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NEARBY



Mayawati appoints kin to key party posts

LUCKNOW
BSP chief Mayawati tightened her family's grip on the party by appointing her younger brother Anand Kumar as vice-president and his son Akash Anand as national coordinator on Sunday. She informed her party leaders and MPs about the appointments at the BSP's national-level meeting here, sources said.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 12

Former journalist shot at by car-borne men

NEW DELHI
A former journalist was shot at in east Delhi's Vasundhara Enclave by car-borne masked men on Saturday night, the police said on Sunday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Jasmeet Singh said the incident took place when the victim was driving home in Noida after meeting a friend in Raj Nagar extension.

CITY ▶ PAGE 4

MBA graduate held for Dwarka double murder

NEW DELHI
An MBA graduate has been arrested for allegedly killing a couple in Dwarka after they turned down his marriage proposal to their daughter, the police said on Sunday. On Saturday, Hari Ballabh and his wife Shanti Singh, both from Bihar, were found stabbed to death at their house in Dwarka's Mohan Garden.

CITY ▶ PAGE 4



EDGE ▶ 4 PAGES



Caught unawares: A pandal, where people had gathered for a 'Ram Katha', collapsed at Jasol in Rajasthan's Barmer district on Sunday after sudden rain and squall. ■ PTI

14 killed in Rajasthan's Barmer as tent collapses on devotees

Sudden rain and squall led to short circuit; CM orders probe

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT JAIPUR

Fourteen persons were killed and over 50 injured when a large tent collapsed on a crowd of devotees in a sudden rain and squall, which led to a short circuit followed by electric current in the iron structure, during a religious congregation in Jasol village of Rajasthan's Barmer district on Sunday. The deceased included two women and a 15-year-old boy.

Trapped under tent
Most of the victims were electrocuted as they were trapped under the tent which was uprooted by strong winds in the afternoon. Mr. Gupta said 25 of those injured had been admitted to the Nahata Government Hospital in the nearby Balotra town and one person with burns was referred to Jodhpur. Doctor

listening to 'Ram Katha' (Lord Ram's story) at a local school ground, when the dust storm and downpour swept the venue.

The 'Ram Katha' was organised by the Mata Rani Bhatiyani Mandir Sansthan of Jasol, which had invited internationally acclaimed story-teller Muralidhar Maharaj to deliver his sermons.

Muralidhar Maharaj, who had started the Ram Katha on Saturday, warned the devotees of the tent falling on them in the middle of his talk and asked them to rush outside.

Mr. Gupta said 25 of those injured had been admitted to the Nahata Government Hospital in the nearby Balotra town and one person with burns was referred to Jodhpur. Doc-

tors feared that the toll could increase as several injured persons were in a serious condition.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who ordered the district officers to investigate the cause, will go to Jasol on Monday to meet the injured. He said the local administration was engaged in the rescue and relief work and was extending "every possible help" to those affected and their kin, including their medical treatment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of lives and wished those injured an early recovery.

"Collapse of 'pandal' in Barmer is unfortunate. My thoughts are with the bereaved families and I wish the injured a quick recovery," he tweeted.

The cyberattacks, done with Mr. Trump's approval, disabled Iran's computer systems that controlled its rocket and missile launchers, the officials said.

U.S. targets Iranian computers

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON

U.S. military cyberforces launched a strike against Iranian military computer systems on Thursday as President Donald Trump backed away from plans for a more conventional military strike in response to Iran's downing of a U.S. surveillance drone, U.S. officials have said.

The rain deficit has depleted reservoirs, besides delaying sowing of summer foodgrain crops. Parts of central and peninsular India are staring at a drought for the second successive year.

Farmers' groups are demanding that the government declare drought in affected areas immediately, so

4 militants killed in Shopian

PEERZADA ASHIQ SRINAGAR

Four militants were killed by security forces in south Kashmir's Shopian on Sunday.

A police spokesman said that on a tip-off, a cordon and search operation was launched at Panzar. In the ensuing encounter, four militants were killed, and their bodies were retrieved.

The deceased were Rafi Hassan Mir and Suhail Ahmad Bhat of Shopian and Showkat Ahmad Mir and Azad Ahmad Khanday of Pulwama. The police said Showkat had a long history of terror crimes since 2015.

Elderly couple, caretaker murdered in Vasant Vihar

Entry to flat was friendly and assailants deliberately ransacked house: police



Policemen near the flat where the murders took place. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI
An elderly couple and their caretaker were found murdered in their flat in south Delhi's Vasant Vihar on Sunday morning.

The bodies of Vishnu Mathur, 78, his wife Shashi, 75, and their caretaker Khushboo, 22, were found in their two-bedroom flat on the first floor of Vasant Apartments. Police said the couple had one stab wound each on their throats while Khushboo had at least five similar wounds around her neck.

The entry to the flat was friendly and the assailants deliberately ransacked the house to make it look like robbery, the police said.

DCP (South West) Deven-

come for household work at the flat, found the door open. On entering the flat, she found Khusboo lying on the floor in a pool of blood and the couple lying dead on a bed. She immediately alerted a neighbour.

"We have questioned several people who were frequent visitors to the flat. The case will be worked out soon," Mr. Arya said.

The police said the couple is survived by a married daughter who lives in East of Kailash. She used to visit her parents regularly and talk to them daily through video calls.

"We spoke to the couple's daughter and her husband to know if any jewellery, cash or valuables were missing

from the house. They claimed that the couple did not keep any such valuables with them," said the officer.

Vishnu had retired from the office of the Central Government Health Scheme and Shashi from a civic body in New Delhi. They had been living in Vasant Apartments for the past nearly 18 years.

The couple had lost their son in a road accident in 1999.

"Shashi was bedridden for the past few months as she had fractured her knee and underwent surgery. Khushboo was hired to take care of the couple as Vishnu had also stopped moving out of the flat due to ill health," a police officer said.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 4

U.P. government project to beautify Taj Mahal stalled

Barrage proposal stuck between two expert committees of the Union Environment Ministry



In limbo: The barrage is meant to secure the foundation of the Taj Mahal and improve the water level at Agra. ■ PTI

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI
When's a barrage, not a barrage? An answer to this lies at the heart of the clearance to a project to improve infrastructure and long-term sustainability of the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra.

A proposal by the Uttar Pradesh government to construct a barrage across the Yamuna, a kilometre and a half away from the Taj Mahal, is stuck between two expert committees of the Union Environment Ministry.

Each committee, consisting of eminent experts, thinks that it's the other pa-

nel that should be taking a call on the future of the project, a perusal of the public

records of meetings and discussions in the Ministry shows.

The project of the Irrigation Department envisages construction of a barrage for "securing the foundation of the Taj Mahal, improving the water level at Agra, beautifying and navigating the Yamuna at 1.50 km downstream of the Taj Mahal."

Water all through year Such a storage, generally used in irrigation and hydro-electricity projects, would

ensure a minimum quantity of water all through the year.

It would help to recharge the ground water and facilitate navigation through river routes. That stretch of the Yamuna is a National Waterway (Delhi to Allahabad) and the barrage would serve as an alternative to motorised transport and would also help to develop a green belt around the pond which would "improve the environment around the Taj Mahal", the project proponents say.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

THE HINDU



MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2019

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MEA rejects U.S. report on state of religious freedom in India

A foreign govt. has no *locus standi* to pronounce on the rights of our citizens'

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Foreign governments do not have the right to criticise India's vibrant democracy and dedication to rule of law, said the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Sunday, after the U.S. State Department's annual report on religious freedom pointed out India's failure to protect minority communities.

"We see no *locus standi* for a foreign government to pronounce on the state of our citizens' constitutionally protected rights," said MEA Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar.

The report sets the backdrop of the visit of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that begins on June 25.

The *Hindu* reported earlier that the report was re-

leased by Mr. Pompeo himself, and he referred to the issue of religious freedom as a "deeply personal" priority.

The 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom referred to multiple instances of the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Centre and various State governments of the Bharatiya Janata Party having taken

steps that hurt the Muslim community.

The official spokesperson, however, maintained that India was proud of its "secular credentials", saying, "it is widely acknowledged that India is a vibrant democracy where the Constitution provides protection of religious freedom, and where democratic governance and rule of law further promote and protect the fundamental rights."

RAVEESH KUMAR,
Spokesperson,
Ministry of External Affairs

law further promote and protect the fundamental rights."

Apart from the murders and lynchings by cow vigilante groups, the report pointed out that there were several attempts to undermine minority institutions and change the names of cities that reminded one of the pluralistic nature of India. In this regard, the report highlighted the change of the name of Allahabad to Prayagraj.

The MEA did not answer if the report and its observations about India's failure to uphold and protect minority rights would feature in talks with Mr. Pompeo during his visits here between June 25 and 27.

INDIA REJECTS PAK. CHARGE OF POLITICISING FATF ▶ PAGE 13

Southwest monsoon's current rainfall deficit is 38%, says IMD

Only half of usual summer foodgrain crop area sown so far

Cropped out

Preliminary report on area* coverage under Kharif crops as on June 21, 2019

* in lakh hectares

Crop	Normal area to be sown for this week	Actual area sown in 2019	Difference between Normal & Actual
Rice	7.39	6.30	

New 'monitors' to welcome kids at SDMC schools

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation has installed nearly 4,000 CCTVs in its 388 primary school campuses. **Sidharth Ravi** finds out that while experts have some privacy concerns, parents are happy about improved security and teachers rejoice at having a tool to keep students in line

CITY MATTERS

Primary schools run by the Delhi municipal corporations are infamous for their inadequate infrastructure, staff shortage, and abysmal annual enrolment numbers.

The schools, which do not charge any fee, are largely attended by children from the poorest sections of society. Most of the students have left for their villages for summer vacation and will be back in July when the schools reopen.

The children attending schools run by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) are in for a surprise as the civic body has installed nearly 4,000 CCTV cameras in its 388 primary school campuses.

The primary municipal school in Humayunpur was one of the first to get the CCTVs, which were installed early this year.

From his office, principal Indra Mani Mishra has access to footage from the 12 cameras installed around the school's campus. The CCTVs have been set up at the entrance gate, entry to toilets, corridors, the playground, an "activity room" where joint classes are held, and other strategic locations. No cameras have been installed inside classrooms.

Constant monitoring

"We can see who is picking up or dropping off the kids... We have heard of unfortunate incidents that happened in some schools; the cameras are useful in that regard," said Mr. Mishra.

But security is not the only thing that the CCTVs are useful for, they also help keep the students in line. "We sometimes scare the students by telling them that there are cameras watching them, they become alert after that... at least for a while, then they go back to being themselves," said the principal smiling.

The cameras have also helped resolve issues between students. When seven-year-old Sagar stole a pair of shoes, it



(Above) A CCTV camera installed at a South Delhi Municipal Corporation school in Arjun Nagar; (right) control room inside the school where footage from all the cameras on campus are fed into a computer.

■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



were worried about their child's privacy, Mr. Kumar argued: "They are little kids, what privacy do they need?"

Around 3,940 CCTVs have been installed in 388 SDMC schools, many of which have two shifts – effectively creating a total of 581 schools.

The project was undertaken at a cost of roughly ₹5.5 crore. The smaller schools have around eight cameras while the bigger schools have up to 16 CCTVs, said an official.

Education activist and advocate Ashok Agarwal said he supported the installation of CCTVs given the frequent cases of corporal punishment and other life-threatening incidents that take place in schools. "Municipal schools are also woefully lacking in security guards," he added.

Mr. Agarwal, however, opposed the idea of CCTVs being installed inside classrooms.

"There is a relationship inside a classroom between teachers and students that should remain private," he said.

Mr. Kumar and other parents believe the same facility will be provided to them.

When asked whether they

were worried about their child's privacy, Mr. Kumar argued: "They are little kids, what privacy do they need?"

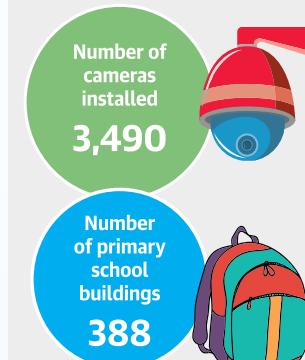
Nandini Sharma, the chairperson of the SDMC Education Committee, said there are no plans to provide parents access to the CCTV footage. "We do believe there is some privacy which belongs to the child that we should not interfere in. After all, no one appreciates such an intrusion," she added.

Location of CCTVs

Ms. Sharma said that while locations of two-three cameras were pre-decided, the rest were left to the discretion of the principals. Several municipal schoolteachers *The Hindu* spoke to said they were not consulted on locations of the CCTVs. The recorded footage is stored up to one month.

Last year, a public interest petition was filed before the Delhi High Court seeking direction to the authorities not to install CCTV cameras inside class-

Eyes everywhere



Enrolment numbers

2017-2018	2,67,721
2016-2017	2,83,737
2015-2016	2,94,862
2014-2015	3,11,221
2013-2014	3,21,810

SOURCE: SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

CCTVs of 'immense help' to teachers in pvt. schools

Say it aids them in solving theft, indiscipline

PALLAVI KESWANI

NEW DELHI
Delhi government's decision to install CCTV cameras inside classrooms in government schools and provide access of the recordings to the parents has given way to a number of debates on how it will affect the functioning of schools, teacher's output and behaviour of students. A PIL filed in the Supreme Court had cited violation of the "Right to Privacy".

However, CCTV cameras have already become a norm in most private educational institutions, with cameras installed in classrooms across all grades. Several teachers have given a positive feedback, claiming it to be the catalyst behind the rise in accountability among their colleagues and also a tool that aids them when dealing with misbehaviour by students.

"Cameras are installed in our school to ensure safety of students after the POCSO Act came into effect. We feel the need to update security. It has only served as an added benefit, safeguarding the interests of both the teachers and the students," said a teacher of a private school in Central Delhi.

Crux of SC petition

The main crux of the petition put forth in the Supreme Court is that the proposed direct access to the recordings of the camera will pose a risk to the safety of "young girls and female teachers" and may give way to stalking.

"If a teacher has been conscientious about her work, having a CCTV around should not affect her. For our school, it has been of immense help in solving cases of theft and indiscipline. However, the access to recordings has been limited to the teachers and principal only. A need for involving the parent has not risen yet. A scenario in which the world is able to look into a classroom - I think that should wait," the teacher elaborated.

Part of the petition also raises the concern that installation of

cameras has been limited to teachers and principal only. A need for involving the parent has not risen yet. A scenario in which the world is able to look into a classroom - I think that should wait

A TEACHER IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL

CCTVs in classrooms would end up becoming an obstruction to freedom of speech and expression, claiming that, "Students and teachers will not be able to express themselves freely in classroom where everything is closely and continuously monitored."

However, another teacher from a different private school has described the CCTV set up in her school as being "inconspicuous" enough to the extent that it does not interfere in the teacher's functioning at all. "Initially we thought that it would be restrictive in some way, but the positioning makes it easy to ignore. The primary purpose behind installing a CCTV camera in each classroom was to increase student's safety. Initially, we had to assure parents that students will not be affected. Now, we are receiving positive feedbacks from them," she said.

Cameras in staffrooms

Meanwhile, the Delhi government has proposed to install two CCTV cameras in each classroom. Beyond the classrooms and the necessary vulnerable spots (that have been made mandatory to be put under CCTV surveillance by CBSE in September 2017), private schools installing cameras inside the staffrooms have met with some criticism.

"Parents and teachers are more than happy with CCTVs being installed for the safety of children, but our school has also installed CCTVs in the staffroom. This is a hindrance to the teachers," said a convent schoolteacher.

Sisodia launches work for 2,000 CCTVs

Part of the AAP government's ambitious project to instal 1.4 lakh cameras across city

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	148	Gurugram	171
Ghaziabad	120	Faridabad	65
Noida	120	Greater Noida	103
Good 0-50	51-100	101-200	201-300 301-400 >401
Poor	Very poor	Severe	

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) | SOURCE: CPCB

DELHI TODAY

Exhibition: A solo painting exhibition by Kumar Umesh at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Exhibition: Bahaar-e-Dilli, a solo exhibition by Bahaa Jain and calligraphy in Urdu by Dr. Touseef Sheikh at Delhi 'Dilli' Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Dance: Sur-Taal, a festival based on the concept of Gaayan by Dr. Sarita Pathak Yajurvedi; Vaadan by Dr. Bipul Kumar Ray, followed by Nrityanjali by Maya at The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m. onwards

Exhibition: Between Art Deco and Modernism- Polish posters from 1918-1939, an exhibition of archival posters from the collection of the Poster Museum at Wilanow at Main Art Gallery, Kamala Nehru Complex, India International Centre (IIC), 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Mail your listings for this column to cityeditor@delhi@thehindu.co.in

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday inaugurated the work to instal 2,000 CCTV cameras in his Assembly constituency of Patparganj as part of the Delhi government's project to instal 1.4 lakh cameras.

Mr. Sisodia said that the placement of the cameras, was decided after MLAs and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) in the constituency conducted surveys to determine the spots that need surveillance.

"Women security and law and order may not be under the Delhi government, but we are doing everything within our power to enhance security of women in the city. In the next 2-3 months, all 1.4 lakh cameras sanctioned will be installed. The tender-



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia inaugurates installation of CCTV cameras in Vinod Nagar.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ing for another 1.5 lakh cameras has begun. This is in addition to cameras being installed in government schools for the security of children," Mr. Sisodia said.

while addressing residents of the area. He added that nobody breaking the law will be able to escape the eyes of the cameras.

Wireless system

The Deputy CM said that CCTV projects had failed to serve their purpose in the past as cables were often cut. He said that the cameras that the Delhi government will be installing are tamper proof with wireless system that runs fully on WiFi.

"Live feeds and footage up to 20-days old will be provided to the RWA members, the local Station House Officer and also to a central control room at the PWD headquarters. RWA members can track the feeds on their mobile phones without any hassle even for issues like damage to resident's vehi-

cles, etc.," Mr. Sisodia said.

He added that the CCTVs would be installed in unauthorised colonies as well.

Reasons for delay

Mr. Sisodia said the project was delayed as the Lieutenant-Governor refused to approve the proposal. "The entire Cabinet, right from Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Satyendar Jain, Gopal Rai and myself sat on a dharma at his [L-G's] home for 10 days and a hunger strike for seven days. That is the only reason why this project has become a reality. It has taken a lot of effort and penance," Mr. Sisodia said.

He alleged that the L-G was opposed to involving RWAs in determining the locations of CCTVs and wanted the Sub-Divisional Magistrate to take the call.

DU receives nearly 20,000 fewer applications this year

1 lakh more registered on portal, but did not make payment

SIDHARTH RAVI

NEW DELHI

The number of students applying for undergraduate courses in Delhi University fell by nearly 20,000 applications compared to last year, data shared by the university on Sunday showed.

The last date for registrations ended on June 22.

Dean of Students' Welfare, Rajeev Gupta, attributed the drop in numbers to the 'edit option' introduced in the application process this year.

"Generally, there are a lot of duplications and given that the application fee is very low, people often apply multiple times to make changes," he said. This year, DU allowed applicants to update the information without making any payments till the last date of registration.

Mr. Gupta dismissed the contention that the number of applications had dropped because of delay in the admission process and changes made in the eligibility criteria due to the intervention of the High Court. "We are releasing the first cut-off list only about a week later compared to last year. I doubt that made a difference," he said.

The first cut-off list will be released on June 28.

While last year, 2,78,574 paid applications were received this year, the number of paid applications stood at 2,58,388. Nearly one lakh more students registered on the admissions portal but did not make the final payment.

Students' choice

Total paid applications



2019
2018

GENDER-WISE DISTRIBUTION

Male: 1,28,634

Female: 1,29,753

Third gender: 1

Category-wise break-up of applicants

Unreserved: 1,52,478

SC: 34,262

ST: 7,100

EWS: 9,091

SOURCE: DELHI UNIVERSITY

Entrance tests to begin from July 3

NEW DELHI
The Delhi University Entrance Tests (DUET)-2019 for admissions to various PG, MPhil, PhD and some undergraduate courses will be held between July 3 and July 8. The new dates were notified on DU's website on Sunday. The change in exam dates has been effected following the High Court's direction to the university to extend the date of registration. For the first time, the exams will be conducted by the National Testing Agency, which also conducts other national examinations such as NEET and JEE.

If PM wants, he can help us: Jaypee homebuyers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AAP's 'Bijli Andolan' begins today

People in Punjab paying higher tariffs compared with Delhi: Harpal Cheema

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party has decided to launch a state-wide 'Bijli Andolan' against the ruling Congress government's recent decision to increase electricity tariffs in Punjab.

"We will start a movement from tomorrow [June 24] against the Congress government's decision to increase power tariffs," said Harpal Singh Cheema, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly.

Anti-people agreements
The decision to launch 'Bijli Andolan' was taken by the



Harpal Singh Cheema.

FILE PHOTO

party's core committee at a recently held meeting, he said, in which an outline of the movement was also discussed.

"People in Punjab are pay-

ing very high tariffs for electricity compared to other States, which was a fallout of the anti-State and anti-people agreements signed between the previous BJP-SAD government and private power players," he said.

Mr. Cheema said party MLAs along with volunteers will over the next seven days travel across the State and tell people about the existing high power tariffs as compared to other States, especially Delhi, which is ruled by AAP.

Mr. Cheema said after June 30, the party would intensify its agitation against the government for its "anti-people" policies.

Mr. Cheema said after June 30, the party would intensify its agitation against the government for its "anti-people" policies.

blem continues to grow. We will make people aware about the fact that they are paying very high power bills in Punjab, while in Delhi power tariffs are cheapest in the country," said Mr. Cheema.

To intensify stir
He added that party leaders and members will submit a charter of demands to Chief Minister Amarinder Singh through the Deputy Commissioners.

Mr. Cheema said after June 30, the party would intensify its agitation against the government for its "anti-people" policies.

Cancer incidence increasing in Rajasthan

Five types constituted over 90% among males, over 70% among females

MOHAMMED IQBAL

JAIPUR

With incidence of cancer progressively increasing in Rajasthan, those of the head and neck among men and breast among women have emerged as the leading forms of the disease in the State, characterised by the development of abnormal cells.

Patterns revealed

The patterns of cancer have been revealed in an International Classification of Diseases-coded Registry of Cancer developed for the first time by a cancer specialist hospital here recently. The Registry of Cancer has identified five leading cancers in males and females, besides highlighting the pattern in the two genders.

Reliable statistics were not available in the State to plan treatment or provide free medicines

DR. S.G. KABRA

Clinical Services Director, Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital

Men constitute 57% and women 43% of all the cancer patients in the State, S. G. Kabra, director (clinical services) at Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital, said here this past week. He said the five leading cancers constituted over 90% of all cancers among males and over 70% of all cancers among females.

Cancers of lip, oral cavity and pharynx, respiratory and intrathoracic organs, digestive organs, lymphoid,

haematopoietic and related tissues and genital organs are the leading forms of malignancy among men in the State. Among women, the leading cancers are those of breasts, genital organs, digestive organs and benign neoplasm.

Dr. Kabra said while the growing incidence of cancer was a cause for concern for healthcare providers in the State, reliable statistics were not available to plan treatment or provide free medicines. "Unless the State government makes cancer a notifiable disease, reliable comprehensive statistics of the disease will not be available," he said.

Dr. Kabra said the percentage occurrence of cancer in Rajasthan was constant during the last five years for

which the ICD-coded statistics were available. As Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital receives patients from all over the State, the representative sample of 9,181 patients treated during 2018 depicts a fairly accurate pattern of the disease.

'Donate a Life'
The hospital has also established a "Donate a Life" fund, with the help of philanthropists, trusts and donors, for treatment of children from poor families suffering from blood cancer. The fund's beneficiaries are children below 14 years suffering from three types of curable blood cancers - low-risk acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, acute promyelocytic leukaemia and Hodgkin's lymphoma.

2 tourists die as boulders hit bike in Kinnaur

KINNAUR (H.P.)
Two tourists from Punjab died after rolling boulders hit their bike in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur on Sunday morning, the police said.

The deceased have been identified as Ishan and Sunil Kumar of Baltana in Zirakpur of Punjab's Mohali district, they added.

They were on their way to Kaza in Lahaul-Spiti when boulders hit them at 6 a.m. at Kashang nullah, near Kinnaur district headquarter Reckong Peo. PTI

Madhya Pradesh teen shoots dead sister for inter-caste marriage

Victim had returned to her marital home on Saturday: police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

INDORE

A 21-year old woman who married a man from a different caste was on Saturday shot dead allegedly by her teenage brother in a village in Indore, the police said.

Bulbul had an inter-caste marriage with Kuldeep, both

residents of Rawad village here, some six months ago and it had enraged her family, Sub-Divisional Officer of Police Ramkumar Rai said.

Bulbul and Kuldeep, who had moved out of the village after the marriage, returned to the victim's marital home on Saturday. The

victim's 17-year-old brother shot her in the head at Kuldeep's home," Mr. Rai said.

Bulbul was rushed to Indore Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital where doctors declared her dead on arrival.

The teen accused surrendered at the Betma police station.

Special training for ex-Maoists, transgenders

STAFF REPORTER

BERHAMPUR

A group of 10 surrendered Maoists and 15 transgender persons of Odisha's Malkangiri district have been provided three-week-long training for personality development and physical ability enhancement.

The programme aimed at increasing their social acceptability started on June 1 and concluded on Saturday. A function was organised at the office of the Malkangiri Superintendent of Police where District Collector Manish Agarwal handed over certificates to the successful trainees.

According to Malkangiri SP Jagmohan Meena, the training would help these people become confident, self-dependant and more adaptable to society.

The short training programme involved physical training and a drill along with theory classes related to the basics of the Indian Constitution, rights and duties of citizens, basic laws and general administration. They were also trained in communication skills and processes to get benefits of different government schemes.

Police personnel, district administrative officials and educationists provided the training.

These trained people will now be helped to get jobs on contractual basis as guards and lift operators.

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IN BRIEF



Robbers decamp with ATM containing ₹30 lakh
A gang of robbers entered an SBI ATM kiosk and decamped with the cash vending machine, a police official said on Sunday. There was nearly ₹30 lakh cash, he said. The robbers used a rope and a SUV to uproot the cash dispensing machine. PTI

Man impersonates CBI officials, arrested

MUZAFFARNAGAR
A man was arrested for allegedly impersonating a Joint Commissioner of the CBI and conducting a raid at a trader's house in the New Mandi area, police said on Sunday. The accused even managed to get two police constables to accompany him. He had come in a car and was found carrying a forged identity card. The accused is being interrogated. PTI

Crocodile strays into temple, villagers hail god

AHMEDABAD
A crocodile that strayed into a Khodiyar Mata temple in Gujarat's Mahisagar district was rescued on Sunday even as villagers delayed the forest department operation by claiming the reptile's presence was an auspicious one, a senior official said. People showered vermilion and conducted aarti for the 6-foot reptile. PTI

Unruly passenger interrupts Indigo flight

BHUBANESWAR
A Guwahati-bound flight from Hyderabad made an emergency landing at the Bhubaneswar airport on Sunday after a 20-year-old passenger allegedly indulged in unruly behaviour on board. The IndiGo flight had to be diverted under emergency protocol. The passenger was later deplaned and handed over to the airport police. PTI

ILS develops antibodies against Chikungunya infection

Helps unravel virus pathogenesis; institute will partner with a biotech company for product commercialisation

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

mercialisation Award 2019 by the Department of Biotechnology.

The Institute of Life Sciences (ILS), which functions under the Department of Biotechnology, has entered into a non-exclusive license for product commercialisation after having successfully developed antibodies against the Chikungunya viral (CHIKV) infection.

The antibodies were developed following decade-long research on the CHIKV infection at the ILS laboratory headed by Dr. Soma Chattopadhyay, a senior molecular virologist. In fact, Dr. Chattopadhyay has been selected for the Biotech Product, Process Development and Com-

Significant impact
"Generation of antibodies has had significant impact on the progress of CHIKV-based research. It will help researchers unravel myriad aspects of virus pathogenesis. Moreover, with greater light shed upon the CHIKV infection biology using these antibodies, research communities are now a step closer to



Preventive measures: Workers during a fogging drive to repel mosquitoes in Delhi. • V. SUDESHAN

developing efficacious antivirals and other control strategies against the Chikungunya virus," said Dr.

Chattopadhyay.
"With no prior antibodies reported against CHIKV, Dr. Chattopadhyay's group was

the first to develop and characterize novel, highly sensitive and specific polyclonal antibodies against the non-structural proteins - nsP1, nsP3 and nsP4 of CHIKV. Furthermore, her laboratory has also developed and characterized a monoclonal antibody against nsP2 of CHIKV," said ILS in a statement.

Lack of information
The molecular virologist, who has 20 years of experience in the field, and her team, started working on this aspect as there was hardly any information on the basic mechanisms underlying CHIKV virus infection and pathogenesis.

These CHIKV proteins were chosen as targets specifically for their critical role in virus survival as they largely govern the overall process of replication and infection in host cells.

Development of these antibodies [nsP2 monoclonal, nsP1, nsP3 and nsP4 polyclonals] was therefore crucial to perform experiments pertaining to CHIKV infection, and thereby advance our basic knowledge," said the scientist.

ILS sources said the antibodies against CHIKV were receiving a tremendous response, and were being purchased by research laboratories across world.

No stay on HC fiat restricting L-G's interference: Puducherry CM

'Only interim order passed on matters with financial implications'

STAFF REPORTER

PUDUCHERRY

Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Sunday said the Supreme Court has not issued any stay on the Madras High Court judgment restricting day-to-day interference of the Lt. Governor in the administration of the Union Territory.

Addressing a press conference here, the Chief Minister said certain reports had wrongly mentioned about a stay of the High Court order given by the Supreme Court.

When the matter came up for hearing on June 21, the Supreme Court had posted the case to July 10 for detailed examination. The Lt. Governor had moved the Supreme Court challenging the



Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy addressing a press conference on Sunday. • T. SINGaravelou

High Court order, the Chief Minister said.

The Supreme Court on June 4 passed an interim order restricting the territorial

administration from implementing decisions that had financial implications.

"The interim order stands even now. However, the Su-

preme Court has not issued any order staying the judgment given by the Madras High Court. The Lt Governor has approached the Supreme Court seeking a stay on the High Court judgment," the Chief Minister said.

On the Union Government's direction on water conservation measures, the Chief Minister said last year itself the government had taken steps to desilt 16 waterbodies. The Cabinet had taken a decision to clean them through open tender.

However, the Lt. Governor overruled the decision insisting on the involvement of members from lake committees in the desilting process, he said.

7 bodies recovered from Nanda Devi

Believed to be those of mountaineers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PITHORAGARH (UTTARAKHAND)

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) on Sunday recovered seven bodies believed to be those of foreign mountaineers who had gone missing on way to the Nanda Devi East peak in Uttarakhand last month, an of-

ficer said.

A 10-member ITBP team of climbers dug out the seven bodies, including a woman mountaineer, which were buried under the snow on the western ridge of the peak towards the Pindari glacier, said Deputy Inspector General (Kumaon range) A.P.S. Nimbadia.

The bodies have not been identified yet and it will be possible only after they are brought down to the base

camp, Mr. Nimbadia said.

The DIG said a search was on for another body as there were eight members in the team, which was led by well-known British mountaineer Martin Moran who had already scaled the 7,434-metre-high peak twice in the past.

Indian Air Force helicopters also assisted in the operation named 'Daredevil', the officer added. The mountaineers had left Munsiyari on May 13 to scale the peak in Pithoragarh district, but did not return to the base camp on the appointed date of May 25. The team included seven members from the U.K., Australia and the U.S., besides a liaison officer from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

Overwhelmed

Officials said that Captain Bhasin told officials that he had just learnt of having become a grandfather and that he was too overwhelmed when he visited the outlet of Tumi, a bags and accessories brand, to buy a gift for his daughter-in-law.

The Air India spokesperson said the carrier has a zero tolerance policy towards acts of impropriety.

Captain Bhasin comes from a family of pilots.

In another order, Sanjay Mishra, Air India's General Manager, Commercial-Eastern Region was given charge of Regional Director-Eastern Region.

7-year jail for killing mongoose, birds

Landmark verdict by Assam court

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI

A court in western Assam's Bodoland Territorial Council has set a precedent by wielding a hitherto unused law related to wildlife crime to hand out the maximum punishment to five poachers for killing birds and lesser animals such as mongoose.

Additional sessions judge at Bijni, N.U. Ahmed, referred to the 2009 Assam Amendment of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 to pronounce his judgments. It warrants at least seven years in prison, extendable to 10 years, and a minimum fine of ₹50,000.

The five persons, Jay Ram Ray, Shibu Ram Ray and Ro-

ben Boro, and Somnath Kisuki and Dhojen Tudu, were sentenced for poaching deer, mongoose, hare and birds inside the Manas National Park. The last of this series of judgments was delivered on June 17.

In the case of Shibu Ram Ray and Rohen Boro, the judge, while declining to let them off under the Probation of Offender section of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, said poaching had made some species extinct and called for protecting wild animals.

Forester Manik Brahma, who registered one of the three cases, expressed the hope that offenders would get the message of the power of wildlife laws.



On guard: Police and BSF personnel maintain a vigil at the Dera Sacha Sauda compound in Bathinda on Sunday. • PTI

Dera follower's murder puts Punjab on alert

Mahinderpal Bittu killed in prison

VIKAS VASUDEV

CHANDIGARH

Security was beefed up in parts of Punjab on Sunday, a day after Sirsa-based Dera Sacha Sauda follower Mahinderpal Bittu, a key accused in the "2015 Bargarhi sacrifice incident" was murdered at Patiala's high security Nabha prison.

Tension prevailed in Faridkot's Kotkapura, the home town of Bittu, as several followers of Dera Sacha Sauda started gathering after his body was brought and kept at the 'Naam Charha Ghar' (congregation place) of the Dera (sect). Dera members refused to cremate the body until what they termed 'real culprits' behind the incident were identified and punished.

Bittu (49), who was attacked by other inmates Gursewak Singh and Maninder Singh on Saturday was rushed to Civil Hospital at Nabha, where he was declared brought dead. Both assailants were produced before a local court in Patiala and were sent to police remand for four days.

To prevent any untoward incident, paramilitary forces along with the State police were deployed in Kotkapura. Police conducted flag marches in Faridkot and neighbouring Moga districts.

"Adequate number of police and paramilitary forces have been deployed in Kotkapura and other parts," said M.S. Chhina, Inspector General of Police.

With onset of rain, AES cases die down in Bihar

A few patients have been discharged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PATNA/MUZAFFARPUR

With the onset of rains, no fresh AES case has been reported in Muzaffarpur district on Sunday even as the health department cracked its whip on a doctor who was asked to report for duty in the brain-fever-affected district, but failed to comply.

Dr. Bhimsen Kumar, a senior resident doctor at the Patna Medical College Hospital, had been directed to report at the SKMCH Muzaffarpur by June 19.

"He failed to do so and the department has taken a serious note of the lapse. He has been placed under suspension pending a departmental inquiry upon conclusion of which further action may be taken," Principal Secretary, Health, Sanjay Kumar said.

Meanwhile, Sri Krishna

Medical College Hospital (SKMCH) superintendent, Sunil Kumar Shahi said "AES is known to strike when the summer heat is at its peak and the incidences plummet no sooner than rainfalls lash the area. The same is happening this time and no child has been admitted during the day so far with the complaint even though AES patients, who have been nursed back to recovery, are being discharged continuously."

The Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) outbreak, which according to the state health department has affected about 20 out of the 40 districts in the State, has afflicted more than 600 children since June 1, killing close to 140.

The high number of deaths this year has been mostly attributed to hypoglycemia.

YUKTI JOSHI

MUMBAI

Nearly two months after she embarked on the Herculean task of running across the country for a cause, Rajasthan native Sufiya Khan, 33, already finds her heart full of warm experiences.

Speaking to *The Hindu* from Pune, where she reached on Friday, Ms. Khan said her 'Run For Hope' initiative aims to complete 4,000 km from Kashmir to Kanyakumari in 100 days. "The thought process behind this run was to spread the message of humanity, openness, positivity and equality (HOPE)," Ms. Khan said.

Record set

In April 2018, Ms. Khan became the fastest female runner to complete the Great Indian Golden Triangle Run on foot. She completed 720 km in 16 days and made it into the India Book of Records.

This run inspired her to spread her message of humanity throughout India, and she decided to run from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. This run, when completed, will be registered with the Guinness Book of World Records, and will be the first of its kind.

"I am astounded by the hospitality and love that I receive. Apart from people who have been following my journey through social media, I get to interact



with the local people. During my run in Punjab, women and young girls would join me, running beside me in slippers," Ms. Khan said. While running in Nashik, Ms. Khan met a family from Kanchali, who drove over 300 km to interact with her.

"Running and interacting with people helps you dismantle your own prejudices against people. When I started my run in Srinagar, I crossed areas like Pulwama, where I was joined by Army personnel and local people.

The climate was extremely hospitable. It was an eye-opening moment," Ms. Khan added. Ms. Khan follows a strict schedule in which she begins running everyday at 4.30 a.m. to reach her goal of 50 km a day. "The need for this run came out of my observation of our current atmosphere. Instead of understanding each other, we bring each other down. We spread vitriol on social media and spend time trolling others," Ms. Khan said.

She added, "I want to inspire and connect people. I want to bring our basic humanity back, where everyone moves a step forward to becoming more kind, positive and understanding."

Ms. Khan is aiming to complete the race in Kanyakumari by July 21 this year.

Sufiya Khan finds support on run for hope

Rajasthan native wants to run from Kashmir to reach Kanyakumari in 100 days

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AI senior pilot suspended for alleged theft

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Air India has suspended its Regional Director-Eastern Region for allegedly shoplifting a wallet in the duty free area of Sydney airport on June 22.

The decision to suspend Captain Rohit Bhasin was taken following a report by the Regional Manager-Australasia. A senior commander, Capt. Rohit Bhasin was to fly AI301 from Sydney to Delhi, a little after he allegedly committed the shoplifting.

The order signed by Air India's Director-Personnel, Amrita Sharai said that "without prejudice to any disciplinary action initiated against him and pending enquiry, Capt. Bhasin is being placed under suspension". The senior pilot was told to not enter the premises of Air India Limited or leave Kolkata, his station, without permission of the airline management. He was also told to handover all his company identity documents.

Overwhelmed

Officials said that Captain Bhasin told officials that he had just learnt of having become a grandfather and that he was too overwhelmed when he visited the outlet of Tumi, a bags and accessories brand, to buy a gift for his daughter-in-law.

The Air India spokesperson said the carrier has a zero tolerance policy towards acts of impropriety.

Captain Bhasin comes from a family of pilots.

In another order, Sanjay Mishra, Air India's General Manager, Commercial-Eastern Region was given charge of Regional Director-Eastern Region.



Clouds of war

The United States needs to dial down on its 'maximum pressure' tactics with Iran

US. President Donald Trump's decision to pull back from air strikes on Iran, after the latter shot down an American drone near the Strait of Hormuz, was a rare moment of restraint amid otherwise escalating tensions between the two countries. The rationale behind the pull-back, according to Mr. Trump, was that he did not want to cause any loss of Iranian lives as no American lives were hurt by the Iranians. Clearly, Mr. Trump, who had campaigned against the costly wars of the U.S. overseas, does not seem to be in favour of launching an open conflict with Iran. A war with Iran could be prolonged and disastrous. Iran has ballistic missiles, proxy militias and a relatively vibrant navy. And the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-third of the world's seaborne oil shipments move, is within its range. Mr. Trump does not want to take a risk unless there are provocations from Iran targeting American lives. While this approach is better than that of Mr. Trump's National Security Adviser, John Bolton, who has threatened Iran with war several times, what the U.S. President overlooks is that the current state of tensions is a product of his "maximum pressure" tactic. A year ago Mr. Trump pulled the U.S. out of a nuclear deal with which Iran was fully compliant, setting off the escalation. His plan was to squeeze the Iranian economy and force Tehran back to the table to renegotiate the nuclear issue as well as Iran's missile programme and regional activism, for a "better deal". A year later, the U.S. and Iran are on the brink of a war.

The problem with Mr. Trump's "maximum pressure" approach is that he doesn't seem to have a plan between the sanctions-driven pressure tactics and a potential military conflict. Iran, on the other hand, is ready to take limited risks, as its actions such as the threat to breach the uranium enrichment limits set by the nuclear deal and the downing of the American drone suggest, to break the stranglehold of the sanctions. As a result, Mr. Trump has a situation where maximum pressure is not producing the desired result, and both countries are edging towards a war he doesn't want. This is a strategic dilemma that warrants a recalibration of policy. Mr. Trump's decision to call off the strike and the new red line he set for Iran could create an opportunity for such a recalibration. He could seize the moment to assure Iran that his primary goal is engagement, not conflict. What Iran wants the most is relief from the sanctions. Instead of sticking to a policy that has proved to be counter-productive and risky, Mr. Trump could offer Tehran some reprieve in return for its remaining in the nuclear deal, which could be followed up by a fresh diplomatic opening. If he continues with the pressure tactics, tensions will stay high, the Strait of Hormuz would be on the brink, and further provocations by either side, or even an accident, could trigger a full-scale conflict. That is a dangerous slope.

Lacklustre meet

GST Council has missed the chance to send positive signals to boost consumer demand

The Goods and Services Tax Council's first meeting under the new government did not deliver any big surprises. Apart from some minor changes to the existing structure and procedures under the GST, the council's meeting on Friday, under Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, was largely a lacklustre event. There was some expectation that the council would consider a significant cut in tax rates across the board in order to help spur consumer demand that has been sagging in recent quarters. But none of that happened. The meeting ended with some changes in procedure that are expected to tackle tax evasion and make GST filing easier. In particular, Aadhaar has been approved as sufficient proof to obtain GST registration. Even the expectation that there would be a cut in the tax imposed on electric vehicles, from 12% to 5%, was not met. The government may be worried about the revenue implications of any significant across-the-board tax cut. Although GST collections have been encouraging in the past couple of months, monthly tax collections have largely been modest since the introduction of the tax regime in mid-2017, failing to meet the government's own targets most of the time. But such caution may not help the larger cause of the economy, which urgently needs a boost in some form. A significant cut in rates could have sent out the strong signal that the NDA government is serious about pushing through serious pro-growth reforms during its second term in office.

Another notable decision taken by the council was the one to extend the tenure of the National Anti-Profitteering Authority by two years, till November 2021. Further, the council increased the quantum of penalty that could be imposed by the authority on profitteering companies, from the current maximum of ₹25,000 to an additional 10% of the profitteered amount. Given that the government has increased the powers of the anti-profitteering body, it would not be surprising if the body becomes a permanent feature under GST. This does not send a promising message to the business community ahead of the Union Budget, scheduled to be presented in Parliament on July 5. The anti-profitteering clause assumes that government action is absolutely necessary in order to pass on the benefit of tax cuts to consumers, or else tax cuts may simply end up adding to the profits of businesses. This is wrong. While businesses naturally try to profit from lower taxes, the forces of competition make sure their profit margins are driven back down to normal. The alternative of having a bureaucracy to deal with the issue makes profit look like a bad word, and encourages rent-seeking by corrupt authorities.

Reimagining the NITI Aayog

The institution can play an important role in refreshing India's fiscal federalism



VIJAY KELKAR & ABHAY PETHE

India's Constitution-makers thought of India as a union of States with a centripetal bias, done, advisedly, to preserve the unity and integrity of a newly fledged nation. Since then, the Indian economy, polity, demography and society have undergone many changes. The new aspirational India is now firmly on a growth turnpike. It is in this context that we revisit India's fiscal federalism and propose redesigning it around its four pillars.

Typically, federations (including the Indian one) face vertical and horizontal imbalances. A vertical imbalance arises because the tax systems are designed in a manner that yields much greater tax revenues to the Central government when compared to the State or provincial governments; the Constitution mandates relatively greater responsibilities to the State governments. For example, in India, post the advent of Goods and Services Tax (GST), the share of States in the public expenditure is 60% while it is 40% for the Centre to perform their constitutionally mandated duties.

The horizontal imbalances arise because of differing levels of attainment by the States due to differential growth rates and their developmental status in terms of the state of social or infrastructure capital. Traditionally, Finance Commissions have dealt with

these imbalances in a stellar manner, and they should continue to be the first pillar of the new fiscal federal structure of India.

Understanding the imbalance

However, in India, the phenomenon of horizontal imbalance needs to be understood in a more nuanced fashion. It involves two types of imbalances. Type I is to do with the adequate provision of basic public goods and services, while the second, Type II, is due to growth accelerating infrastructure or the transformational capital deficits. The latter are known to be historically conditioned or path dependent. Removing these two imbalances clearly comprises two distinct policy goals and calls for following the Tinbergen assignment principle, which are two different policy instruments. It is here that we believe that NITI Aayog 2.0 must create a niche, assume the role of another policy instrument and become the second pillar of the new fiscal federal structure.

In the past, the Planning Commission used to give grants to the States as conditional transfers using the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula. Now with the Planning Commission disbanded, there is a vacuum especially as the NITI Aayog is primarily a think tank with no resources to dispense, which renders it toothless to undertake a "transformational" intervention. On the other hand, it is too much to expect the Union Finance Commission to do the dual job. In other words, there is an urgent need for an optimal arrangement. It is best that the Union Finance Commission be confined to focussing on the removal of the horizontal im-



balance across States of the Type I: i.e. the basic public goods imbalance. We need another institution to tackle the horizontal imbalance of the Type II; for this the NITI Aayog is the most appropriate institution. It can be argued that the Finance Ministry is the other alternative to deliver the goods in this regard but it is ill-suited to do this; its primary duty is to concern itself with the country's macro-economic stability and the proper functioning of the financial system rather than be an instrument of growth at the sub-national level.

Towards this task of cooperative federalism, NITI Aayog 2.0 should receive significant resources (say 1% to 2% of the GDP) to promote accelerated growth in States that are lagging, and overcome their historically conditioned infrastructure deficit, thus reducing the developmental imbalance. In short, the NITI Aayog should be engaged with the allocation of "transformational" capital in a formulaic manner, complete with incentive-compatible conditionalities. The variables or parameters used in this formulaic transfer will be very different from those traditionally used by the Finance Commission.

NITI Aayog 2.0 should also be

mandated to create an independent evaluation office which will monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the utilisation of such grants. In doing so, it should not commit the mistake of micro-management or conflicts with line departments. It must be also accorded a place at the high table of decision-making as it will need to objectively buy-in the cooperation of the richer States as their resources are transferred to the poorer ones.

Ushering in decentralisation

The same perspective will have to be translated below the States to the third tier of government. This is crucial because intra-State regional imbalances are likely to be of even greater import than inter-State ones. Decentralisation, in letter and spirit, has to be the third pillar of the new fiscal federal architecture. De jure and de facto seriousness has to be accorded to the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments. For this, the missing local public finance must be birthed. One of the ways for this is through the creation of an urban local body/panchayati raj institutions consolidated fund. This would mean that Articles 266/268/243H/243X of our Constitution will need to be amended to ensure that relevant monies directly flow into this consolidated fund of the third tier.

Through such constitutional amendments, the Centre and States should contribute an equal proportion of their Central GST (CGST) and State GST (SGST) collections and send the money to the consolidated fund of the third tier. For instance, one-sixth sharing of the CGST and SGST with the third tier can generate more than

1% of the GDP every year for the financing of public goods by urban-level bodies. Such an arrangement will be the third pillar of fiscal federalism. Further, the State Finance Commissions should be accorded the same status as the Finance Commission and the 3Fs of democratic decentralisation (funds, functions and functionaries) vigorously implemented. This will strengthen and deepen our foundational democratic framework.

Fine-tuning the GST

The fourth pillar – and in a sense what is central and binding – is the "flawless" or model GST. It is to the credit of our democratic maturity that the GST Bill was passed unanimously by Parliament; but in its present form, it is far from flawless. It needs further simplification and extended coverage. We need to quickly achieve the goal of a single rate GST with suitable surcharges on "sin goods," zero rating of exports and reforming the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) and the e-way bill. The GST Council should adopt transparency in its working, and create its own secretariat with independent experts also as its staff. This will enable it to undertake further reforms in an informed and transparent manner. Thus, India will be able to truly actualise the "grand bargain" and see the GST as an enduring glue holding the four pillars together by creating the new fiscal federal architecture and strengthening India's unique cooperative federalism.

Vijay Kelkar and Abhay Pethe are the Vice-President and Founder Member, respectively, of the Pune International Centre

Walking a diplomatic tightrope

For India and the U.S., managing bilateral ties is linked to balancing nationalist, cultural and economic agendas



VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Is the die already cast for U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's forthcoming visit to India? Mr. Pompeo, and his Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, are the trusted lieutenants of their leaders, U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, respectively, and largely aligned with their politics. But Mr. Pompeo and Mr. Jaishankar are also the links between the disruptive politics of their chief executives and the conventional strategic approach of professionals who work under them, and the legacy ecosystems in their respective countries. They have the tough task of managing a bilateral relationship that they both know is critical, without appearing to be undermining the nationalist, cultural and economic agendas of their leaders, which mirror each other, and hence create a situation of likes repelling each other.

A general presumption informing scholarship on international relations is that there is a non-negotiable and unchanging precept of national interest that determines the conduct of nations. Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump are two leaders who are rewriting the notion of national interest itself – for instance, secularism was considered

to be India's national interest until recently; immigration and trade were considered to be in America's national interest.

Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi are guided by nationalists that have cultural and economic components. In both, their views converge in some aspects and conflict in some others. For instance, on the cultural front, they could cooperate on global Islamism. But the growing presence of Indians in America is a source of conflict – Mr. Modi's politics involves boosting the global Hindu; but Indian Americans are cultural aliens to Mr. Trump's supporters, besides being seen to be their economic adversaries. The sustained squeeze on Indian guest workers entering the U.S., particularly through the H-1B visa programme, is a case in point.

Country-specific perspectives
What does Mr. Modi want for India from abroad? He wants investment, technology, arms, but does not want finished products (other than arms) or foreign ideas – Christianity, an open global market, the right to self-determination, human rights, Western strands of democracy coming through missionaries, international bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This has been expressed through higher tariffs on imports and restrictions on global NGOs. This list does not entirely correspond to what Mr. Trump wants to sell – he wants to sell only finished products at lower tariffs, and keep technology and capital within the borders of

America protected.

From an Indian perspective, Mr. Trump has upended American strategy in two fundamental aspects. His approach to international ties gives precedence for commerce over the strategic, and workers over corporations. Professional strategists conventionally understood the U.S.'s international ties from the perspective of its multinational corporations. These corporations wanted cheap manufacturing in China and Southeast Asia and U.S. policy enabled that pursuit. Corporations wanted cheap labour from India by outsourcing work and importing workers into the U.S. But Mr. Trump does not want American work coming to India, or Indian workers going to America; Mr. Modi wants both. Mr. Trump's disinterest in strategic matters and obsession with selling meet Mr. Modi's desire for arms acquisition, however. Given a choice, Mr. Trump would be willing to sell arms to India without regard for issues such as regional stability that preoccupy professionals in the State Department.

India's trade surplus is tiny relative to the size of the American economy and its trade volumes. Presidents before Mr. Trump al-

ways privileged the strategic components of America's global ties over trade and commercial issues. India benefitted from that approach. When commerce becomes the only lens that the U.S. sees the world through, India and China look similar – trying to extract benefits from it. Mr. Trump thinks – he has said it several times – that India and China took his predecessors for a ride. Mr. Modi thinks his predecessors were weak leaders who were taken advantage of by the world, and he also wants to show how strong he is.

When Mr. Trump sees India and China as two similar countries that are taking advantage of America with protectionism, weak intellectual property protection, and higher emissions under the climate treaty, the strategic reason for India-U.S. alignment, which is the menacing rise of China, gets weakened. In fact, the Wuhan summit, that marked a new thaw between India and China, had as its backdrop Mr. Trump's tirade against both countries on these issues.

The terror fight

One war that Mr. Trump wants to end (in Afghanistan) and another war that he appears to be itching to begin (with Iran) have major implications for India and its ties with the U.S. India wants America's continued engagement in Afghanistan and peace with Iran. Just as the U.S. was campaigning hard to have Masood Azhar designated as a global terrorist, it was also seeking Pakistan's help to persuade the Taliban for a deal in Af-

ghanistan. The point being that India-U.S. cooperation on terrorism has several components to be factored in and the Indian euphoria surrounding Mr. Trump's relentless bluster against Pakistan needs to be tempered with some realism.

The Hindutva nationalists in India have a deep suspicion of China and its intention and they consider the U.S. as an ally and a partner, but the tactical nature of that approach is not hidden or unstated. The cultural suspicion of the U.S. itself is an additional factor.

A speech by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat to a gathering of the organisation on June 16 in Nagpur is instructive: "We are progressing and we will continue to progress. When India advances, when our Hindu society advances... the implication of that is that the selfishness that dominates the world is bound to come to an end... Countries that dominate the world using their money power and military power with the facade of grandiloquence. Therefore, there are many out there who do not want India's progress. I don't take names, but you understand. Many countries in the world are forced to support us because we have now become stronger. That is for advancing their interests. If we let them take advantage of our internal differences, our new beginning after 70 years will be eclipsed before it fully blossoms and bears fruit."

Mr. Pompeo and Mr. Jaishankar have the task of navigating a bumpy ride.

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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.

Religious freedom

Articles 25 to 28 of the Constitution grant the freedom of religion but one wonders whether they are restricted to the text alone (Page 1, "BJP slams U.S. for 'bias' against the PM", June 23). With instances of communal violence and mob-lynching on the rise, we have to ask ourselves whether we have this freedom. The current government seems to slam critics instead of looking into the wrong that is being done. There have been constant statements about the need to make India a "Hindu Rashtra". Instead of slamming the criticism, the government should take corrective measures. It must remember the Prime Minister's words, "If there is no criticism, democracy will be at a loss. One should

not be saddened by criticism."

ISHAN FOUDZAR,
Bengaluru

■ Top leaders of the ruling party condemn acts of violence and hatred against the minorities in a ritualistic manner more out of compulsion than conviction. The failure to prevent hate crimes, protection to the perpetrators of these crimes and weak law enforcement are facts that cannot be refuted. Crimes against the minorities cannot be delinked from the emergence of the ruling party as the country's principal political force.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

■ The present government is known not to accept its failures and the truth with grace. The same government

asserted that demonetisation was a success though the central bank said that most of the banned denomination notes were returned. There is also data on low GDP growth and a high unemployment rate which are contrary to the government's claim that the country is on the path to development. When the government cannot accept authentic data, no one expects it to agree with the U.S.'s assessment of India's "religious freedom".

KSHIRASAGAR BALAJI RAO,
Hyderabad

■ The absence of Jawaharlal Nehru's name in the President's address to both Houses of Parliament must lead to contemplation. Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India, keeps being ignored under the

current political dispensation not because the Congress is not in power but because our history's palimpsest is sought to be overwritten by the politics of the day. But this cannot negate the reality that the Nehruvian era was ahead of its times and which is what enabled us to sustain both democracy and economic progress at fair levels. The first of the famed IITs was established ahead of our first general election of independent India – a foresight to ensure that the right to education goes hand-in-hand with the right to vote and technological and research institutes go to form the bulwark of our macro-economics. There is a lesson for any progressive nation; history is not for selective reading, and it matters less as to where we started but more how we intend hence onwards to

progress quickly and inclusively.

R. NARAYANAN,
Navi Mumbai

Afghan jolt

In Saturday's nail-biting encounter between India and Afghanistan, it was Mohammed Shami who ensured our victory.

Afghanistan put up a brave fight till the last over. The collapse of India's middle order is cause for concern

(Sport page, "Shami's hat-trick seals it for India in a sensational finish", June 23).

SRAVANA RAMACHANDRAN,
Chennai

■ On a slow track at the Hampshire Bowl, Southampton, it turned out to be a game of fine margins. While the earlier victories against bigger teams were relatively easy, the Men in Blue were thoroughly tested

before the business end of the tournament. Sometimes tough wins inject more confidence than the easy ones, and the win against Afghanistan was one such. Full marks to Afghanistan for playing tough cricket against a top team.

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

■ India won only because of some brilliant pace bowling from an ever consistent Bumrah and Shami. The shock that Afghanistan was close to giving us should make the Indian team managers ponder over the brittle middle order batting. An over-reliance on the openers and Kohli does not augur well for India's smooth progress.

DEVADAS V.,
Kannur, Kerala

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A dialogue of civilisations

China is actively promoting the idea of confluence of civilisations. Why is India so inactive?



SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI

Is the 21st century going to be marked by a fruitful conversation among civilisations or marred by a frightening conflict of civilisations? This is one of the most vigorously debated questions in our times.

In the closing decade of the last century, Samuel Huntington, a noted American political scientist, put forward the thesis of 'The Clash of Civilisations'. He claimed that the future trend of world politics would be defined by the conflict between Western and non-Western civilisations. His belief: the West's superior civilisation would triumph in this clash. Many in America and Europe lapped up his thesis, since it had appeared soon after the end of the Cold War, which saw the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the U.S. as the sole superpower.

Since then, numerous public figures around the world have countered Huntington's theory. Notable among them was Mohammad Khatami, Iran's President from 1997 to 2005. To its abiding credit, the United Nations endorsed his counter-concept and proclaimed 2001 as the "UN Year of Dialogue among Civilisations".

A new Cold War?
The U.S. has become a diminished power in the past three decades. Nevertheless, it appears that Huntington's argument still has backers in the Donald Trump administration. One of its high-ranking officials has sought to paint the current U.S.-China trade war on the canvas of a 'clash of civilisations'.

In a recent speech, State Department Policy Planning Director Kiron Skinner alerted Americans to the "long-term threat" posed by China, and said that countering this threat is "a fight with a really different civilisation". She described the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union as "a fight within the Western family". In contrast, she said, "It's the first time that we will have a great power competitor that is not Cauc-



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

sian." In addition to arrogantly proclaiming civilisational superiority, her remark was plainly racist. Many around the world are today wondering: is Washington planning a new Cold War? Will the world have to pay a heavy price once again?

It is against this backdrop that we should see the significance of a new initiative by Chinese President Xi Jinping. In recent years, no leader has been championing the need for inter-civilisational dialogue for world peace and common prosperity more forcefully and consistently than Mr. Xi. He is also the only contemporary global leader proposing such dialogue as a path to reach a much loftier goal, of "building a community of common future for mankind", which he expounded at the UN's 70th anniversary summit in 2015.

In the debate on whether there will be a conflict or confluence of civilisations, three questions become pertinent. Are all civilisations equal? Can dialogue really help in addressing the big challenges before the world today? And how should nations learn from one another? Mr. Xi has answered these squarely.

In his speech at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 2014, Mr. Xi had said: "All civilisations are equal, and such equality has made exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations possible. All human civilisations are equal in terms of value. They all have their respective strengths and shortcomings. There is no perfect civilisation in the world. Nor is there a civilisation that is devoid of any merit. No one civilisation can be judged superior to another."

Speaking at the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in Oc-

tober 2017, he highlighted the relevance of this debate to the newest, and one of the most pressing, problems facing the entire planetary population: climate change. He said the world needs to make a transition from "industrial civilisation" to "ecological civilisation", and learn to create "harmony between man and nature", a noble teaching embedded in all the world's civilisations, cultures and religions.

Dialogue of civilisations

He continued his advocacy by hosting a major 'Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilisations' in Beijing last month, in which I participated as a non-governmental delegate. Over 2,000 participants representing the 48 Asian countries, and also many distinguished personalities from other continents, attended the event. In his keynote, Mr. Xi stressed the importance of Asia, a continental "cradle of civilisations" that "covers a third of the earth's land mass and has two-thirds of the world's population". Explaining the purpose of the conference, he said, "The world today is moving toward greater multipolarity, economic globalisation and cultural diversity, and is becoming increasingly information-oriented. All this points to promising prospects for the future. Meanwhile, instability and uncertainties are mounting and the global challenges faced by humanity are becoming ever more daunting, calling for joint responses from countries around the world." His prescription: "to meet our common challenges and create a better future for all, we look to culture and civilisation to play their role, which is as important as the role played by

economy, science and technology."

In an indirect reference to the protectionist and supremacist stance being adopted by the U.S., Mr. Xi cautioned: "Civilisations don't have to clash with each other; what is needed are eyes to see the beauty in all civilisations... If countries choose to close their doors and hide behind them, human civilisations would be cut off from each other and lose all vitality. We Asian people hope that all countries will reject self-exclusion, embrace integration, uphold openness and promote policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity."

History is witness to how civilisations decline and die when they become exclusivist. Mr. Xi put it well: "We need to stay open and inclusive and draw on each other's strengths. All living organisms in the human body must renew themselves through metabolism; otherwise, life would come to an end. The same is true for civilisations. Long-term self-isolation will cause a civilisation to decline, while exchanges and mutual learning will sustain its development."

Why was India absent?

As an Indian, I was happy when Mr. Xi in his speech made a special reference to India's contribution to the richness of Asian civilisations by mentioning the Rigveda, Ganga and Indus rivers, and, above all, the priceless gift of Buddhism. However, again as an Indian, I was assailed by a disturbing thought: when China is taking the lead in spiritedly championing inter-civilisational dialogue within Asia and around the world, why is India, inheritor to one of the richest and oldest civilisations, so inactive at the governmental level? Also, why didn't India send an official delegation to the conference?

An official delegate could have presented a picture of India-China civilisational solidarity, which is best described by this poem by Rabindranath Tagore, who is as highly respected in China as in our own country: "Once I went to the land of China, / Those whom I had not met/ Put the mark of friendship on my forehead/ Calling me their own".

Sudheendra Kulkarni, an aide to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, is founder of Forum for a New South Asia – Powered by India-China-Pakistan Cooperation'

Confronting news avoidance

Initiatives such as slow news, seen as effective antidotes to breaking news, offer hope at a time of information overload



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

One is rarely reminded of literature when reading an exhaustive domain survey. The 2019 Reuters Institute Digital News Report, which covered 38 markets globally across six continents, documented an increasing phenomenon – news avoidance. It pointed out that improved technology increases access to news but also makes it easier to avoid it.

Reading this section of the survey, I was reminded of Toni Morrison's insightful observation about "our own rapidly disintegrating sense of belonging". On receipt of the 2008 PEN/Borders Literary Service Award, the Nobel laureate said: "Certain kinds of trauma visited on people are so deep, so cruel that unlike money, unlike vengeance, even unlike justice and rights, or the goodwill of others, only writers can translate such trauma and turn sorrow into meaning, sharpening the moral imagination. A writer's life and work are not a gift to mankind; they are its necessity." What she said about writing in general applies to journalism too.

There are multiple reasons for news avoidance. According to the Reuters Institute study, polarisation, misinformation, and low trust may not be the only issues facing the news industry. In its data this year, it found that almost a third (32%) of its respondents said that they actively avoid news – three percentage points more than in 2017. This, according to the study, may be because the world has become a more depressing place or because media coverage tends to be relentlessly negative – or a mix of the two. News avoidance figure reached a staggering 11% even in Japan where reading the news is often seen as a duty.

Uneven fallout

Ruth Palmer and Benjamin Toff, in their prediction for journalism in 2019 for the Nieman Journalism Lab at Harvard University, pointed out that for a growing number of people, navigating the stresses of daily life involves opting out of following the news. Their biggest concern was that the news avoidance will most probably play out unevenly, and hence it may increase existing inequalities. For instance, they rightly pointed out that a gender gap in news avoidance is cause for alarm because, "if women, and lower-income women in particular, are less informed about political affairs than other

groups, they may be poorly positioned to advocate for themselves politically." It is important here to recollect the response of a woman in 24-35 age group in the U.K.: "News is a major negative and has a huge impact on everyone who watches it. There is never any positive or happy news."

Mr. Toff argued that for news avoiders, the high costs of consuming news in terms of time or emotional resources are not offset by the perceived benefits because the value of political information as social currency may be low. A study by the Pew Research revealed that seven out of 10 Americans have news fatigue. In this study, it was clear that feeling overwhelmed by the news is more common among those who follow the news less closely than among those who are avid consumers. Hence, journalists may not be the best judges to understand the growing distance between citizens and news.



Joshua Benton, director of the Nieman Journalism Lab, collated some of the comments for a short article on news avoidance by Isabelle Roughgarden, senior editor-at-large at LinkedIn, to understand the range of factors that has contributed to news fatigue. He found out that by focussing too much on trust factor and the polarising voices on Twitter, news managers are missing the larger group that just doesn't like the meal news media have been serving: "The ones who find the news we produce disempowering, stress-inducing, and, frankly, not worth the time and effort."

The increased access, the unending news cycle where news is breaking every second, and the proliferation of platforms that offer news have led to a form of news overload. In this context, initiatives such as slow news, seen as antidotes to the debilitating effect of breaking news, offer hope. The proponents of this model are looking to respond with more meaningful, inclusive, and less relentlessly negative coverage – often developed in closer collaboration with audiences. The Reuters study revealed that explanatory journalism is resonating well with the younger readers. To paraphrase Toni Morrison, we need a language that helps restore a sense of belonging.

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SINGLE FILE

Creating sanctuaries of hope for migrant workers

Promises like 'Housing for All by 2022' fail to address the needs of migrants

MADHURika SANKAR



There is a wilderness within our borders. It's so vast that it covers an entire nation, with around 100 million inhabitants, one-fifth of our labour force. The total earnings of these seasonal wanderers, India's internal migrant workers, are around \$170 billion per annum, i.e. around 6% of India's GDP. Sadly, this wilderness, comprising the residents hidden away in industrial complexes, in soot-ridden kitchens of hotels and in dusty construction sites, is invisible to the naked eye.

Shambhu Ghatak, from the Inclusive Media for Change Project, says the migrant population in India is riddled with the issues of inadequate housing; low-paid, insecure or hazardous work; extreme vulnerability of women and children to trafficking and sex exploitation; exclusion from state services such as health and education; and discrimination based on ethnicity. Furthermore, there are mental health issues, not to mention the darkness of debt-ridden, bonded labour. But, herein lies an irony: a treasure-trove of close to \$3 billion, levied as cess on builders under two migrant workers acts, lies grossly underutilised. Access to the money eludes migrant workers as they need to provide proof of address, which is difficult due to the fluidity of their lives. Further, ration cards, Voter IDs and Aadhaar cards are also not easy to obtain.

Trade unions are the best way for the workers to benefit from government welfare schemes but employers often prefer hiring unregistered migrants over their registered counterparts, further distancing the migrants' access. There is also the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979), enacted to prevent migrant workers from being exploited, but it is rarely invoked and the penalty is minimal.

However, there are rays of hope, stemming from civil society organisations like the Aajeevika Bureau, Hunnarshala Foundation and Ci3; some Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives; forward-thinking government schemes like that for affordable, migrant housing in Bhuj; and from these resolute workers themselves (the women toilet-masons of Assam are a story of positive irony, for a change).

We need something more than the promise of 'Housing for All by 2022', which fails to address the needs of accommodation for such workers. There need to be multi-level reforms, with an emphasis on sustainable, inclusive construction practices; affordable temporary housing schemes; and inclusive urbanisation at the top. These should be peppered with legally binding implementation protocols. We need to accommodate the wilderness within, so as to help morph this open cage, in which migrant workers live, into a sanctuary of inclusive hope.

The writer is based in Chennai



DATA POINT

Mortality malady

The first three columns show IMR in 2017 and the reduction of IMR across two time periods. For instance, Odisha's 2017 IMR is relatively high compared to others and the change across the two periods has remained similar.

The next three columns show the urban-rural gap across time spans. States like Assam and Madhya Pradesh have a higher divide.

Shades of red indicate lower levels of improvement, while green shades indicate progress.

Union territories were not considered. Some States did not have sufficient data.

* Number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births

Source: Sample Registration System

In 1997, out of every 1,000 live births in India, 71 infants died before turning one. In 1997-2008, the figure reduced to 53 (-18), and between 2008 and 2017, it dropped to 33 (-20). The rate of reduction in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)* has not improved much and the rural-urban gap too remains high across these two time periods in some States. By Siddarth Rao T and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

State	IMR 2017	IMR '97 - IMR '08	IMR '08 - IMR '17	IMR urban-rural ('97)	IMR urban-rural ('08)	IMR urban-rural ('17)
Goa	9	-9	-1	-	-	-
Kerala	10	0	-2	4	-2	1
Manipur	12	-16	-2	7	-8	-4
Sikkim	12	-18	-21	-10	-16	-4
Mizoram	15	18	-22	-7	-21	-13
Delhi	16	0	-19	-	-	-
T.N.	16	-22	-15	-18	-6	-5
Maharashtra	19	-14	-14	-25	-17	-9
Punjab	21	-10	-20	-16	-12	-3
Himachal	22	-19	-22	-26	-18	-8
W.B.	24	-20	-11	-15	-8	-2
Karnataka	25	-8	-20	-39	-17	-5
Tripura	29	-17	-5	-14	-10	4
Gujarat	30	-12	-20	-23	-23	-14
Haryana	30	-14	-24	-11	-15	-7
A.P.	32	-11	-20	-33	-22	-13
Bihar	35	-15	-21	-20	-15	-5
Rajasthan	38	-22	-25	-28	-31	-14
Meghalaya	39	4	-19	-4	-17	-16
Odisha	41	-27	-28	-35	-22	-10
U.P.	41	-18	-26	-23	-21	-11
Arunachal	42	-15	10	-32	-15	-10
Assam	44	-12	-20	-42	-27	-25
M.P.	47	-24	-23	-42	-27	-19
India	33	-18	-20	-32	-22	-14

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 24, 1969

RBI help sought to serve State Bank clients

The assistance of the Reserve Bank of India has been sought for the provision of funds to the hardpressed clients of the State Bank of India, badly hit by the indefinite strike by the bank's supervisory staff, it is learnt. The Reserve Bank is understood to be considering the possibility of providing funds to the Government departments, public sector corporations and the private sector firms which are in need of cash. Telegrams are reported to be pouring in from the clients of the State Bank all over the country desperately seeking such assistance from the Reserve Bank. There is yet no indication of the Centre intervening in the dispute between the management and the striking staff of the State Bank of India. It is learnt that the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, is very firm about not intervening in the dispute unless the supervisory staff called off the strike.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 24, 1919

Relief Scheme. Bombay Corporation's Proposal.

Some time back the Bombay Municipal Corporation instructed its medical relief committee to prepare a scheme for the future working of volunteers and voluntary organisations in conjunction with the health department on occasions of outbreaks of epidemic in the city. The following is the outline of the scheme proposed after a prolonged and careful deliberation. The city should be divided into 50 units, each unit consisting of about 20,000 population. Each unit should have a committee consisting of a chairman and not more than two members. Each committee should have an organisation consisting of a doctor, two nurses and not less than 10 volunteers. As far as possible one of the members of the committee should be a member of the Corporation. The committee should be organised with

FROM PAGE ONE

Monsoon rainfall deficit is at 38%, says IMD

Out of 36 meteorological divisions, only six have received normal rainfall or more. In terms of districts, 47% face large deficiencies (at least 60% below normal) or no rainfall at all. In total, almost 80% of districts face a rainfall deficit of at least 20% below normal. The Vindhya region, with an 89% monsoon deficit, is worst affected. Regions like Marathwada and Madhya Maharashtra are also facing drought-like situations, especially as they faced deficits in pre-monsoon rainfall as well.

According to the Central Water Commission (CWC), 80% of the country's 91 major reservoirs have below-normal storage. In fact, 11 reservoirs have no water at all.

Summer or kharif sowing is lagging behind as a result of the tardy monsoon, with just over half of the area usually sown with foodgrain crops covered so far. Out of almost 32 lakh hectares that have usually been sown by foodgrains by this time, farmers have only planted 17 lakh hectares so far. Since this is early in the season,

the gap is expected to close if the monsoon picks up steam.

The biggest delays are in pulses and oilseeds, which are dryland crops completely dependent on monsoon rains. Rice, which is usually sown in irrigated land, is only slightly slower than usual. Sugarcane, a water-guzzling cash crop, has actually been sown on a larger amount of land than usual.

The AIKSCC has also demanded that the Central norms for crop loss compensation (input subsidy) must be revised to at least ₹10,000 per acre for un-irrigated land and proportionately higher amounts for irrigated land and horticultural crops.

Crop insurance must be paid in full and in a timely manner, while the RBI must ensure that farmers are not denied credit due to impending drought, it said. The farmers' groups called on the government to extend the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) from 100 to 150 days of work in drought-affected areas.

Project to beautify Taj Mahal stalled

A discussion on the scheme first began at the Union Environment Ministry on October 11 last year. A committee led by Satish Wate, former Director of the CSIR-National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, ruled that the project ought to be evaluated by the Environment Appraisal Committee (River Valley and Hydro Electric Projects). This committee, on February 27, held that the project did not involve hydropower generation or irrigation and therefore was better suited for another Environment Ministry committee – the one on infrastructure projects – and known as the EAC (Infrastructure Projects-2).

On May 27, as minutes of

Non-Gandhi can be Cong. chief: Aiyar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Amid uncertainty over Rahul Gandhi continuing as Congress president, senior leader Mani Shankar Aiyar said on Sunday that a 'non-Gandhi' can be party chief, but the Gandhi family must remain active within the organisation.

The BJP's objective is to have a "Gandhi-mukt Congress" so as to have a "Congress-mukt Bharat", he said.

It would be best if Mr. Gandhi remains party chief, but at the same time, his own wishes must be respected, the former Union Minister said.

However, the Congress is yet to undertake any organi-

RSS to filter BJP's recruitment in West Bengal

Induction of leaders will be conducted only after a screening at the party's Mandal level

SUVIJIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA

After a controversial Trinamool MLA in Birbhum district joined it, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has revised its recruitment policy in West Bengal on advice from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a senior party leader told *The Hindu*. Now any induction, except of veteran leaders, will be conducted only after a screening at the BJP Mandal level. Besides BJP workers, the Mandals usually have RSS activists as well.

The Mandals will carry out the initial screening and send their recommendation



Shock recruitment: The induction of former MLA Manirul Islam in Birbhum district shocked RSS and BJP old-timers. •PTI

to the BJP's district committees. Till now, cadre of other parties used to approach the BJP's top leaders and directly join the party. Now, they will be inducted only after clearance by the respective Mandals. The decision was

taken at the highest level and induction will now be "reasonably restricted", the senior BJP leader said. However, there is no plan to halt the induction or membership drive.

The induction of Manirul

Islam, a history-sheeter in the Birbhum district, shook up the RSS and BJP's old-timers in Bengal. A large number of ordinary people and Trinamool cadre joined the BJP to escape Mr. Islam's wrath. He secured admission after his negotiation with BJP leader Mukul Roy.

Complaint to Shah
The BJP's Birbhum district committee categorically said that it was "not happy" with the decision to induct Mr. Islam. The complaint was conveyed by the RSS to Kailash Vijayvargiya, the party's West Bengal in-charge, and to party president Amit

Shah. Following the development, the BJP Mandals are now empowered to put all the names together and do a "screening" of the new entrants.

Recently, in Howrah district, the BJP inducted about 700 new members, but also dropped about 100 potential members after screening them. Over the past one month, pressure was internally mounted on the BJP, following Mr. Islam's induction. *Swastika*, the RSS mouthpiece in Bengal, said in an article in its June 10 issue that to "dislodge the Trinamool, outsiders with no credibility are inducted."

'Offer' of talks comes amid bloodshed in Valley

A record number of 88 locals were killed this year, and highly trained militants are being pushed into Kashmir

PEERZADA ASHIQ
VIJAYITA SINGH
SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI

the Lok Sabha election results were announced on May 23.

The visit followed J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik's statement on Saturday that the Hurriyat leaders were ready for talks and a change of guard in the Home Ministry, where BJP president Amit Shah has assumed office as Home Minister.

Mr. Sharma was appointed in 2017 to carry forward the dialogue with all stakeholders, but his role had been undermined in the past by parallel action initiated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Enforcement Directorate. Several separatists, including Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, are being investigated by the agency for funding terror groups.

"Yes, this was the first time after the general elections that I went to Srinagar. I would not like to disclose anything about the meetings," Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu*.

Of late, terrorists in Kashmir have resorted to new tactics. Buoyed by back-to-back



Peace call: Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq made the offer of talks from the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar. •NISSAR AHMED

successful operations against local militants in the past six weeks without any major casualty, Major Ketan Sharma, 32, was confident of wrapping up within hours a pre-dawn operation started around 4 a.m. against a hiding militant at Badoora village in Anantnag on June 17.

"As soldiers raised their heads to fire at his position, the militant would fire back with precision. He succeeded in hitting four jawans. The fact that he hit the Major in the face shows his level of training. He was a freshly infiltrated militant [from Pakistan]. There is a bid to push

highly trained militants from across from the border," a senior police officer told *The Hindu*.

As the operation drew to a close at Achabal, three soldiers were injured, while Major Sharma lost his life.

Changing tack

Top police officers of the counter-insurgency cell and the special operations group (SOG) said the surprise element thrown up by the militants by changing tack and technology resulted in higher casualties this year.

"First, the suicide car blast on a CRPF convoy on February 14 inflicted the highest casualties, when 40 jawans died. In June, we saw a fidayeen militant coming close to a stationed CRPF mobile bunker at Anantnag's busy market, killing five jawans and a police officer. In both these incidents, there was surprise element," a south Kashmir-based police officer said.

The change in tack and technology by terrorists was because the surprise, short pre-dawn operations em-

ployed by the security forces were yielding results, with 113 militants killed this year, the police officer said.

Of the 113, 25 were foreigners.

"Around 45% of them belonged to the Jaish-e-Mohammed. We stepped up operations against the group and its leadership after the February 14 attack and killed over 40 of them in south Kashmir," another counter-insurgency cell officer said.

Another new tactic employed by the militants is to make IEDs locally and stage attacks away from the now-secured Srinagar-Jammu highway, which was, previously, the main focus of the militants.

"The June 17 IED attack, where it was fitted to a Maruti car, took place on an interior road near Aarial in Pulwama. Over 10 jawans were injured and two were left dead," the police officer said.

As the security forces take on the terrorists, it remains to be seen what happens with the reported offer of talks and the follow-up on Mr. Sharma's visit.

Kishan Reddy gets bulk of Home work

Shah trusts him with crucial divisions

VIJAYITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

One of the first things G. Kishan Reddy arranged when he checked into his office at the iconic North Block building on Raisina Hills was a miniature statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister of Independent India. Mr. Reddy said he owed to Patel the liberation of the then princely state of Hyderabad on September 17, 1948 from the Nizam's rule. The statue would be an ode to the illustrious leader, he said.

A first-time MP from Secunderabad in Telangana, Mr. Reddy was hand-picked by Home Minister Amit Shah to assist him in the functioning of the high-profile Ministry as a Minister of State. Like Mr. Reddy, who had been the State president of the BJP in Telangana till 2016, the other Minister of State Nityanand Rai held the post of State president of Bihar.

But an examination of the division of work between the two junior Ministers, done by Mr. Shah last week, shows that the Secunderabad MP got the lion's share of the pie.

High-profile job

This is the first time the functioning of important divisions such as Jammu and Kashmir, Left-wing extremism, northeast region, Union Territory, women safety, internal security, counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation, cyber-information Security and judicial

While former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda called a meeting of his supporters in Delhi on June 9, Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee chief Ashok Tanwar met his supporters in Gurgaon on June 12.

In Jharkhand, party workers turned rebellious during

With 23 divisions, the Home Ministry is the largest among all the Ministries. Many joint secretaries do not even have an office space in North Block and operate from extended offices at the National Stadium at India Gate.

The work division was made almost 20 days after Mr. Shah took charge on June 1. It was also imperative as Parliament is in session and Ministers would have to prepare for the Question Hour session in both the Houses.

Mr. Reddy, a three-time MLA, lost the Amberpet Assembly seat to the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in December 2018. He bounced back and won the Secunderabad Lok Sabha seat. The BJP won four seats in Telangana, the party's best performance in the southern State.

On June 20, Mr. Reddy accompanied the four Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MPs in the Rajya Sabha, who joined the BJP, to Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu's office where they tendered their resignation.

He fiercely opposed the Telangana government's proposal for a 12% quota for Muslims in educational institutes and government jobs. In the past, he campaigned against illegal slaughterhouses in the State alleging that a "beef mafia" operated in Hyderabad.

After he was appointed, Mr. Reddy told a daily on June 1 that "Hyderabad had become a safe zone for terrorists." Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi of the AIMIM flayed him for his "irresponsible and disgraceful" remarks.

PIL plea in SC on senior advocates

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A petition filed in the Supreme Court has complained of inconsistencies in the guidelines framed by various High Courts for the designation of advocates as senior advocates.

Recently, in Howrah district, the BJP inducted about 700 new members, but also dropped about 100 potential members after screening them. Over the past one month, pressure was internally mounted on the BJP, following Mr. Islam's induction. *Swastika*, the RSS mouthpiece in Bengal, said in an article in its June 10 issue that to "dislodge the Trinamool, outsiders with no credibility are inducted."

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IN BRIEF



PM pays tribute to Syama Prasad Mookerjee

NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee's passion for a united and strong India continued to inspire people. In a tweet to mark Mookerjee's 66th death anniversary, the Prime Minister said he was a devout patriot and proud nationalist. PTI

Resolve Amethi residents' problems in a week: Irani

AMETHI
Union Minister Smriti Irani on Sunday asked Amethi's administration officials to ensure that any problem faced by a person in her constituency was resolved in a week. "You all should not only focus on completing paper work but the real benefits of welfare schemes should reach people. The people's problems should be redressed in one week," said Ms. Irani. "If someone is coming to you with a problem, it means all is not well," she told officials. PTI

Insolvency proceedings opened against Jet

NEW DELHI
Insolvency proceedings have been opened against Jet Airways, which stopped flying on April 17. The company became the first domestic airline to go bankrupt after the Mumbai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal on June 20 admitted an insolvency petition filed by SBI, on behalf of 26 lenders. Jet owes more than ₹8,000 crore to banks, and thousands of crores more in arrears to vendors, lessors and employees.

India rejects Pakistan's charge of politicising FATF

'Allegation meant to deflect attention'

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

ponding to India's statement that time was running out for Islamabad to show action "Against Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terror (AML/CFT)" by groups that pose a transnational risk.

Calling Pakistan's statement on politicisation a "false ploy" meant to "deflect attention and evade scrutiny of [Pakistan's] poor compliance of global standards on AML/CFT and hoodwink the global community", the government sources pointed to Pakistan's own attempts at trying to influence the outcome of the FATF process, which has placed the neighbour on a "greylist" of countries of concern. In June 2018, the FATF decided unanimously to put Pakistan on the grey-

list, and hand it a 27-point action plan meant to be implemented within 18 months (by September 2019). If it fails to fulfil its FATF commitments, it could face the "next steps" or being moved to the "blacklist", the FATF has warned.

The sources say that instead of moving seriously on the checklist, including shutting down support for groups such as the Lashkar-



A SENIOR INDIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

pointed to Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi's visits to various capitals, and telephone calls to other FATF member governments asking for help in staying off pressure at the global watchdog body's plenary session.

At the Orlando plenary, apart from China, Turkey and Malaysia, three countries Prime Minister Imran Khan has visited in the past few months, countries such as Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council members pitched for more time for Pakistan to comply with the action plan. However, the U.S., Japan and Israel joined India in ensuring a firm line was taken in the final outcome document.

Another potential worry for India is that China's ap-

ee placed on the "blacklist", alongside Iran and North Korea for its failure to show "credible, verifiable, irreversible and sustainable measures" against terror groups operating within its territory.

Pakistan has often cried foul over India's statements, and even wrote to the FATF earlier this year asking for India to be taken off the committee overseeing the review after former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said Pakistan should be downgraded by the FATF.

A blacklist entry for Pakistan will mean it could lose potential loans and foreign investment, be shunned by the IMF, the World Bank, the ADB and the EU and also suffer a downgrade by credit rating agencies such as Moody's, S&P and Fitch.

A dip for rains



For divine intervention: Priests sitting in water-filled drums recite hymns to appease the rain gods at Sri Sankara Matham in Matunga, Mumbai, on Sunday. Maharashtra and other parts of the country are reeling under a severe drought. ■ PRASHANT NAKWANI

India searched for Pak. submarine

+ Post-Pulwama, Navy deployed a major part of its fleet close to Pakistani waters

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
NEW DELHI

Soon after the Pulwama terror attack, India pulled out its Navy from an exercise and deployed a major part of its fleet, including nuclear and conventional submarines, close to Pakistani territorial waters. During the aggressive deployment of the naval assets by the Indian side, the Pakistanis were getting an impression that New Delhi might use its maritime force to avenge the killing of 40 CRPF personnel in a suicide bombing by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM).

India was continuously keeping an eye on the movement of the Pakistani military but after the Indian Air Force hit the Jaish terrorist factory in Balakot, one of the



The trigger: The Pulwama bomb attack triggered hostilities between India and Pakistan. ■ REUTERS

most advanced Pakistani Agosta-class submarines – PNS Saad – vanished from the Pakistani waters, a senior government source said.

Having accounted for all other surface warships and all the submarines, the vanishing act done by the PNS Saad fitted with air-indepen-

dent propulsion (a technology which allows the submarines to stay for a longer period under water than normal submarines) swung the entire Indian Navy into action.

"The location near Karachi from where the PNS Saad vanished, it could reach the Gujarat coast in

three days and the headquarters of the western fleet in Mumbai within five days and was seen as a major threat to the security of the country," the sources said.

The anti-submarine warfare specialist warships and aircraft were positioned to help in the hunt for the missing Pakistani submarine.

"In all the areas where it could have gone in the given time frame, extensive searches were carried out by the Indian Navy," the sources said. After 21 days of an extensive search, the Indian Navy located the PNS Saad on the western side of Pakistan. It was sent there for hiding, to ensure a covert capability in case of extension of hostilities in the aftermath of the Balakot air strikes.

Cabinet nod for wage code Bill likely

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Looking to bring in a fresh wave of labour reforms, the Labour Ministry is likely to seek Cabinet approval for the Code on Wages Bill next week as it pushes for its passage in the ongoing Parliament session, a source said.

The Bill lapsed after the 16th Lok Sabha was dissolved last month. Now the Ministry would have to seek the Cabinet's nod for introducing it in either House of Parliament.

"The Cabinet can approve the wage code Bill next month. The Labour Ministry wants to push the draft law for passage in the current Parliament session," the source said.

The wage code Bill is one of four codes envisaged by the government which would subsume 44 labour laws with certain amendments. The four codes will deal with wages, social security, industrial safety and welfare, and industrial relations.

Plea in SC seeks protection for non-Nagas in Dimapur

Imposition of ILP will create a country within a country'



**SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI**
A petition filed before the Supreme Court has sought a direction to the Centre and the Nagaland government to take appropriate steps for the protection of life and liberty, properties and other fundamental rights of non-Nagas living in the commercial hub of Dimapur following the imposition of the Inner Line Permit (ILP).

BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, in a public interest litigation (PIL) petition, has challenged certain sections of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 which gives unbridled power to a State to prescribe ILP.

Section 2 of the Regulation empowers a State government to prescribe 'Inner Line' to prohibit citizens of India or any class of such citizens going beyond the prescribed line without a pass.

Mr. Upadhyay said the colonial-era regulation was

tenants would be adversely affected," he said.

The plea said that "Gujaratis, Rajasthani, Biharis, Jharkhandis, Bengalis, Gorkhas, Bodos, Dimasas, Karbis, Garos, etc. have been regarded as outsiders by the government of Nagaland, which is a racial discrimination."

"Many traders/businessmen have to close down their business and leave Dimapur, a cosmopolitan town. Dimapur cannot be converted exclusively for hills tribes on racial ground when it was never an integral part of the Naga hills," the petition said.

The petition contended that the imposition of the ILP would "create a country within a country ... and create a monopoly of trade, commerce, business only for new settlers who have come down to Dimapur from the Naga Hills and bar perpetual residency and right to free moment to others".

NTECL
NTPC TAMILNADU ENERGY COMPANY LIMITED
(A JV of NTPC Ltd. & TANGEDCO)
Vallur, Chennai

Date: 24.06.2019

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
1. Applications are invited from manufacturers of fly ash or clay fly ash bricks / blocks interested for lifting the Dry Fly Ash from NTECL Silos for one year starting from 16.10.2019.
2. Interested ash brick manufacturers who are holding allotments now/ have responded to earlier EOI also need to apply.
3. The application format and procedure are available in NTECL website: www.ntpcenergyjv.com
4. The completed application with all enclosures shall reach NTECL on or before 31st of July 2019.

ASH UTILISATION DEPARTMENT
NTECL VALLUR

प्रतिभूति मुद्रणालय/SECURITY PRINTING PRESS
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आ एक्युटी स्प्रिंटिंग & मिंटिंग कोर्पोरेशन ऑफ इंडिया लिमिटेड/
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No. SPPh/A/H/Adv/2019/1512 Date: 24-06-2019

निविदा आवंगान्धी सूचना / Notice Inviting Tender (NIT)

मुहरब निविदा निम्न लिखित मात्र के आधार पर किए जाएँ हैं:
Sealed tenders are invited from eligible and qualified tenderers for supply of following:

क्र.सं. SI. No.	मात्र / सेवाएँ का संक्षिप्त विवरण Brief Description of Goods / Services	निविदा सं. Tender No.	मात्रा Quantity	निविदा तारीख और बंद करने का समय Closing Date and Time for Receipt of Tenders
1	Various Repair and renovation works	6000013144	1 job	26-07-2019
2	Corrugated Boxes in sizes	6000013164	42,000 Nos.	At 10:45 AM (IST)
3	Snow White Maplitho Paper	6000013195	15,000 Kgs	
4	AC's with Accessories	6000013043	1 Lot	30-07-2019
5	Graphic Arts Process Film Roll 26*60	6000013227	30 Nos.	At 10:45 AM (IST)
6	Supply of Collapsible Gate Lift G+3	6000013037	1 No.	
7	Color Viewing Station	6000013097	1 No.	02-08-2019
8	Construction of Lift enclosure	6000013081	1 No.	At 10:45 AM (IST)
9	Various Renovation of Shed Works at SPPh	6000013114	1 Job	
10	DG Sets & Replacement of LT Switchgears	6000013255	1 Job	

आप विवरण हैं, कृपया हमारा वेबसाइट : <http://spmcilhyderabad.spmcil.com> देखें और कोई संशोधन/शाहीद-ए-वेबसाइट पर एक अप्रैवित विवरण जाओ।
For further details, please visit our website at <http://spmcilhyderabad.spmcil.com> & any amendment / corrigendum will be published on website only.

HSR / Sd/- Manager (TO) & CPSO (कृत महाराष्ट्रधक्क/ for General Manager)

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For further details, please visit [www.tsspdcl.southerntelangana.gov.in](http://tsspdcl.southerntelangana.gov.in) and www.tsspdcl.org
ID: SPDCLCORP01030 Sd/- (M. BALARAJU) Chief General Manager (P&MM)

Date: 24/06/2019, Date: 24/06/2019

IIIT Sri City invites tenders in the following areas :

1) Furniture suppliers 2) Mess Vendors

3) Transport agencies 4) Security agencies

For tender documents and other details, please visit www.iiits.ac.in

Registrar I/c



Indian Institute of Information Technology
Sri City, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh
No.IIT/S/PROC/2019/06/01, Date: 24/06/2019

IIIT Sri City invites tenders in the following areas :

1) Furniture suppliers 2) Mess Vendors

3) Transport agencies 4) Security agencies

For tender documents and other details, please visit www.iiits.ac.in

Registrar I/c

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE
Bangalore - 560012. Phone: 2293 2202 / 2203,

No. IISc/Tender 2/2019-20 17th June 2019

Short Term e-TENDER NOTIFICATION

Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore invites bids through e-procurement platform www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in from the eligible bidders for the work of "Construction of Rock Storage and Thin Section Laboratory Space at Centre for Earth Sciences, IISc, Bangalore". Last date of bid submission online (Technical and Financial Bid) is on 08/07/2019 at 15.00 hrs. Opening of Technical Bid is on 09/07/2019 at 16.15 hrs. Any other details can be obtained from the office of the Centre for Campus Management & Development, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore on all working days or e-mail : office.ccmd@iisc.ac.in
Sd/-, REGISTRAR



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2nd Floor, 33/11K Indoor Substation Building, Museum Road, Vijayawada - 520002.

Not looking for war with Iran: Trump

Tehran warns conflict in the Gulf could spread uncontrollably and threaten the lives of U.S. troops

REUTERS
DUBAI/WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday he was not seeking war with Tehran after a senior Iranian military commander warned any conflict in the Gulf region could spread uncontrollably and threaten the lives of U.S. troops.

Tensions remain high between longtime foes Iran and the United States after Mr. Trump said on Friday that he called off a military strike to retaliate for Iran's downing of an unmanned U.S. drone out of concern it would have been a disproportionate response.

"I'm not looking for war," Mr. Trump said on NBC's *Meet the Press* programme.

'Ready for deal'

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo repeated to reporters on Sunday that Washington was prepared to negotiate with Tehran with no preconditions.

"They know precisely where to find us," said Mr. Pompeo, who is traveling to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to "ensure



Up in arms: Activists protesting against the Iranian regime outside the White House in Washington. ■ AP

we're strategically aligned" with those countries, which are regional rivals of Iran.

Mr. Trump has said he will impose further sanctions on Iran beginning on Monday, but has also indicated that he would be prepared to seek a deal to bolster its flagging economy, an apparent move to defuse tensions. "I think they want to negotiate. And I think they want to make a deal. And my deal is nuclear. Look, they're not going to have a nuclear weapon," he added.

Iran played down the im-

pact of any new U.S. sanctions. They were "just propaganda, as all sanctions... have been imposed and there are no more sanctions left," state-run news agency IRIB quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying.

Last year Mr. Trump withdrew the United States from a 2015 accord between Iran and world powers that curbed Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for easing sanctions. Relations in the region have worsened significantly since then.

Diplomatic efforts are under way to ease tensions between the two nations. Andrew Murison, Britain's Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, said on Sunday that he had "open, frank and constructive" talks with Iranian government representatives in Tehran.

"I reiterated the U.K.'s assessment that Iran almost certainly bears responsibility for recent attacks on tankers in the Gulf of Oman," and called for such activity to stop, Mr. Murison said.

60-day deadline

A senior advisor to Iran's top authority Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tehran may scale back compliance with its nuclear deal soon unless European countries shield it from U.S. sanctions through a trade mechanism.

"If Europeans don't take measures within the 60-day deadline, we will take new steps," the semi-official ISNA news agency quoted the official, Kamal Kharazi, as saying. Tehran announced a deadline of 60 days in May.

Iran has said it would respond firmly to any threat

and warned on Sunday the risks of a military confrontation. "If a conflict breaks out in the region, no country would be able to manage its scope and timing," Major General Gholaamali Rashid said, according to the semi-official Fars news agency. "The American government must act responsibly to protect the lives of American troops by avoiding misconduct in the region."

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani accused the Americans of stoking tensions in the Gulf through what Iran has called the violation of its airspace by the U.S. military drone, Fars reported.

Washington said the aircraft was targeted in international air space in "an unprovoked attack".

A hawk in Trump's administration, national security adviser John Bolton, sought to maintain military pressure on Iran. "Neither Iran nor any other hostile actor should mistake U.S. prudence and discretion for weakness. No one has granted them a hunting license in the Middle East," Mr. Bolton said during a visit to Israel.

Sirisena calls for repealing law clipping presidential powers

Political uncertainty in Sri Lanka due to the 19th Amendment'

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, who will complete his term by end of this year, has called for repealing a law that clips presidential powers, citing it as reason for "political uncertainty" in the country.



Maithripala Sirisena

before four-and-a-half years of its term.

When President Sirisena prematurely sacked Parliament late last year, sparking an unprecedented political crisis that spanned seven weeks, the Supreme Court ruled that his dissolution was illegal.

"People accuse us of running an unstable government. They say that me and the Prime Minister are pulling in different directions... the reason is the 19A," President Sirisena said in his speech on Sunday.

The fissures within the government came to light in the wake of the deadly Easter terror attacks too, when both leaders said that while prior intelligence had been available with security officials, they were not aware of the warning.

With presidential polls due by end of the year, it remains unclear if President Sirisena will run for office again. No other party has finalised its candidate for the race.

Erdogan's party loses Istanbul re-poll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISTANBUL

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan suffered a major blow on Sunday as the Opposition candidate in Istanbul's controversial mayoral election re-run romped to victory.

Ekrem Imamoglu won the first vote in March by a tiny margin of just 13,000 votes in the city of 15 million.

That win was however annulled by election authorities after Mr. Erdogan's AKP party claimed that there was corruption in the counting.

But after being stripped of



Supporters of Ekrem Imamoglu celebrating on Sunday. ■ AP

With more than 99% of ballots counted on Sunday night, Mr. Imamoglu was winning by more than 7,75,000 votes – and had 54% overall.

'A win for all'

"It was not a single group or party, but the whole of Istanbul and Turkey that won this election," Mr. Imamoglu said in his victory speech.

"Mr. President, I am ready to work in harmony with you. I convey from here my request to meet with you in the shortest time possible," he added.

Ethiopia Army chief killed in failed regional coup

Situation is currently under full control by the Federal Government, says PM

REUTERS
ADDIS ABABA

Ethiopia's Army Chief of Staff and the head of the northern State of Amhara were killed in two separate but related attacks when a General tried to seize control of Amhara in an attempted coup.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's office said in a statement on Sunday.

Amhara State President Ambachew Mekonnen and his adviser were shot dead



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. ■ AFP

and the State's Attorney General was wounded in the regional capital of Bahir Dar on Saturday evening.

In another attack, Ethiopia's Army Chief of Staff Seare Mekonnen and a retired General were shot dead in Seare's home in Addis Ababa by his bodyguard.

Mr. Abiy's office named Amhara State Security head General Asamnew Tsige as responsible for the foiled coup, without giving details

barked on unprecedented reforms in Ethiopia, Africa's second-most populous country and one of its fastest-growing economies.

But the premier's shake-up of the military and intelligence services has earned him powerful enemies, while his government is struggling to rein in powerful figures in Ethiopia's myriad ethnic groups fighting the federal government and each other for greater influence and resources.

The shooting in Bahir Dar occurred when the State President – an ally of Mr. Abiy –

was holding a meeting to decide on how to put a stop to the open recruitment of ethnic Amhara militias by General Asamnew.

"The situation in the Amhara region is under full control by the Federal Government in collaboration with the regional government," Mr. Abiy said in a statement.

Brigadier General Tefera Mamo, head of special forces in Amhara, told state television that "most of the people who attempted the coup have been arrested, although there are a few still at large."

Trump says re-election will be easier if he is impeached

FBI probe into 2016 campaign was illegal



Donald Trump

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said in an interview broadcast on Sunday that his chances of retaining the White House in 2020 would be strengthened if Democratic lawmakers start impeachment proceedings against him.

Asked on NBC's *'Meet the Press'* whether he thought impeachment was good politics for him, Mr. Trump replied, "I think I win the election easier."

The President repeated his long-standing allegation that the FBI's counterintelligence investigation into his 2016 campaign was illegal. "I

the Mueller Report into Russian interference in the 2016 election outlined numerous contacts between his campaign and Russians, as well as evidence that the President tried on several occasions to stymie the investigation.

While many of the candidates for the Democratic nomination are pro-impeachment, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has argued that it would be a risky move without an "ironclad" case and bipartisan support.

Mr. Trump said Ms. Pelosi was staving off the growing impeachment calls because she agreed with his assessment that it would harm their prospects in 2020. "I think she feels that I will win much easier," Mr. Trump said. "I mean, I've been told that by many people."

Economic plan for West Asia peace snubbed

Won't be tempted by money: Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM

The economic component of the Trump administration's long-awaited West Asia peace plan drew chilly responses from regional allies on Sunday, two days before it was to be discussed at a conference in the Gulf.

An Israeli Minister called a major piece of the White House's "peace to prosperity" plan "irrelevant," while Jordan and Egypt restated their support for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, pouring cold water on Washington's focus on economic issues.

The \$50 billion economic plan, published on Saturday, calls for massive infrastructure projects and job creation for Palestinians. It makes no mention of Palestinian political aspirations in

the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, lands Israel captured in 1967.

Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said on Sunday that the country will not be "tempted" by money into what he said amounts to giving up Palestinian rights.

Mr. Berri said in a statement that although Lebanon is currently dealing with an economic crisis, it would be a mistake to think that billions of dollars could convince the government to abandon Palestinians' rights as refugees.

Sufian Qudah, a spokesman for Jordan's Foreign Ministry, said that "no economic proposal can replace a political settlement to the conflict which must be resolved as per the two-state solution."

Saudi launches residency scheme to boost revenue

Aimed at luring wealthy expatriates

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIYADH

Saudi Arabia on Sunday launched a new special residency scheme aimed at luring wealthy expatriates as the petro-state seeks to boost non-oil revenue.

The scheme offers a permanent residency for 800,000 ryals (\$213,000) and a one-year renewable residency costing 100,000 ryals (\$27,000), according to the online portal for registrations.

The scheme will allow expatriates to do business without a Saudi sponsor, buy property and sponsor visas for relatives, the website said.

Analysts say the programme will largely benefit wealthy Arabs who have lived in Saudi Arabia for years without permanent residency or MNCs seeking



to do long-term business.

The move appears to be aimed at boosting non-oil revenue as the kingdom seeks to diversify its economy.

Though it was approved by the Saudi Cabinet last month, the portal began accepting applications on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia is currently home to some 10 million overseas workers.

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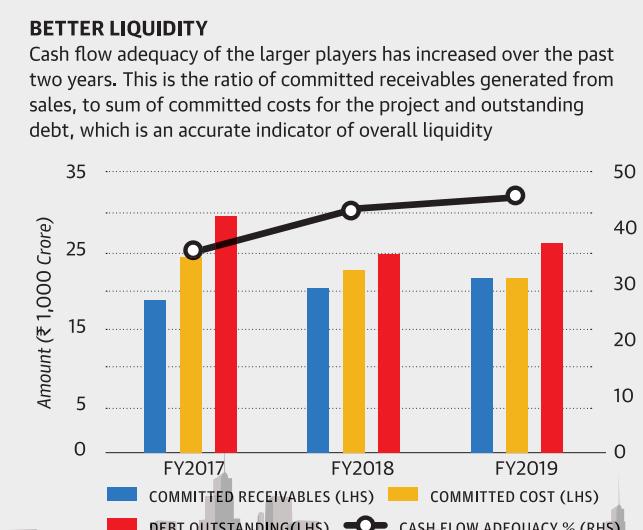
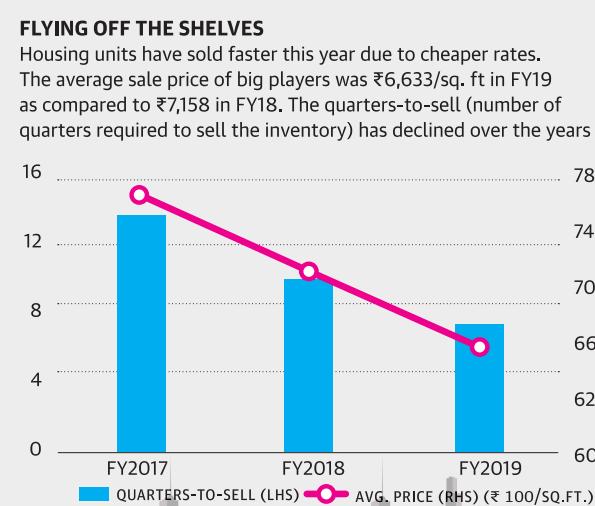
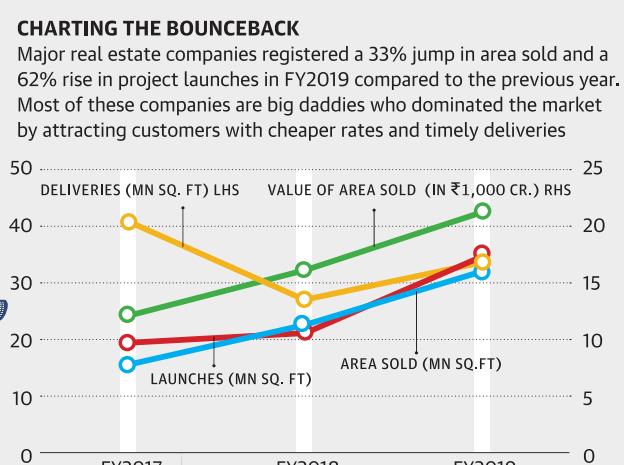
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GST's performance versus promise

Buoyancy ratio aside, the revenue picture is creditable given the transitional glitches

V.S. KRISHNAN

As the Budget draws nearer, the GST revenue picture has assumed great importance. The fiscal projections and the ability to fund welfare schemes hinge on this. Therefore, we have to ask a fundamental question on how GST revenue has done? Has performance lived up to its promise? From the evidence available, the answer would be a qualified 'Yes'.

The widespread perception that the GST revenue growth has not done well is unfair as the GST revenue performance should not be measured against the ambitious targets set, but against the growth of the nominal GDP.

First-year, first show

An assessment was made by Kapil Patidar and Arvind Subramanian in June 2018.

This showed that in the first year of implementation of GST, revenues grew by 11.9% and the buoyancy was 1.2. A buoyancy ratio over 1 shows progressiveness in the revenue growth and opens up the prospect of a rising tax-to-GDP ratio. This is a significant improvement over the pre-GST period when the buoyancy ratios for State value added tax (VAT) and Central indirect taxes like central excise and service tax were less than 1. The revenue performance is especially creditable given the transitional difficulties during implementation and teething technical problems with the GST network (GSTN).

Some other analyses show that the tax-to-final consumption expenditure also grew from 10.3% in the year before GST (2015-16) to 11.9% (including adjustments for transitional credits) in 2017-18. However, the State-wise picture shows that some States did better than the others. The States that had a high percentage of origin-based taxes in subsumed re-



The design of GST integrates the entire value chain from raw material to retail for the purpose of indirect taxation. ■REUTERS

venues – Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Odisha – were found to lag behind in subsequent revenue performance. The relative buoyancy of GST revenue compared to the pre-GST period is not surprising. This is a result of two factors.

One, the design of GST integrated the entire value chain from raw material to retail for the purpose of indirect taxation. This design reduced non-compliance in downstream trading, as these entities chose to register to avail of the input tax credit generated upstream.

The GST revenue growth will reach a steady normal rate only when the effect of the transitional credits are extinguished. Here, the trends are promising. This is also indicated by the fact that monthly CGST revenues are slowly inching towards monthly SGST revenues – the utilisation of the transi-

tional credits has a greater impact on the CGST rather than the SGST. It is for this reason that GST revenue buoyancy is likely to do much better in the coming year.

This, however, requires some policy measures going forward. First, the revenue performance of the composition dealer has been disappointing.

Therefore, the imposition of duty on the composition dealers levied on the Reverse Charge Mechanism (RCM) basis could be an important anti-evasion measure going forward.

Second, the introduction of the new GST annual return form and matching of invoices will substantially improve compliance.

Third, the GST taxable base must be expanded to include petroleum products (especially aviation turbine fuel and natural gas in the first round), then bring in real estate and electricity. A

further surge in GST revenue will happen once land and real estate is brought under the GST net. This will clean up the land market and the revenue gains will be more on the direct tax side as more transactions are reported under GST.

Fourth, greater coordination between investigation agencies in the CBDT and CBIC could yield better results.

The I-T department has already incorporated GST registration and turnover information in their return formats. Finally, the policy to improve revenue buoyancy has to be data driven.

Unfortunately, today, detailed sector-wise analysis of revenue is hampered by lack of separate data on the sectoral profile of the new registrants and of separate revenue trends for goods and services. There is a perception in many States that revenue from services has lagged expectations. This can be

rectified by a small modification in the format of the GST annual return. This modification would require companies to indicate the HSN (Harmonised System of Nomenclature) code in eight digits in respect of goods supplied by them and accounting codes of each of the services provided.

Duty payment in cash should be indicated code wise for each of the goods and services. In conclusion, one could use the metaphor of the mythological churning of the ocean by the Devas to generate nectar resulting in the poison surfacing first.

The implementation of GST similarly has seen transitional difficulties coming to the forefront in the initial period. Hopefully, in future, we will see the GST yield more of the promised nectar.

(The writer is national leader, Tax and Economic Policy Group, EY India. Views are personal)

INTERVIEW | ANIL YENDLURI
'We are a new generation port, old rules do not hold for us'

We have changed the model from port-centric to port-user centric. Everything we designed was customer- and cargo-specific, says the Krishnapatnam Port CEO

LALATENDU MISHRA

Private sector Krishnapatnam Port in Andhra Pradesh, possibly the fastest growing port of India, has created a niche for itself due to its customer centric approach and meticulous planning to ensure faster evacuation of cargo. Having achieved annual cargo handling volume of 54.5 million tonnes in 10 years of its existence, the port has started harbouring the ambition to become the JNPT of the east coast and India's transhipment hub, said Anil Yendluri, director and chief executive officer, Krishnapatnam Port Company Ltd. (KPCL). Excerpts from an interview:

What differentiates your port from the rest on the east coast?

ture to port-user centric infrastructure.

On the east coast, there are over half-a-dozen ports; how are you beating the competition?

India is a big country growing at 7% in GDP. It needs to import and export a lot. Earlier, ports, mostly government-owned, were going slow to meet the needs of the country. We understood that there was so much potential.

Whatever infrastructure we had planned and developed, and the systems we designed, everything was customer-specific and cargo-specific.

As a result, customers get what they want, and cargo gets the required infrastructure.

That is how we have changed the entire model from port-centric infrastruc-

ture to port-user centric infrastructure.

That means, we have not taken away someone's business. Cargo gets generated when a new port comes up.

There is enough potential in the country which has not been harnessed.

So, having understood that this area needs another port with state-of-the-art technology, infrastructure facilities and new orientation towards importers and exporters, we started working on that and started creating infrastructure.

If you remember, in the past, vessels used to wait for 10 days causing a lot of loss to the country. Here, at our port, berths will be waiting for the vessels. Productivity, cost reduction, ease of doing business and customer service are our prime concern.

That is how we have built a new-age port which exactly suits the needs of customers. That is why we are growing and we have unleashed the potential of this region and of the country.

Evacuation of cargo is a major problem for most of the Indian ports, what

you have done to deal with that?

When we understood that coal import requires particular space and infrastructure, we built a dedicated four-lane road, as we understood the problems faced by other ports. We are providing evacuation directly from the berth to the highway. Now, that road is being upgraded to six lanes. At our port, not more than two trucks would wait at the gate at any given point of time. At some ports you can see 40-km-long queues. The entry point has 16 gates with 8 weighbridges.

So, no truck would be waiting at the gate. So, we have built fantastic road infrastructure. Within the port we have 60 km of road infrastructure with separate parking lots. You will not see queues anywhere.

Same is the case with rail infrastructure.

Most of the Indian ports have one-line rail connectivity. From day one, we have had two-lane rail connectivity. We have built infrastructure which can handle 60 trainloads a day.

Even if a customer wants to take his entire cargo in one day, it is possible here. So, we have made evacuation infrastructure in such a way that because of port limitations no customer

would suffer. We have planned infrastructure in such a manner that in the next 50 years you will not find any congestion in this area. We are planning for 40-50 years down the lane.

You said your ambition is to be the JNPT of the east coast. How will you achieve this?

If you look at container growth, ports on the east coast are growing faster than those in western India. It is not because eastern ports are more efficient. Trade with eastern nations for India is improving and automatically eastern ports are playing a major role.

Looking at the eastern ports, most of the existing ports are city-centric, they have limitations to grow, but we don't have such issues. We are currently at 54.5 million tonnes, we can go to 300 million tonnes.

No port in India so far has dreamt of that, but we can scale up to that level with efficient infrastructure inside the port.

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can unlock a lot of value and bring down the logistics costs. What have you done on this front?

Ports, unlike other industries, is not a standalone industry. The port is an ecosystem where a lot of entities converge and work together and grow. Today, we closely work with power producers to meet their coal demand, we have worked with a lot of edible oil importers and today we have the second-largest edible oil importing hub in India with refineries at the port. We are looking at pharma importers and trying to create a pharma cluster here.

We are also looking at other industries which are planning to develop facilities near the port. A lot of people are moving to Krishnapatnam because we are power-surplus, there is adequate water and skilled manpower.

A lot of land is available and we have good law and order situation and support from the State government to encourage trade. We have everything to attract investors from any part of the

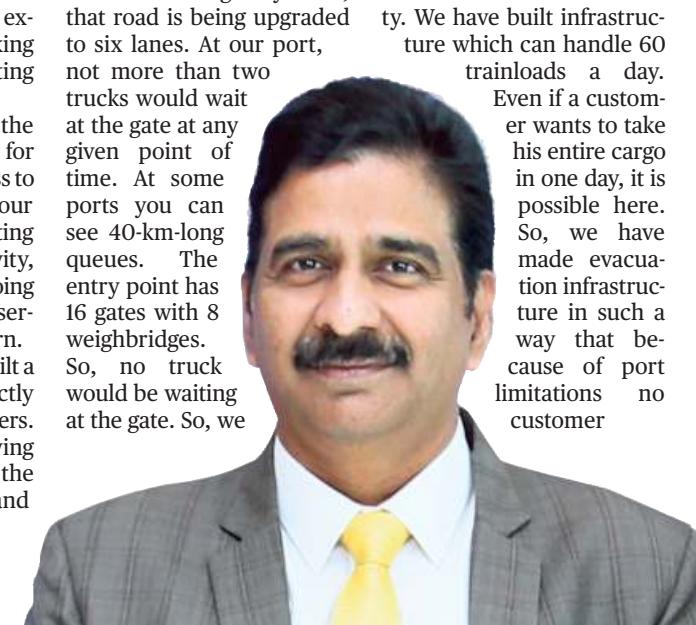
world and the country to set up a manufacturing base here.

As the port operator, we are supporting them in this ecosystem where they can stay with us and flourish. Apart from industrial infrastructure we are also providing social infrastructure, which is important for all stakeholders and their families.

What is your expectation from the Union Budget?

The government must work closely with shipping lines, mainly container shipping companies, so that they make direct calls to Indian ports rather than doing transhipment in other countries. The port operators and government should work closely to attract them. On the east coast, we are doing the largest transhipment and want to become a new emerging mainland transhipment port for India on the lines of Colombo and Singapore.

(The writer visited Krishnapatnam Port at the invitation of the company)



Port-led development

AND-X

ASK US



K. NITYA KALYANI

Q. I am confused about buying a healthcare policy. Which policy would best serve my requirements? I am 39 years old, working in the middle management level. Kindly suggest the best product for me.

HRISHIKESH KUMAR SINGH

A. If this is the first health insurance cover you are going to buy, the best option is a basic hospitalisation policy for a Sum Insured (SI) of at least ₹3 to ₹5 lakh.

You can buy this from any general insurance company or health insurance company that you are comfortable with and through an agent with whom you have a good working relationship and who gives you good service.

The four public sector general insurance companies, namely The New India Assurance Company Limited, United India Insurance Company Limited, The Oriental Insurance Company Limited and National Insurance Company Limited have a hospitalisation policy with the common brand name Mediclaim.

Other companies have various brand names for the equivalent policy like Easy Health by Apollo Munich Health Insurance Company Limited, ICICI Lombard Complete Health Insurance by ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited, SBI General Health Insurance Plan by SBI General Insurance Company Limited, Individual Health Guard by Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Limited and MediPrime by Tata AIG General Insurance Company Limited. Since you are 39 years old, there will be few formalities like medical tests before you are issued a policy now and your premium will be relatively lower.

Q. When renewing third-party insurance for my motorcycle, I was given very different premium rates by the same insurance company.

The quotes were ₹1,510 with personal accident insurance of ₹15 lakh and ₹1,162 without it. I have read that personal accident insurance is compulsory with motor third-party insurance. If so, why the option? What is the correct picture?

M.V. SADANAND

A. The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 mandates Third Party Liability (TP) cover for motorised vehicles used in a public place. Personal Accident (PA) insurance is not compulsory under this law.

However, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has mandated a minimum Personal Accident cover of ₹15 lakh following an intervention by the Madras High Court. The point is that this PA cover can be purchased from any insurer and need not be part of the TP cover that you purchase.

This explains the two options you were given, with and without PA cover. When you buy TP cover, the company will get a declaration from you that you already have a PA cover for ₹15 lakh or more and issue you just the TP cover.

It is important to remember that TP insurance is the basic minimum cover required by law and it protects you only against your liability for injury or death caused in an accident involving your vehicle to other people or damage to their property. It does not cover any damage to your own vehicle. To cover that you have to buy a comprehensive cover. As for the PA cover, the subject of this discussion, it is in your own interest to ensure that you do have a PA cover as it offers you and your family valuable financial protection in case of an accident.

(K. Nitya Kalyani is a business journalist specialising in insurance and corporate history)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

Be wary of that plastic in your purse

Credit cards are double-edged swords. One's perception is shaped by the experience

ANAND KALYANARAMAN

When it comes to credit cards, the argument continues. Some swear by it, some swear at it. That's understandable. A credit card is a double-edged sword, and people's perceptions are shaped by their experiences.

Use it wisely and a credit card can offer much convenience and flexibility. But slip up on timely payments, and the plastic can burn a big hole in your pocket.

Goodies galore

A credit card carries many goodies. One, it's easy to use and lets you go shopping without lugging around wads of cash. Next, you earn reward points on using your credit card. These points can be redeemed for various purposes, including paying for purchases online. Besides reward points, some credit cards provide users various offers. These include cashbacks on purchases and discounts on spends at select restaurants, and access to airport lounges and special events.

In addition, credit cards

offer users another big plus – an interest-free credit period of about 15-45 days during which you do not have to make payments for purchases made using the card. Say, the latest billing cycle on your credit card is May 20, 2019 to June 19, 2019 – and the payment due date is July 5, 2019. For purchases made on May 20, you can pay after about 45 days and for purchases made on June 19, you get to pay after about 15 days – on July 5.

During this free credit period, the amount stays in your bank account or in other investments, earning interest or returns.

This effectively means that you have borrowed money from the bank free of cost and have deployed it to make money.

If you have more than one credit card with different billing cycles, you can schedule your spends such that you enjoy the maximum credit free periods on the cards.

Pay punctually

Payment defaults on credit card dues can prove very costly. The exorbitant interest charged on credit

Upside, downside

- Credit cards carry reward points that can be redeemed
- They carry interest-free credit period of about 15 to 45 days
- Payment defaults on card dues can prove very costly
- There is a risk of falling into a debt trap

card dues – up to 3.5% per month – works out to more than 40% a year. This makes credit card debt among the costliest in the market.

Then, there are late payment charges on payment defaults and the goods and services tax (GST) to add to the woes.

Credit cards allow their users 'revolving credit' – this means that you can make a minimum payment (usually 5% of the total sum due) by the due date and carry forward the balance to the next billing cycle. It sounds good, but is not. When you opt for the 'minimum payment', you kiss goodbye to the free credit period. So, on the bill amount, you get charged interest right from the transaction date, and not just from the due date.

April 10, and also lose the free credit period on the purchase made in May.

Say, you settle the balance dues of ₹14,500 (₹9,500 plus ₹5,000) on May 25. Interest cost will be calculated as follows: on ₹10,000 from April 10 to May 15, on ₹9,500 from May 15 to May 25 and on ₹5,000 from May 17 to May 25. At 3% a month or 36% per annum, the interest cost works out to about ₹480. Add to this GST at 18% and you will be down by about ₹570.

The minimum payment option can be useful if you face a temporary cash crunch. But if you make a habit of it, you could soon find yourself in a debt trap.

The payment will run into years, with massive interest outgo. Your credit score will also take a

knock. A saving grace in paying the minimum due is that you do not get charged late payment fees. You escape the defaulter tag and could face a lesser negative impact on your CIBIL score.

If you do not pay even

the minimum due, you will be labelled a defaulter and also pay late payment fees in addition to the interest cost. You could also be charged a higher interest rate when you do not pay even though it is actually only borrowed and has to be repaid.

Be wary of this and restrict spending on the card only to the extent you can pay when the bill arrives.

Avoid cash withdrawals

Lastly, while you are allowed to use your credit card to withdraw cash from ATMs, this is not a good choice. That's because such cash advances don't enjoy free credit period and are charged interest at high rates from the date of withdrawal until they are repaid.

Also, a transaction fee is levied on such transaction. Do this only in real emergencies.

IN FOCUS: MF UTILITIES

As easy as investing in mutual funds

You can invest across schemes and fund houses at the click of a button

NALINAKANTHI V

If you are a regular investor in mutual fund (MF) schemes and have investment across fund houses, going to multiple portals to make the purchase or redeem your units is now passé.

You can now do it from the comfort of your home and at the click of the button, without having to shell anything extra for the convenience.

Welcome to MF utilities, a transaction platform facilitated by the mutual fund industry, which helps invest in multiple schemes across fund houses in one shot. The platform is free not just for investors but also for distributors and SEBI-registered investment advisers.

How to get started

Irrespective of whether you are an individual or non-individual investor, the first step towards transacting through MF utilities is to complete the CAN (common account number) registration. The CAN application form can be downloaded online, duly

filled and submitted, along with requisite documents, to the nearest Mutual Fund Utilities (MFU) point of service (POS) or MFU office. There are about 373 MFU POS centres listed in the website. You can check for the one close to your house.

As an individual investor, you can also choose to complete the CAN registration online, by filing an eCAN, wherein all the data required is submitted electronically and the same is instantly created.

Using a common transaction form, you can invest in schemes across MF houses at one go. You can make a single payment for investment across multiple schemes and multiple fund houses.

You can now invest in the direct option of multiple schemes across fund houses through the MFU portal at one go and benefit from the higher returns (higher by about a per cent or so).

This saves you the hassle of having to either go to the registrar and transfer agent office or their website or that of the AMC for individual transactions. You can get a consolidated view of all your investments in one place.

However, to avail an eCAN facility, you need to be KYC-compliant and should have invested already in any of the participating asset management companies (AMCs), which are part of the MFU.

Upon successful completion of CAN registration, all your existing MF investment will also be mapped using the CAN credentials and you can access all your MF investments in one place.

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You can now invest in the direct option of multiple schemes across fund houses through the MFU portal at one go and benefit from the higher returns (higher by about a per cent or so).

This saves you the hassle of having to either go to the registrar and transfer agent office or their website or that of the AMC for individual transactions. You can get a consolidated view of all your investments in one place.

Decoding MFUs

- Using the MFU platform, one can invest in the direct option of various schemes
- This is suitable only for those who do not require advisory services
- Currently 34 AMCs, of the 44, are part of the MFU system

What are the cons?

Not all the 44 MF houses are part of the platform currently. There are only 34 participating AMCs currently in the MFU system and you can invest or redeem units of these AMCs only through the platform.

If you are looking to invest in the schemes of the 10 fund houses that are not part of the MFU portal, you will have to go through the respective AMC's portal, registrar and transfer agent or intermediaries such as robo-advisers or independent advisers.

If you are a beginner, looking to invest in equities and need help in selecting the right fund for you, you may be better off going through a robo-advisory firm or an independent adviser.

(The writer is an independent financial consultant)

BLACKBOARD: SIDE POCKETING

Separating the bad from the good

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

What is the side pocketing rule?

Simply put, side pocketing is a framework that allows mutual funds to segregate the bad assets in a separate portfolio within their debt schemes. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced the framework in December – primarily triggered by the IL&FS fiasco – after it emerged that many fund houses have huge exposure to the beleaguered entity and could potentially take a huge hit on their net asset value thereby affecting investor returns.

How does it work?

The capital markets regulator has laid down that such a portfolio can be created only if there is a credit event at the issuer level in the form of downgrade of a debt or money market instrument to 'below investment grade' or subsequent downgrades from such levels.

In other words, if a debt instrument is downgraded to default rating by credit rating agencies, then the fund house has the option to create a side pocket so that good assets can be ring-fenced.

How does it benefit investors?

Side pocketing segregates the bad assets from the good ones. All existing investors in the scheme are allotted equal number of units in the segregated portfolio as held in the main portfolio and no redemption or subscription is allowed in the segregated portfolio.

Thereafter, the units have to be



listed on a stock exchange within 10 days to facilitate exit of the unit holders. Effectively, this makes the price discovery of the bad assets a transparent procedure with investors having the freedom of either selling it at prevailing price or holding it if they expect the value to recover in future.

Can the side pocket rule be misused? SEBI has put in place checks and balances to minimise any such misuse. The regulator has said that trustees of all fund houses will have to put in place a framework that would negatively impact the performance incentives of fund managers, chief investment officers (CIOs), etc. involved in the investment process of securities under the segregated portfolio. So, fund managers know that any creation of such side pocket in the future would also affect their own appraisals and incentives.

Further, SEBI has also said that side pocket should not be looked upon as a sign of encouraging undue credit risks as any misuse of the option would be considered serious and stringent action can be taken.

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Frankly, sir, you should be more risk-taking than asking me to help you choose piggy bank!"

Education loans for studies in India

Name of lender	Interest rate	Loan amount (₹)	Processing fee	Margin requirement	Maximum tenure	Moratorium period
State Bank of India	8.65%-10.7%	Upto 40 lakhs	NIL	Upto ₹4 Lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 Lakhs: Upto 5%	15 years	Course period + 1 year
Punjab National Bank	8.45%-11.05%	No limit	NIL	Up to ₹4 lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 lakhs: Upto 5%	15 years	Course period + 1 year
Andhra Bank	8.95%-10.75%	No limit	NIL	Upto ₹4 Lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 Lakhs: Upto 5%	15 years	Course Period + 1 year or 6 months after getting job, whichever is earlier
HDFC Credila	12.55% + spread	1 lakh onwards	1-2% of loan amount	Upto 100% funding	12 years	6 months to 1 year of grace period is extended after course completion
Axis Bank	13.7%-15.2%	50,000- 75 lakhs	Loan upto 10 lakhs: NIL Above 10 lakhs: Rs 5,000	Upto ₹4 lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 lakhs: 5%	15 years	Course Period + 1 year or 6 months after getting job, whichever is earlier
Bank of Baroda	8.7%-10.7%	Upto 80 lakhs	NIL	Up to ₹4 lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 lakhs: Upto 5%	15 years	Course period + 1 year
Avanse	12.65% + spread	1 lakh onwards	1-2% of loan amount	Upto 100% funding	10 years*	6 months after course completion or 3 months after getting job
Union Bank of India	8.6%-11.75%	Upto 37 lakhs	NIL	Upto ₹4 Lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 Lakhs: Upto 5%	15 years	Course period + 1 year
Bank of India	8.65%-11.15%	Upto 30 lakhs	NIL	Up to ₹4 lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 lakhs: Upto 5%	15 years	Course period + 1 year
Federal Bank	10.85%-15.25%	Upto 20 lakh	NIL	(For select premier institutes-Up to ₹10 lakhs-NIL; Above ₹10 lakhs-5%)	15 years	Course period + 1 year
Canara Bank	8.9%-10.7%	Upto 36 lakh	NIL	Upto ₹4 Lakhs: NIL Above ₹4 Lakhs: Upto 5%	15 years	Course period + 1 year



Food craft (Clockwise from left) The XXLab team; shoes made of their soy leather; Adi Sundoro; a full view of his work, *Come Closer to Sea* ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Food for thought

An exhibit inspired by the culture of food gatherings in Indonesia, tells the social, industrial, and political tale of the country

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

In Bahasa Indonesia, the saying "makan ngga makan asal kumpul" refers to a gathering of family and friends, highlighting the importance of togetherness in Indonesia. The idea is to hang out and share whatever possible. Especially food.

It is this concept that Haryo Hutomo, an Indonesian trans-disciplinary artist with a recent focus on curatorial work, was mulling over for months. When he saw a call for submissions from the Korean Cultural Centre in India, he knew that this concept, through an exploration of Indonesia's food industry, was a great way to present a broad picture of the country's social, cultural, and political landscape overseas.

Bringing together individual showcases by six artists, Haryo's project is now showing at the Korean Cultural Centre in the capital, through July.

Opening with the 28-year-old printmaker Adi Sundoro's tiled 18 x 4 feet long mural, *Come Closer to the Sea* the exhibit also has conceptual installations, showcases, and research-backed video art. For instance, Fajad Abadi uses a clear boxing bag stuffed with fritters and other dry street-food, to talk about the fight for territory between local food-sellers. "It's almost like a mafia

within the street food industry sometimes," says Haryo. In Jakarta-based artist Natasha Gabriella Tontey's dystopian looped video installation, the celebrated heroes are common household pests, which she thinks could lead us into a sustainable future.

More academically, Fransisca Retno shows life-size projections of slides of human cells that have been affected by some of the food we consume today. A showcase called 'Cooking Under Pressure' by Bakudapa: The Food Study Group, turns around to look at Indonesia's history of agrarian conflict of the 1960s, which altered people's relationship with what they ate.

The last of these is a futuristic showcase by the all-women collective, XXLab. The group, which works at the intersection of art, science, and technology, creates leather-alternatives from the effluents of Indonesia's soy production facilities – a major source of pollution in the country. Edited excerpts from a conversation with two of the participating artists.

IRENE AGRIVINA, XXLAB

■ What's the response to the exhibit been like so far?

A lot of people thought it'd be like food-food. The sort you can eat. This is one



of the perceptions that Haryo is trying to challenge actually, that food isn't just fun, but it's also a tool of diplomacy. There's more to food than just cooking and eating.

■ How did XXLab start?

I'm also a part of House of Natural Fiber (HONF), which is the first new media art collective in South East Asia. XXLab is one of the many smaller collectives within HONF. It comprises some of us (Eka Jayani Ayuningtyas, Atinna Rizqiana, Asa Rahmania and Ratna Djuwita) who attended the workshop by Mz* Baltazar's Lab, an Austria-based feminist creative space for hackers, back in 2013. It was a bunch of us who were interested in bio-hacking. That's how we started a project to research and find new materials for the future. We license our work through a creative commons license.

■ What else does XXLab do? Do you have investors?

No investors. Since we are an open collective, it really depends on the interest levels of the members at any given time. But what we are doing now is finding new ways to develop the concept we have – of making sustainable materials for the future. This is very important to us because we need to replace animal

leather, which will reduce pollution and water pollution too. Apart from soy-waste, we are also looking at using rice milk to make undergarments and paper.

■ Have you patented the idea, or are you pitching it to players in the fashion industry?

We are still trying to find the right model to work with industry. Because we still want to keep the tech open source, yet have economic value for it. A lot of people ask us if we get paid for the new material we make. But it's not about that, it's about having a technology and making it open-source so anyone can really adapt and use. The message we try to spread to people is that the budget may be limited, but there's always space for innovation.

ADI SUNDORO

■ Adi, you have a whole wall of frames, the medium of which you describe as kitchen lithography. What is that and when did you start practising it?

So printmaking has four main branches: relief print (on raised surface, like on stamps), screen printing (like on mugs and t-shirts), intaglio (on cut surfaces, like etching), and planography (a

done on flat surfaces, with a mix of water and grease). This last is the hardest for me, because there's only one facility in Indonesia to do this, and it's far away from me. In my last year at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (doing a B.Ed. in Visual Arts), I really wanted to get into planography. So I looked up the internet for alternative techniques to practise planography. That's when I found kitchen lithography. The process was invented in 2011 by a French artist called Émilie Aizier. I got in touch with her to learn the medium better. A year after that, in 2014, France held the world's first kitchen lithography contest. I sent some of my works there and won a "public prize" – meaning by the public's choice.

■ Take us through the big mural at the entrance

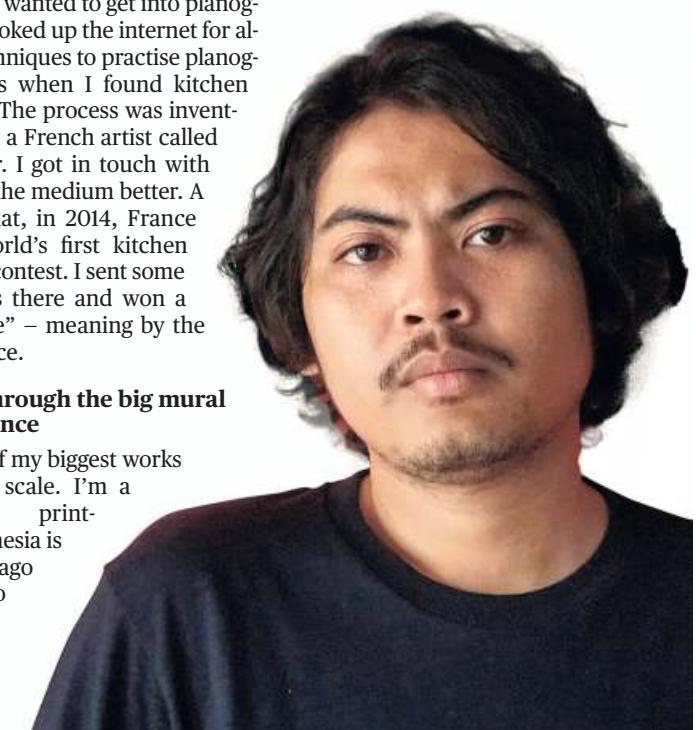
That is one of my biggest works in terms of scale. I'm a professional printmaker. Indonesia is an archipelago with close to seventeen thousand islands with a lot of sea area. I basi-

cally wanted to show my viewers, especially the Indonesians, that our country has a lot of potential and power in its maritime resources.

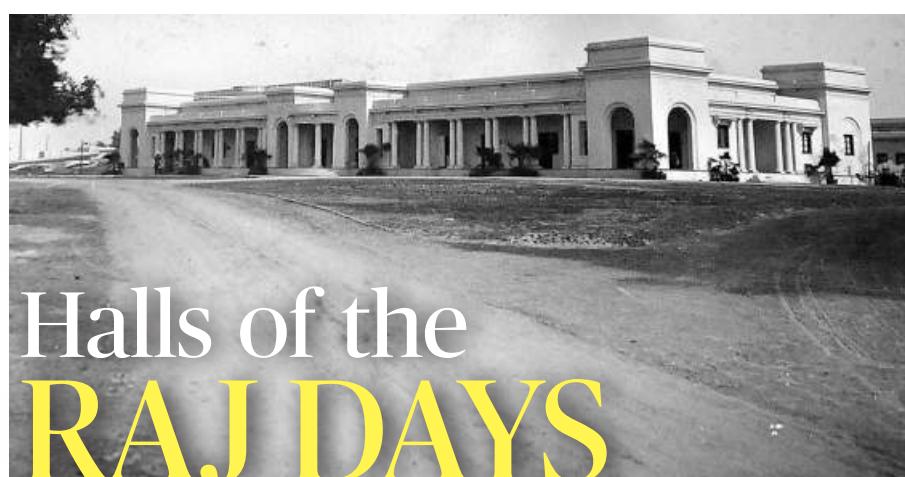
■ You say that you've made an India-special series for this showcase?

It so happens that when Haryo called me, asking me to participate in this exhibit, I was watching videos on this YouTube channel called Grandpa's Kitchen. It's an old Indian man with close to 5 million followers! He makes so much food and feeds children. I'd been watching his videos for a while – thanks to YouTube algorithms, and I thought that I ought to make a tribute to India and him. I adopted a new technique for this: made prints of screenshots, drew those out, re-processed them digitally, and then finally made screenprints of that. But when the ink was still wet, I accentuated them with chilli powder!

At Korean Cultural Centre, A-25, Lajpat Nagar IV; on until July 30th; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



DOWN MEMORY LANE



Halls of the RAJ DAYS

Metcalfe House, which is now premises of the Defence Research and Development Organisation, was once a famous venue for hosting parties and much more



R. V. SMITH

Many buildings came into existence in Delhi during the days of the Raj. Probably the most famous among them was Metcalfe House built by Sir Thomas Metcalfe, which now houses the Defence Research and Development Organisation. His brother, Sir (later Lord) Charles Metcalfe built the Metcalfe Testimonial in Agra, which was destroyed in a fire; Metcalfe House, destroyed during the 'Mutiny', was rebuilt.

The dining hall of Metcalfe House (Matka Kothi) vibrated with life during Sir Thomas' parties. His guests included the British officers

posted in Delhi to keep an eye on the Mughal court. But his predecessor, William Fraser, as chief of the East Indian Company Residency, used to think that Sir Thomas liked to keep to himself or enjoy the company of Col. James Skinner, who happened to be his best friend.

Skinner's house in Mori Gate had a big hall too, where the parties were just as colourful. Fraser preferred the Hansi estate of Sikandar Sahib (as Skinner was known to his Indian troops). Among the weekend-visitors to Hansi, was Martin Sahib, a young man born about the time Fraser was murdered in 1835. He was later to build Hallinger Hall at Agra, which is now part of a colony behind the civil courts.

On the other side is the Martyrs' Cemetery, which

dates back to Akbar's times and next to it the lodge built by Lady Doctor Ulrick. On the same road was the bungalow of Ball, the magistrate (later occupied by the lawyer Tavakalay), and a little further off, the thatched cottage atop a hill where his son stayed. Ball was quite an institution. The old man was around at the time of the 'Mutiny' and his son followed him into magistracy. The daughter was a dancer, famed for her beauty.

The elder Martin was a young man in 1858, and took part in the campaign against the Rani of Jhansi. He followed her closely into a khaliyan (barn) during her retreat, when she suddenly turned around and ordered him not to pursue her, but to look for buried treasure as his reward. He found it all, right in the barn and Mrs.

Maguire used to tell the story by the fireside in after-years.
The writer is a veteran chronicler of Delhi

Once upon a hall Built during the days of the British, these halls saw many lively parties ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

HALLS OF GRACE

Hallinger Hall was built by Martin Sr. and it was a palatial building. One of the first Christmas plays in North India was staged here. Whatever memories there are of this hall survive only in old wives' tales. And the same may be said of the other halls. Metcalfe House Hall had a goodly collection of Napoleon's busts and other memorabilia of 'the Little Emperor' which were sent away to Mussoorie when the building was taken over by the government.

Atal Hall (like Haksar Haveli) is in a shambles as nobody was keen to preserve it, despite a much-publicised visit by Indira Gandhi.

The Town Hall had a library and museum once before becoming a rabbit warren of a municipal office. There are however plans to restore it to its former grandeur.

The Gospel Hall in Connaught Place is a miniature creation, but the earliest hall was the thousand-pillared one of Alaudin Khilji at his now ruined city Siri. The Siri Fort auditorium is a reminder of sorts of Siri's lost glory.

Jaswal's Punjabi chronicles

With her fourth book out in India now, the author says her work was never meant to drag down her community

SINDHURI NANDHAKUMAR

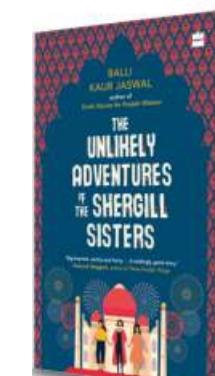
Balli Kaur Jaswal is four novels old, and just like her itinerant childhood (her father worked for the Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and she lived in countries like Russia and the Philippines), her books are also spread across the world.

Her recently-released novel, *The Unlikely Adventures of the Shergill Sisters*, sees three estranged British-Punjabi siblings embark unwillingly on a trip across northern India, at the bidding of their now deceased mother. Before that, the author's wildly popular *Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows* (2017) – which was scooped up by Sir Ridley Scott's production company for a cinematic adaptation – was set in London's Southall neighbourhood.

Jaswal's binding thread is the Punjabi Diaspora experience. "There's this very false idea that people in the Diaspora are removed from India, and are therefore more progressive," says the third-generation Singaporean-Punjabi. "In fact, a lot of their viewpoints are very crystallised and you find people in India have moved on."

Starting with humble goals

But the 35-year-old author is clear that being a flagbearer for young Punjabi readers was never her intention. "I had very humble goals when I started writing," she admits. "It was just 'I want to say something about the world and the way I view it.' And she is wary of



A voice for the times

On the flip side, many readers are grateful to Jaswal for creating literature that makes sense of their immigrant experience. Jaswal is doing for diaspora literature today what Chitra Barnerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri did for South Asian readers when they



Diaspora diaries The author and (below) her latest novel ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

started out in the '90s and early 2000s. Her own tenuous relationship to India – a country she had only visited once before returning for research in 2016 – improved when Diaspora culture (like Lahiri's novels and the British sketch comedy show, *Goodness Gracious Me*) became mainstream. "It was about being Indian in another country and reconciling with that."

It would be very easy to classify *Shergill Sisters* as chick lit. But it is more than that, painted as it is on the confusing canvas of the immigrant experience. That is what has won Jaswal so many readers across the world. In fact, she hints at the possibility of the book being adapted into a short series. "Still working out the details," she laughs.

Published by HarperCollins, priced at ₹399.

Why smoking is worse for women's health than it is for men

Put out the RISK

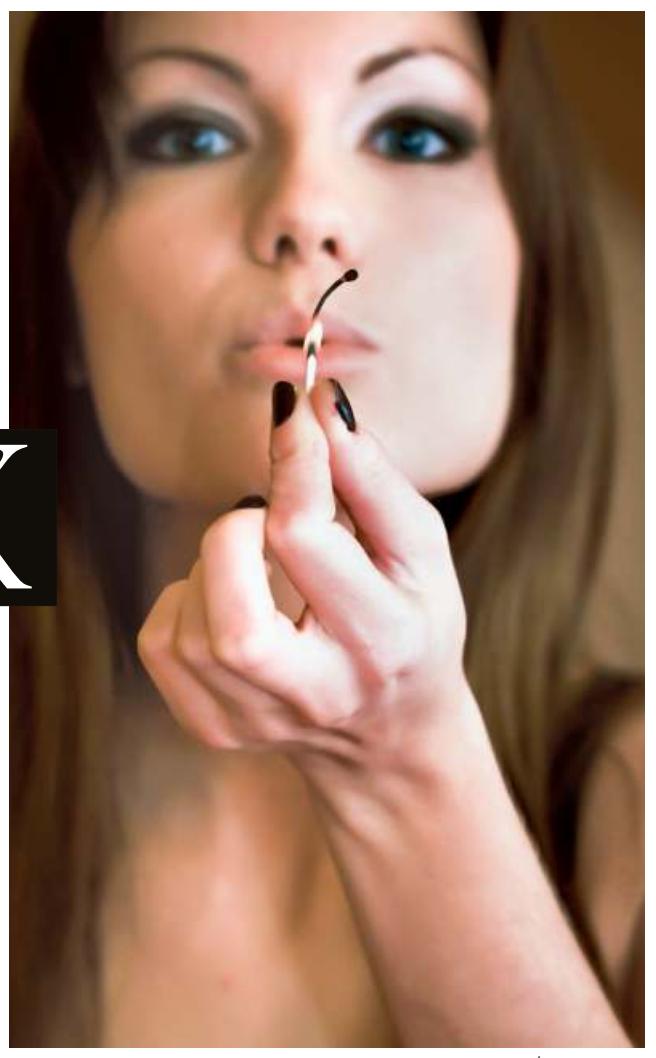
SOMA BASU

Manisha (name changed to protect privacy), a journalist working with a media house in Delhi, remembers the ultimatum her orthopaedist gave her two years ago: That at 27, she could not possibly let the spinal bone in one of her vertebrae degenerate. "The only option for you is to quit smoking now," Dr Harshvardhan Hegde had told her. She did, but only after he told her how cigarette smoke weakens bones and her spinal cord could be severely affected in the long run.

"It was not easy after three years of continuous smoking," she says, "But I had to." One of the vertebrae in her lower back had been damaged when she met with a road accident nine years before, and she suffered multiple compression fractures in her thighs, ankles, heel and spine. Recovery was long.

Smoking was cool in her journalism college, says Manisha, and before she realised, she was addicted to it. Later, her job made it worse. "My smoke breaks became frequent and I started binging on drinks and junk food along with it," she says. With no exercise, she rapidly gained weight and her back pain returned. "I did not realise bone density loss can set in early and aggravate my already-affected vertebrae."

Today, she has transformed herself by completely staying away from cigarettes and exercising regularly. While Manisha made a healthy choice for herself, not all women who smoke do so.



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

In fact, several studies by the Global Adult Tobacco Survey, National Family Health Survey and National Sample Survey done up to 2012 indicate smoking among women has doubled with each passing decade in India. It was 2.2% of the female population above 15 years in 1980 and is predicted to rise to 20% by 2025, according to the World Health Organization.

"This is a serious and unique public health issue, with an

enormous consequence not only for women's health but also their families," warns Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, an oncologist at Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital. "Women not only share most of the health risks of smoking with men (such as cancer of the lungs and gastrointestinal tract) but also face additional health hazards like adverse pregnancy outcomes and increased cardiovascular risks," he adds. Here, four



FACT ON FAT

Smoking causes women to develop a male pattern of fat distribution (more belly fat instead of buttock fat). This is associated with high blood sugar and low HDL cholesterol.



Cigarettes go to the heart

Women smokers are at greater risk of heart attacks and paralytic brain strokes. The hormone oestrogen is naturally heart-protective. When oestrogen levels are diminished, HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol) is reduced and triglycerides go

up. "As a result, the clotting tendency of blood increases and the heart muscle becomes electrically unstable. The natural protection that women have, against atherosclerotic disease of blood vessels and heart attacks before menopause, is removed by tobacco smoke," says Dr K Srinath Reddy, a cardiologist and the president of Public Health Foundation of India.

According to her, risks of stillbirth, neonatal death and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) are also increased because maternal smoking raises the catecholamine production which can lead to under perfusion of the foetoplacental unit. This is even if you quit as soon as you conceive.

The health effects of smoking in a population become pronounced after 20 to 30 years of the habit adopted by a sizeable percentage of young adults. With the number of female smokers increasing in India, there is no reason to think that they would be spared the serious health effects," says Dr Raina.

Osteoporosis can sneak up

Orthopaedic surgeon, Dr M Mithran, based out of Madurai, says since oestrogen is depleted in post-menopausal women, smoking can cause further suppression in the production of the hormone and lead to an early onset of bone mineral density reduction. A research paper in *The British Medical Journal* claims that women who smoke one pack of cigarettes a day, often experience a loss of bone density equalling 5% to 10% more than non-smokers by the time they reach menopause.

■ Despite the number of female smokers growing at a faster rate than male smokers in the last two decades, awareness campaigns show men smoking. It isn't a wasted effort: the prevalence of cigarette smoking among men in India has fallen to 23% in this decade from 33.8% in the 1980s. Smoking among women doubled during the corresponding period.

health effects of smoking that make it worse for women.

Smoking affects fertility and hurts the unborn baby

Why blow it up in smoke? "Women smokers are at a greater risk of infertility. They may face difficulty in conceiving, suffer miscarriages or ectopic pregnancies. They may give birth to pre-term, low-weight or Intra-Uterine Growth Restriction babies, as the nicotine from tobacco reduces the placental blood flow and impedes foetal brain development," says Dr Revathy Janakiraman, a Madurai-based gynaecologist.

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An increased risk of breast cancer

Most studies on the impact of smoking on women are based on populations in the West, says Dr Vinod Raina, Director Medical Oncology at Fortis, Gurugram. The Breast Cancer Now Generations Study tracked 113,000 women in the UK for 40 years and found that those who smoked may be 14% more likely to develop breast cancer, compared to never-smokers.

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PEANUTS

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Q&A

Is it okay to sit with the legs crossed (one leg over the other knee and foot dangling)?

■ Ideally not. Over many years, this may result in the tightening of muscles, with the dangling impacting an unnecessary load on the spine. Also, you may not be conscious, but you may use one leg predominantly over the other. This will cause asymmetry in the long run. When seated on a chair, your knee should be at 90 degrees, and the complete foot should rest on the floor, with equal weight on heel and toe.

My husband and I are in our 70s, and find it difficult to go for a walk. Is it worth investing in any equipment for us to exercise at home?

■ You can rig up a home gym, investing in a treadmill, or an exercise bike, or an elliptical training machine for aerobic exercise. An exercise tube and Swiss ball also help for strength training. However, you can try and go to a park twice a week to walk.

My son is 12 years old and training to be a gymnast. He repeatedly gets small painful cysts over his knuckles. We have met doctors, but no one has a solution. What should we do now?

■ Try and meet a general surgeon, as this doesn't look like an orthopaedic problem, rather a local tissue problem, because that part of the body does not come into contact

with the training equipment.

I'm 15, 5'8, 55kg and I want to start working out with the main goal of increasing my arm strength. What exercises do you recommend?

■ Push-ups are multi-joint exercises that do a lot of good for arm strength and upper-body strength in general. You can move from a wall push-up to a bench push-up to the ground. You may not be able to see any bulk, because you are still in the growth phase, but your strength will go up. When doing any arm exercise, three sets of 10 reps is ideal. You can go to the gym at this stage, but make sure to do moderate-intensity training (where you feel tired after, but not burnt out), so your growth is not affected.

Is it true that you won't be able to grow taller if you develop abs?

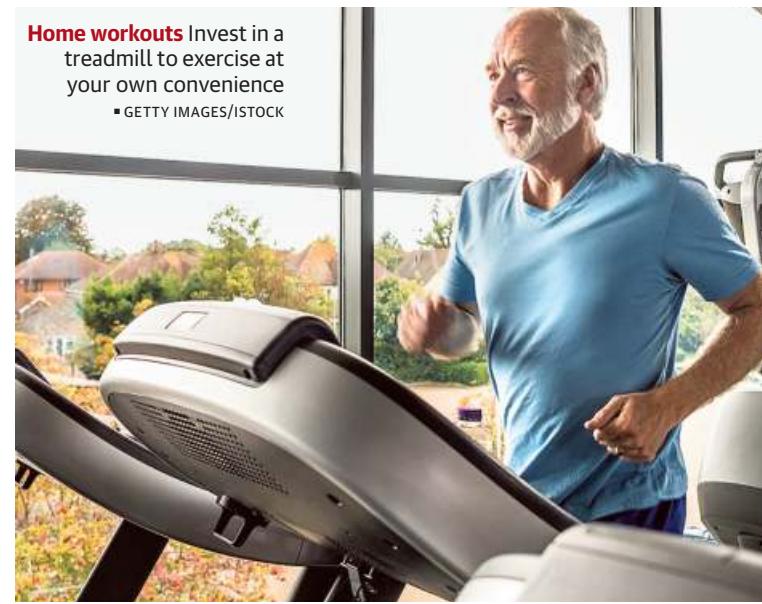
■ Developing abs muscles is not an impediment to growing taller. The blueprint of height is in your genes, so exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet, to optimise growth.

Dr Kannan Pugazhendi is a renowned sports physician and fitness consultant with over two decades of experience

Nothing in this column is intended to be, and is not, a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please seek independent advice from a licensed practitioner if you have any questions regarding a medical condition. Email us your questions at mp_health@thehindu.co.in

Home workouts Invest in a treadmill to exercise at your own convenience

■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



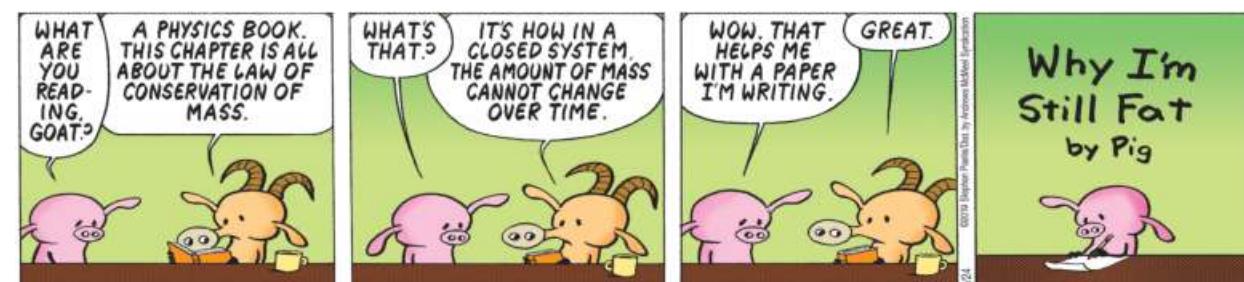
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PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



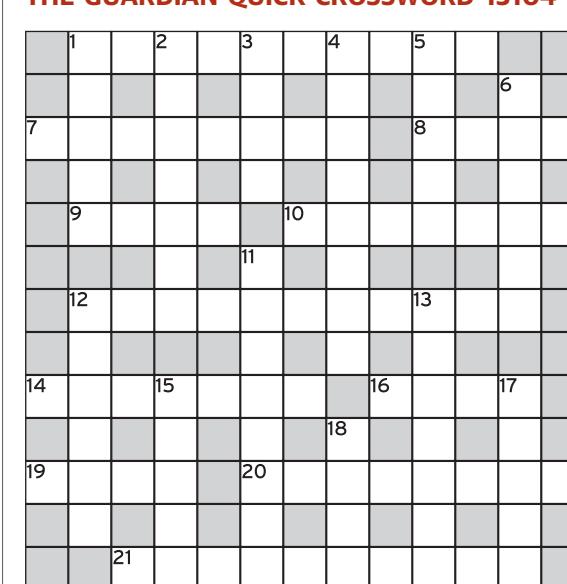
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



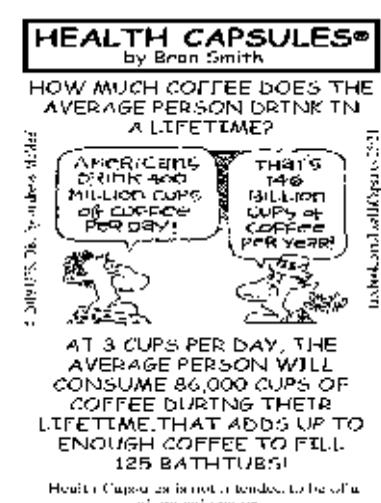
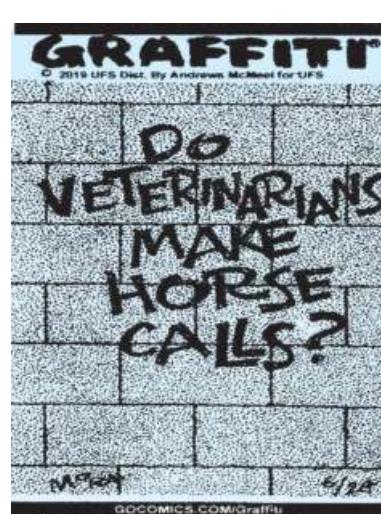
THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13104



- 2 Pals (7)
3 Tug (4)
4 Remain too long (8)
5 Prince of Darkness (5)
6 Part of the eye (6)
11 Slow-moving reptile (8)
12 Energy (6)
13 Pungent gas (7)
15 Illuminated (3,2)
17 Coin-tossing call (5)
18 Group of countries (4)

Solution will appear in *The Hindu* dated June 25, 2019.

Solution No. 13103



- Across
1 Once popular child's toy - favourite topic (5,5)
2 Circumspection - girl's name (8)
3 Old-fashioned pronoun (4)
4 Spanker or spinnaker, for example (4)
5 Stupid (7)
6 Portuguese (5)
■ Down
14 Nimbleness (7)
15 Leave out (4)
16 Hit with the head (4)
17 The Prairie State (8)
18 Posh (5-5)
19 Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme (5)

C	U	F		C	O	M	P	A	R	E	D
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IN BRIEF



China's Qu Dongyu to head UN food agency

ROME
Qu Dongyu on Sunday became the first Chinese national to be elected to head the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Mr. Qu, 55, is a biologist by training. AFP



Swimming in oceans ups infection risk: study

WASHINGTON
According to a study, swimming in the ocean alters the skin microbiome and may increase the likelihood of gastrointestinal and respiratory illness and ear and skin infection. PTI

New sports hub



Grand opening: Guests waiting outside the Olympic House, the International Olympic Committee's new headquarters, after its inauguration in Lausanne, Switzerland. It marks the 125th anniversary of the IOC, which was founded on June 23, 1894. ■ REUTERS

Flying taxis to ease Olympic traffic

Vertical take-off & landing vehicles can cut travel time during the 2024 Games in Paris

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LE BOURGET

Paris aims to give visitors to the 2024 Paris Olympics a flying start by offering airborne taxis to tournament sites straight from the airport.

Arrivals in the City of Light currently face an hour-long haul by train or bus from Charles de Gaulle airport to the north of Paris.

But if Airbus and airport managers - Aerports de Paris (ADP) and the RATP regional transport - have their way, passengers, right after their flight lands on the runway, will be able to take to the air once again with an urban taxi of the future.

At last week's Paris Air Show, the companies said that the Olympics offered

Australian watchdog prepares for clampdown on tech giants

Report slams 'lack of transparency' in their operations, handling of personal data

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australia's competition watchdog is poised to call for far-reaching new regulations on Facebook, Google and other tech giants, which could have global ramifications for how they make money and choose the content people consume.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's recommendations, if confirmed, would be among the strongest yet in a drive to rein in the power of digital behemoths amid a host of worldwide concerns ranging from anti-trust issues to privacy abuse, and their role in spreading disinformation and hateful content.

Following an 18-month inquiry into the power of digital platforms, the ACCC is



Report expected to flag use of 'opaque' algorithms for ranking search results, ads and content. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

due to issue its final report by June 30.

It is expected to include proposals for sweeping controls over tech companies' handling of personal data and their use of "opaque" algorithms to rank how they display advertisements, search results and content.

In a 328-page preliminary

report issued in December, the ACCC had raised alarm over the "substantial" market power wielded by the likes of Google and Facebook, and notably the "lack of transparency" in their operations.

"We are at a critical point in considering the impact of digital platforms on society,"

said the report, initiated by the conservative government at the behest of Australia's main media organisations.

Impact on news industry

The report focussed particular attention on the huge impact Google and Facebook have had on Australia's news industry, with the number of newspaper and online journalists falling more than 20% since 2014 as digital advertising revenues were overwhelmingly captured by the two tech titans.

"While the ACCC recognises their significant benefits to consumers and businesses, there are important questions about the role the digital platforms play in the supply of news and journalism in Australia," it said.

Climate activists end their blockade

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN

Hundreds of climate activists called an end to their protest on Sunday inside one of Germany's biggest open-pit mines after police repeatedly ordered them to leave, citing life-threatening danger, and authorities pulled some protesters out.

The Garzweiler lignite coal mine has been the focal point of environmental protests in Germany since Friday, when 40,000 students rallied for more government action against climate change.

"We wrote climate history this weekend," the activist group End of Story said. "Our movement has never been so diverse and never been so determined."

Earlier, some protesters blocked the railroad tracks used to transport coal.

Is your house cat ready for an adventurous trip?

Felines are territorial and like routine'



Baged fluffy: Malaya Fletcher carries her cat, Copurricus, in a backpack in Philadelphia, U.S. ■ NYT

training felines for adventure that some owners of leashed cats say inspired them to bring their pets into the great outdoors.

Being independent

But is it a good idea to put a feline on a leash and harness when they are accustomed to moving around according to their own agenda? Can imposing our desires for a cat to take on a role similar to that of a dog possibly be harmful to the animal?

Each cat has its own interests and personality – all of which adds up to either wanting to be outside or not, Mr. McMillan said.

One cat owner in Portland, Oregon has tried for a year to walk her "bad boys." She's been able to take her cats out on leashes, but has hardly made it past her driveway without one of them running up a tree and the other heading back inside.

Cats have a reputation of being independent. They are believed to have domesticated themselves thousands of years ago, instead of being purposefully domesticated by humans. So putting them in harnesses for a walk can be especially challenging if it's something they don't want to do.

Felines are also territorial and like routine. So "the idea of taking cats to different territories at different times" is counterintuitive to what we know about cats," said Mikel Delgado, a researcher. NY TIMES

Plants may be spreading superbugs to humans

Spell threat to global public health

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LOS ANGELES

Plant-based foods can transmit antibiotic resistance to the microbes living in our gut, a study has found.

Antibiotic-resistant infections are a threat to global public health, food safety and an economic burden.

To prevent these infections, it is critical to understand how these bacteria are transmitted.

"Our findings highlight the importance of tackling food-borne antibiotic-resistance from a food chain perspective, including plant-foods and meat," said Marlene Maeusli, a PhD candidate at the University of Southern California.

Spread of antibiotic-resistant superbugs from plants to humans is different from outbreaks of diarrhoeal ill-

nesses caused immediately after eating contaminated vegetables. Superbugs can asymptotically hide in (colonise) the intestines for months or even years, and while escaping, cause an infection.

The researchers developed a novel, lettuce-mouse model system that does not cause immediate illness to mimic consumption of superbugs with plant-foods.

They grew lettuce, exposed it to antibiotic-resistant E. coli, and fed it to mice. Later, they analysed their faecal samples over a period of time.

"We found differences in the ability of bacteria to silently colonise the gut after ingestion, depending on a variety of host and bacterial factors," said Mr. Maeusli.

Device to trap ocean plastic relaunches

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SAN FRANCISCO

A floating device designed to catch plastic waste has been redeployed in a second attempt to clean up an island of trash swirling in the Pacific Ocean between California and Hawaii.

Boyan Slat, creator of The Ocean Cleanup project, said on Twitter that the 2,000-foot long floating boom that broke apart late last year was sent back to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch this week after four months of repair.

A ship towed the barrier from San Francisco to the patch in September to trap the plastic but it broke apart under constant waves and wind.



Urban mobility: Vahana, an experimental flying taxi by Airbus, on display at Le Bourget Airport near Paris. ■ REUTERS

the perfect opportunity to bring into service futuristic Vertical Take-off and Landing machines, and that they would launch a feasibility study.

"In 2010, for the first time, more than half of humanity was living in urban zones

and we think we shall surpass 60% by 2030," said Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury.

The time had now come to vault up to "the third dimension" of local commutes – air, he said.

VTOL converts are already sprouting in number as

Back on the ground, the view has been muddied by a delay beyond the Games, to 2025, of the express fast train designed to cut congestion and travel time between Charles de Gaulle airport and the city centre.

For aircraft manufacturer Airbus, ADP and RATP, which manages Parisian public transport services, the Games are a chance to showcase French savoir-faire in urban transport.

In order to make VTOL a reality by 2024, ADP is working alongside Airbus. The manufacturer has two prototype models – the single-seater "Vahana" and the four-seater variant "CityAirbus".

"A lot of young people don't even know that Britain

TV show to inform youth about British colonialism

Beecham House, the six-part series, will air on ITV

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

British-Indian filmmaker Gurinder Chadha, hopes her new Raj era television show about an East India Company officer, which hit the TV screens in the U.K. on Sunday, will help inform youth about the history of Britain's colonial past.

Beecham House, a six-part television series for the ITV channel, is filmed in Jaipur.

It is the story of a former soldier, John Beecham, who arrives in India to settle down with his family in Delhi.

"A lot of young people

had an empire because it is not taught in schools and perhaps one of the reasons it's not, is actually because it's an uncomfortable period in British history," said Ms. Chadha, the co-creator, writer

and director of the series.

The show has been widely dubbed as 'Downton in Delhi' after another popular period drama on ITV called *Downton Abbey* set in the early 1900s in England.

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The show has been widely dubbed as 'Downton in Delhi' after another popular period drama on ITV called *Downton Abbey* set in the early 1900s in England.

Behind the wheel: Saudi women savour new freedom

A year on, the reform has freed many women from their dependence on chauffeurs and male relatives

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
QATAR

Buckling up in a pearl-silver Lexus, Sabeeha al-Fakher takes the wheel and relegates her son to the passenger seat, a role reversal the 68-year-old Saudi widow never imagined would be possible in her lifetime.

Until June 24 last year, the act would have been considered a crime in Saudi Arabia, where hardliners have preached for decades that allowing women to drive would promote gender mixing and promiscuity.

Overtaking the world's only ban on female drivers has potentially put thousands of women behind the wheel in the most visible symbol of the conservative

kingdom's modernisation drive.

Among them is Fakher, a mother-of-five who never thought she would see the reform, which ushered in a new era of freedom and mobility for women.

"I still don't believe it," she said, zipping past younger drivers in her native eastern city of Qatif.

Her husband, who passed away a decade ago, secretly taught her how to drive during trips to neighbouring Bahrain in the 1990s, despite the risk of infuriating family patriarchs.

The reform has freed many Saudi women from their dependence on private chauffeurs and male relatives.

"We felt like (we were) in a cage before," said Munirah al-Sinani, a 72-year-old mother of four, driving in the nearby city of Dhahran with her husband in the passenger seat.

But as authorities detained several veteran women's rights campaigners in the weeks before the ban was lifted, it became clear that the reform drive would not include greater political freedoms.

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However, with the kingdom tightening its purse strings amid low oil prices, their new-found mobility allows the women to join a labour market chronically short of female workers.

givable until recently.

But in a society steeped in conservatism, many say that they have endured sexism and aggression.

Arson attacks

Social media is rife with memes of traffic pileups blamed on women drivers, along with condescending messages advising women to "avoid wearing make up" while driving.

More alarmingly, arsonists "opposed to female drivers" torched a woman's car near the holy city of Mecca last July, the Saudi media reported.

Since then the local media has reported at least five more arson attacks on women-driven cars in several cities.

Brain treats information, money the same way

A common neural code exists for both

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LOS ANGELES

"To the brain, information is its own reward, above and beyond whether it's useful," said Ming Hsu, from University of California, Berkeley in the U.S.

"We were able to demonstrate for the first time the existence of a common neural code for information and money, which opens the door to a number of exciting questions about how people consume, and sometimes over-consume, information," said Mr. Hsu.

"And just as our brains like empty calories from junk food, they can overvalue information that makes us feel good but may not be useful – what some may call idle curiosity," Mr. Hsu said.



Way forward: Around three million women could receive licences by 2020, according to consultancy firm PwC. ■ AFP