) for the fifth wicket.

The scores: Pakistan 317 for six in 50 overs (Imam-ul-Haq 101, Babar Azam 69, Mohammad Hafeez 52, Shoail Malik 31, Imad Wasim 43 n.o.) vs South Africa.



Padma Shri award winners

- Sunil Chhetri (football)
- Gautam Gambhir (cricket)
- Sharath Kamal (table tennis)
- Bombayla Devi Laishram (archery)
- Bajrang Punia (wrestling)
- Prashanti Singh (basketball)
- Ajay Thakur (kabaddi)

Holder and Dowrich pile on the misery

ENG IN WI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BRIDGETOWN

Jason Holder and Shane Dowrich turned the screws on a flagging England side as the West Indies' seventh-wicket pairing reached lunch at 237 for six in its second innings on the third day of the first Test at Kensington Oval on Friday.

Resuming from the overnight position of 127 for six, and with a first innings lead of 212 after demolishing the tourists on the second after-

noon for just 77, the pair battled through the two hours of play to extend the home side's overall advantage to what already looks an insurmountable 449 runs.

Blossoming partnership

Holder, the West Indies captain, was the dominant partner in reaching 80 at the break with wicketkeeper-batsman Dowrich on 61.

Their partnership has blossomed to the tune of 117 runs and England already has been played completely out of the match.

SCOREBOARD WEST INDIES VS ENGLAND, FIRST TEST

West Indies – 1st innings: 289. England – 1st innings: 77. Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-35, 3-44, 4-44, 5-48, 6-48, 7-49, 8-61, 9-71. West Indies bowling: Roach 11-7-17-5, Gabriel 7-1-5-1, Holder 8-3-15-2, Joseph 4-2-1-20-2. West Indies – 2nd innings: K. Brathwaite lbw b Moeen 24, J. Campbell c Jennings b Stokes 33, S. Hope c Jennings b Stokes 3, D. Bravo c Stokes b Moeen 1. (At end of play on day two).

Dominant Djokovic demolishes Pouille

Moves into his first Melbourne final since 2016, faces Nadal



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic on Friday continued his quest for a record seventh Australian Open crown by swatting aside French 28th seed Lucas Pouille 6-0, 6-2, 6-2 to set up a final against Rafael Nadal.

It was a flawless display on Rod Laver Arena by the world number one who moves into a first Melbourne decider since 2016.

"It is definitely one of the best matches I've ever had on this court, definitely," said Djokovic, who hit 24 winners and had just five unforced errors.

"You know, everything worked the way I imagined it before the match and even more so. Tough one for Lucas, but he had a great tournament, and I wish him all the best for the rest of the season," he added.



Cruise mode: Novak Djokovic ran Lucas Pouille ragged during a 83-minute dismantling of the Frenchman. • AFP

THE RESULTS

Men: Semifinal: 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt Lucas Pouille (Fra) 6-0, 6-2, 6-2. Women: Doubles: Final: Samanth Stosur (Aus) / Zhang Shuai (Chn) bt Timea Babos (Hun) / Kristina Mladenovic (Fra) 6-3, 6-4.

Grand Slam semifinal, took just 83 minutes to outclass his regular practice partner Pouille, who was appearing in his first.

Fresh The 14-time Grand Slam title winner was fresh because quarterfinal opponent Kei Nishikori had quit after 51

minutes and he jumped all over the world number 31 right from the start.

Djokovic was in total control against the Frenchman, who had needed more than three hours to see off Milos Raonic in the last eight.

The Serb ran Pouille

ragged so effectively that he dished out a dreaded 6-0

"bagel" in a first set that lasted just 21 minutes.

Pouille held his first service game of the second set to a huge ovation from the centre court fans, but it was a brief respite as Djokovic, a



KVITOVA HAS WON HER LAST EIGHT SUMMIT CLASHES:

2016: WTA Elite Trophy, China

2017: Birmingham Classic

2018: St. Petersburg Trophy (Russia), Qatar Open, Prague Open, Madrid Open, Birmingham Classic

2019: Sydney International

<table border

More swings it Karnataka's way

Saurashtra loses wickets late in the day to leave the game finely poised

RANJI SEMIFINALS

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA
BENGALURU

Until late in the afternoon, it seemed like this was going to be a day of hard work and little reward for Karnataka. Saurashtra was 223 for four in the final session, only 53 runs away from taking the first-innings lead, when the balance swung dramatically. Ronit More struck three times in three successive overs, removing Sheldon Jackson, Prerak Mankad and Kamlesh Makwana, as Saurashtra collapsed to 227 for seven at stumps at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Friday. More walked back with five for 54, his post-tea spell of three for 16 leaving this Ranji Trophy semifinal finely poised with three days left.

In the morning, Karnataka was bowled out for 275, the final pair having added 11 runs to the overnight score. More then struck twice before lunch, with Vishvaraj Jadeja departing on the stroke of the break.

Saurashtra was 63 for two



Breathing fire: Ronit More struck three times in three successive overs to peg back Saurashtra.

■ SUDHAKAR JAIN

and what followed after lunch was an hour of intense red-ball cricket.

Abhimanyu Mithun and More probed away relentlessly, bowling with pace and discipline and causing Cheateswar Pujara much dis-

comfort. The India star, on what was his 31st birthday, needed 12 balls to get off the mark, a single squeezed into the leg-side.

Then came the day's big moment. Mithun got one ball to rise sharply off the sur-

face, a surprised Pujara could not react quick enough, and as the ball deflected through to the keeper, Karnataka erupted in celebration. Replays would later suggest that the ball had kissed the glove but the umpire was unconvinced. Mithun pounded the turf in disgust.

Karnataka looked genuinely stunned. Pujara had faced 18 balls for one run at that point. In 12 overs between lunch and the first drinks break, Saurashtra had added only 17 runs.

But Pujara and Snell Patel weathered that period of hostility and quickly got to work. They scored freely off Karnataka's spinners, Pujara even heaving a short ball from Shreyas Gopal over mid-wicket for six.

On the stroke of tea, Patel fell for 85 to a poor shot. Pujara was guilty of a similar error after the interval, top-

Meanwhile, K. Gowtham, who hurt his left knee while diving on the field and had to be stretchered off, was being assessed, the Karnataka team management said.

The plan after lunch had

been to bowl tight, More said. "The last ball before lunch, we got a wicket and the momentum shifted. Pujara is their main batsman and we wanted to get him out."

"Five to 10 balls were close calls but we couldn't get a wicket. We were just unlucky. That's how the game works. Bowling in good areas is in our hands. Sometimes you get a wicket and sometimes you don't."

Saurashtra batsman Snell Patel was disappointed with

the timing of his own dismissal. "It was very wrong to get out in a crunch situation – last ball before tea," he said.

"If I'd stayed there after tea, the situation would have been different. We played some bad shots; there was some good bowling too. But the game has not gone out of our hands yet."

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Anjeze triumphs in main event

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

This has been Ronit More's best season of First Class cricket and it is getting steadily better.

On Friday, the Karnataka medium-pacer claimed his fourth five-wicket haul of the season to drag his side back into this Ranji Trophy semifinal against Saurashtra.

"It's a very good feeling but the job is half done," he said later. "There are three more wickets to go."

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been to bowl tight, More said. "The last ball before lunch, we got a wicket and the momentum shifted. Pujara is their main batsman and we wanted to get him out."

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TV PICKS

New Zealand vs India: Second ODI, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9.15 a.m.
Australian Open: Sony Ten 2 & Six (SD & HD), 2 p.m.
BWF World Tour: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 11.30 a.m.
NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 9 a.m.
ISL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7.15 p.m.
Australia vs Sri Lanka: 1st Test, third day, Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 8.30 a.m.
PWL: Sony Ten 3 & Six (SD & HD), 6.45 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Gursimar wins first title of the year

PUNE
 Gursimar Badwal gave her rivals no chance on the final day to clinch her first title of the year in the second leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Friday. Gursimar shot four-under 68 for the second time in three days to total five-under 211 and win by five shots. PTI



Warriors switch gears to beat Wizards

LOS ANGELES
 Stephen Curry made a timely return to finish with 38 points as Golden State Warriors won its season-high ninth straight game with a 126-118 victory over the Washington Wizards on Thursday.
The results: Washington Wizards 118 lost to Golden State Warriors 126; LA Lakers 105 lost to Minnesota Timberwolves 120; Phoenix Suns 106 lost to Portland Trail Blazers 120; Oklahoma City Thunder 122 bt New Orleans Pelicans 116. AFP



Gearing up: Indians at a training session ahead of the Davis Cup World Group qualifier against Italy. AP

Prajnesh confident he can do well on grass

'We have a slight advantage, just need to fight hard and close the gap'

DAVIS CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA

Prajnesh Gunneswaran, in the form of his life, is confident of a stellar show on grass when India will clash with fancied Italy in the Davis Cup World Group Qualifiers, next week.

The southpaw from Chennai made a remarkable turnaround post a stress fractures in his knees to achieving a career-high 104 recently.

"I'm good on grass. I beat (then World No. 23) Denis Shapovalov recently. I should be able to do well here," Prajnesh told PTI here.

"I did well in four, five tournament at the end of last year. I consistently did well in four Challengers. Those were my best results. I think we will have a slight advantage. We just need to fight hard and close the gap."

Late bloomer

Considered a 'late bloomer' on the wrong side of the 20s, Prajnesh hopes to soon break into top 100 as he aims a spot top 50 in 2019.

"My target is to be in top 50 but my (immediate) goal

is to get inside 100. If I get there I will revisit my goals. I want to continue at least five to six more years. Knees are in great shape at the moment."

With Italy's being strong on hard courts, India has opted for grasscourts for the February 1-2 fixture which will serve as a qualification for the 18-nation World Finals in Madrid next year.

Pre-dominantly a baseline player, Prajnesh refused to reveal his tactics to tackle the unpredictable bounce on grass courts.

"I really don't want to discuss the tactics, the kind of adjustments we will make. We will see on the day of the tie. Perhaps, I will stand lower to the ground and bend low," he said.

His moment of reckoning came last year when he won the deciding fifth rubber against Yibing Wu in the Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Group 1 semifinal last April.

Pel has a shot at double

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Top-seeded Stijn Pel of the Netherlands put himself in line for a grand double, cruising into the boys' singles final and clinching the doubles title in the company of Guy den Ouden in the DKS ITF juniors tennis tournament here on Friday.

Pel powered past Chinese Taipei's Han-Chih Lin 6-0, 6-3

Doubles (final): Guy den Ouden & Stijn Pel bt Hanwen Li & Yu Zhang (Chn) 6-3, 7-6(4).

Girls: Semifinals: Mai Napatt Nirundorn (Tha) bt Tilwith Di Girolami (Bet) 6-2, 6-3; Alexandra Eala (Phi) bt Anastasia Astakhova (Kaz) 6-2, 6-7(3), 6-1; **Quarterfinals:** Pel bt Shuoran Wang (Chn) 6-3, 6-1; Nirundorn bt Melissa Boyden (Ned) 6-3, 6-3; Astakhova bt Lunda Kumhom (Tha) 6-3, 6-4; Eala bt Ting-Pei Chang (Tpe) 6-3, 7-6(2).

Doubles (final): Weronika Baszak (Pol) & Federica Sacco (Ita) bt Linda Kumhom & Mai Napatt Nirundorn 1-6, 6-1, [10-7].

The results:

Boys: Semifinals: Stijn Pel

REGIONAL ROUND-UP

Grishma adjudged the best

GREATER NOIDA: Grishma Niranjan from Bengaluru was adjudged the "most valuable player" in the NBA Academy women's camp which concluded here on Friday.

Grishma had won the sharp shooter award in the first camp held last year.

Siya Deodhar from Nagpur won the "best teammate" award. She had won the "most improved player"


Grishma Niranjan.
 ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

award in the last edition. Harsimran Kaur of Punjab was declared the "best defender", while Khushi Dongre from Maharashtra won the coach's award. Ann Mary Zachariah of Kerala was announced as the "most improved player" of the camp.

Spanish coach to conduct camp at CLTA

CHANDIGARH: Spanish coach Joaquin Perez Romman will conduct a tennis camp at the CLTA Complex, sector-10, from January 29 to February 10. The fee for the fortnight-long camp is ₹25,000 for a player, which will include stay and food. For CLTA trainees, who do not avail of stay facilities, the fee is ₹2,000, while for other trainees it is ₹15,000.

A 1-1 draw

KOCHI: ATK's Edu Garcia (85th minute) scored on debut but Gerson Vieira undid the hard work as his own goal helped Kerala Blasters escape with a 1-1 draw in their ISL encounter at the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium on Friday.

The game seemed to be heading to a goalless draw until Garcia's free kick put the visitor ahead. The lead lasted just two minutes as Poplatnik's header took a deflection off Vieira and landed in the ATK net.

Mahesh stars for Lajong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Super-sub Naorem Mahesh Singh struck in the 84th minute as Shillong Lajong FC stunned defending champion Minerva Punjab FC 1-0 for its second win of the I-League season, here on Friday.

Sarita shocks Pooja, Dangal tastes victory

PWL

Y.B. SARANGI

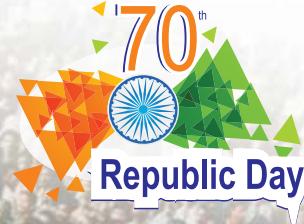
GREATER NOIDA

Sarita stunned World championships bronze medallist Pooja Dhandha 6-5 in a thrilling women's 57kg bout of the Pro Wrestling League season 4 at the Gautam Buddha University indoor hall here on Friday.

Sarita's victory gave UP Dangal a 5-2 win against MP Yodha, its second victory of the season.

Sarita took advantage when her fancied rival went into a defensive shell after being hit on the right eye. Pooja's passivity cost her a point in the first round, but she fought back to win five points, including two take-downs, in the second.

Sarita, an Asian championships silver medallist, gave Pooja a tough time with a series of swift explosive moves, and went on to upstage her rival.

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Government of India

We, The People of India
 march together to create a New India which is free from Corruption, Dirt, Poverty, Terrorism, Casteism and Communalism.

Heartiest Greetings on Republic Day to all Indians

For A Stronger
 Prosperous &
 Progressive Republic

Today we remember all the great women and men who contributed in the framing of our constitution. Let's reaffirm our unwavering commitment to uphold the ideals of our constitution and strengthen our republic

-Narendra Modi

S. DINAKAR

You associate Rahul Dravid with resilience. His mental resources and discipline were force multipliers of his batting ability. A sterling work ethic and a value system drawn from the heart of cricket made him what he was – a role model on and off the field.

And after retirement, his contribution to Indian cricket, in his typically quiet, efficient and self-effacing fashion, has been enormous.

Dravid sir told me I could call him up any time and discuss my problems

VIJAY SHANKAR | INDIA ALL-ROUNDER

As coach of the India under-19 and 'A' teams – he assumed charge in mid-2015 – Dravid has guided the next generation, honing their technique and, crucially, preparing them mentally for the challenges of international cricket.

The concept of 'A' tours is essential for the development of cricketers, particularly in conditions outside Asia. The batsmen get a taste of pace, swing, seam movement and bounce. The pacemen learn the right lengths to bowl on those tracks and are exposed to different balls, such as the Dukes and Kookaburra.

The players also get a feel of quality global competition; the opposition often comprises several internationals or those on the fringes of selection. So when they move to the next stage, they are not intimidated by reputations.

While Indian teams have embarked on 'A' tours in the past as well, there are many more such campaigns now, and plenty of thought behind them. Last year, India 'A' visited England and New Zealand ahead of the Test series in England and Australia respectively; several cricketers on the 'A' tours played in the subsequent Tests.

Encouragingly, many more cricketers are coming through the ranks. And they seem ready.

When Mayank Agarwal was pitchforked into the vital Melbourne Test, travelling on an SOS from India, he not only displayed a tight game against Mitchell Starc & Co, but also exhibited the strength of mind needed for the big stage on Boxing Day.

Later, Mayank revealed that Dravid had spoken to him about "managing his mental energy" on the eve of the Test. What wonderful advice!

Similarly, the combative wicket-keeper-batsman Rishabh Pant, a powerhouse really, not just arrived



Bridging the gap

As coach of India's under-19 and 'A' teams, Rahul Dravid has equipped players to make the difficult transition from domestic to international cricket

on the Test scene but showed he belonged mentally, appearing to relish the sniff of a duel.

And the same mental toughness is evident with Hanuma Vihari, another cricketer who has spent quality time with Dravid on 'A' tours. Vihari looks technically sound and possesses the belief that is so essential for big-time cricket.

The Board has done well to put Dravid in charge of both the under-19 and the 'A' teams on a long-term basis. There is continuity, a natural progression of cricketers with promise from the under-19 level to the Ranji Trophy and then to the India 'A' set-up from where they can graduate to international cricket.

All the while, you have Dravid, someone with great integrity and insight, gauging their ability, honing their skills, overseeing their development, and being accessible to them at all times. India all-rounder Vijay Shankar said, "Dravid sir told me I could call him up any time and discuss my problems with him."

And Dravid keeps his lines of communication with chairman of selectors M.S.K. Prasad and the team-management, including Ravi Shastri and Virat Kohli, open.

Rustingly, India now has a feeder system in place. The gifted Prithvi Shaw was fast-tracked into the team after Dravid convinced the selectors and team-management about the youngster's preparedness for Test cricket.

Dravid constantly interacts with the junior selection panel as well. Former India seamer Venkatesh Prasad, who headed the junior panel for more than two years, said, "Rahul is not only a great player but has wonderful communication skills."

Prasad added, "He throws up a lot of ideas during conversations. Rahul bridges the gap with the boys, puts them at ease, and encourages them to express themselves. And there is so much respect for him."

Prasad felt that the selectors too should be given their due. "They travel to so many games, watch so many matches, look for talent. The junior panel made some good decisions."

The M.S.K. Prasad-led senior panel, in tandem with Dravid and the team-management, has also got several key picks right.

In fact, after batsman Shubman Gill was selected for the New Zealand tour, M.S.K. Prasad revealed, "We have discussed with Rahul that Shubman is ready for international cricket. The best part is the clutch of 'A' tours which has made all these players battle-ready for the biggest challenge."

The present generation is fortunate; there are so many avenues. S. Sharath, former Tamil Nadu left-hander, played his best cricket in the 90s, when the opportunities were few and far between.

Sharath, a formidable batsman in domestic cricket, said, "I just played in one 'A' series, that too in the sub-continent, in Bangladesh, and on an astro-turf pitch. Now the youngsters get so many chances. And they have an exceptional person such as Dravid to guide them."

Sharath, who played in the India under-19 team with Dravid, said, "To me, [V.V.S.] Laxman is the most talented player from South Zone and Dravid the toughest mentally. Even then, at the under-19 level, you could see those traits in him."

C Rahul is not only a great player but has wonderful communication skills. He throws up a lot of ideas during conversations. He puts them [the boys] at ease and encourages them to express themselves

VENKATESH PRASAD | FORMER INDIA SEAMER

That the BCCI now permits youngsters to play in only one under-19 World Cup enables them to move forward, rather than stagnate at the junior level.

At the under-19 stage, it is more about identifying talent and focusing on the 'process' than winning, but Dravid put together a very good team, with the likes of Shaw, Gill, and exciting pacers Kamlesh Nagarkoti and Shivam Mavi, which went on to triumph in the 2018 World Cup.

Dilip Vengsarkar, former India captain and past chairman of BCCI's successful Talent Resource Development Wing, said, "The 'A' team concept is good and Dravid has been doing a fine job. But you should not have 'A' tours during the period First Class cricket is played in India. It dilutes the field."

Vengsarkar has a point but the cricket seasons in countries such as Australia, South Africa and New Zealand clash with the Ranji dates. A balance has to be struck.

For instance, for the ongoing 'A' matches against England Lions at home, the selectors have not picked anyone who is a part of the Ranji semifinals.

The under-19 and 'A' tours have enabled the emerging cricketers in India to evolve. And it's heartening that Dravid, constantly raising the bar, is leading this silent revolution. He continues to be a man on a mission.

WORD PLAY

American Twist

ON THE BOX

STACKING UP



FA Cup: SAT: Manchester City v Burnley, 8.30 P.M.; SONY TEN 2 & HD. **SUN:** Crystal Palace v Tottenham, 9.30 P.M.; SONY TEN 1 HD.

La Liga: SUN: Valencia v Villarreal, 1.15 A.M., Girona v Barcelona, 8.45 P.M.; SONY TEN 2 & HD.

Bundesliga: SAT: Dortmund v Hannover, 7.45 P.M., STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & HD; Borussia Monchengladbach v Augsburg, 7.45 P.M., Werder Bremen v Frankfurt, 10.45 P.M., STAR SPORTS SELECT 2 & HD. **SUN:** Bayern Munich v Stuttgart 7.45 P.M., Dusseldorf v Leipzig, 10.15 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & HD.

Serie A: SUN: AC Milan v Napoli, 1 A.M.; SONY SIX & HD.

NBA: SAT: Jazz v Timberwolves, 7.30 A.M.; SONY TEN 1 & HD. **SUN:** Celtics v Warriors, 7 A.M.; SONY TEN 1 & HD.



ICC Test Rankings

#	TEAM	M	PTS	RATE
1	India	43	5,007	116
2	South Africa	39	4,280	110
3	England	49	5,310	108
4	New Zealand	30	3,213	107
5	Australia	41	4,143	101
6	Sri Lanka	45	4,103	91
7	Pakistan	32	2,803	88
8	West Indies	35	2,463	70
9	Bangladesh	25	1,727	69
10	Zimbabwe	11	138	13

ODI Rankings

#	TEAM	M	PTS	RATE
1	England	55	6,918	126
2	India	61	7,351	121
3	New Zealand	46	5,188	113
4	South Africa	46	5,037	110
5	Pakistan	44	4,531	103
6	Australia	43	4,290	100
7	Bangladesh	39	3,608	93
8	Sri Lanka	57	4,426	78
9	West Indies	40	2,899	72
10	Afghanistan	36	2,394	67

T20I Rankings

#	TEAM	M	PTS	RATE
1	Pakistan	36	4,979	138
2	India	42	5,298	126
3	England	22	2,586	118
4	Australia	28	3,266	117
5	South Africa	22	2,502	114
6	New Zealand	26	2,940	113
7	West Indies	27	2,725	101
8	Afghanistan	27	2,490	92
9	Sri Lanka	30	2,580	86
10	Bangladesh	30	2,321	77

Biggest Movers ►



Men's Top Five

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Novak Djokovic	31	9,135	18
2	Rafael Nadal	32	7,480	13
3	Roger Federer	37	6,420	17
4	Alexander Zverev	21	6,385	21
5	Juan Martin del Potro	30	5,150	17

Cameron Norrie (GBR)
Rank 68 ▲ 25 spots

Robin Haase (NED)
Rank 58 ▼ 9 spots

Women's Top Five

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Simona Halep	27	6,642	16
2	Angelique Kerber	30	5,505	19
3	Caroline Wozniacki	28	5,436	19
4	Naomi Osaka	21	5,270	20
5	Sloane Stephens	25	5,077	21

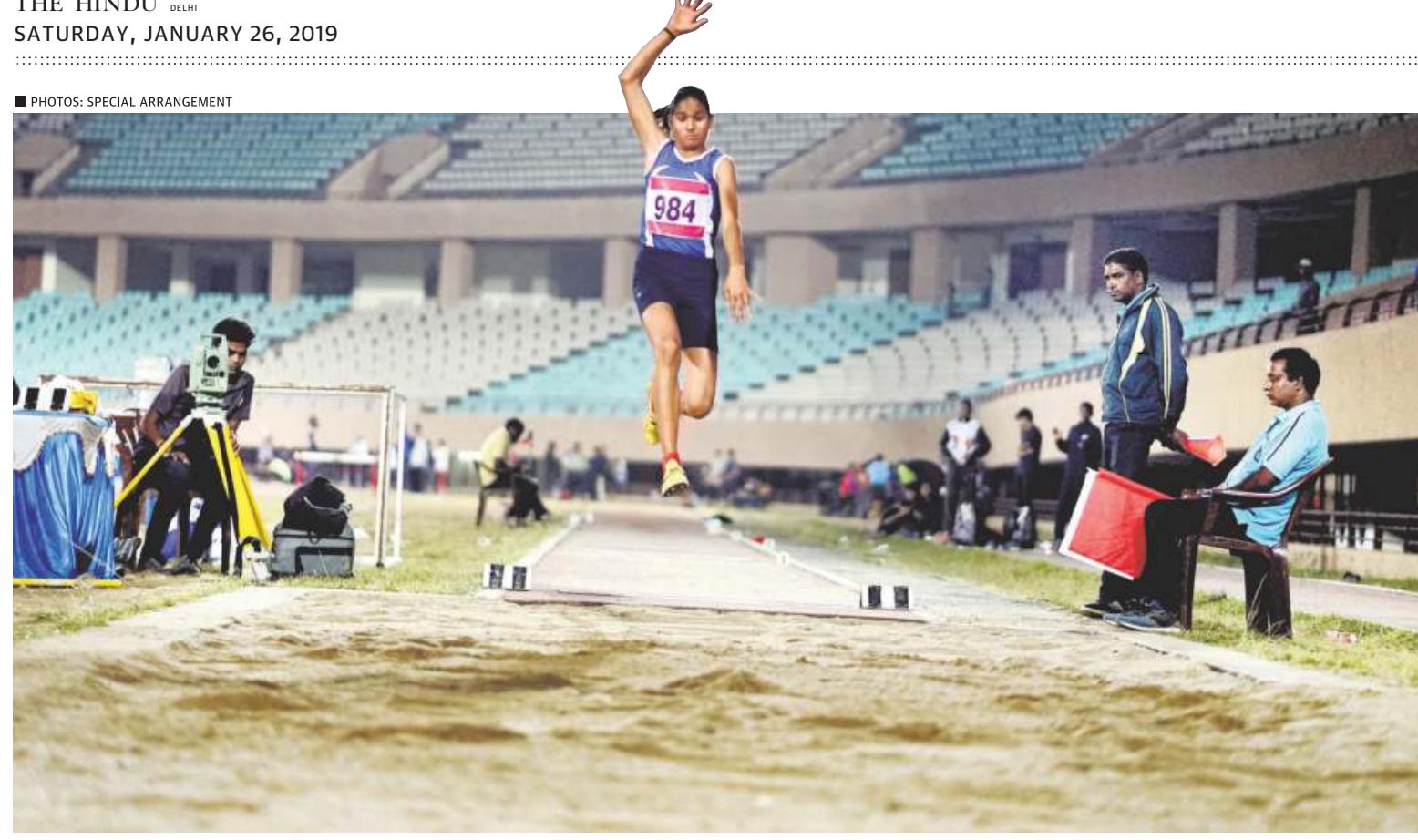
Sofia Kenin (USA)
Rank 37 ▲ 19 spots

Monica Niculescu (ROU)
Rank 99 ▼ 11 spots

English Premier League Standings

#	TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	
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PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Made for the long jump

Shaili Singh has Anju Bobby George and Bobby George excited. The first couple of Indian long jump believes the 15-year-old from Jhansi is poised for great things

STAN RAYAN

As she watched the young long-jumpers at the inter-District Nationals in Visakhapatnam a little more than a year ago, something struck Anju Bobby George about a girl from Jhansi.

Just 13 then, Shaili Singh did not make an impact on the results board in the under-14 event, finishing fifth with 4.93m. But Anju was excited. A week earlier, her husband Bobby George had felt the same way at the junior Nationals in Guntur.

It did not take long for the famed duo to pick the girl for the Anju Bobby Sports Foundation, which is being run as a junior national camp, at Bengaluru's SAI Centre.

A natural

"When we see an athlete, we sort of know how she could develop," explains Anju, the country's lone senior World Championships medallist (long jump bronze; Paris 2003). "And when I saw Shaili, her muscle formation, her explosiveness, her aggressiveness during the competition, I felt she had all the qualities to be a top jumper."

After some tinkering from coach Bobby, without breaking the young girl's natural rhythm, Shaili began to show her potential. She broke the under-16 National Record with a very impressive 5.94m effort at the junior Nationals in Ranchi.

"This girl is made for the long jump," said an elated



Preparing for lift-off: Anju Bobby George and her trainees — Rugma Udhayan, N. Ruchitha, Mariya Jaison, Shaili Singh, Deepanshi Singh and R. Kusuma — at Bengaluru's SAI Centre.

Bobby after the big leap. "The interesting thing is, she is just 14, she started serious sport less than 17 months ago and now she is close to six metres. This is world-class performance for her age, and if you compare her with Anju at 14, Shaili is, in fact, 50 to 60 centimetres ahead."

Anju and Bobby are thrilled, for they feel they may have found the athlete who could bring the country the elusive Olympic medal.

"Yes, I think so and that's my dream. I have high hopes for Deepanshi Singh too. And I hope one of my girls breaks my National Record (6.83m)," says Anju.

"I think Shaili has the capacity to go as far as Anju," says Bobby. "We have six trainees in our centre, and Shaili is the most talented of

C If you compare her with Anju at 14, Shaili is, in fact, 50 to 60 centimetres ahead. But to do well at the international level, it may take five to six years of continuous training

BOBBY GEORGE | LONG JUMP COACH

the lot and Deepanshi is very hard working. But to do well at the international level, it may take five to six years of continuous training."

The Anju Bobby centre is unique. Nowhere else in the country do you have a World bronze medallist and the coach who took her that far, guiding athletes under one roof. This offers the best of both worlds to athletes.

"At the back of my mind, I know I've done seven metres in training so I want to teach my athletes to do something similar," says Anju.

"She is 1.69m tall and though young, she is mentally very strong. She has clarity about everything," says

"Small things matter. I know how your hands should be positioned for a big jump, how your legs should be positioned, how your hips should be locked... these small things which a coach cannot teach, I can teach them."

The camp is virtually a long-jump centre, and Shaili, who turned 15 a few days ago, is clearly the girl to watch.

"She is 1.69m tall and though young, she is mentally very strong. She has clarity about everything," says

Bobby. "We have changed her technique, from hang to the hitch-kick, but as an athlete, she is not even 30% complete when it comes to technique. But even with her current motor qualities, she can go 25 to 30cms farther."

Measured approach

But Bobby is not pushing her. "It will take more than a year to compete internationally, because she has to turn 16, so why push her? She is rather new, so we have left her in her natural state. I am just concentrating on her running skills and synchronised movements, and she has improved nicely in these things. We are not pushing her into advanced technique; we will start that later."

Shaili has come a long way in a short while: she was introduced to the sport two years ago, when her mother noticed a small item in a local newspaper about selection trials for a sports hostel in Lucknow.

She is now in good hands, for, apart from imparting top-class coaching, the Anju Bobby centre also takes care of her academic expenses and flies her to competitions.

The foundation, which has long jump World Record holder Mike Powell as a consultant coach, is young and has set high goals for its athletes. But Olympic medals don't come cheap. Care,

support and funding are of the essence if athletes like Shaili are to go from strength to strength.

WEEKEND SPORT 17

Japan's maverick 'Citizen Runner' goes pro

Yuki Kawauchi's eccentric training methods helped him win last year's Boston Marathon. He will quit his job as a school administrator in April to focus on running full time

In Japan, where more people run marathons than anywhere else, it takes a special character to stand out from the crowd.

In the small town of Kuki, north of Tokyo, one man, Yuki Kawauchi, has done just that. Unlike other elite runners, Kawauchi, who came to the world's attention with his Boston Marathon victory last year, is not fully professional. He is a school administrator.

All this is about to change in April when the 31-year-old, known in Japan as the 'Citizen Runner', will finally focus on running full time.

However, what is not about to change is Kawauchi's unique take on preparation. He currently runs at least 20 kilometres every day before or after work, through the streets of Kuki or round and round the running track in the city's park. He never stops running — he says he runs around his house when completing chores — and takes part in far more competitive marathons than his peers.

Whilst Kenya's Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge ran just one marathon in 2018, Kawauchi ran 11. Partly due to the number he has run, the Japanese holds the record for the most sub-2-hour-20-minute marathons (81).

C Since I like travelling, it gives me such a pleasant feeling to go all around the world. For me, it is perhaps the only meaning of running

This also means he runs more winter marathons than his competitors. His win in Boston, his greatest success to date, came in frigid cold and bitter rain.

"It is quite rare to run [a] full-marathon in such weather," he says. "Those runners who only join the competition once or twice a year would never experience that. As I have participated in about 80 competitions, I have the experience."

Extraordinary output

Kawauchi holds a special place in the hearts of marathon fans across the world for his extraordinary output and unconventional approach.

He won the 2016 Kuki half marathon wearing a suit, and prepares for every race, no matter where he is in the world, with three portions of Japanese curry.

Kawauchi says his decision to run so many marathons comes partly from necessity and partly from a desire to see the world.

"Since I like travelling, it gives me such a pleasant feeling to go all around the world. For me, it is perhaps the only meaning of running."

Competing also helps Kawauchi stay in shape — for more competitions.

"I run as an individual runner



ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES FOR IAAF

without belonging to any team and I have my job during the weekdays. This makes it hard to keep up the quality of my practice," he says. "Running in competitions is the best practice for me."

Kawauchi's decision to turn professional comes just 15 months before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics but there is no guarantee he will even try to make the national team.

"I want to take time to think," says Kawauchi. "I have much more potential or possibility for the Olympics than before, since my time is getting faster. But at this moment, I have not trained enough to compete at the Olympics. It depends on how much I can level up after April."

Kawauchi's decision to turn professional came after taking 10 days off work in the build-up to the 2017 World Championships in London. That added preparation time led to him finishing ninth and he has now set his sights on competing for a podium place at Eugene 2021 after two years of professional training.

No regrets

Kawauchi will also be able to leave his job without any regrets. The school marked its 100th anniversary last year and Kawauchi had a key role in organising the celebrations.

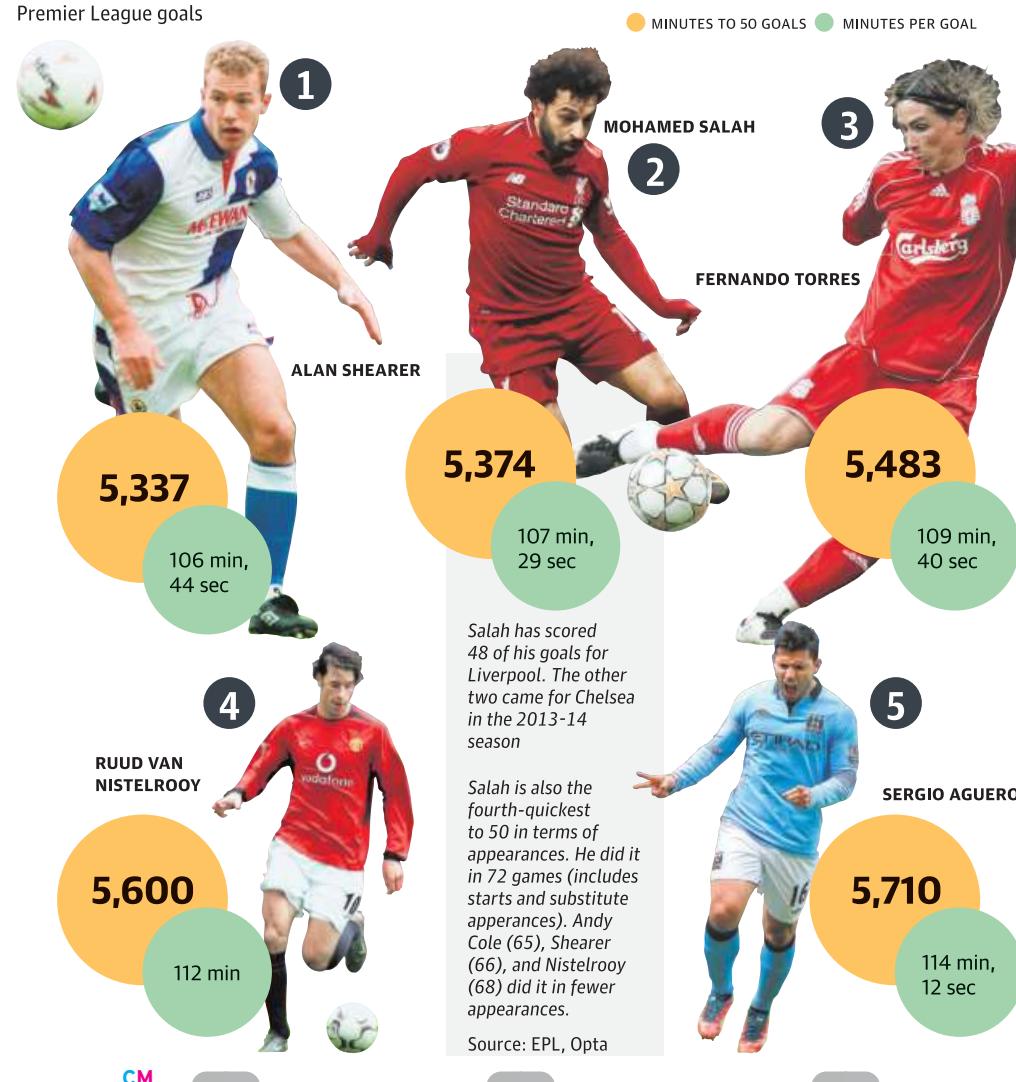
"I did not want to have any regrets at the school, that is why I set the time in April this year," he said.

"I got my job done." REUTERS

GAME THEORY

Fastest to 50

Mohamed Salah scored his 50th Premier League goal last weekend, becoming the second-quickest player to this milestone in terms of minutes. Here is how he compares with the others on the list of the fastest to 50 Premier League goals



PICTURE THIS



Chess on ice

Curling looks deceptively easy. In reality, it demands great precision and several years of practice. Some like the sport to chess because of the strategy involved. Others describe it as a cross between darts

and shuffleboard, but on ice.

Curling is played between teams of four. Competitors stand on one end of the playing surface (or sheet) and slide granite stones (weighing about 18kg) towards a bull's eye or 'house'. Two team members accompany the stone, using brooms

to alter the state of ice in front of it, shaping its path. There is also a fair bit of yelling (arguably the most fun aspect), with teammates shouting instructions to one another.

Curling is considered one of the oldest team sports. It's said to have begun in Scotland in the early 16th century, when locals curled heavy stones on frozen lochs.

The foundation of the sport remains the same — although the athletes are much fitter today, as you'll find in Jonkoping, Sweden, where the third leg of the Curling World Cup begins next week.

