



U.S. clears \$125 million in sales for monitoring Pakistan's F-16 jets
page 10



Ratul Puri, Kamal Nath's nephew, gets interim relief in Agusta case
page 11



Not intimidated by CBI summons in Saradha scam: Derek O'Brien
page 11



Hamilton takes the pole at the German Grand Prix
page 18

NEARBY



Pakistan using deceit over Kashmir: Modi

NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the victory in the Kargil war a "symbol of India's might, determination and capability". Speaking at the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the war in New Delhi, Mr. Modi said that "wars are fought not by governments but by the whole country".

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Nagaland forms panel to frame RIIN modalities

KOHIMA
The Nagaland government on Saturday set up a commission to frame the modalities of creating the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland, officials said. The RIIN, a register of all the indigenous inhabitants of the State, is required to prevent issuance of indigenous inhabitant certificates to ineligible persons, they added.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 7

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MAGAZINE ▶ 32 PAGES (TABLOID)
CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGES 4 & 6

1,050 passengers rescued from stranded train near Mumbai

NDRF, Army, Navy engage in 10-hour rescue after flood waters inundate tracks



A train marooned: This screen grab from a video footage taken by the IAF shows the Mahalaxmi Express stranded between Badlapur and Vangani on Saturday. ■ AFP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A coordinated operation of the NDRF, the Army and the Navy on Saturday rescued over a thousand passengers stranded on the Mumbai-Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Express near Badlapur, following heavy overnight rains that inundated large swathes of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

The train that left Mumbai on Friday night could not proceed beyond Vangani in Thane district, around 65 km from Mumbai, as the Ulhas river near Badlapur burst its banks, leading to water-logging on the tracks.

SOS sent

The first SOS on the train was sent out at 5.25 a.m. A coordinated response was initiated by the Maharashtra government.

In the 10-hour rescue operation, seven Navy units, two helicopters of the Indian Air Force, and four Army columns retrieved 1,050 passengers, including nine pregnant women, from the 20 marooned coaches. The operation was monitored by the Western Naval Command, the Army, the Air Force, Maharashtra's Chief

Secretary and Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nitayanand Rai.

NDRF teams were the first to reach the site with six inflatable boats at 9.43 a.m. They were joined by the Western Naval Command with three diving units, a Sea King helicopter with divers on board and several auto-inflatable crafts. The first seven passengers were evacuated at 10.05 a.m. By 2.00 p.m., all the passengers were evacuated and brought to the Sahyadri Mangal Karavay in Badlapur.

Special train

A special train from Kalyan departed at 6.10 p.m. carrying the evacuated passengers through the Manmad line to Kolhapur, railway officials said. "We received unprecedented rainfall in a short period. Our first objective was to reach the train and ensure that passengers do not de-board in panic. This was a first-of-its-kind evacuation undertaken on this scale in Maharashtra," said Sunil Udasi, Chief Public Relation Officer, Central Railway.

LACK OF INFO LEFT PASSENGERS ON THE EDGE ▶ PAGE 9

A big takeoff

Dec 14, 2018: AAI publishes its request for proposal for six airports

Feb. 25&26: AAI declares Adani Enterprises Ltd. the highest bidder for all six airports

July 3: Union Cabinet approves leasing of Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Mangalore airports



project cost upfront for each of the airports, to better determine the financial capability of interested players.

SPECIAL

Key suggestions

DELHI Timings		
SUNDAY, JULY 28		
RISE 05:40	SET 19:15	
RISE 01:45	SET 15:41	
MONDAY, JULY 29		
RISE 05:41	SET 19:15	
RISE 02:33	SET 16:43	
TUESDAY, JULY 30		
RISE 05:42	SET 19:14	
RISE 03:28	SET 17:45	

Delhi Weather		
max	min	
Delhi City	32	25
Safdarjung	32	25
Palam	31	25

Delhi Palam Today		
32°C	Comfortable weather lies ahead. Few spells of rain or thundershower are likely.	

Delhi Palam Tomorrow		
35°C	Rise in day temperatures is likely. Mainly dry and warm weather would prevail.	

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi	61	Gurugram -
Ghaziabad	52	Faridabad 52
Noida	53	Greater Noida 39
Good 0-50	51-100	101-200
Poor 201-300	301-400	>401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M., YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]		

IN BRIEF



Minister inaugurates Digi Seva Kendra

NEW DELHI Power Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday inaugurated the Digi Seva Kendra (DSK) at Paschim Vihar here which seeks to provide seamless 'single window digital services' to lakhs of the Capital's residents. Modelled on the lines of Passport Seva Kendras, the Kendra provides digital experience even at physical locations and is also replete with Door Step Service (DSS) for senior citizens, differently abled and the medically ill. Four more DSKs are in the pipeline that will take its count to 11.

Pass percentage in govt. schools has gone up'

STAFF REPORTER

The pass percentage of government school students studying in Class 12 has reached 96.5% while that of Class 10 students has crossed 80%, the Delhi government said here on Saturday. It credited special classes at such schools for "saving" as many as 20,000 students from repeating an academic year.

The pass percentage of Delhi government schools had now gone up by 9.7% points in Class 10 and 2.3% points in Class 12 after factoring the compartment results as well.

"For us, every child matters. I am proud of our teachers who conducted special classes for students during summer vacation and ensured that students placed in compartment not only take the exam but also pass it," Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who also holds the education portfolio, said.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Rosalind Wilson Memorial Lecture 2019: "Judging the Judges: Need for Transparency and Accountability" by Justice Ajit P. Shah, Chair: Soli J. Sorabjee, Life Trustee, IIC, at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 6:30 p.m.

Talk: Ambarish Dava will recite verses from the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, selected by Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi at Raman Kendra, Lodhi Road, 5 p.m.

Dance: A solo Kathak recital by Dhriti Swarop, a disciple of Padmashri Dr. Shovana Narayan at Triveni Auditorium, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205 Tansen Marg, 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition: "+ - Iconic Forces", a solo painting show by Suman Sen Gupta. The exhibition portrays the co-existence of duality throughout human history at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Theatre: "Gudamba", a monologue Urdu presentation will be part of the ongoing Urdu Drama festival organised by the Ghalib Institute, Alwan-e-Ghalib Marg, 6:30 p.m.

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

Govt. draws flak after NGT bans stone crushers in Mahendragarh

Swaraj India hits out at authorities, alleges 'nexus between officials and owners'

VIKAS VASUDEVA

CHANDIGARH

Hitting out at the BJP government over illegally operating stone crushers in Mahendragarh district of Haryana, the Swaraj India party on Saturday said it has exposed the "nexus between government officials and those involved in running illegal crushers in the State".

The National Green Tribunal had on July 24 ordered immediate closure of all illegal, pollution-causing stone crushers in the district.

"The NGT order exposes the collusion of owners of illegal crushers and the government machinery. We hope that now the State government and the local administration will respect the order and spirit of the NGT and take strict action against erring officials and others," said Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav.

Prosecution, penalty
The NGT also directed the Deputy Commissioner of Mahendragarh to ensure immediate initiation of action by way of prosecution and recovery of compensation which must be "deterrent



The NGT ordered immediate closure of all illegal, pollution-causing stone crushers in the Haryana district. ■ FILE PHOTO

and relatable to the cost of restoration" so that the illegal activity is not profitable.

The order came on a petition by Mahender Singh and Tejpal Yadav, who complained that the location of the illegal stone crushers was close to plantation, reserved forest and educational institution. Besides, the area is overexploited in terms of groundwater, resulting in scarcity of water even for drinking purpose, the petition stated.

The NGT, which had sought factual and action-taken report from a joint committee, comprising representatives of the Deputy Commissioner, Mahendragarh; District Town and

Blatant violation

"The report shows the State administration in poor light. There is no explanation as to how potable water has continued to be drawn without any restriction by the State administration even though the area is critical in terms of groundwater... It is also not

Country Planning, Haryana State Pollution Control Board; and the Divisional Forest Officer, pointed out in its order that two reports submitted earlier were filed without "application of mind and were rejected". The third report, too, was found "inadequate to deal with the matter", said the NGT.

Clearing violation

The order added that the Haryana Chief Secretary may look into the conduct of the officers who gave the earlier reports for "withholding the information" which has now been revealed.

We hope that now the State government and the local administration will respect the order and spirit of the NGT and take strict action against erring officials and others

YOGENDRA YADAV
Swaraj India president

clear as to how blatant violation of air quality norms is being allowed for permitting operation of stone crusher units.. The report does not clarify as to how many stone crushers, if any, are legitimate and do not conflict with the environment. It appears that the State administration has not cared to fully verify the compliance of environmental norms while permitting continuation of the stone crushers, even after proceedings before this tribunal," the NGT observed.

"For category "B" projects, such data validation

Draw up action plan for revamping existing mechanisms: NGT to MoEF

To ensure effective monitoring of environmental clearances

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Following a plea that questioned the effectiveness of current monitoring mechanisms for compliance of environmental clearances granted to various projects, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Union Environment Ministry to draw up an action plan for "revamping the existing mechanisms".

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "...with regard to category "A" projects, the data validation has to be the primary concern of the MoEF&CC [Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change] and ought not be outsourced."

"For category "B" projects, such data validation

may be done through SEIAA [State Environment Impact Assessment Authority]. It is necessary to have an action plan providing for revamping the existing mechanism by providing 100% monitoring of category "A" projects through the mechanism of regional offices of the MoEF&CC and the CPCB [Central Pollution Control Board]," the Bench observed.

Serious challenges

Directing authorities to furnish the action plan within one month, the Bench observed, "The need for 100% monitoring of category "A" projects is necessary in view of serious challenges of environment faced by the country in the form of there being 100 polluted industrial clusters,

ters, 351 polluted river stretches and 102 non-attainment cities, apart from other serious issues."

The directions came after submissions made by the Environment Ministry pertaining to third-party monitoring mechanisms.

Earlier, the green panel had directed the Ministry to "evolve an appropriate" mechanism to ensure effective monitoring of the environmental clearances granted.

Following allegations that there was "flagrant violation of conditions of environmental clearance and adequate monitoring was not taking place," the tribunal in October last year had observed that "compliance of conditions of EC must be monitored on a periodical basis, at least once a quarter".

NGT seeks report from SDMC over desilting

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking execution of a 2016 order passed by the National Green Tribunal that had directed authorities to desilt a drain on the Mehrauli-Badarpur Road, the green panel has sought a status report from the South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Around 600 million people are facing acute water crisis in the country.

Millions of litres of fresh potable water are being wasted in the absence of appropriate regulations or action plans

NGT BENCH

water has "assumed alarming proportions," the petition stated, "The demand from water is expected to grow from 40 billion cubic metres currently to around 220 billion cubic metres in 2025...[the situation] is worsening by the day and needs to be arrested for the future generations."

Punishable offence
The Bench observed, "The applicant accordingly seeks directions to the Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change to take measures under [relevant sections] and to all States and Union Territories to make wastage or misuse of water through overflowing tanks or otherwise, a punishable offence."

The green tribunal posted the matter for August 28. Stating that wastage of

water has "assumed alarming proportions," the petition stated, "The demand from water is expected to grow from 40 billion cubic metres currently to around 220 billion cubic metres in 2025...[the situation] is worsening by the day and needs to be arrested for the future generations."

Facing crisis
Noting the allegations made in the plea, the Bench observed, "Around 600 million people are facing acute water crisis in the country.

Millions of litres of fresh potable water are being wasted in the absence of appropriate regulations or action plans."

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by the Shri Shri Thakur Ram Chandra Dev Association that had sought directions to the government and civic bodies to "undertake regular cleaning and desilting of the drains abutting the temple complex to avoid waterlogging in future".

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Kin question intention of accused who killed boy over theft suspicion

Family members say victim was just 'roaming around' in neighbourhood with brother

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after a 16-year-old boy was beaten to death on the suspicion of being involved in a theft, his family members on Saturday claimed that he did not enter the house for burglary but was "roaming around".

Found on rail track
"He was roaming in the area when the accused caught and thrashed him brutally. Later, they threw him on a railway track," said a relative of the victim.

The police said the incident happened in Adarsh

Nagar's Lal Bagh when the boy sneaked out of his house with his brother while his family members were sleeping.

He had entered the house to allegedly commit burglary but was caught red-handed by the owner.

"We were sleeping together and don't know where and when they went at night. On Friday morning, there was a huge crowd near the railway track when someone informed us that our boy was lying there," said the teenager's family.

He was the eldest of six siblings and his mother

died three years ago. His father, who was a plumber, had stopped working due to his health issues. His grandmother, who has a shop in the area, bears the expenses.

'Why did they kill him?'
"Had he been a thief, they would have recovered some stolen items from him. If he had stolen anything, they should have informed us. Why did they kill him?" the victim's grandmother said.

However, the accused said the boy was previously involved in other robbery

cases. "He had snatched the mobile phone of my son earlier. On Friday, when he entered our house, my son saw him and tried to catch him. The boy went up to the terrace and jumped off. My son chased and nabbed him. Meanwhile, the neighbours gathered and started beating him," said Anita, the wife of the homeowner.

A first information report under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered and the homeowner and five others, including a minor, have been nabbed.

Woman stabbed to death in Jangpura: brother wants accused hanged

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

"I don't care about his [accused] religion... I want him to be hanged," said Nirdosh, brother of the woman who was stabbed to death in Jangpura on Friday evening.

Preeti Mathur, 21, was stabbed six times with a knife by Mohammad Munsair in Bhogal, the police said.

Fifty-three-year-old Giri Lal, who got injured while trying to rescue the woman, said the attacker was brandishing the knife to keep the locals away. "I hit him with a plastic rod but he kept stabbing the woman. Then he attacked me but by that time, she had collapsed. I then caught him after which the other shopkeepers started beating him," said Mr. Lal.

Arvind Tiwari, a salesman, said he saw a man talking to the victim when suddenly he attacked her with a knife. She started running but he held her and attacked her again. "She kept asking for help but the accused was so brutal that no one stepped forward," said Mr. Tiwari. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-East) Chinmoy Biswas said the accused and the victim used to stay in the same locality in Sarai Kale Khan and had known each other. But due to some reason, the woman had stopped talking to Munsair, he added. "We did not get any complaint regarding stalking or misbehavior against the accused. He is undergoing treatment after being beaten by the locals," said Mr. Biswas.

Preeti's brother said Munsair had misbehaved with her after which he was asked by the landlord to vacate the house. Munsair had then shifted to a new house in the same locality. "My sister was pursuing BA. I never thought that I will not have her around in rakhi," said Nirdosh. Munsair, an unemployed man, earlier worked at Safdarjung Hospital as a sweeper. A video of the incident is doing the rounds.

Couple found dead inside IIT-D campus fought often

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following the case where three of a family were found dead inside their flat in IIT-Delhi campus on Friday, the police on Saturday said they did not recover any note from the spot.

DCP (South-West) Devendra Arya said a PCR call was received at 11 p.m. on Friday stating that a woman was unable to reach her daughter, who lives with her in-laws in IIT-Delhi campus, over the phone. A team reached the spot and found the flat to be locked from inside. "They broke open the main door and found a man, his wife, and his mother hanging in separate rooms," said Mr. Arya. The man worked at the institution.

During investigation, it was found that the couple used to fight often. The woman's mother had registered a complaint of domestic violence against her son-in-law on July 7.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, Telephone: 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -7.30 p.m.

AAP demands strong law against mob lynching

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday urged the Central government to come up with a strong law against mob lynching.

Referring to a case in Adarsh Nagar here, where a

16-year-old boy was allegedly lynched after being caught for stealing on Friday, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh demanded a strict inquiry into the case. "It's a very unfortunate incident. Will mob decide justice in this country?" he said.

He said the Supreme Court had also told the Centre in 2018 that there should be a law on mob lynching. "Not just Muslims or Dalits, but now anyone is being killed," Mr. Singh said. "Many bills are passed in the Parliament without

any discussion or without any scrutiny and without being sent to any committees. When will a law be made on mob lynching, which is becoming a blot on our society? I want to ask this to the Centre," he added.

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Narendra Modi
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MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

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Case No Bar Ct: 984027370 / 9709103052

HINDU DEVAR parents - CNB - invite

alliance for daughter born 1986

55/50k, BE/SWE working in USA

prefers boy working

AIIMS doctors wear badges to protest against NMC Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Resident doctors and students at AIIMS here wore black badges to work on Saturday in a symbolic protest against the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill which, they alleged, was "anti-poor".

Doctors and medical students across the country have been opposing the Bill, which was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 22 by Health and Family Welfare Minister Harsh Vardhan.

The resident doctors of AIIMS were seen wearing black badges in ICUs, emergency block, wards and operation theatres on Saturday.

Protests were being organised in various parts of the country against the Bill on the call of the Indian Medical Association.

Minister opens OPD, labs at Safdarjung Hospital

Geriatric OPD for elderly to be open every Sunday starting today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"Health has been positioned as one of the top agenda of the government and today's development reflects that the Prime Minister is committed to fundamentally transform the country and give quality health services to the people," said Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Harsh Vardhan on Saturday.

Facilities include
He was speaking at the inauguration of a host of facilities at Safdarjung Hospital, including a geriatric Sunday OPD, 3T MRI facility, biplane cardiac catheterization laboratory and ESWL-Lab.

While interacting with the staff, paramedics, and doctors at the emergency block,



Union Health Minister
Harsh Vardhan.

Sunday starting from today [July 28] in the main OPD complex and specialties including, medicine, general surgery, ENT, ophthalmology, and orthopedics will be provided.

The OPD timings will be from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and registration timings will be 9 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. Patients would be asked to come on the day of the OPD of the respective unit for follow-up visits.

The dispensary will issue medicines from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. The required laboratory and radiological investigations will be done through emergency services of New Emergency Block (NEB) as already being done for emergency patients, said a release issued by the Health Ministry.

Man acquitted in robbery case as complainant turns hostile

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has acquitted an accused in a robbery case as the complainant refused to identify him in the trial.

He told in his deposition that he had identified the accused in the Test Identification Parade (TIP) as the person who had robbed his

scooty and ₹1.5 lakh cash at the instance of the investigating officer. The accused had chased him before robbing him, the complainant said. "He had identified the accused at the behest of the probe officer who had shown the photograph of the accused before the TIP proceedings," the complainant said in his evidence.

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Economy Sales: 23539218

Two kanwariyas die in separate incidents

Six persons are undergoing treatment

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men, who were going for dak kanwar, died on Saturday in two separate incidents, the police said.

In the first incident, a 24-year-old man died while three others were injured after a truck rammed another in west Delhi, they said. The police said they received information about the accident near Sagarpur bus stand at 2.41 a.m.

"Investigation stated that a few persons were going for dak kanwar in a truck from Bindapur. They had stopped to cover the vehicle with canvas when it started to pour. The truck was parked on the roadside near Sagarpur bus stand when another truck rammed it. One died while three others were injured," an officer said.

The injured – Vijay Thakur, truck driver, Ankit (27) and Abhishek (27) both from Sagarpur are undergoing treatment, they said. Mohit from Delhi Cantt died during treatment in Safdarjung

CISF launches encyclopaedia to strengthen security services

Portal includes videos, case studies

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The Central Industrial Security Force launched an online encyclopaedia – Securitypedia – which incorporates a wide gamut of security-related practices across the globe, said a CISF spokesperson on Saturday.

The CISF has established a technical lab at National Industrial Security Academy (NISA) in Hyderabad to maintain and update technical knowledge about the latest innovations in the field safety and security that can be used in places like airports and government offices, he added.

The technical lab has a dedicated research and development wing manned by a team of officers with a technical background, who maintain a constant interface with various academic and research institutions and other professional agencies, said a CISF official.

"Depending upon the outreach and feedback, the Securitypedia will be made accessible to other paramilitary forces," he said, adding that moving ahead with digital India, there was a need to empower the personnel by making technical knowledge available to them at the click of a button.

Officials can blog
"It is not just a static website containing data archives but a platform where CISF officials can contribute by writing blogs on professional is-



The newly launched portal of the CISF.

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

sues. It has been developed as a repository of knowledge and contains extensive information on technical learning, CISF manuals, case studies, technical compendium, etc," said the official. There is also a feature in Securitypedia – CISF Tube – where officials can find all videos relevant to CISF. To streamline the monitoring of field units on a day-to-day basis, they have developed an innovative dashboard that provides real-time data collection.

The technical research and development lab of CISF has been actively engaged with national-level research institutions such as the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) to leverage the technological solutions they can offer.

To achieve the objective, CISF has been assisting the National Center of Excellence in Technology for Internal Security (NCETIS) at IIT-Mumbai in the evaluation of products, said the spokesperson.

Patparganj gets fourth mohalla clinic

Four more to come up in the area by November, says Deputy Chief Minister

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday inaugurated a mohalla clinic in Patparganj, the Assembly constituency from which he has been elected as an MLA.

This is the fourth mohalla clinic in the constituency and four more are expected to come up by November. "One clinic had to be demolished

because of the petty politics of the BJP, which we have now built here. We have plans for more. Soon, Patparganj will have eight mohalla clinics," Mr. Sisodia said.

'Doctor within 1 km'
"The government is working on the health and education of its citizens in a manner never done before in India.

We have a dream for Delhi – if you fall ill anywhere in the city, an MBBS doctor should be available within 1 km to treat you. Whichever area you live in, whether you have money in your pocket or not, you will have a doctor to treat you," said Mr. Sisodia.

He added, "Sometimes one thinks that instead of working very hard for the past 4.5 years, what did we get in return? What we get in return is the smile on the faces of satisfied patients."

The Deputy Chief Minister told the officials, who would be running the clinic, that doctors are known for their "pleasant behaviour" with patients and requested them to carry on the tradition.

Mohalla clinic is a flagship project of the government.

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* Series 2: Know about Women Participation in Lok Sabha Elections 2019

Know the Electoral Facts of Our Nation

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**Women
Participation in
Lok Sabha
Elections 2019**

Bridging the Gender Gap:

- ♀ No. of registered women voters for 2019 elections was 438,491,517 as compared to 397,049,941 for 2014 elections.
- ♀ Gender ratio in the electoral rolls increased to a historic 930 in 2019 as compared to 908 in 2014.
- ♀ Gender gap between male and female voters reduced to just 0.10% in 2019 elections as compared to 1.46% in 2014 election.
- ♀ 18 States & UTs (A&N Islands - 65.38%, Arunachal Pradesh - 80.70%, Bihar - 59.60%, Chandigarh - 70.83%, Dadra & Nagar Haveli - 81.17%, Daman and Diu - 75.47%, Goa - 76.16%, Himachal Pradesh - 72.08%, Jharkhand - 64.92%, Kerala - 78.80%, Lakshadweep - 86.49%, Manipur - 84.14%, Meghalaya - 73.94%, Odisha - 74.14%, Puducherry - 81.52%, Tamil Nadu - 72.20%, Uttarakhand - 64.45%, West Bengal - 81.80%) recorded higher female participation than male participation in Lok Sabha election 2019.
- ♀ At least one All-Women managed polling station established in each Assembly Constituency of the country during Lok Sabha Election 2019 where entire polling staff, including police officer and security personnel deployed were women.
- ♀ 78 Women MPs have been elected in Lok Sabha 2019 election compared to 62 Women MPs elected in 2014 election.

Targeted Interventions:

- ♀ Designing targeted campaigns:- Women centric messages in outdoor and massmedia outreach. Newly married young women specifically identified.
- ♀ Monitoring Gender gaps in voter registration:- Door-to-Door information and motivation through ASHA/ Anganwadi Workers, Shiksha Mitras and other ground formations.
- ♀ Stakeholders participation:- Partnering with SHGs and Cooperatives of women to spread awareness.
- ♀ Creating facilities for ease of voting:- Women voters facilitated through separate queues, toilet arrangements, crèches and volunteers at polling stations.
- ♀ National and State Icons & role models:- Popular faces of women empowerment like MC Mary Kom and Saina Nehwal.
- ♀ Increase in engagement of women:- Women specific activities like rangoli, group songs competition etc in rural areas to motivate their electoral participation.

*Other thematic facts about 2019 Elections will be published in next series.

DPI/129/19

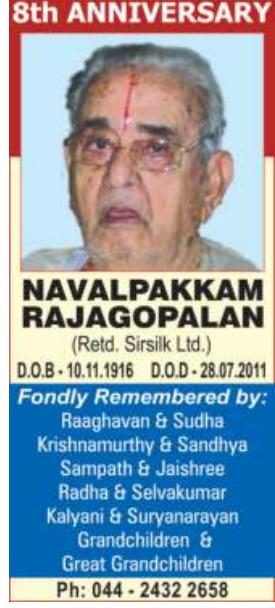
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THE HINDU

Man sends 'talaqnama' to wife on stamp paper
INDORE
A 34-year-old woman approached police after her husband sent a "talaqnama" on a ₹100 stamp paper in Indore in Madhya Pradesh, an official said on Saturday. The woman resides in Chandan Nagar. "My husband sent me a ₹100 stamp paper containing 'talaq-e-bair', which according to him frees me from the marriage. I refuse to accept this one-sided divorce," said Reshma Sheikh.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**DEATH ANNIVERSARIES**

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85% of food adulteration cases in Bhind pending since 2011

An inter-State racket involving spurious milk was recently busted in the M.P. district

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Almost 85% of food adulteration cases, primarily relating to milk and dairy products, registered in Bhind district of Madhya Pradesh are pending in courts since 2011. An inter-State racket involving adulteration of milk and dairy products was recently busted in the district, as per an RTI reply.

There have been convictions in only eight of the 55 cases registered between January 22, 2011, and September 4, 2017, in the district. The last conviction was in 2016, according to an RTI reply to a query raised by activist Ajay Dubey.

Raid on units

On July 19, the State Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Department and a Special Task Force raided units manufacturing synthetic milk and dairy products in Bhind and Morena districts. Around 10,000 litres of synthetic milk, 500 kg of mawa and 200 kg of paneer were seized. Around 60 persons, including food



On July 19, authorities seized over 700 kg of milk products during raids in Bhind and Morena districts. ■FILE PHOTO

inspectors, were arrested.

Following this, the government cracked down on units manufacturing spurious milk and the State Public Health and Family Welfare Minister Tulsi Ram Silawat said that the National Security (NSA) Act, 1980, would be invoked against those involved in the illegal activity.

"It was unreasonable to invoke the NSA Act against adulterators when there were so many cases pending," said Mr. Dubey, adding: "Those who are stall-ing litigation and thereby

not bringing the accused to book must be held accountable for the proliferation of such rackets in the State. What is the point of the NSA Act when the pendency rate is so high?"

Forty-two cases in Bhind district relate to adulteration of milk and dairy products. Thirty-seven cases of adulteration are being investigated, including one in which the Madhya Pradesh government is the accused party. The RTI reply stated that there were no registered cases of spurious drugs in the district.

State Controller of the FDA department Ravindra Singh admitted the high pendency rate was a concern. "We have apprised the Chief Secretary of the rate and plan to fast track the process. We have also directed District Collectors to dispose of cases on a priority basis," he said.

Meanwhile, the FDA department recently seized 5,200 litres of adulterated milk being transported by a tanker to Kanpur from Porsa, Morena district. Chemicals and skimmed milk powder worth ₹30 lakh were also seized in a raid at a milk godown in the district. A show-cause notice was issued to the Food Safety Officer of the district for negligence.

From Pipalyamira, four samples were taken from a paneer factory and 255 kg of condensed milk and 250 kg of ghee were seized from Unhel, Ujjain district. In the past few days, 233 samples of milk and dairy products from across the State have been sent to the State Food Laboratory for testing.

'Self-help groups to be linked to nutrition plans'

Says Rajasthan Minister Mamta Bhupesh

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Self-help groups (SHGs) will be connected to supplementary nutrition programmes and basic health-care schemes in rural areas.

Ms. Bhupesh said the ACB will file a charge-sheet against guilty officials and that disciplinary action has already been taken against them. She added that the SHGs will be fully protected and had no reason to worry about their functioning.

New SHGs will be formed in Makrana in Nagaur district to streamline distribution of food," said the Minister.

Political vendetta in ED questioning, says Hooda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Saturday alleged "political vendetta" in his questioning by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a money laundering case related to the allotment of a

plot in Panchkula to the Associated Journals Limited in an "illegal" manner.

The senior Congress leader was questioned for the second consecutive day by the ED on Friday. He was grilled under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, official sources said.

"It is political vendetta," said Mr. Hooda. The plot in Panchkula, registered at no C-17 in Sector-6, was attached by the ED in December last year.

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Nagaland forms panel to frame RIIN modalities

Commission to submit its report within three months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOHIMA
The Nagaland government on Saturday constituted a commission to frame the modalities of creating the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland, officials said.

The RIIN, a register of all the indigenous inhabitants of the State, is required to prevent issuance of indigenous inhabitant certificates to ineligible persons, they added.

A notification on setting up of the panel to develop the modalities was issued on Saturday, after the administration held meetings with tribal bodies, civil societies and non-Naga communities of the State.

It was decided that the policies and modalities of preparing the RIIN would be framed and made public before the actual enumeration begins.

The notification said the



Neiphiu Rio • FILE PHOTO

chairman and T. Kiheto Sema and S. Chingwang Konyak as members. Justice (Retd.) Zelre Angami will function as the advisor to the Commission. The Home Commissioner and the Commissioner Nagaland will be ex-officio members of the panel.

The Nagaland government began the process of preparing the RIIN on July 10.

Genuine citizens

The RIIN would provide protection to genuine citizens who are permanent settlers of Nagaland and non-Nagas will not be harassed during preparation of the list of indigenous citizens, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had said.

According to a June 29 government notification, the RIIN will help identify the citizens who settled in Nagaland prior to December 1, 1963, the day it became a full-fledged State.

The panel would submit its report within three months.

The Commission would be headed by retired Chief Secretary Banuo Z. Jamir as

Amarinder scraps Fazilka DC's order on dress code

The officer had issued order on 'request' by employees' union

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday scrapped the orders of the Fazilka Deputy Commissioner imposing a dress code on employees.

'Casual dress unkempt' DC Manpreet Singh Chhatwal had reportedly issued the orders on a written request by the employees' union which had sought a formal dress code as they found the casual dress 'unkempt'.

An official spokesperson said the Chief Minister has directed the DC to forward the union request to the State government for further action, as deemed necessary.

"Any decision on the matter would be taken after due

consideration of all relevant aspects of the issue," said the spokesperson.

'Not feasible'

The Chief Minister said imposition of a dress code in a government office did not, on the face of it, appear to be a feasible option. Other ways could be explored to ensure office decorum, he said, adding that the State government did not have any dress code in place for its employees and hence, it was not reasonable to expect employees in one district office to follow any such code.

As per the DC's orders, male employees would have been required, with effect from July 29, 2019, to abstain from wearing T-shirts and female employees would have been required to mandatorily wear *duppattas*.

Any violation of the dress code would have invited action, according to the orders.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GHAZIABAD

The Bulandshahr police on Saturday arrested three people, including an alleged Bangladeshi couple, from Khurja town of the district. According to the police, the couple has been living in India for a long time on forged documents. They have a five-month-old daughter as well.

Khurja CO Raghvendra Mishra said that the case came to light as part of the drive initiated by the administration to check unverified workers in the pottery industry. "On the information given by local intelligence, we conducted a raid in Mohalla Baradari where we found that Akash alias Nishi and his wife Mishti were living after assuming fake identities through forged documents. They have been arrested under sections 420, 467, 468, 471,



Voters displaying their identity cards during panchayat election in West Tripura on Saturday • PTI

67% votes cast in Tripura rural election

BJP has won 85% seats unopposed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AGARTALA

An estimated 67.16% votes were cast till 3 p.m. on Saturday in the three-tier panchayat election in Tripura, which passed off peacefully, an election department official said.

Polls were held in only 15% of the total seats as 85% seats have already been won unopposed by the ruling BJP.

The Opposition – the Congress and the CPI(M) – accused the BJP workers of intimidating their voters since Friday night and not

allowing them to exercise their franchise, a charge denied by the ruling party.

Ballot papers used

"Since ballot papers were used, it would take some more time to get the final percentage," State Election Commissioner G.K. Rao said. He said the BJP has won 5,652 seats of the total 6,646 seats unopposed.

Additional Inspector General of Police (Law and order) Subrata Chakraborty said no major incident of violence was reported from any part of the State.

Bangladeshi couple held for living in India on fake papers

Man arrested for 'helping' them get forged documents

C Documents include birth certificates, Aadhaar cards, PAN card, bank passbooks and passport of the wife

RAGHVENDRA MISHRA

Khurja CO

Aadhaar cards, PAN card and bank passbooks of two nationalised banks and passport of the wife. A photocopy of Nishi's passport was also recovered. Nishi told us that his original passport was submitted at the Kolkata airport. We are checking it with the Kolkata police," Mr. Mishra said.

He added that Tej Krishna Pratap Singh alias Robin, who helped them in getting fake documents, has also been arrested. "They have been arrested under sections 420, 467, 468, 471,

120B and Section 14 of The Foreigners Act and 12(1)(B) of The Passports Act, 1967."

Describing them as "poor illegal economic migrants", Mr. Mishra said that during interrogation Nishi revealed that they came from Bangladesh in search of a job. "Nishi is from Krishnapur village of district Naogaon in Bangladesh while Mishti is from Jhinadah village of the same district. We have recovered Nishi's Bangladeshi birth certificate as well. They approached Robin for forging basic documents like birth certificate and rent agreement. On the basis of these papers, they got the passports and opened bank accounts."

Interestingly, for their marriage, the couple visited Bangladesh in December 2017 and returned in January 2018 using forged documents, said Mr. Mishra.

Landslides sever Imphal-Assam link

IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM

IMPHAL

Incessant rain over the past few days in Manipur has triggered multiple landslides in the State and on the national highways that snake through the hills.

Government officials on

Saturday said that three landslides on NH-37, which connects Imphal to Assam, buried or stranded several vehicles and have rendered large portions of the highway non-motorable. The police said that debris was being cleared and the high-

way may be reopened soon. The officials said that landslides were reported at Lukhambi, Kotland and Nung. The Border Roads Organisation and the State PWD officials are supervising the clearing of the mud, loose earth and debris.

Government Polytechnic, Manesar

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Subject/Discipline	No. of visiting faculty required in GP Manesar Cluster
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The application Performa, essential qualifications and required guidelines will be available on Technical Education Department website www.techeduhry.nic.in & on Govt. Polytechnic, Manesar website www.gpmansar.ac.in. Applications from interested candidates in duly filled Performa must reach on or before 07/08/2019 up to 5:00 PM in the office of Principal, Govt. Polytechnic, Manesar by post/ in person along with attested copies of educational qualifications including all detailed marks certificates, proof of NBA Accreditation of the Course and experience; if any.

Note:-

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PRDH-7798

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TENDER NOTICE

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OPENING

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IN BRIEF



Sri Lanka PM, wife offer prayers at Kasaragod

KASARAGOD
Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and wife Maithree Wickremesinghe reached Kasaragod on a private visit and offered prayers at the Kumaramangalam temple at Bela, near Kumbla, here on Saturday. Reports quoting temple priest said Mr. Wickremesinghe and wife prayed for the prosperity of their nation and welfare of their family.

Orthodox faction enters church following SC order

ALAPPUZHA
Members of the Orthodox faction of the Malankara Church on Saturday entered St. Mary's Church at Kattachira, near Kayamkulam, based on a Supreme Court order. It had remained closed for the past several months following clashes between the Orthodox and Jacobite factions over the ownership of the church. Officials said they executed the Supreme Court order allowing the Orthodox faction the legal mandate to administer the church. It was opened amid tight security.

Man held on charge of killing girlfriend

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
A man who allegedly killed his 30-year-old girlfriend and buried her body in the backyard of his under-construction house has been arrested. Acting on a tip-off, the police arrested Akhil from the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. According to the police, Akhil and Rakhi were in a relationship for over six years. Trouble started when she came to know that he was getting married to another woman. Akhil and his brother Rahul allegedly strangled her. Rahul was arrested earlier on Saturday. PTI

BJP likely to spurn overtures from section of JD(S) leaders

Karnataka Chief Minister has ruled out making any deal with the party



Accolades again: Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa gets a rousing reception from supporters on a visit to his native village Bookanakere, in Mysore district on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Siddaramaiah says rebel MLAs called him after 3 disqualifications

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU/VIJAYAPURA
Ahead of Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa's floor test, two senior Congress leaders on Saturday claimed that some MLAs from the rebel camp had tried contacting Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Siddaramaiah.

"Two MLAs from the rebel camp called up Siddaramaiah recently. But he ignored their calls and did not answer," former

Home Minister M.B. Patil told the media in Vijayapura. However, he refused to identify the MLAs. Confirming the claim, Mr. Siddaramaiah said in Bengaluru, "It is true, some of them called me. They called me after the Speaker announced the disqualification of three MLAs. They are worried about disqualification now."

These claims, made by Congress leaders ahead of Mr. Yediyurappa's floor test,

have created a flutter in the rebel group. Some of the members immediately clarified that they were not worried about any action against them, including disqualification.

Janata Dal (S) rebel legislator H. Vishwanath rubbished the claim. "It is false. They are trying to create confusion, that something will happen on Monday. But we are intelligent enough to know better," he said.

unit. A senior BJP leader said that having a truck with the JD(S) makes no sense at present. "We have fought the party tooth and nail over the past one year and have just toppled their government. Three of their MLAs have resigned and are all set to join us. The party cannot let go of

rebels. It is also a question of our credibility," he said.

Action against Speaker? Meanwhile, the BJP strategists are considering moving a no-confidence motion against Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar on Monday. The party fears he might disqualify

the remaining 13 rebel MLAs till the end of the tenure of this Assembly.

"It will not be appropriate for the Speaker to take a call on the fate of the 13 rebel MLAs after the winning side moves a no-confidence motion against him," a BJP strategist said.

Errant police officers to be booked for electoral fraud

Junior college students 'rag' seniors in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ANANTAPUR
Junior students of the Government Polytechnic College at Hindupur allegedly resorted to ragging senior students leading to a stand-off on Saturday, and police officers had to intervene and bring the situation under control.

Principal G. Sayanarayana told *The Hindu* that five senior students had allegedly resorted to ragging last week and were given warning and a written assurance of good conduct was taken jointly from the parents and senior students.

They were told in front of junior students not to rag them and the penalties that they could attract. "This seems to have emboldened the juniors and they began behaving in a harsh manner with the seniors, which led to the dispute," Mr. Sayanarayana added.

Back to its glory



Tourist attraction: With heavy rainfall in the Sharavati Catchment area, Jog falls in Shivamogga, Karnataka, has attracted large number of visitors this month. ■ VAIDYA

KIA may help fix BBMP's plastic problem

City's airport needs 50 tonnes of the material for laying roads to second terminal

CHITRA V. RAMANI

BENGALURU
The Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) may hold the key to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) problem of plenty. The civic body is sitting on 11,753.50 kg of banned plastic items that it had seized during raids on shops, street vendors, traders and even citizens, but lacks the storage space. In what could be a fortuitous turn of events, however, the mountain of confiscated plastic may be just what KIA's operator, the Bengaluru International Airport Ltd. (BIAL), needs.

With the construction of the second terminal under way at the airport, BIAL has been looking at using alternate materials that meet its



A view of the Kempegowda International Airport ■ FILE PHOTO

sustainability mission. It has proposed to use plastic to lay the roads leading to and related to the second terminal.

BBMP officials, on condition of anonymity, told *The Hindu* that they had received a proposal from BIAL. "We were told that they require 50 tonnes of plastic. We plan

to send the low grade plastic that is in the various processing plants, dry waste collection centres (DWCCs) and the banned plastic items that have been seized," the officials stated.

According to the BBMP officials, BIAL is also mulling the feasibility of opening

kiosks across the city where citizens could drop off plastic items. "BIAL is yet to finalise the locations of these kiosks. Once finalised, we will look into the feasibility and provide the statutory approvals needed," they said.

Nascent stage? However, a BIAL spokesperson said the proposal was still in the nascent stage. "Research and development is underway. We are keen on using plastic. The back-end work is likely to be completed in six to eight weeks," said the spokesperson.

For now, the plastic that has been seized is being stored either in the ward offices or range offices of the Medical Officers of Health. In some wards, they have been sent to the DWCCs.

A.P. waits in hope as Almatti brims

Irrigation engineers hope for a calibrated release to avoid a flood downstream

G. VENKATARAMANA RAO

VIJAYAWADA
With the monsoon finally turning active, particularly on the west coast, the reservoirs on the Krishna, which have been empty for a while, are slowly getting filled.

Almatti, the first sizeable reservoir on the Krishna, located in north Karnataka's Vijaypur district, has almost reached full capacity of 129.72 tmc ft, according to the Irrigation Department data.

Inflows into the reservoir steadily increased from 17,000 cusecs on July 3 to a peak of 1.14 lakh cusecs on July 14. Thereafter, the inflow fell to 7,662 cusecs on July 24 only to rise again to 22,593 cusecs on Saturday.

According to State irrigation engineers, dam authori-

Revive passion for reading among youth, say readers

Suggestions aplenty at *The Hindu*'s Open House in Kochi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI
It was an evening well spent for about 40 readers of *The Hindu*, with some coming in from as far away as Kannur, to participate in the first Kerala Open House with the Readers' Editor A.S. Panneerselvan, on Saturday.

The Open House, in the presence of the editor Suresh Nambath, saw readers demand that *The Hindu* take the initiative to re-ignite the passion for reading, especially among the millennials who depend mostly on online portals for news and other reading.

The readers also offered suggestions to improve the readability of the paper and to keep up with the times when news is available at one's fingertips.

Foremost among them were Anna Katampally and Chithra S. Nair, students from St. Teresa's College here. "There are options aplenty to get live and quick news. *The Hindu*'s online edition offers news in depth. It must become more lively and friendlier to the youth," they said.

Face-to-face: One of the participants posing a question at the Open House conducted by *The Hindu* in Kochi on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Hindu. "Sadly, most among today's young generation do not have the passion to read."

Davis Vithayathil sought more representation from Kerala in the Letters to the Editor column.

"Everything about the daily, from the quality of newsprint to content, is outstanding," said Santhosh Krishnan. Mini Priya, assistant professor from SH College, Thevara, highlighted how many like her relied considerably on the daily to garner data for research.

In response

Mr. Panneerselvan spoke of the efforts that *The Hindu* takes to understand and correct the errors that creep into the daily. "Errors can happen, since newspapers are

produced by humans and driven by deadlines. The Open House was organised to recognise the viewpoints of readers."

Responding to demands that the e-paper and a few other offerings from *The Hindu* stable be made available free of cost, he delved into the expenses involved in garnering credible news. "Newsprint too is expensive," he said.

Mr. Nambath said the Readers' Mail column would be shortly restored, with responses from government officials concerned.

"We try to be representative of all regions in Letters to the Editor column. Readers can write about areas of their interest in Open Page and get paid as well," he said.

'No room for intolerance in Kerala'

STAFF REPORTER

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Coming down hard on "forces of intolerance" for their attacks on filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan and other independent-minded artists, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the

State will provide all security and the right atmosphere for them to continue to pursue their art independently and fearlessly.

"For the past few years, fascist forces have been trying to spread the poison of communalism and intolerance even in the field of cinema. Let these forces keep in mind that such threats will not work in Kerala," the Chief Minister said.

Earlier, Mr. Vijayan visited Mr. Gopalakrishnan at his home to express solidarity with the filmmaker.

Reforms help more devotees to have darshan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

TIRUMALA
The menace of lobbying and black marketing of VIP darshan tickets at the hill temple of Lord Venkateswara has been checked to a large extent at least for the time being, thanks to the reforms introduced by the temple administration.

The major fallout of the reforms is that the 'element' of discrimination, which caused heartburn between the VIPs before the abolition of L1, L2 and L3 system, is absent. Another visible vantage is that about one hour of darshan time is saved enabling the TTD clear more than 5,000 devotees additional every day.

The protocol privileges are now strictly confined to those VIPs arriving in person, and rest are treated as one category without any discrimination.

KIA may help fix BBMP's plastic problem

City's airport needs 50 tonnes of the material for laying roads to second terminal

CHITRA V. RAMANI

BENGALURU
The Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) may hold the key to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) problem of plenty. The civic body is sitting on 11,753.50 kg of banned plastic items that it had seized during raids on shops, street vendors, traders and even citizens, but lacks the storage space. In what could be a fortuitous turn of events, however, the mountain of confiscated plastic may be just what KIA's operator, the Bengaluru International Airport Ltd. (BIAL), needs.

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A view of the Kempegowda International Airport ■ FILE PHOTO

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According to State irrigation engineers, dam authori-

ties are likely to release water given the healthy storage situation.

Currently, there is a flood cushion of just 6 tmcft in the dam with water level at 125.5 tmcft. If there is a sudden flood from the upper reaches, the engineers warn.

During the corresponding period the previous year, there was only 114.56 tmcft (37.25%) in the reservoirs on the corresponding date last year.

While the capacity of all the reservoirs in the State is 982.35 tmcft, there is only 208.35 tmcft water (21.21%) in them as on date. There was 365.96 tmcft (37.25%) in the reservoirs on the corresponding date last year.

rayanapur reservoir, which is immediately downstream Almatti, is also nearly full. While its full capacity is 37.64 tmcft, there is already 30.69 tmcft water in it.

Dismal scenario in A.P. However, the water position in the two reservoirs on the Krishna downstream in Andhra Pradesh continues to be dismal.

While 184.56 tmcft is required to fill the Srisailam reservoir, another 185.42 tmcft is needed to fill Nagarjunasagar.

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CM YK

IN BRIEF



Assam flood toll hits 81, water re-enters Sonitpur

GUWAHATI
The toll in Assam floods touched 81 on Saturday with the death of one more person in Barpeta district, as water re-entered Sonitpur district, bordering Arunachal Pradesh, an official report said. The situation in the other 17 flood-affected districts remained unchanged. A total of 1,716 villages in 56 revenue circles of the state are inundated. PTI

Gujarat Assembly clocks long day

AHMEDABAD
The 14th Gujarat Legislative Assembly has broken its 1993 record of the longest sitting on a single day – 12 hours and nine minutes. Assembly speaker Rajendra Trivedi termed it historic and there was celebration in the House. According to the press release issued by the speaker's office, Friday's proceedings commenced at 10 am and concluded at around 12:09 am on Saturday.

Lt. Gen. Paramjit Singh to be new DGMO of Army

NEW DELHI
Lt Gen Paramjit Singh will be the next Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) of the Indian Army, official sources said on Saturday. Lt Gen Singh, currently serving as General Officer Commanding of the Army's Nagrota-based XVI Corps, will take over as the new DGMO on October 15, succeeding Lt Gen Anil Chauhan. PTI

5 arrested, red sanders logs seized in A.P.

NELLORE
The Somasila police on Saturday seized red sanders logs weighing 127.7 kg and worth ₹4.02 lakh, and vehicles used to smuggle them with the arrest of five persons at Gudigunta village. The A.P. police said legal proceedings would be launched to seize the assets of the accused.



The big rescue: 1) NDRF personnel carrying inflatable boats to rescue stranded passengers of the Mahalaxmi Express, 70 km from Mumbai on Saturday; 2) Rescuers on their way to the train; 3) Passengers being brought back; 4) A group of passengers walking to safety after reaching a higher ground. ■ AFP, AP & SANDEEP RASAL



As train stopped, lack of info kept passengers on the edge

People feared that the water would enter the coaches before help came in

Stranded holidaymakers rescued from resort in Shahad

A CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

As the skies opened up in Vangani in Thane on Friday, little did over a thousand passengers on the Mumbai-Kolhapur Mahalaxmi Express expect that the next 12 hours would be the stuff of a cinematic thriller.

The train that left Mumbai late in the evening, became marooned near Vangani early on Saturday. As the train lost power and lights went out in the coaches, helplessness among the stranded passengers was underlined by lack of communication from all quarters, as cell phones also went dead due

Saturday. Heavy rainfall marooned the tourists who had come to spend the weekend at River Winds resort. Officials said overnight rain led to waterlogging in the village and the water level rose up to seven feet at the resort.

had no clue what was going around. That helplessness was the most agonising part of this ordeal. When you know you are in life-threatening trouble but you do

not know if help is on its way, the despair just increases manifold," recalled a passenger.

The train was marooned for almost 17 hours, with the passengers, including nine pregnant women, fearing that the water would enter the coaches before help came in.

Coach B-1 had its own share of drama where Reshma Kamble was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Her co-passengers soothed her nerves and kept her spirits up. Ms Kamble was rescued by a team of the local police and nurses from a nearby government hospital.

Five arrested for assault in Madhya Pradesh

SIDDHARTH YADAV
Bhopal

The police have arrested five persons on the charge of thrashing three persons, including two local Congress leaders, near Betul in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday night on suspicion of being child-lifters.

Armed with lathis, 20 villagers of Naval Singhantha attacked the trio after stopping their vehicle, said Betul SP Karthikeyan K. "The villagers mistook them for child-lifters and started attacking them. But, when they realised they were local leaders, they ran away," he said.

The police suspect a viral video of a female child-lifter at the Itarsi railway station, 90 km from Betul, to be the trigger.

Betul Congress general secretary Dharmendra Shukla, party leader Dharmu Singh Lanjwari and tribal leader Lalit Baraskar suffered minor injuries. The police registered a case under Sections 147 [Punishment for rioting] and 323 [Punishment for voluntarily causing hurt] of the Indian Penal Code. Five persons are yet to be arrested.

Awareness sessions
To arrest the growing trend of attacks on suspicion of being child-lifters, the Betul police have begun organising Jansamvad programmes with residents of five villages at a time. "We tell them to use the dial-100 facility in case they are suspicious of anyone and not take the law into their own hands. Now, we have started getting more calls," said Mr. Karthikeyan.

Responding to a call, a dial-100 vehicle visits the spot to ascertain whether the person in question is a child-lifter or not. The Shahpur police station received 10-15 calls relating to child-lifters everyday, the highest in Betul district, he added.

Cooperatives for sustainable mining: NGT

Body asks small mine owners to unite

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The chairman of the committee of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for rat-hole mining in Meghalaya has advised small coal mine owners in the State to form cooperatives to shift to scientific and sustainable mining.

But B.P. Katakey, a retired judge heading the committee, pointed out that he made the suggestion in his individual capacity. "A proper mining plan is needed for scientific coal extraction.

The mines in Meghalaya are privately or community-owned, and it may not be possible for small mine owners to have specific mining plans. Form-

ing a cooperative can help them go for an alternative method of mining that is likely to be more expensive than rat-hole mining," Justice Katakey told *The Hindu*.

The NGT had also advised the state to explore alternative way of mining that factors in safety measures, environmental clearance and restoring the areas mined.

Rat-hole mining is fast, involves minimum machinery, but is hazardous for miners.

There have been many fatal accidents across the State's coal belt.

One such was the death of 17 miners in a flooded mine at Khloo Ryngksan in East Jaintia Hills district in December 2018.

Fourth body found in Odisha mine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESHWAR

The death toll in the coal mine accident in Odisha's Angul district rose to four on Saturday with the recovery of one more body, officials said.

The Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) suspended a senior manager for his alleged negligence that led to the accident.

The mine workers were killed in a dump slide at the Bharatpur opencast mine in the Talcher coalfields on Tuesday.

The victim was identified as Ramesh Das, a security guard. Nine injured workers were rescued immediately after the accident had occurred and are undergoing treatment.

Seven naxals killed in encounter in Bastar

3 persons among the dead are women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAIPUR

Seven naxals, including three women, were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district on Saturday, police said.

The team was advancing through the forest of Tiriya, around 400 km from the capital Raipur, when the gunbattle broke out, he said.

Bodies of the seven ultras were later recovered from the spot, he said.

Further details were awaited as the patrolling team was yet to return to its camp, the DIG said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



Forecast for Sunday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely over Goa, Gujarat, central Maharashtra east Rajasthan, west Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, coastal Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Marathwada, Saurashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	3.8	33.5	26.0	Kozhikode	1.2	31.6	22.5
Ahmedabad	0.2	34.5	27.7	Kumool	17.6	28.9	23.6
Aizawl	2.0	28.7	22.2	Lucknow	36.0	33.3	25.8
Allahabad	16.2	32.7	25.9	Madurai	2.9	36.6	—
Bengaluru	—	26.6	20.4	Mangaluru	15.5	26.0	22.5
Bhopal	18.8	27.1	23.8	Mumbai	219.2	30.9	24.0
Bhubaneswar	13.6	27.6	24.0	Mysuru	—	23.9	19.9
Chandigarh	27.3	31.8	25.6	New Delhi	11.2	32.5	25.4
Chennai	26.4	33.6	24.3	Patna	6.4	33.6	26.6
Coimbatore	—	32.0	23.4	Port Blair	4.4	30.7	23.1
Dehradoon	31.9	30.6	23.3	Puducherry	2.6	35.4	23.1
Gangtok	56.0	21.2	17.5	Pune	78.0	24.1	21.0
Goa	46.0	30.5	25.5	Raipur	6.4	27.2	24.4
Guwahati	1.0	34.2	26.4	Ranchi	5.6	32.5	23.2
Hubbballi	—	24.0	21.0	Shillong	8.3	24.4	17.3
Hyderabad	4.3	29.0	22.4	Shimla	60.6	20.8	17.0
Impthal	56.8	27.9	21.1	Srinagar	—	24.7	17.7
Jaipur	84.0	27.4	25.1	Tiruchi	9.3	39.0	24.4
Kochi	—	29.6	24.4	Vijayawada	42.8	30.1	24.2
Kohima	17.4	26.4	16.8	Visakhapatnam	6.8	33.0	25.2
Kolkata	1.5	29.0	26.4				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	106	50	—	64	—	—
Bengaluru	6	32	46	—	93	—
Chennai	11	24	39	82	—	—
Delhi	8	21	101	32	50	—
Hyderabad	—	—	51	19	33	—
Kolkata	4	42	—	57	56	—
Lucknow	4	25	49	60	—	—
Mumbai	12	22	103	—	54	—
Pune	68	8	67	16	16	—
Visakhapatnam	17	47	41	28	48	—

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.)

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jodhpur, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 22, indicating a hazardous level of pollution. In contrast, Guwahati, Assam recorded a healthy AQI score of 22.

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jodhpur, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 22, indicating a hazardous level of pollution. In contrast, Guwahati, Assam recorded a healthy AQI score of 22.

Inviting Proposals under MODROB Scheme for Institutions approved by AICTE in Rural Areas

A special drive is undertaken by AICTE under MODROB Scheme for modernising laboratories in technical institutions operating in rural areas and

approved by AICTE by providing grant for procuring modern equipments.

The details of the scheme are available on the following link http://www.aicte-india.org/scheme/institution_development_scheme. The scheme is open from 31.07.2019 for submitting applications online and will be closed on 28.08.2019.

FROM PAGE ONE

FinMin, NITI Aayog guidelines ignored

The DEA and NITI Aayog's detailed notes of the proposal on the six airports were circulated among the participating ministries ahead of the PPPAC meeting.

In its note, the DEA noted unequivocally, "the six airport projects are highly capital intensive projects, hence it is suggested to incorporate the clause that no more than two Airports will be awarded to the same bidder duly factoring the high financial risk and performance issues. Awarding them to different companies would also facilitate yardstick competition."

To buttress its point, the DEA cited that though GMR was the only qualified bidder for Delhi and Mumbai, both the airports were not given to the same company.

However, the PPPAC referred to a decision taken by the Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS) that "no restriction needs to be placed on the number of airports to be bid for or to be awarded to a single entity," according to the Record of Discussion of 85th PPPAC, a copy of which is with *The Hindu*.

In a separate note, the NITI Aayog highlighted the need to have players with prior Operation and Management (O&M) experience. It referred to the Model Request for Qualification (RFQ) that requires an applicant without O&M experience to either tie-up with an entity or engage qualified personnel with the requisite experience.

On this issue, too, the PPPAC quoted the EGoS decision – "prior airport experience may neither be made a pre-requisite for bidding nor a post-bid requirement. This will enlarge the competition for brownfield airports which are already functional."

This decision, again, was a departure from the earlier norm. During the first phase of privatisation, Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports each had to find a foreign player with O&M experience to

comply with RfP norms.

Dropping O&M experience as a pre-requisite raises questions about the jurisdiction of EGoS. Headed by the CEO of NITI Aayog, it was constituted by the Union Cabinet to take decisions "on any issue falling beyond the scope of PPPAC". However, according to PPP guidelines, O&M standards fall under the purview of PPPAC.

Question of cost

The DEA was also scathing in its criticism over a "critical" detail such as the "total project cost" missing from the RfP document.

"It is not advisable to keep the project cost open ended and it is essentially required to frame the eligibility criteria in terms of technical capacity, financial capacity and O&M experience and other financial covenants such as bid security, performance security etc, which are always in percentage terms of the estimate Total Project Cost."

The DEA rejected the Ministry of Civil Aviation's (MoCA)'s explanation that it was not possible to calculate the total project cost for the entire period of 50 years of lease, on the ground that these were brownfield airports and all the required data should be available. Nevertheless the PPPAC went along with MoCA.

The DEA had also raised concerns over the criteria of per passenger fee (PPF) for determining the winning bid and said the current PPF should be set as a reserve price.

However, according to AAI's reply dated April 8 to an RTI plea filed by Sobhan P.V. of the Airports Authority Employees' Union, "No study was conducted to ascertain the existing Per Passenger Fee." The plea was filed after the completion of the bidding process and AAI's response shows that it had no parameter to judge whether the PPF quoted by the winning bidder was better than what it was drawing at the existing airports.

10,000 more troops to be deployed in J&K

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), from the years 2016 to 18, 1,278 operations were conducted by security forces, in which 599 terrorists were killed.

From the beginning of this year till July 16, 126 terrorists were killed in various operations in the Kashmir Valley. During these operations, 75 security personnel were also killed, and they included the 40 CRPF personnel killed in the February 14 Pulwama terror attack.

In an unprecedented move, on July 25, the MHA ordered deployment of additional 100 companies of the CAPFs "in order to strengthen the counter-insurgency grid and for maintaining the law and order situation in J&K".

A senior government official said troops were being airlifted to the Valley. "Forces are being moved through commercial aircraft and we are also taking the help of the Indian Air Force," said an official.

After the ongoing deployment, the Valley will see a deployment of nearly 1.2 lakh personnel of Central

C The Centre's decision has created a fear psychosis among people. There is no dearth of security forces in Kashmir
MEHBOoba MUFTI
Peoples Democratic Party president

forces. The MHA order comes after National Security Advisor Ajit Doval returned from the State this week.

The last time such deployment was made on February 23, three days before the Balakot air strike in Pakistan.

The official refused to comment if the deployment was related to government's move to remove Article 35A from the State. The provision lets the J&K legislature decide the "permanent residents" of the State, prohibits a non-J&K resident from buying property in the State and ensures job reservation for its residents.

GST on EVs, chargers reduced to 5%

The meeting was originally scheduled for Thursday but was postponed as Ms. Sitharaman was busy with her Parliament duties. The Council has also extended the deadline for the filing of the intimation for availing of the Composition Scheme, in Form CMP-02 to September 30 from the earlier July 31.

The last date for furnishing the statement containing the details of the self-assessed tax in Form CMP-08 for the quarter April 2019 to June, 2019 by taxpayers under the Composition Scheme has been extended to August 31 from July 31.

Activists plan people's struggle against RTI Bill

Apart from seeking help from political leaders, they propose to meet the President and urge him not to sign it

**PRISCILLA JEBARAJA
SANDEEP PHUKAN**
NEW DELHI

the move will compromise the autonomy of the Commissions and weaken the transparency law.

RTI activists are in touch with political leaders, including Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, to rally support, sources told *The Hindu*.

'Helping the corrupt'

In a tweet on Saturday evening, outgoing Congress president Rahul Gandhi accused the Centre of assisting in corruption by amending the Act. "Government is diluting RTI in order to help the corrupt steal from India. Strange that the normally vociferous anti-corruption crowd has suddenly disappeared. #GovtMurdersRTI," he tweeted.

Activists want to take the battle back against the RTI move-



Many fears: Youth Congress activists protest near Parliament on Saturday against the new RTI Bill. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

ment's original roots as a mass people's struggle. "Ultimately, the way to keep the issue in the spotlight is to have more people file more RTI petitions. We must exercise the right repeatedly in order to safeguard it," said Nikhil Dey, also a founder at NCPRI.

Some of the issues that could be pursued include defence expenditure, the Ra-

bodies, which cannot be given the same status as the Election Commission, a Constitutional body.

Some RTI activists hope to meet President Ram Nath Kovind in a last-ditch bid to persuade him against signing the Bill into law by reminding him of his own role in the original passage of the RTI Act in 2004. Mr. Kovind had then been a Rajya Sabha MP and a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee which finalised the Bill.

A legal challenge is also being considered. The Supreme Court has previously held that the Right to Information was a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. "A statutory amendment that makes the right illusory is subject to judicial review," tweeted constitutional lawyer Gautam Bhagat.

case for the modernisation of the defence forces.

"Today, the wars have reached space. Wars are fought even in cyberspace today. So, modernisation of defence forces is not only a necessity but also our priority. Modernisation should be the identity of our defence forces," he said.

He said his government had taken many steps for the welfare of the armed forces including the implementation of the One rank, one pension scheme, a long-standing demand, and to raise the amount given as scholarships to the children of those killed in operations.

"The question of national security will not be addressed either under fear or influence of anyone, nor shortages. It will be addressed keeping our priorities in mind," he said.

Jaish bomb expert killed in Shopian

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two militants, including Jaish-e-Mohammad's (JeM) top commander and bomb expert, were killed in a joint operation of the Army, the police and the CRPF, in south Kashmir's Shopian early on Saturday.

Meanwhile, a soldier died as the Army foiled an infiltration bid in north Kashmir.

The slain militants were identified as JeM's Munna Lahori, a Pakistani, and Hizbul Mujahideen's Mir Zeenat Ul Islam, from Shopian's Turkawangon area. Lahori is believed to be the group's top commander and bomb expert. "He was involved in planning and executing series of terror attacks, especially the IED blast at Arihal area of Pulwama," said the police.

However, according to AAI's reply dated April 8 to an RTI plea filed by Sobhan P.V. of the Airports Authority Employees' Union, "No study was conducted to ascertain the existing Per Passenger Fee." The plea was filed after the completion of the bidding process and AAI's response shows that it had no parameter to judge whether the PPF quoted by the winning bidder was better than what it was drawing at the existing airports.

Qureshi case: ED gets custody of businessman

Babu held for links with accused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

against Mr. Qureshi and others.

CBI tussle

However, in October last year, the CBI, led by Alok Verma then, registered a case of alleged corruption and extortion against Mr. Asthana and his subordinates based on Mr. Babu's complaint.

Mr. Babu alleged that he had paid more than ₹3 crore to get relief in the case. On the other hand, Mr. Asthana accused Mr. Verma of corrupt practices. The matter reached the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) which initiated an inquiry into the charges and counter-charges. Later on October 23, the CVC divested Alok Verma and Rakesh Asthana of their powers and the issue went to the Supreme Court, which reinstated Mr. Verma. A day later, Mr. Verma was stripped off his responsibilities as the CBI chief on CVC's recommendation.

The ED is probing the purchase of shares worth ₹50 lakh of a company, allegedly linked to Mr. Qureshi, by Mr. Babu. It is suspected that the amount was paid as bribe to settle a case.

The Central Bureau of Investigation's special probe team, under the then Special Director Rakesh Asthana, had earlier recommended his arrest in its own case

IAF gets first set of Apache helicopters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The first four Apache AH-64E attack helicopters for the Indian Air Force (IAF) arrived at Hindan Air Force Station on Saturday, ahead of schedule.

An additional four Apaches will arrive in the coming week, and the eight will then move to the Pathankot Air Force Station for their formal induction by the IAF in September, aircraft manufacturer Boeing said in a statement.

For Indian C-17 spares, monitoring F-16s in Pakistan

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
WASHINGTON

The U.S. State Department on Friday decided to approve a possible Foreign Military Sale (FMS) to India of the C-17 aircraft's follow-on support at an estimated cost of \$670 million, according to the Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA).

The agency delivered the required certification notifying the U.S. Congress of this possible sale on July 26.

Debate and not disrupt, Naidu tells House of Elders

Says Rajya Sabha members have a special responsibility

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after 17 political parties jointly wrote to Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu complaining about "hurried legislation" that were being rushed through without due parliamentary procedures, Mr. Naidu said on Saturday that the ruling and Opposition parties needed to function as "joint stakeholders" and not look at each other as "enemies or adversaries".

"Members of Rajya Sabha have a special responsibility cast on them of leading by example being the members of the House of Elders," Mr. Naidu said on Saturday.

"During this session, some members in their wisdom have preferred to tear official papers and throw them at the Chair on some occasions. Such conduct does not speak well of the functioning of our parlia-



C Some members tear official papers and throw them at the Chair. This does not speak well of the functioning of our democracy
VENKAIAH NAIDU
Rajya Sabha chairman

mentary democracy," the Vice-President said in a speech at a "Democracy Awards" function of the Maharashtra State Election Commission in Mumbai.

Democracy was all about debate, discussion and decision

and should not be re-

placed by disorder, disruption and delay in legislation, he said.

People's mandate

In a word of caution for the Opposition, Mr. Naidu said the mandate of the people should be respected. At the same time, the Opposition parties did have the right and responsibility of getting governments to deliver on the promises made by them during the polls, he said.

Though Mr. Naidu is yet to reply to the Opposition's letter, his office, according to officials, is collecting data to negate the Opposition's claim of "little parliamentary scrutiny" of Bills. "During the last two years of Mr. Naidu's chairmanship, 10 Bills were first introduced in the Rajya Sabha (till the last session) and of them, eight were referred to the standing committee concerned," a senior official in the Rajya Sabha secretariat said.

Mr. Naidu said he was picked up from the Samta Express while on the way home from Visakhapatnam after attending a session of preaching.

Earlier, three others from the Kashmir Valley were acquitted in the case.

Pentagon nod for military sales to India, Pak.



The C-17 aircraft has been of immense help during rescue and relief operations across the country. ■ PRASHANT NAKWANE

The money will be used to pay 60 U.S. contractors, a diplomatic source said.

"India needs follow-on

support to maintain its operational readiness and ability to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

(HA/DR) assistance in the region. India will have no difficulty absorbing this support into its armed forces," an official statement from the DSCA said.

The possible sale will strengthen the U.S.-India strategic relationship. "(It will also) improve the mobility capabilities of a major defensive partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region," the DSCA added.

(With Press Trust of India inputs)

Houston calling with big diaspora event for PM

Modi's U.S. visit in September follows impasse in trade talks and rocky bilateral ties over Trump's Kashmir statements

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Improving India-U.S. trade ties, combating climate change and addressing his biggest Indian-American diaspora event will be on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diary during his U.S. visit in September.

According to officials involved in planning the visit, Mr. Modi, who last visited the U.S. in June 2017, will travel to New York and Houston, Texas, during the trip from September 22 to 26.

Meet with Trump?

A trip to Washington is not on the cards at present, the sources said, indicating that Mr. Modi could meet President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

After their meeting in Osaka, bilateral ties have been rocked by Mr. Trump's comments that Mr. Modi sought his mediation on Kashmir.

They are expected to meet at the G7 summit in France on August 24 to smooth out

Modi in the U.S.

Pit stops: New York, Houston

Sept. 22: 'Howdy, Modi' in Houston is billed as the biggest diaspora event to be addressed by the Prime Minister in the U.S. thus far

Sept. 24: PM planning to address the UN General Assembly; Special event to commemorate the closing of the 150th anniversary celebrations for Mahatma Gandhi

The entire community has rallied behind this historic event [in Houston] and is enthused to make it unparalleled

SWAPAN DHARYAWAN
President, Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston



The venue of a community reception given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in San Jose, California, on September 27, 2015. ■ REUTERS

matters. The Houston visit on September 22 is billed as the biggest diaspora event to be addressed by Mr. Modi in the U.S. thus far, with organisers expecting a crowd of 50,000 at the NRG Stadium, a statement issued by the Texas-India Forum said on Saturday.

Confirming the Houston event, which will be called "Howdy, Modi", the BJP's foreign affairs department

told *The Hindu* that Texas had one of the biggest diaspora populations and therefore merited Mr. Modi's visit. In 2015 and 2016, Mr. Modi addressed similar events in New York and San Jose, with crowds between 16,000 and 18,000 at each.

In New York, the Prime Minister is planning to address the UN General Assembly beginning on Sep-

tember 24. A day before that, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will host the Climate Action summit. Earlier this week, Luis Alfonso de Alba, United Nations Special Envoy on Climate Change, met Environment and Forests Minister Prakash Javadekar in New Delhi to discuss India's role in battling climate change.

According to the sources, Mr. Alba invited Mr. Modi to

address the summit, which he has not accepted as yet. However, he will attend a special event to commemorate the closing of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, officials said.

Investment pitch

Mr. Modi will address the annual Bloomberg Global Business Forum in New York on September 25. He is expected to make a pitch for investment in India, even as he will face questions on India-U.S. trade negotiations which have hit an impasse. In particular, U.S. IT companies have been upset by new Indian regulations on data localisation and e-commerce rules.

A diluted version of the data protection Bill, which is due to be presented in Parliament next week, may assuage some of those concerns.

However, issues on tariffs and U.S. counter-measures and complaints at the WTO are still to be ironed out,

with a meeting of U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal expected ahead of Mr. Modi's visit.

In Houston, the business community, led by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston, hopes the event will pave the way for more business with India.

"The entire community has rallied behind this historic event and are enthused to make it unparalleled," said Swapna Dharyawan, chamber president, who had facilitated a visit to Delhi for the Houston Mayor and a trade delegation, and invited U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster to deliver an address in Houston last year.

"We hope [Mr. Modi's] visit will lead to a direct flight to Delhi," said Houston-based Jagdish Ahluwalia, pointing to the potential for Texas-India ties in energy, petrochemicals, chemicals, medical technology, aerospace and the space industries.

JD(U) to oppose triple talaq Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

In a setback to the government's efforts to pass the triple talaq Bill in the Rajya Sabha, the Janata Dal(U), a National Democratic Alliance partner, on Saturday said it would oppose the draft legislation in the Upper House.

Party spokesperson K.C. Tyagi slammed the Bill, which criminalises instant divorce by Muslim men with a jail term of up to three years, and said it was of an "imposing nature" and would "definitely create a lack of trust in society".

"We believe that ours is a nation based on a delicate balance in respect of laws and governing principles for different religious and ethnic groups. We must not impose any view without obtaining substantive consultations," Mr. Tyagi said.

The JD(U) does believe in reforms, but these should be brought after in-depth consultations with various religious and ethnic groups, he said.

The Bill may be tabled in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, sources said. The Lok Sabha passed it on July 25 and if the Rajya Sabha passes it, it will become law, replacing an ordinance which had enacted a similar provision through an executive decree.

The JD(U), led by Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, did not vote in the Bill's support in the Lok Sabha and staged a walkout. It made little difference though, as the BJP enjoys a strong majority in the House on its own.

3 military logistics pacts on the anvil

Talks on with Australia, Japan, Russia

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI
Agreements with Australia, Japan and Russia are in advanced stages and are likely to be concluded by the year-end.

SENIOR DEFENCE OFFICIAL
expected to be signed during the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin in September on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in Russia. Last month, a delegation led by Additional Secretary Jiresh Nandan visited Russia for finalising the agreement, the Defence Ministry said in its monthly report. Moscow had sent a draft agreement early last year and the MoD sent it to the Integrated Defence Staff and the three services for their comments in July.

Australia had submitted a draft MLSA soon after India signed the LEMOA, but New Delhi said at that time it would take up more logistics pacts after the first one was operationalised. In March, before the bilateral naval exercise AUSINDEX, Australian diplomatic sources made a strong pitch for a pact saying the argument for one is "compelling". AUSINDEX saw participation of the largest Australian naval contingent to India with 1,000 personnel and assets.

India and Japan are moving fast on finalising the ACSA. A statement during the visit of Mr. Modi to Japan in October said the two leaders welcomed the joint exercise between each of the three services and "the commencement of negotiations on the ACSA, which will enhance the strategic depth of bilateral security and defence cooperation".

Port access

India signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Understanding (LEMOA) with the U.S. in August 2016 after decade-long negotiations.

Since then, it has concluded several such agreements with France, Oman, the Philippines and Singapore and gained access to the Sabang port in Indonesia.

Logistics agreements are administrative arrangements facilitating access to military facilities for exchange of fuel and provisions on mutual agreement, simplifying logistical support and increasing operational turnaround of the military away from India.

The ARLS with Russia is

KASE
Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence
Skill Development Mission of Government of Kerala
Department of Labour and Skills
Registered Office: 3rd Floor, Carmel Tower, Vazhuthacaud, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 014. Website: www.kase.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

Dated: 27/07/2019

No. KASE/1334/2019
KASE invites tenders from companies/firms who meet the prescribed eligibility criteria for operating Kaushal Kendras in Kollam, Kozhikode and Palakkad.
Interested may please submit e-tender (Tender ID: 2019.KASE_289358.1) through www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

Sd/- Managing Director

Government of Rajasthan

Social Justice and Empowerment Department
Head Office: Directorate, Social Justice and Empowerment Department, Rajasthan

Ambedkar Bhavan, G 3/1, Rajmahal Residency Area, Civil Lines, Jaipur

Phone - 0141 220258
0141-2202017

Ref.: F 7(2) (G.H/Cycle supp./SJED/2019/43773 Date: 24/07/19

NOTICE INVITING e-BID (NIB No. 02/2019-20)

For Hostels under SJED All over Rajasthan

Sealed Single Stage, Two-envelopes unconditional online Bid for One Year Rate contract are invited on behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan for the procurement and supply of Complete MTB Frame Bicycle for Boys and Girls from the Producers/OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturers) Suppliers registered under relevant authority for providing such items.

The Bid documents containing the terms and conditions can be download from the website of State Public Procurement Portal, <http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in> or e-Procurement Portal <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> from <http://sje.rajasthan.gov.in>. The last date of online submission of Bid is 28-08-2019 upto 15:00 hours.

UB No. SOC1920GLOB00089

Director

Social Justice and Empowerment Department
Rajasthan, Jaipur

DIPR/C/6113

IN BRIEF

CRPF marks 81st Raising day, Shah extends wishes
NEW DELHI
Home Minister Amit Shah extended his wishes to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on the occasion of its 81st Raising day on Saturday, and said the country was extremely proud of their valour and courage. India's largest paramilitary force's commitment and dedication in serving different terrains is exceptional, he added. PTI

LJP seeks strict action against Azam Khan

NEW DELHI
The Lok Janshakti Party said on Saturday that the Lok Sabha should have acted against Samajwadi Party MP Azam Khan by now for his sexist remarks against Deputy Speaker Rama Devi. The BJP ally demanded that the Speaker take strict action against him if he did not apologise. His remarks "cannot be condoned and are extremely condemnable", LJP MP Veena Devi said in a party statement. PTI

Priyanka slams U.P. govt. over farmer suicides

NEW DELHI
Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday hit out at the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh over issues being faced by farmers and questioned the efficacy of farm and loan waiver schemes. She cited a media report which said that five farmers have committed suicide in as many days in Bundelkhand's Banda. "Farmers grow crop, don't get the price for it. Famine occurs, compensation is not given," Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. PTI

Colours of freedom



Students painting on the Tilak Marg foot overbridge in New Delhi on Saturday as part of a beautification drive of railway walls in the run-up to Independence Day. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Agusta accused gets protection from arrest

Judge asks Ratul Puri to join the investigation and cooperate in it

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A Delhi court on Saturday granted interim protection from arrest to Ratul Puri, nephew of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, in a money-laundering case connected with the ₹3,600-crore AgustaWestland VVIP helicopter deal.

Granting the protection till July 29 when his anticipatory bail application would be taken up for hearing, Special Judge Inder Jeet Singh said: "In order to reconcile the circumstances, but without any observation on the merits of the case, it is appropriate to list this applica-

tion (anticipatory bail application) on 29.07.2019 when the complete record will be presented, and till then the applicant will not be arrested in this case by the Enforcement Directorate."

However, the accused would join the investigation and cooperate in it, the judge said. Later, Mr. Puri joined the investigation at 5 p.m. at the Directorate's office.

Earlier in the day, the accused, through his counsel Vijay Aggarwal, filed an application for anticipatory bail, submitting that he apprehended arrest.

Opposing the application,

Special Public Prosecutor of the Directorate N.K. Matta asked the reasons that had created the sudden apprehension in the mind of the accused as he had been joining the probe since February.

When Mr. Matta sought time to file a reply to the application, counsel for the accused sought interim protection till his plea for bail was taken up for hearing by Special Judge Arvind Kumar who is seized of the case. The judge allowed his plea and granted protection.

In the bail application, the accused said he came to know that he would be ar-

rested by the probe agency when he came out of the directorate's office for lunch after being interrogated by them on July 26.

Mr. Puri was informed by someone that the directorate officials had visited his house and office and told persons available there that they were going to arrest him, the application alleged, adding that the apprehension was also triggered by recent political developments in Madhya Pradesh where two BJP MLAs voted in favour of the Congress government on a Bill.

But Mr. Matta dismissed the allegations as false.

Not intimidated by CBI summons: Derek O'Brien

Summoned in connection with the Saradha scam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA
Derek O'Brien, Trinamool leader and Rajya Sabha member, said here on Saturday that he was not intimidated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) summons to him and will meet the officers of the agency after the Parliament session ends on August 7.

"In February too, I had agreed to appear before the CBI after the session of Parliament, but the CBI chose not to call me. This time too, I am ready to meet them," he said in a statement.

Mr. O'Brien said that after February, he had not received any intimation from the CBI. "Now, during this Parliament session, I was served a notice asking to appear before the CBI on August 1. I have sent a letter stating that I would meet [them] after this Parliament session is over on August 7," he said.



The CBI summoned him in connection with the multi-crore Saradha scam.

The matter relates to proceeds from the sale of paintings of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, which were allegedly pumped into *Jaago Bangla*, which is the mouthpiece of the Trinamool.

Mr. O'Brien is the publisher of the Bengali publication.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA		OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR		e-mail-serv_kpd@yahoo.com		
No:- Tender Online RCK - 17/19		Letter No.- 1534		Date:- 25.07.2019		
e - Procurement Notice						
1. Name of the Work : Construction of Roads & CD works including maintenance for 5 years under PMGSY-II Batch-I (2018-19) packages in the District of Kendrapara and Jajpur.						
2. Class of Contractor : as specified in the Column-10 of the Annexure.						
3. Time for Completion : as specified in the Column - 08 of the Annexure						
4. Estimated Cost : As per Annexure Column-7 attached						
5. Detail Projects : As per annexure attached						
6. Other Details :						
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To			Technical Bid
1	2	3	4	5	1	2
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara - Jajpur	Tender Online RCK - 17/19	30.07.2019 at 11.00 A.M.	13.08.2019 up to 5.00 P.M.	09.08.2019 up to 2.00 P.M.	19.08.2019 At 11.00 A.M.</td	



Zarif hosts Oman Minister amid Gulf tensions

TEHRAN
Iran's top diplomat Mohammad Javad Zarif hosted his Omani counterpart Yusuf bin Alawi in Tehran on Saturday, his office said, amid mounting tensions in the region between Tehran and Washington. The talks centred on the "latest regional and international issues", the Foreign Ministry said in a brief statement. AFP

France to proceed with tax on U.S. tech firms

PARIS
Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said on Saturday that France would proceed with taxing revenues of big technology firms and urged the U.S. not to bring trade tariffs into the debate on how to fairly raise levies on digital services. He was responding to U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to tax French wines. REUTERS

Bahrain executes 2 Shia citizens on terror charges

DUBAI
Bahrain executed two Shia citizens by firing squad on Saturday on terror charges, officials said, despite appeals for clemency from international human rights groups. The convicts were put to death along with a third death row prisoner found guilty of murder. AFP

3 police officials killed in Taliban attack

GHAZNI
At least three police officers were killed and a dozen more wounded on Saturday when a Taliban suicide bomber drove a U.S.-made armoured vehicle into a compound in eastern Afghanistan, officials said. The attack targeted the police headquarters in Ghazni's Ab Band district, said a spokesman. AFP

Ditch backstop or face no-deal exit, Johnson tells EU



British PM urges Europe to renegotiate the withdrawal agreement

REUTERS
MANCHESTER

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson cautioned the EU on Saturday that the "anti-democratic" Irish backstop must be ditched if they were to strike a Brexit divorce deal.

Mr. Johnson, since taking office on Wednesday, has repeatedly said that if the EU continues to refuse to renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement agreed by his predecessor Theresa May, then he will take Britain out on October 31 without a deal.

Biggest demand
His biggest demand is that the most hotly-contested element of the Brexit divorce agreement, the Irish border backstop, be struck out of the Withdrawal Agreement, a demand that has angered Ireland and perturbed other EU capitals.

"If we get rid of the backstop, whole and entire, then we are making a lot of progress," Mr. Johnson said, when asked if it was only the Irish border backstop that he wanted changed.

Speaking before a Stephenson's Rocket, a 19th century steam locomotive, in the northern England city of Manchester, Mr. Johnson dedicated most of his speech to improving public services, transport and the Internet and driving up economic growth.

"Our post-industrial towns have a proud, great heritage but an even greater future. Their best years lie ahead of them," he said, announcing new long-term rail links and promising imme-

Boris' Brexit bets

These are the possible Brexit scenarios for the U.K. under its new Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson as the country races to meet an October 31 deadline

1 Brexit with a deal

Johnson has vowed to renegotiate the deal that predecessor Theresa May struck with the EU. He says he will withhold Britain's divorce payments as a bargaining chip to try to get rid of the agreement's so-called "backstop clause". However, EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has called the demand "unacceptable"

2 No-deal Brexit

Johnson has promised that he will take the country out of the EU, with or without a deal, on October 31. However, most MPs, including from his own party, are opposed to such an arrangement. This could

result in a no-confidence motion against Johnson when Parliament meets in September

3 Snap election

A snap poll could be called by Parliament but the minimum duration between a successful vote of no-confidence and an election is 51 days. This means MPs would have to act in the first week back from recess if they want to bring in a new government

4 Proroguing Parliament

Johnson has not ruled out the controversial option of 'proroguing' Parliament to pre-empt a no-confidence vote by MPs who may want to avert a no-deal Brexit

**a) What happens when Parliament is prorogued?**

- All legislative activity stops and no debates or votes are held in the House

b) Can a Prime Minister prorogue the House?

- The power is with the Queen, who acts on the advice of the Prime Minister. So, Johnson can ask the Queen to temporarily shut Parliament

5 Second referendum

Johnson could also call another referendum to establish a mandate for leaving without a deal, but he has said he is opposed to such a vote

What is the Irish backstop?

- The plan aims to ensure

Prime Minister Boris Johnson

that there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The backstop, opposed by hard-Brexiters, will keep the UK's territory of Northern Ireland in the EU customs union and much of the single market

**How Parliament voted**

The Withdrawal Agreement has been voted down thrice in Parliament so far. However, a majority of British MPs have also voted twice against leaving the EU without a deal

1 First parliamentary vote: January 15

For the deal: 202/635

Against the deal: 432/635

Abstention: 1

Margin of defeat:
230
votes

2 Second parliamentary vote: March 12

For the deal: 242/634

Against the deal: 391/634

Abstentions: 74

Margin of defeat:
149
votes

3 Third parliamentary vote: March 29

For the deal: 286/634

Against the deal: 344/634

Abstentions: 4

Margin of defeat:
58
votes

then we can make progress, I think."

The Withdrawal Agreement that Ms. May struck in November with the EU says the U.K. will remain in a customs union "unless and until" alternative arrangements are found to avoid a hard border.

Many British lawmakers oppose the prospect of being bound to EU rules and customs duties that would prevent Britain doing its own trade deals and leave it overseen by EU judges.

Trump hits out at black lawmaker from Baltimore

Cummings had criticised border officials

REUTERS
WASHINGTON
President Donald Trump hit out at a prominent African-American critic on Saturday, calling him a "brutal bully" who should concentrate on cleaning up his "disgusting, rat and rodent infested" Baltimore district rather than criticising the work of immigration officers on the Mexican border.

Mr. Trump's target in a series of early morning tweets was Representative Elijah Cummings, the Democratic Chairman of the House of Representatives Oversight Committee, who has called Mr. Trump a racist and sharply criticised his immigration policies.

Mr. Cummings responded



ed to Trump on Twitter.

"Mr. President, I go home to my district daily. Each morning, I wake up, and I go and fight for my neighbors. It is my constitutional duty to conduct oversight of the Executive Branch. But, it is my moral duty to fight for my constituents," he said.

Baltimore Mayor Bernard Young called Mr. Trump's rhetoric "hurtful and dangerous."

Hong Kong activists clash with police

Rocks, bottles thrown as the Chinese territory sees protests against gang attack

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Police fired volleys of tear gas and protesters hurled bricks during clashes in a rural Hong Kong town on Saturday as several thousand activists gathered to protest an attack by suspected triad gang members at a train station last weekend.

Activists pushed ahead with the march in Yuen Long, scene of the attack by club-wielding men, in spite of a refusal by police to allow the protest on safety grounds.

Rocks and bottles were thrown by protesters, who built barricades out of street furniture and umbrellas, creating multiple stand-offs.

Police, widely criticised for failing to better protect the public from last week-



Rallying against police: A demonstration in the district of Yuen Long in Hong Kong on Saturday. AFP

kend's attack, responded with tear gas as they pushed activists into retreat as it grew dark.

"Many people want to go but some will stay. There is still a lot of anger. I'm not sure which way it will go.

Nam Pin Wai (village) could be a target," said Kenneth, 27, retreating from one of the front lines.

Amid the retreat, which saw several hundred protesters leave the area, Reuters witnesses saw a hardcore

group of activists with small metal bats, metal and wooden poles and slingshots moving against the tide.

Last Sunday, about 100 white-shirted men stormed the Yuen Long mass-transit station, hours after protesters marched through central Hong Kong and defaced China's Liaison Office – the main symbol of Beijing's authority over the former British colony.

The men attacked black-clad protesters returning from Hong Kong island, passers-by, journalists and lawmakers with pipes and clubs, leaving 45 people injured. Some of the men later fled to Nam Pin Wai, a traditional walled village.

On Sunday, a car was dented and its windows smashed near the village.

Govt. can use Pentagon funds to build wall: Court

Ruling gives President's plan a boost

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday ruled in favour of President Donald Trump, allowing him to proceed with plans to divert billions of dollars in Pentagon funds towards construction of his border wall with Mexico.

"Wow! Big VICTORY on the Wall," Mr. Trump tweeted in reaction to the ruling. "Big WIN for Border Security and the Rule of Law!"

Mr. Trump declared a national emergency earlier this year in a bid to bypass Congress and obtain funding for his signature project, after the stand-off led to the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. But about 20 U.S. States along

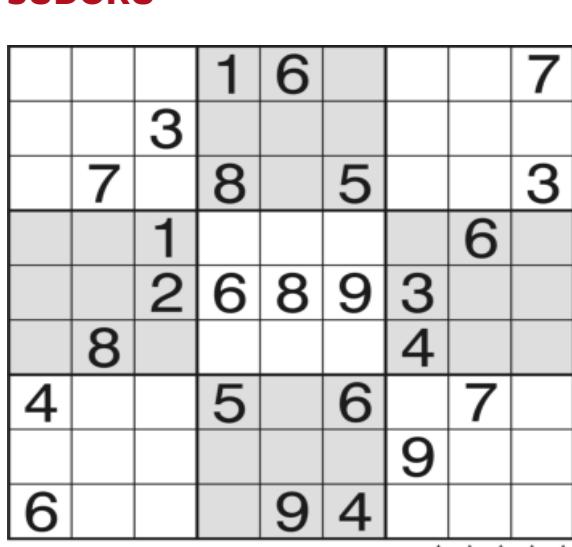
with rights and environmental groups and border communities are backing lawsuits that claim the emergency declaration violates the Constitution.

A federal judge on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals had issued a temporary injunction against using Defense Department funds for wall construction.

On Friday, the Supreme Court overturned the lower court decision with a 5-4 ruling.

Mr. Trump declared a national emergency earlier this year in a bid to bypass Congress and obtain funding for his signature project, after the stand-off led to the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. But about 20 U.S. States along

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



Afghan govt. to hold talks with Taliban in August

Oslo likely to be the venue, say officials

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban could begin in Norway within the next two weeks, officials and sources said on Saturday, marking a potentially crucial step in efforts to end the war.

The Taliban has so far refused to speak to the government of President Ashraf Ghani, which it sees as illegitimate, except for a recent summit where Ghani officials attended in a "personal capacity".

"We are preparing for direct talks," said Abdul Salam Rahimi, the State Minister for Peace Affairs, noting that the government would be represented by a 15-member delegation. "We are working with all sides and hope that in the next two weeks the first meeting will take place in a European country."

He did not specify where the summit might take

place, but diplomatic sources said the talks were scheduled to begin in Oslo on August 7. The sources said the international community and the Afghan government were still awaiting word from the Taliban.

The apparent development comes after Taliban negotiators sat with Afghan representatives at a so-called intra-Afghan dialogue brokered by Germany in Doha this month.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said any new talks would only begin after a deal has been forged with the U.S., and he reiterated the insurgents' long-held position that they would "not talk to the Kabul administration as a government".

Mr. Rahimi said the next delegation would include some of those who went to Doha, as well as religious scholars, women and other members of civil society.

U.S., Guatemala sign asylum deal

Central American migrants could be sent back to Guatemala

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump announced on Friday that a "landmark" asylum agreement has been reached with Guatemala, as the United States ratchets up pressure on its southern neighbours to stem the flow of migrants towards its border.

The White House said Guatemala would now be considered a "safe third country," meaning that U.S.-bound migrants who enter Guatemala would be required to seek asylum there instead.

Mr. Trump said the deal will "provide safety to legitimate asylum seekers and stop asylum fraud" in the region.

The asylum agreement with Guatemala comes days after Mr. Trump threatened tough retaliation against the small Central American country if it did not sign on to an asylum deal.

Friday's agreement, signed in the Oval Office by Guatemala's Interior Minister Enrique Degenhart, and U.S. Acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, would apply to Salvadoran and Honduran migrants passing through Guatemala towards the United States.

Their asylum claims should now be filed in Guatemala, Mr. McAleenan said.

If Central American migrants instead "make a journey all the way to the U.S. border, they would be removable back to Guatemala if they want to seek asylum," he noted. The deal is expected to be up and running in August, Mr. McAleenan said.

It was not immediately clear how the agreement signed on Friday would jibe with a provision of Guatemala's Constitutional Court, which recently blocked the idea of a deal making Guatemala a "safe third country" for asylum requests.

Chants of "Russia without Putin" and "Putin resign" echoed through central Moscow as guardsmen beat back protesters with batons and detained people. Jailed Opposition leader Alexei Navalny had called for Saturday's protest to persuade officials to allow candidates to run in a September 8 vote.

Russia: 800 detained over poll protest

REUTERS
MOSCOW

Russian police arrested more than 800 people in Moscow on Saturday in one of the biggest crackdowns of recent times against an increasingly defiant Opposition decrying President Vladimir Putin's tight grip on power.

The detentions came before and after a protest to demand that Opposition members be allowed to run in a local election. Authorities had declared it illegal and sought to block participation, but several thousand people turned up.

Chants of "Russia without Putin" and "Putin resign" echoed through central Moscow as guardsmen beat back protesters with batons and detained people. Jailed Opposition leader Alexei Navalny had called for Saturday's protest to persuade officials to allow candidates to run in a September 8 vote.

EV industry upbeat, ICE players seek Govt's help

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) has said the government's vision of increasing electric mobility in the country has been acknowledged by the GST Council through its decision to slash tax on EVs (electric vehicles).

"Over [time], this will help popularise EVs," Rajan Wadhera, president, SIAM said.

He said since the automotive industry is currently going through a difficult time, the government must intervene to stimulate demand so that the industry can turn around.

Rahil Ansari, head, Audi India, said, "Measures supporting the overall industry are required. All players are struggling with declining sales, leading to production cuts and may lead to job losses, too. The draft notification on hiking registration for ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles is detrimental to the overall development. We need support, not penalties."

Tarun Mehta, co-founder & CEO, Ather Energy, said, "The reduction of GST rates from 12% to 5% reduces the upfront cost of buying a vehicle by ₹8000-₹10,000. Compounded by the tax rebates offered in the Union Budget, today electric vehicles are an affordable upgrade from existing ICE options."

Sohinder Gill, director general, Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) said the move would "reduce the gap between EVs and IC Engine vehicles. The EV industry now awaits corresponding reduction of 18% GST on spare batteries," he said.

ICICI Bank clocks profit as provisions dip

Net NPA ratio lowest in 14 quarters; from an economic point of view, there is clearly a slowdown: Batra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

ICICI Bank reported a ₹1,908.03-crore net profit for the April-June quarter compared with a ₹119.55-crore loss during the same period of the previous year as additions to bad loans fell, lowering provision requirement.

Net interest income (NII) increased 27% year-on-year to ₹7,737 crore while net interest margin rose 3.61% compared with 3.19% in the same period of the previous year. Net interest margin was 3.72% during the fourth quarter of 2018-19.

Interest on I-T refund

"The impact of interest on income tax refund and interest collection from non-performing loans on net interest margin was about 17 basis points in Q1-2020 compared

Turning around



We continue to focus on reaching a consolidated return on assets of 15% by quarter ending June 2020

SANDEEP BATRA, ED (designate), ICICI Bank



Metrics	Q1 FY20	Q1 FY19	Growth (%)
Total income (₹cr)	21,405.50	18,574.17	15.24
Net profit/loss (₹cr)	1,908.03	(119.55)	-
Earnings per share (₹)	2.96	-	-
Net NPAs (%)	1.77	4.19	-

with about 25 basis points in Q4-2019," the bank said.

Non-interest income, excluding treasury income, stood at ₹3,247 crore compared with ₹3,085 crore while fee income grew 10% to ₹3,039 crore.

"The growth in core oper-

ating profit and reduction in credit cost resulted in a net profit of ₹1,908.03 crore," said Sandeep Batra, executive director (designate), ICICI Bank.

Core operating profit (profit before provisions and tax, excluding treasury income)

grew 21% year-on-year to ₹6,110 crore.

Asset quality improved with gross non-performing assets falling by almost ₹8,000 crore in a year to ₹45,763 crore as at June end and the ratio came down to 6.49% from 8.81%.

Net NPA ratio decreased from 4.19% on June 30, 2018 to 1.77% at June 30 this year – the lowest in the last 14 quarters. Net NPAs de-

creased 51% to ₹1,857 crore.

As a result, provisions fell to ₹3,496 crore in Q1-2020 compared with ₹5,971 crore a year earlier. The bank had a provision coverage ratio of 74%.

"We continue to focus on reaching a consolidated return on assets of 15% by quarter ended June 2020," he added.

The total domestic ad-

vances grew 18%, driven by a 22% growth in retail loans. The corporate loan book grew 13%.

Mr. Batra declined to give any guidance on loan growth and said there was a slowdown in economic activity.

"From an economic point of view, there is clearly a slowdown. We have seen slowdown in transactions and auto sales. However, the services sector continues to do well and we are seeing some improvement in capacity utilisation in the public sector," he added.

Deposit growth was 21% year-on-year, driven by a 34% growth in term deposits.

The share of CASA deposits to total deposits fell to 45.2%

as on June 30, 2019 compared with 49.6% as on March 31, 2019 and 50.5% on June 30 last year.

OYO Hotels to expand T.N. footprint

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The legal framework needs a

relook when it comes to

tackling corporate govern-

ance and failure issues, senior

lawyers Somasekhar

Sundaresan and Arvind Da-

tar said.

"If there is a governance

failure which has led to a busi-

ness failure, do we have a

legal framework that actual-

ly deals with it? Sadly, the

answer is no," Mr. Sundaresan

said, speaking on the topic

"Corporate failures – where

does the buck stop?" orga-

nised by the Palkhivala

Foundation.

Mr. Sundaresan also said

that the system is still grapp-

ling with how to deal with

real examples when they

come up. "And, when an ex-

ample comes up, we get into

case-specific solutions and

the worst case ends up driv-

ing the law for the entire so-

cietry, including the largely

compliant segments of socie-

ty," he said.

Mr. Sundaresan pointed

out how the Companies Act

2013 was framed entirely

we are trying to solve are

and the solutions for them,

and invite public comments

and then come up with a law

based on the feedback?" Mr.

Sundaresan asked.

Differentiation needed

Also speaking at the event, Mr. Datar said there should be differentiation between corporate failures due to frauds and those that were genuine failures.

He pointed out that sometimes regulation becomes the reason for business fail-

ure, giving the instance of sugar and real estate sectors that have been stuck with different regulations like State government rules, In-

solvency and Bankruptcy

Code and Real Estate Regula-

tion and Development Act (RERA).

OYO, which gets maxi-

mum bookings from Chen-

na and Coimbatore, is

poised to enter Tirunelveli,

Salem, Velankanni, Kan-

cheepuram, Yelagiri and

Tiruchendur.

"Supported by OYO's operational and technological capabilities followed by great customer and as-

set-owner feedback, we are

expanding our presence

across the State," said Adi-

tya Ghosh, CEO, OYO India

and south Asia, in a

statement.



lancing the interests of both

land owners and tenants."

However, he said there

could be some challenges in

implementation.

"The cap on the security

deposit can become a pain-

point for many landlords –

in cities like Bengaluru, a 10-

month security deposit

(with some scope for nego-

tiation) was the accepted

norm.

"Also, if a tenant defaults

or causes significant dam-

age to a property, a two-

month security deposit may

not cover the expenses the

property owner incurs in re-

pairs," he said.

Mr. Puri said while the go-

vernment lays down the

basic policies, the exact

rules will likely change with-

in each State since land is a

State subject.

States' call

"Like we saw in the highly lopsided roll-out of RERA, the Model Tenancy Act, 2019 may lose its real purpose if States do not follow the basic guidelines and di-

lute them," he added.

According to Mr. Puri, while the capping of the se-

curity deposit amount to a

maximum of two months

may benefit tenants, the

heavy penalty that will now

be imposed for non-vacancy

of the residential unit would

act as a deterrent and pro-

tection the interest of owners.

'Review legal set-up to tackle corporate failures'

Worst-case scenario ends up driving the law for entire society, says Sundaresan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI



we are trying to solve are

and the solutions for them,



The giant scale of the shift needed to BS-VI can be gauged from the production base. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Cleaner air, higher costs?

What will the move to Bharat Stage VI mass emission standards for various classes of motor vehicles by April 2020 entail?

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

The story so far: The Union Government, through an order dated September 16, 2016, mandated Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) mass emission standards for various classes of motor vehicles throughout the country from April 1, 2020, leapfrogging BS-V. While this will lead to better air quality in the short term, it also means higher vehicle prices and costs. For the automobile industry, this has meant accelerated development of all related technologies and components and big investments.

What makes BS-VI fuels cleaner?

As per Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms for upgraded fuels, (IS: 2796 - petrol and IS: 1460 - diesel), sulphur content is reduced to 10 mg/kg max in BS-VI from 50 mg/kg under BS-IV. This key reduction in sulphur makes it possible to equip vehicles with better catalytic converters that capture pollutants.

BS-VI confers several benefits, the most important of which is limits set on Particle Number (PN) for engines, a reference to direct injection engines that emit more particulates but are more efficient and release less carbon dioxide. Also, there are lower limits for hydrocarbons (HC) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) in diesel engines and lower Particulate Matter limits for both petrol and diesel engines.

What impact will it have on consumers?

Prices are the biggest impact factor both for commercial and passenger vehicles under the BS-VI regime, with one industry research estimate putting the increase at up to ₹20,000 for petrol cars, ₹65,000 to ₹90,000 for diesel cars, going up to ₹2.25 lakh for heavy commercial vehicles. Even two-wheelers, requiring fuel injection technology, will witness a price spike of ₹3,000 to ₹6,000. However, these estimates are made a year ahead of the actual roll-out of BS-VI fuel nationwide, and the auto industry may opt to absorb some costs and pass on the rest to the consumer. In terms of fuel, the oil marketing sector has said the retail price increase for BS-VI fuel could be anything from a few paise per litre to ₹2.

In the run-up to BS-VI, sales growth of vehicles has witnessed a slump due to several factors, including economic conditions, weak rural demand and the impending shift to higher standards

The giant scale of the shift needed to BS-VI can be gauged from the production base: the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) says the industry produced 30,915,420 vehicles ranging from two-wheelers to commercial vehicles in the year ended April 2019, with an annual growth of 6.26%.

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, for example, had to transition 16 models and 50 applications with tests across 60 lakh km. It decided to remove diesel models under the BS-VI category. Mahindra & Mahindra invested about ₹1,000 crore and several-fold investments were made by its suppliers.

But Mahindra, Tata and several other companies said they would go ahead with diesel line-ups. Hyundai India which exports almost all its models does not face issues with migration and the company is said to be fully ready for BS-VI. Some new manufacturers such as Kia are entering the market with BS-VI vehicles.

In the run-up to BS-VI, however, sales growth of vehicles has witnessed a slump due to a combination of factors, including economic conditions, weak rural demand and the impending shift to higher standards.

As per June 2019 sales data released by SIAM, automobile companies sold 16.28% fewer passenger vehicles compared to June 2018. There was a 23.39% drop in the sale of commercial vehicles in the same period. Two-wheeler sales dipped by 11.70%.

What about the BS-IV vehicles already manufactured?

Since there is no bar on the operation of existing vehicles beyond the cut-off date for BS-VI, that is, April 1, 2020, the inventory of personal and commercial vehicles will continue to be sold. This is significant for the commercial sector, which involves higher investments. After the deadline, however, all new vehicles sold must comply with BS-VI.

A spike in sales of BS-IV vehicles is expected closer to the festival season, when buyer sentiment turns positive, and the industry prepares to liquidate its stock of soon-to-be obsolete vehicles. The outlook is unclear for heavy commercial vehicles due to recent changes that enable higher freight loading, and depressed demand for expansion.

The availability of higher financing through banks after the move to recapitalise them, and higher liquidity in non-banking financial companies could also influence sales.

What will the shift mean?

As of January 1 this year, there were 57,468 retail fuel outlets of the oil marketing companies across the country. Although BS-VI fuel was introduced in the national capital last year, and extended to some contiguous districts in neighbouring States, the release of the higher grade fuel in all the pumps in the country has to be simultaneous. The auto industry wants it done by February. The cost of upgrading refineries to produce the higher-quality fuel is estimated at between ₹25,000 crore and ₹30,000 crore.

Why does India say no to Kashmir mediation?

What are the historical reasons why third party mediation is avoided by the government? Will the status quo on India's Kashmir policy remain?

SUHASINI HAIDAR

The story so far: On Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sought mediation in Kashmir when they met during the G-20 summit in Osaka. In Parliament, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar categorically said that Mr. Modi did not request Mr. Trump to "mediate or arbitrate" on the Kashmir issue. He said India remains committed to discussing all issues with Pakistan bilaterally.

What is the backstory on the U.S. offer of mediation?

In 1993, the new administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton decided to wade into the Kashmir issue, indicating repeatedly that it wished to mediate between India and Pakistan. At the UN General Assembly in September, Mr. Clinton referred to resolving "civil wars from Angola to the Caucasus to Kashmir," and a month later, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphael questioned the validity of Kashmir's 'Instrument of Accession' during a press briefing. At a recent event, the Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Civil Aviation (and Minister of State, Commerce and Industry), Hardeep Puri, recounted how India issued a strong protest. Mr. Puri was then the Joint Secretary (Americas), and made the call to an official in Washington with a carefully but strongly worded message cleared by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. Mr. Puri said, "We read the riot act to the U.S. administration that time, and succeeded remarkably in drawing a red line on the issue [of mediation]."

In fact, until Mr. Trump dropped a bombshell during his joint press appearance with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday, where he claimed that Mr. Modi had asked him to "mediate or arbitrate" on Kashmir, no U.S. leader has publicly crossed that line in 25 years. Responding to a swift and angry denial from the Ministry of External Affairs, the U.S. State Department seemed to backtrack from the allegation by saying that Kashmir remains a "bilateral issue", but maintained that the U.S. "stands ready to assist" any India-Pakistan talks.

Why does India refrain from taking help?

India's firm position against mediation on Kashmir or any other issue stems from several reasons, most notably a historical suspicion, since the 1950s and 1960s, as mediated talks by the United Nations and World Bank, the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia have been unsuccessful in resolving the issues between India and Pakistan. At best, the attempts have worked for diffusing tensions, or calling off hostilities at the Line of Control and the International Border, but not in terms of their rival claims over Jammu and Kashmir. Another reason is that India sees itself as a regional leader, and does not require any assistance in sorting out its issues with other regional countries. In addition, the widespread belief is that mediation favours the weaker party by levelling the playing field, and with its stronger



Milestone: Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistan President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in Shimla in 1972. ■ THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

conventional and non-conventional military prowess, India has seen no significant gain from bringing a third-party into its 70-year-old conflict with Pakistan.

When did the UN try to mediate?

The early attempts at mediation by the UN were made after India took its complaint against Pakistan's forced occupation of parts of Kashmir (PoK) to the UN Security Council on January 1, 1948. The UN then set up the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) which proposed mediating a resolution along a three-point action plan: Pakistani demilitarisation of the

Kashmir region, followed by Indian reduction in military presence, and a proposed final resolution by an impartial U.N. administered plebiscite to "determine the wishes of the Kashmiri people". The deal never got off the ground as Pakistan never agreed to demilitarise, and India under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made it clear that a plebiscite would never be accepted. Where the UNCIP was successful was

in mediating a ceasefire in 1949, and negotiating the geographical location of the cease-fire line which would be monitored by the United Nations Military Observer Group In India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). Individual U.N. representatives continued to visit both sides from 1949 to 1953 but failed to improve the atmosphere for a resolution, or to convince either side to demilitarise the two sides of the LoC. The first United Nations Representative for India and Pakistan (UNRIP) appointed to mediate the dispute was Sir Owen Dixon, an Australian jurist, who was followed by Frank Graham, an American diplomat, who gave up after his proposal was rejected by

New Delhi and Karachi (then the capital of Pakistan) in April, 1953. The only exceptions to this dismal record were the 1960 World Bank guaranteed Indus Water Treaty, and a territorial agreement on the Rann of Kutch, mediated successfully by the British government in 1965. Soviet Premier Kosygin also moderated between Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan to broker the 1965 Tashkent peace agreement, but the treaty has always been marked by suspicion and doubts, tainted by Shastri's sudden death at Tashkent.

What about the U.S.?

A particularly bitter episode for India came from mediation attempts by the U.S. and the U.K. after the 1962 Sino-Indian war. The U.S. had provided India with planes and military hardware worth about \$60 million during the war, and the price, said American officials, was that India should agree to mediated talks with Pakistan on Kashmir.

Says Ashoka University Professor Rudra Chaudhuri (author of *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*, and also the director of Carnegie India), "The mediation was accepted because Nehru was in shock after the defeat to China, and the U.S. made it clear that any further military assistance was contingent on India's cooperation on Kashmir talks."

On November 21, 1962, the day the war ended, a team of 24 American negotiators headed to India, led by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Averell Harriman. They worked, along with U.S. Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith and British High Commissioner Paul Gore-Booth to bring India to the table for six rounds of talks between Foreign Minister Swaran Singh and Pakistan Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Eventually, however as India regained its confidence, the talks floundered, and ended in 1963 after Nehru made it clear that India would never give up the Kashmir Valley.

Will India remain opposed to mediation?

After winning the war with Pakistan that saw the creation of Bangladesh, India, in 1972, negotiated the Simla Agreement, which did away with any idea of future mediation between the two countries. According to the Agreement signed on July 2, 1972 by Indira Gandhi and by then President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the two countries "resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them".

In February 1999, the Lahore declaration signed by Nawaz Sharif and Atal Behari Vajpayee also affirmed the bilateral nature of issues and their resolution. Thus, even when Mr. Trump spoke this week, India's response, in Parliament, was to invoke the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration saying that they "provide the basis to resolve all issues between India and Pakistan bilaterally". These bilateral efforts are at an end at present, and little has moved since the last negotiations on Kashmir in 2003-2008, when Indian and Pakistani negotiators discussed the four-step formula.

India has maintained its opposition to third-party mediation, however, and despite offers from several leaders including South African President Nelson Mandela, UN Chief António Guterres, and more recently, the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, has said, "thanks, but no thanks".

What is zero budget natural farming?

Will this form of chemical-free agriculture increase farmers' incomes? Where are the pitfalls?

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

The story so far: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman thrust zero budget farming into the spotlight in the first Budget speech of the 17th Lok Sabha earlier this month, calling for a "back to the basics" approach. She said, "We need to replicate this innovative model through which in a few States, farmers are already being trained in this practice. Steps such as this can help in doubling our farmers' income in time for our 75th year of Independence." Several States, including Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, have been aggressively driving a shift towards this model.

What is it and how did it come about?

Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF) is a method of chemical-free agriculture drawing from traditional Indian practices.

It was originally promoted by Maharashtra agriculturist and Padma Shri recipient Subhash Palekar, who developed it in the mid-1990s as an alternative to the Green Revolution's methods driven by chemical fertilizers and pesticides and intensive irrigation. He argued that the rising cost of these external inputs was a leading cause of indebtedness and suicide among farmers, while the impact of chemicals on the environment and on long-term fertility was devastating. Without the need to spend money on these inputs – or take loans to buy them – the cost of production could be reduced and farming made into a "zero budget" exercise, breaking the debt cycle for many small farmers.

Instead of commercially produced chemical inputs, the ZBNF promotes the application of *jeevamrutha* – a mixture of fresh desi cow dung and aged desi cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour, water and soil – on farmland. This is a fermented microbial culture that adds nutrients to the soil, and acts as a catalytic agent to promote the activity of microorganisms and earthworms in the soil. About 200 litres of *jeevamrutha* should be sprayed twice a month per acre of land; after three years, the system is supposed to become self-sustaining. Only one cow is needed for 30 acres of land, according to Mr. Palekar, with the caveat that it must be a local Indian breed – not an imported Jersey or Holstein.

A similar mixture, called *bijamrita*, is used to treat seeds, while concoctions using neem leaves and pulp, tobacco and green chillies are prepared for insect and pest management.

The ZBNF method also promotes soil aeration, minimal watering, intercropping, bunds and topsoil mulching and discourages intensive irrigation and deep ploughing. Mr. Palekar is against vermicomposting, which is the mainstay of typical organic farming, as it introduces the most common composting worm, the European red wiggler (*Eisenia fetida*) to Indian soils. He claims these worms absorb toxic metals and poison groundwater and soil.

Why does it matter?

According to National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data, almost 70% of agricultural households spend more than they earn and more than half of all farmers are in debt. In States such as Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, levels of indebtedness are around 90%, where each household



A cotton field in Andhra Pradesh. (Below) Subhash Palekar ■ AP AND S. MAHINSHA



Sikkim, which has seen some decline in yields following a conversion to organic farming, is used as a cautionary tale on totally abandoning chemical fertilizers

bears an average debt of ₹1 lakh. In order to achieve the Central government's promise to double farmers' income by 2022, one aspect being considered is natural farming methods such as the ZBNF which reduce farmers' dependence on loans to purchase inputs they cannot afford. Meanwhile, inter-cropping allows for increased returns.

The Economic Survey has also highlighted the ecological advantages.

Is it effective?

A limited 2017 study in Andhra Pradesh claimed a sharp decline in input costs and improvement in yields. However, reports also suggest that many farmers, including Mr. Palekar's native Maharashtra, have reverted to conventional farming after seeing their ZBNF returns drop after a few years, in turn raising doubts about the method's efficacy in increasing farmers' incomes.

ZBNF critics, including some experts within the Central policy and planning think tank NITI Aayog, note that India needed the Green Revolution in order to become self-sufficient and ensure food security. They warn against a wholesale move away from that model without sufficient proof that yields will not be affected. Sikkim, which has seen some decline in yields following a conversion to organic farming, is used as a cautionary tale regarding the pitfalls of abandoning chemical fertilizers.

Which are the States with big plans?

According to the Economic Survey, more than 1.6 lakh farmers are practising the ZBNF in almost 1,000 villages using some form of state support, although the method's

advocates claim more than 30 lakh practitioners overall. The original pioneer was Karnataka, where the ZBNF was adopted as a movement by a State farmers' association, the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha. Large-scale training camps were organised to educate farmers in the method. According to a survey carried out in those early years, ZBNF farmers all owned small plots of land, had some access to irrigation and owned at least one cow of their own.

In June 2018, Andhra Pradesh rolled out an ambitious plan to become India's first State to practise 100% natural farming by 2024. It aims to phase out chemical farming over 80 lakh hectares of land, converting the State's 60 lakh farmers to ZBNF methods.

Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Karnataka and Uttarakhand have also invited Mr. Palekar to train their farmers.

Is the budgetary support enough?

Despite the ZBNF buzz caused by the Budget speech, the Finance Minister did not actually announce any new funding to promote it. Last year, the Centre revised the norms for the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana – Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR), a flagship Green Revolution scheme with an allocation of ₹3,745 crore this year, and the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, which has an allocation of ₹325 crore and is meant to promote organic farming and soil health. Under the revised guidelines, both Centrally-sponsored schemes now allow States to use their funds to promote the ZBNF, vedic farming, natural farming, cow farming and a host of other traditional methods.

Andhra Pradesh says it has utilised ₹249 crore from these schemes to promote the ZBNF over a two-and-a-half year period. The State estimates it will need ₹17,000 crore to convert all of its 60 lakh farmers to the ZBNF over the next 10 years.

However, this is only a fraction of the spending on Central government subsidies for fertilizers, pesticides and mass irrigation that has driven the Green Revolution model.

What lies ahead?

NITI Aayog has been among the foremost promoters of Mr. Palekar and the ZBNF method. However, its experts have also warned that multi-location studies are needed to scientifically validate the long-term impact and viability of the model before it can be scaled up and promoted country-wide.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research is studying the ZBNF methods practised by basmati and wheat farmers in Modipuram (Uttar Pradesh), Ludhiana (Punjab), Panthagar (Uttarakhand) and Kurukshetra (Haryana), evaluating the impact on productivity, economics and soil health including soil organic carbon and soil fertility.

If found to be successful, an enabling institutional mechanism could be set up to promote the technology, NITI Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar has said. The Andhra Pradesh experience is also being monitored closely to judge the need for further public funding support.

CAPSULE



Origin of photosynthesis

Imperial College London researchers, studying *Helio bacterium modesto caldum* – an ancient bacterium – have found structures in it that suggest photosynthesis may have evolved a billion years earlier than is presently believed, and oxygenic photosynthesis need not have evolved from anoxygenic photosynthesis.



Love hormone

Oxytocin is believed to regulate maternal behaviour. Now, a study in *PLOS ONE* finds a group of cells activated by oxytocin present in one area in female mice but not in the same area in males. Activation of the receptors correlates with estrogen presence, implying the cells can induce maternal behaviour. The finding has potential for treating postpartum depression.



Fountain of youth

Senescent cells are the opposite of stem cells: they can never divide again. New research finds that ageing, senescent cells stop producing nucleotides, the building block of DNA. When young cells were prevented from producing nucleotides, the cells became senescent. The findings have potential to help with ageing and related diseases.

IIT Madras: Breath humidity sensors for wearable electronics

It detects ethanol, acetone in oral breath of alcoholics, diabetics, respectively

R. PRASAD

A nanofibre sensor capable of sensing minute variations in relative humidity levels in the exhaled breath has been fabricated by a team led by T. Pradeep from the Department of Chemistry at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras. The highly sensitive sensors can be integrated into wearable electronics and might have applications in assessing human metabolism and calorie burn rates.

The sensor can also detect traces of ethanol and acetone, two major components present in the oral breath of alcoholics and diabetics, respectively.

Quick response time

The sensors have very quick response time of about one second and can detect a range of relative humidity from 0.95%. The sensor was found to have high stability.

"Even after exposing the sensor to ambient conditions for a week, we still found the response time to be about one second and could match the breathing rates quite effectively," says Sathvik Ajay Iyengar who was a short-term student with Prof. Pradeep's team and is one of the first authors of a paper published in the journal *ACS Applied Electronic Materials*.

The breath rate was measured for one-two hours prior to and after exercise. The heart rate is higher soon after exercise and this is reflected in higher breath rate. "We intend collecting breath rate over a period of few days to establish the relationship between heart and breath rate and metabolism," says Pillalamarri Srikrishnarka from IIT Madras, the other first author of the paper.



Portable: The nanofibre sensor can be easily integrated to the base of wearables such as common place masks, say (from right) Pradeep, Pillalamarri Srikrishnarka and Sathvik Ajay.

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ethanol and acetone in the breath, the resistance of the sensor increases and conductivity reduces. Hence, there is a dip in the current measured from the baseline.

"The reduction in conductivity is because of the absence of moisture – the hydrogen bond between the sensor and analyte [ethanol and acetone] is less likely to form," says Srikrishnarka.

"Polyaniline is the major contributor of current conduction, and reduced graphene oxide complements it. The combination of polyaniline coating and reduced graphene oxide allows higher current conduction," says Srikrishnarka. "In the absence of reduced graphene oxide, polyaniline can still conduct current but at a significantly lower level. The reduced graphene oxide alone does not help conduct current."

"The coating of the mat with polyaniline occurs in water and so can be scaled up to get large-scale coat-

ings. This process also makes it easier, quicker and relatively more eco-friendly than other commercial processes," says Prof. Pradeep. The nanofibre mat obtained is very thin and offers breathability. In order to integrate sensors like this into wearable electronics to monitor breath, resistance-free air flow is the key.

Portable sensor

To make the sensor truly portable, the researchers are using the popular Arduino prototyping platform coupled with Bluetooth module for collecting data wirelessly.

"We initially tested the sensor performance using an Arduino Uno and we observed a good response. We intend to team up with other departments to recognise patterns by using machine learning and to develop mobile-friendly apps to monitor health," says Prof. Pradeep. The team plans to take the work forward via startup initiatives.

Reversible superglue inspired by snail epiphram

Snails secrete a mucous film which dries to forms a glassy structure that fixes them to the substrate

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

A hydrogel-based adhesive that combines strength and reversibility has been developed by a collaboration of researchers based in the U.S. and Korea. This combination is not easily found in adhesives. The group has drawn inspiration from snails in developing this adhesive.

Snail mucous

When snails are startled or encounter discomfort, they shrink into their shells. They secrete a mucous film around the opening of their shell, which on drying forms a glassy structure that both seals them in and fixes them strongly to the object they are sitting on. This structure formed by the dry mucous is called an epiphram.

The strength of this epiphram stems from the fact that before it dries it penetrates into the microscopic crevices on the surface the



Firm grip: To demonstrate this, we used two 2-square-centimetre pieces of the adhesive to suspend me (85 kg) in the air, says Jolly.

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Similarly, the hydrogel developed by the group hardens from its wet state with a modulus of 100 pascals to a dry state value of 2.3 gigapascals.

"The ability to go from being as soft as Jello to being 1,000 times stiffer when dried, that is, hard as a bottle cap, and to do so without shrinking significantly in the process, is what makes our adhesive special and strong," says Jason Christopher Jolly, a PhD student in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, University of Pennsylvania, and an author of the paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Soft hydrogel

Unlike commercially available wood glues (such as Fevicol) or superglues that are liquids when applied and solidify to perform the adhesive role, the PHEMA adhesive developed by the

group is like a solid that in its hydrated state is soft, wet and squishy. "In this state it is able to flow into and fill micro- and nanoscale surface grooves and pores, following which it can be dried to lock itself in place," explains Jolly in an email to *The Hindu*.

Strong adhesive

PHEMA, which stands for poly(2-hydroxyethyl methacrylate), has a remarkable adhesive strength. According to the researchers, a 1 x 1 cm square sample of the adhesive can hold an object weighing 91 kg. To compare this to a commonly used reversible adhesive, a strong 1 cm square of Velcro can support a weight of 12.2 kg.

"To demonstrate this, we used two 2 square centimetre pieces of the adhesive to suspend myself (85 kg) in the air," says Jolly.

The group ran into PHEMA rather serendipitously when Gaoxiang Wu, co-first

author of the paper, was cleaning out some old samples from his desk that were thin films of patterned PHEMA on slides he had prepared for another project. The idea was born when he found that the slides were stuck together and he could not separate them even with great effort.

The group has filed for patents for the technology. Further, while the adhesive shows strength and reversibility, it is still limited to use in relatively dry environments, as its switching mechanism relies on water. "It is limited to applications that don't require very fast switching," says Jolly.

"Our plan is to tweak the chemistry so as to not be water-based but to use organic solvents. We are also working on engineering more adhesives of this class that can be switched on with different stimuli such as light, heat or electrical pulses," he adds.

IISER Mohali finds that zebrafish use landmarks for navigation

The presence of colourful landmarks, visible even in turbid conditions, plays an important role in improving foraging success

R. PRASAD

Low to extremely turbid water conditions are quite common in areas that humans inhabit. Under such conditions, it is a challenge for fish to forage food as they rely on vision to navigate and find food. Now, in a study carried out using zebrafish, researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Mohali have found hard evidence to support how turbidity negatively affects foraging efficiency and how they learn to cope with it. The study was done in collaboration with IISER Kolkata.

The team led by Dr. Manjari Jain from the Department



Smart fish: The zebrafish used visual cues and landmarks to navigate to foraging sites. *NAKUL RAJ

posed by reduced visibility. The study found that acclimation to turbidity conditions zebrafish did overcome a challenge to

termining success in foraging food. The results of the study were published in the journal *Biology Letters*.

Colourful landmarks

In addition to acclimation, the presence of colourful landmarks that are visible even in extremely turbid conditions plays an important role in improving foraging success. The study could conclusively show that zebrafish use visual cues to navigate to foraging sites especially when turbidity is high and visibility is low.

The cornerstone of the study is the visual learning capability of zebrafish. We found the wild freshwater zebrafish (*Danio rerio*) are cap-

able of using familiar visual landmarks to find food locations even when vision is compromised," says Dr. Jain.

"This is the first study to show the ability of zebrafish to use any landmark for navigation," says Dr. Jain. The study highlights the important role of behavioural plasticity and spatial learning to cope with altered sensory environments, which in this case is increased turbidity of the water they live in.

Effect of turbidity

"Here we demonstrate the detrimental effect of turbidity on zebrafish with respect to foraging. Turbidity is likely to increase the metabolic cost associated with foraging

behaviour," Dr. Jain stresses. "But what is unique is that within one month of acclimation they seem to deal with it. The foraging ability improves drastically. It highlights the importance of acclimation."

If zebrafish do indeed learn to cope with turbidity and find food in a matter of one month, should the effect of turbidity on zebrafish matter at all? "Just because they are able to cope with turbidity in a month does not mean that chronic exposure to turbid water is not going to affect them. The resilience to survive in turbid water has not been studied," she warns.

"If one of the sensory mo-

dalities is compromised in some species they are capable of switching over to another. But in the case of zebrafish we found they continue to use visual sensory to locate food," Dr. Jain says.

For the study, the researchers collected 160 zebrafish from a clear stream near Kolkata. The fishes kept in tanks were fed fish pellets and *Artemia* (genus of aquatic crustaceans). They were trained for two weeks to navigate and locate food. After training fish to find food, 75 fishes were split into three groups and the different groups were acclimated for a month in clear, low turbid and high turbid conditions. The low turbid condition

mimicked coastal water and high turbidity mimicked an estuary mouth.

Acclimation

The researchers found that one month of acclimation was sufficient for fishes to forage food even when the turbidity was high. Even during training, the researchers did find that zebrafish in turbid water did learn to use colourless stones as proxy for food locations. During the tests, even in highly turbid conditions, the ability to locate food was superior when there were landmarks. Their ability to locate food was compromised when the landmarks were not present.

Predicting pollution levels using oceans' memory

Patterns like El Nino can help predict weather conditions and pollution, nearly a season in advance

ASWATHI PACHA

Researchers from China and the U.S. have been successful in predicting air pollution levels in northern Indian States. The model they have developed shows 75% accuracy in predicting pollution levels, and the prediction can be done even a season in advance. The model takes into account certain climatic patterns related to the ocean which have a regulatory effect on the wintertime air pollution over northern India. Studying these patterns can help predict pollution levels.

India has been emerging as one of the world's most polluted countries, with particulate matter PM 2.5 levels spiking more than 999 microgram per cubic metre in parts of Delhi last year.

Studying a combination of El Nino, Antarctic Oscillation and the anomalies in sea surface temperature during autumn (September-November), can help forecast the pollution conditions in winter (December-February).

The statistical model developed by the team can also help the government in adjusting policies and strategies for pollution control before winter comes, the paper published in *Science Advances* adds.

It is known that the aerosol over an area is modulated by meteorological conditions and circulation patterns. Stagnant weather conditions such as low wind speeds and descending air can favour rapid aerosol formation and accumulation. Understanding these climatic factors which influence the wintertime haze pollution can help foresee the future ventilation conditions too.

Also, the ocean data serves as a memory and large-scale climate patterns like El Nino can tell what the weather conditions and pollution will be, nearly a season in advance.

The team constructed a computer model which incorporates the El Nino and Antarctic Oscillation data for autumn. Climatic data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. for the period 2003-2018 and the aerosol optical depth observed by various satellites were also used.



Winter haze: The ocean data serves as a memory to foretell how the weather conditions and pollution will play out.

* FILE PHOTO

tic Oscillation data for autumn. Climatic data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. for the period 2003-2018 and the aerosol optical depth observed by various satellites were also used.

"It will help identify if the weather conditions will be favourable or unfavourable for pollution, helping the government frame a more stringent pollution control plan if needed," explains Dr. Meng Gao, assistant professor at the Hong Kong Baptist University, China. He is the first author of the study.

The Antarctic Oscillation does not directly influence Indian climate but affects the Indian Ocean Meridional Dipole which in turn plays a role in our climatic conditions.

He added that there have been several studies in China connecting extreme pollution with East Asia winter monsoon, Arctic sea ice loss, the El Nino-Southern Oscillation, and Pacific sea surface temperature anomalies. The predictions from these studies have helped the government make the needed reforms, especially in its industrial sector, helping bring down pollution levels in the country.

Bees use complex memory for communication

Waggle run correlates with distance from food site to hive

I.T. ILAVENIL

Bees use waggle dance to communicate with their nest mates the flight distance and direction to foraging sites. Now, a research team led by Axel Brockmann at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru, has studied how bees use complex memory to generate dance duration to communicate a change in foraging distance.

Bees are known to waggle dance near the entrance of the hives. The duration of the waggle run of a dancing bee correlates with the distance between the food site and the hive. For instance, as the distance to the foraging site increases, the duration of waggle increases too.

The team used the honey bee species *Apis mellifera* for the study. "Most of the research on the brain and behaviour of bees around the world is done with the help of *A. mellifera* and therefore we could put our results into the context of all the research done previously," says Dr. Brockmann.

Memory formation
To understand in detail memory formation in bees for waggle dance, the researchers trained a group of honey bees to forage food kept 300 metres away from the hive. When the food source was shifted to 400 metres, most of the bees took multiple trips to the new foraging site to update their dance. Till such time the bees formed the new memory, they displayed an intermediate dance duration indicating distances in between the new and old foraging locations.

"One must assume that the bees, when arriving at the new feeder site, know the distance between the feeder and the hive. If not, they will not be able to find the way back. The occurrence of intermediate dance durations indicates that the bees use memo-

ry of both distances when they update the dance information," says Dr. Brockmann.

It was also noticed that the memory processes of bees responded differently depending on whether the foraging distance was extended or shortened from the original distance of 300 metres. When the feeder was shifted from the original distance of 300 metres to 200 metres and back to 300 metres, the bees were able to update the feeder distance following each shift and communicate the distance correctly through waggle dance.

In contrast, when the feeder was shifted from the original distance (300 metres) to 400 metres the bees were able to communicate the longer foraging distance. But when brought back to the original distance of 300 metres, it continued to exhibit the waggle duration for 400m.

"The foraging site at 400 metres was new to the bees unlike the one at 200 metres which the bees visited earlier during the training process. Therefore, when the feeder was first shifted to a novel site [400 metres] and then back to the original site [300 metres], honey bees did not update the waggle duration after the second shift. This is likely due to new memory interfering with the recall of an older one," says Arumoy Chatterjee, a PhD student at the institute. He is the first author of the paper published in *Journal of Experimental Biology*.

"Previously, there was no easy way to dissociate the waggle dance activity of honey bee foragers from their foraging activity. Our experiments now provide us with the means to dissociate them, an essential first step towards understanding the mechanisms underlying the conversion of flight information to waggle dance information," adds co-author Ebi George, another PhD student at the institute.

Life as one big BREADBOARD

Outcomes hardly matter; just do it as diligently as possible

SHANKAR GOPALKRISHNAN

The electronics laboratory sessions at the engineering college were eventful. A motley set of equipment lay scattered on the table – a breadboard, a display screen, a clump of wires and colourful beads comprising resistors, transistors and capacitors. The objective was simple: to follow a set of instructions, create an electronic circuit on the breadboard and read the resultant output waveform on the display screen. The breadboard had tiny holes into which you inserted the resistors and capacitors and connected them up with wires.

It would be unnerving especially if you were doing it for the first time. You had to contend with multiple challenges – instructions that were unclear, the pressure of time and the overbearing

presence of the professor who looked out for the slightest error to give you an earful! It was often an exercise in futility, and there were days when the experiments completely failed despite your best efforts. Still, you soldiered on.

If you managed to get the desired output waveform and successfully completed the lab work, it was deemed a miracle.

The miracle

One afternoon, a miracle did happen. The display screen suddenly sprang to life, and registered this most beautiful waveform. It was a sight to behold – a rainbow of sorts for our thirsty eyes!

We were a team of three and had struggled through the entire afternoon putting the pieces of the circuit together until the breadboard resembled a wild jungle... with wires hanging all over!

We impatiently waited until the professor was at the table to evaluate our artwork. It was our crowning glory moment. The professor's expression was inscrutable – he looked at the waveform with interest and then looked at each of us with equal interest. He carefully removed one of the resistors from the breadboard, reaching out for it between the wild undergrowth of wires. "Watch, my dears; the waveform output is still intact!" Our response was muted. "Yes, sir," we mumbled. In such a complicated circuitry, there could be some scope for redundancy, where the loss of a body part need not affect the overall health, or so we thought.

What happened from this point on was nothing short of dramatic. The professor did quick work: he removed a capacitor here, a resistor there and uprooted wires by the

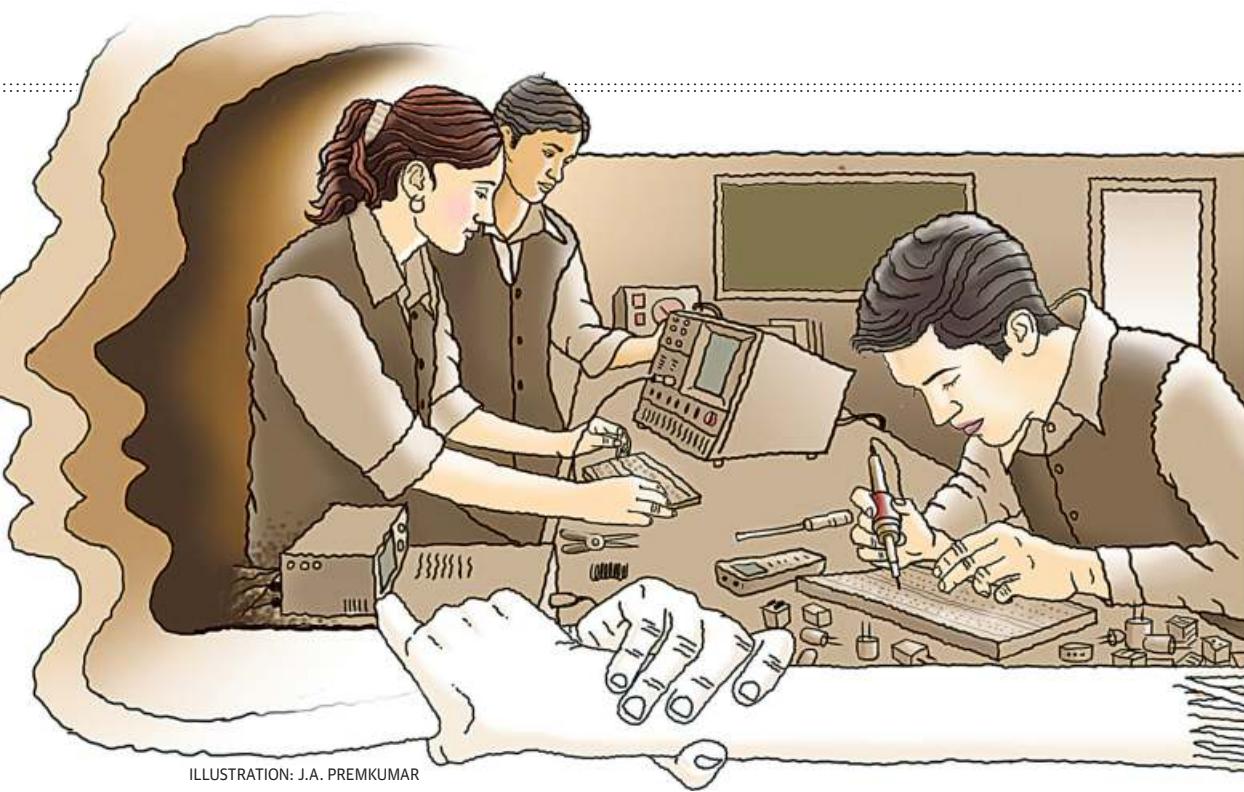


ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

handful. Like dead pieces outside a chessboard, there was a now a growing heap of deadwood piling up outside the breadboard. "My dears, your waveform is still intact!"

We knew something was wrong. Soon, the professor plunged his entire fist into the breadboard and exclaimed whatever came in his grasp and exclaimed, "My dears, your waveform has still not changed!" Eventually, in a manic rage, he had emptied the entire breadboard of all its components. The waveform still smiled back at us, unaffected. The rest of the afternoon was not

pleasant. The professor asked for the lab record books and scrawled, "repeat the experiment" in red across the entire page. He was evidently angry.

The above incident is actually several decades old. To this day, I am baffled how the waveform output could be so precise especially when the breadboard was emptied out. There are plausible explanations, no doubt, of the circuit being 'shorted' or the display wires possibly connected back-to-back. I do not know. However, I do know this incident has taught some valuable lessons for life.

Often we wonder about our contribution to this world, our role in the scheme of things and how it will shape the future. As the years roll by, these larger-than-life questions nag us. We worry that if by a quirk of fate, we move on today, would we have done enough for the future, for the family, for society so that they are better off, just that little bit, because we lived. But there are no easy answers.

It is here that the breadboard and the waveform come to our rescue. The waveform did not require the elaborate circuitry on the

breadboard at all. So too with life. The cosmic laws will take care of the future on their own. In front of these mighty laws of time, space and causation, my puny existence and contribution amounts to nothing. Hence, I need not worry about the future. The future will unfold on its own, regardless of me. This attitude frees me from unnecessarily carrying a load that I need not!

If that is the case, do I need to struggle with the breadboard at all? Do I need to wire those elaborate connections? Can I simply eject out of the whole framework

if anyway my contribution amounts to nothing?

No, I do need to wrestle with the breadboard and arrange those resistors and wires to the best of my ability. If I look back, those electronics laboratory sessions were important. We experienced the whole gamut of emotions – of elation and dejection, ear and futility (often on the same day). The tapestry of emotions made our lives richer. Without them, our lives would have been boring and hollow. The diligence, the teamwork, the common goal and the shared emotion... everything was essential and helped us emerge stronger and wiser. In the process, we had a lot of fun. So too with life. I am placed today in a particular role, to wire up some circuit on some breadboard.

The outcome just does not matter. I only have to be busy in the process of wiring the breadboard as diligently as I can. That alone is my lot. Ours is not to question why. Ours is but to do and die! Therefore, we keep doing, like the busybee... with a heart for any fate. Still achieving, still pursuing, we learn to labour and to wait!

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The striking tales the rain tells

The universal truths and some age-old lessons of water management

C.N. PILLAI

Rain, or the lack of it, is very much on our minds today. Though about 70% of the surface of the earth is covered with water in the form of oceans, life on the land depends on precipitation as rain and snow.

The occurrence of precipitation is subject to the vagaries of nature, leading to unexpected droughts and floods. Man, over the ages, has adopted various strategies to propitiate nature and the gods to ensure adequate rainfall. The ancients were aware of the importance of trees and mountains in ensuring rainfall and conserving water. I recount two stories from Indian mythology to illustrate the point.

Bhagavata Puranam contains chapters on Govardhan puja practised in Gokulam during Krishna's childhood.

This was an agrarian community whose livelihood was farming and cattle-rearing, and timely rain was important. Every year, they would conduct a puja or *yagam* to propitiate Lord Indra who was believed to be the one who controlled rain.

Once when Krishna was about seven years old, preparations were afoot for the annual Indra puja. Krishna questioned the elders of the community on the puja. When told about its purpose, he could not accept it. He argued that rain was a natural phenomenon and Indra, if at all involved in it, could act only according to the rules of nature. Scanty rainfall, if it happened, was the result of our own acts of commission

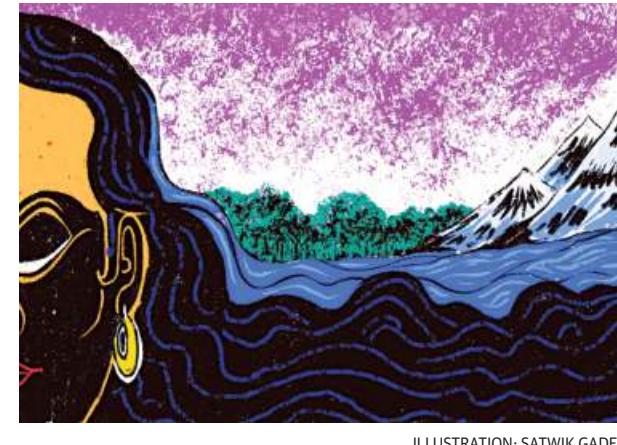


ILLUSTRATION: SATWIK GADE

and omission. (I am using modern terminology here for what I think Krishna meant by ascribing it to *karma*.)

He further said they were living in the foothills of the Govardhan mountain and the mountain and the trees were responsible for bringing forth rain. We neglect the mountain and the trees at our own risk and Indra had no role to play in this.

Bhagiratha was determined to cajole Ganga Devi herself from the heavens to come down to earth, and to this end, he performed rigorous *tapasya*. His arduous ef-

The ancients were aware of the importance of trees and mountains in ensuring rainfall

forts finally bore fruit and Ganga Devi agreed to come down to the earth.

But the fall of the waters would result in a deluge and the entire earth could be washed away unless means were in place to contain the floods. Lord Siva agreed to receive and hold the waters when they descend, in his tresses. Here Siva symbolically stands for the Himalayan mountains and his tresses for the trees, vegetation, hills, valleys and lakes.

Ganga Devi did descend in the form of heavy rains or cloudbursts and the waters were contained by the mountain.

But even that did not solve the king's problem. Water in the mountain is not water in the plains where the ancient ashes were waiting to be quenched, and that location was far away. Poor Bhagiratha went back to his *tapasya* and persuaded Siva to release the waters in measured quantities via rivulets and finally into the mighty Ganga, which flowed down the plains till it reached the grounds where the rituals were performed.

The purpose of reciting this well-known story is only to emphasise the importance of mountains and trees to regulate floods and in water management, to use a modern term. Disturbing the ecosystem of the catchment areas, be they the hills or the plains, can have disastrous consequences all around the region. The devastating flood that inundated Uttarakhand and the neighbouring Himalayan States in 2013 was attributed to the wanton destruction of the mountains in various ways by people for short-term gains.

In the present-day context, experts in this field are aware of these matters. While a spate of quick-fix measures are being undertaken, it is good to remember that such measures can only be of limited use, and long-term measures should be implemented on an ongoing basis.

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Bhagiratha's task

Let me now go fast backward to another era and another scenario. King Bhagiratha ruled his country in the foothills of the Himalayas. He was a troubled person. The souls of his forefathers were

All in a day's work for this doctor

Two patients, the same kind of effort put in; one survives, the other dies

PINGALI GOPAL

The one-hour-old blue baby was brought in at 5 a.m. with rapid breathing. A quick examination and an X-ray established a diaphragmatic hernia – a defect in the muscle separating the abdomen from the chest. This allowed loops of bowel and other abdominal organs to enter the chest, compressing the lungs and the heart. The only course open was surgery.

As the paediatric and neonatal surgeon in the hospital, I gave the attendants a rough estimate of the cost, including the possible variances in the event of complications arising. I added that in case they are not happy to stay in that hospital, we would transfer the child to the government facility – and told the father to communicate his decision to the nurse.

The consent came after a few hours. The child was born after years of marriage. The father asked me to do my best; and sought a discount on the bill as he had limited means. I promised to do my best with the medical efforts and the bill too if everything went well. The child had a smooth surgery and went on elective ventilation.

I saw another patient just as I was coming out of the theatre, and as it happened, it was an exactly similar case. I groaned. The same bit of counselling went into the discussions with the family attendants. The father was absent in the proceedings. The attendants said he was working in Mumbai and was on his way. The treatment

started and the child underwent surgery the next day. The surgical findings were very similar, and the child went on ventilatory support.

On the third day, the condition of both babies started deteriorating, the cause being sepsis. For the next few days, it was a see-saw between life and death for them, amid our efforts. The

Thank you so much for saving the child. You are but God to us

babies would improve, raise hopes, and then sink a bit. I spent two consecutive nights in the neo-natal intensive care unit (NICU) over endless cups of tea. On the seventh day, the first baby started to improve; unfortunately, the condition of the second progressively deteriorated. The attendants of the second baby stopped buying medicines, and we had to supply them from our stock. The number of attendants started dwindling at a slow rate. Five days later, the first ba-

impossible amount those days. Members of the local doctors' body and the police later added to the already cramped room.

Shouting matches between some of our more vocal doctors and angry members of the crowd ensued. The original attendants of the patient were completely missing from the scene of action now. After four hours, a deal was finalised on the intervention of some local politicians and the police. The hospital and the pharmacy are to waive the dues and pay some extra money for funeral expenses on humanitarian grounds. There was a threat to me and the hospital from a mob. Amid slogans on loudspeakers, journalists taking photographs, and curious onlookers, the body of the child left the hospital.

I sat helplessly and burnt with impotent anger. The family had lost the child, but a doctor had just lost some faith. When a doctor hardens a little bit, what are the consequences for the medical profession and society? Two patients, the same kind of effort put in; one survives and makes me god and the other dies making me a devil.

Triumph and disaster stalks everyone, and it is well worth remembering the words of Lord Krishna: I am indifferent to triumph today, but still to handle disaster similarly. In their own ways, both the families managed a huge discount! I, god and devil rolled into one, went home, had dinner, and slept fitfully to see another day.

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How nature sorts us

No two lives are comparable, and no two achievements can be similar

G. SWAMINATHAN

I recently watched a movie on social discrimination and its perils. The Indian Constitution does not permit such acts, but unfortunately we live in a country soaked in discrimination from time immemorial.

Can we find any society where there is no discrimination? Probably not; only in terms of the degree there might be differences.

If we look at a human being's life from his or her birth, at every stage he/she has to face or find inequity. First, the looks and colour, then IQ, then education, then academic achievements, job or marriage, children, health, and finally, death.

Factually speaking, the whole world survives only because of discrimination. If everyone is equal and same, life will just not move. An engineer cannot do the job of a doctor and a factory worker cannot execute the position of a CEO. One can argue that some start their career on the shopfloor and one day become CEOs. But such instances are far and few between.

Can we vouch that all the intelligent students reach high positions in their professions, or *vice versa*? I have seen many intelligent students who turned out to be mediocre in their careers while many of the mediocre and dull ones achieved great heights in the later part of their lives.

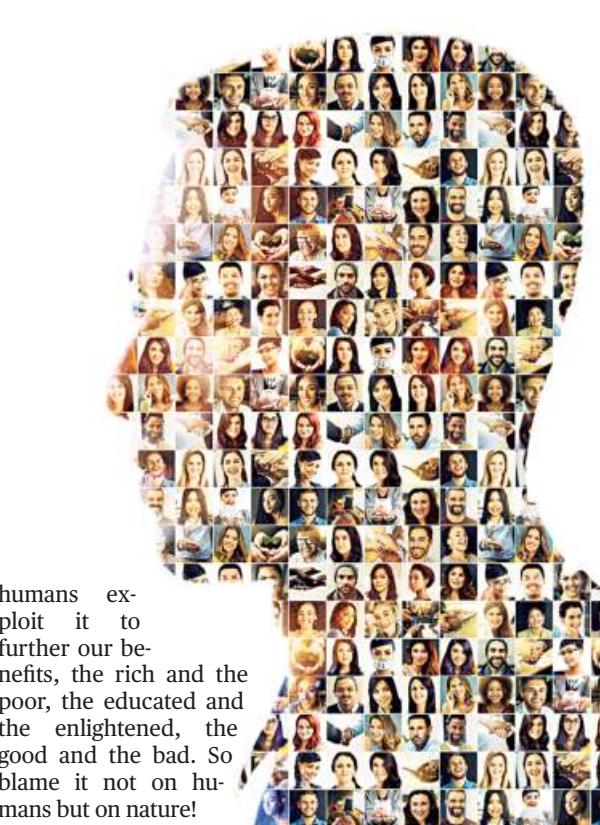
If everyone is intelligent there is no need for education; if everyone is beautiful, the word may not exist in

the lexicon at all. If everyone is rich, there will not be anyone to do the work. If everyone is healthy, there is no need for doctors. When equality is attained, one cannot talk about bigotry.

Life and humans are in black, white or grey. No two things are equal. No two lives are comparable. No two achievements can be similar. Life runs because the roads of life are made by destiny with several ups and downs. Everyone, except the blessed few, had no option but to pass through them.

A world without discrimination or distinction is an utopian concept. Contrasts only propel life.

So basically, nature itself differentiates everyone and every life and every act; we



humans exploit it to further our benefits, the rich and the poor, the educated and the enlightened, the good and the bad. So blame it not on humans but on nature!

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A son flies free

Seeming freedom and novelty for him, misery and apprehension for mother

RAMAN NAIR

My sin, the sin of sloth

Being lazy could be a state of mind that could well liberate you

ACHYUTH NAMBIAR

Mock-meat and all that

Coping with a certain kind of ambiguity in vegetarianism

VIMAL KUMAR

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Archer – the new weapon in England's armoury

Stokes re-appointed vice-captain; Anderson returns from injury

THE ASHES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Uncapped fast bowler Jofra Archer has been included in England's 14-man squad announced on Saturday for next week's Ashes opener against Australia, with all-rounder Ben Stokes re-appointed vice-captain.

The pair enjoyed starring roles in England's World Cup final win over New Zealand at Lord's on July 14, with all-rounder Stokes ensuring England drew level with the Black Caps total in regulation play before Archer bowled the decisive Super Over that sealed victory.

Quick strides

Archer, 24, who qualified to play for England only earlier this year, could now make his Test debut when the first of a five-match series starts at Edgbaston on August 1.

He carried a side strain through the World Cup but reported fit after a brief holiday in his native Barbados, returning to action for Sussex on Friday, where he took two for 21 in a tied Twenty20 Blast match against Surrey.

Since making his senior debut in 2016, Archer has taken 131 wickets in 28 First Class matches at an average of 23.44.

Stokes was restored to his position as Joe Root's deputy after being stripped of the vice-captaincy following a late night brawl in September 2017. He was subsequently cleared of a charge of affray last year, with Jos Buttler acting as vice-captain.

Buttler and Stokes were rested from a see-saw Test



Where he belongs: Jofra Archer's exploits in the World Cup and his First Class returns have earned him an Ashes call-up. ■ REUTERS

against Ireland that England eventually won by 143 runs at Lord's on Friday. Veteran spearhead James Anderson also returned to the squad after missing the match with a side injury.

But, while 10 of the 11 players who defeated Ireland were included, there was no place for left-arm spinner Jack Leach following his Man-of-the-Match heroics that saw the nightwatchman make a career-best 92 in England's second innings.

Moeen Ali was retained as the lone specialist spinner.

England's top-order frailties, however, were exposed during a first innings where it only managed 85.

Opening batsman Rory Burns, despite twice being dismissed in the match for six, remained in the squad even though he now averages just 22.28 from seven Tests.

England selector Ed Smith said: "Though it is unusual to select a squad of 14 for a home Test, there are com-

peting reasons to do so here.

Several bowlers are recovering from injuries or niggles. In addition, some bowlers who played in the World Cup are being closely monitored to assess their preparation for Test-match cricket.

"The wider circumstances – a successful home World Cup campaign followed so quickly by a home Ashes series – are unprecedented. It feels sensible to select an expanded squad and leave a number of bowling options

open for the final team selection," the former England batsman added.

It's official

Meanwhile, an England and Wales Cricket Board statement said Stokes' return to a leadership position has been cleared by several senior officials.

"Colin Graves, chairman of the ECB, has approved the reappointment of Ben Stokes as Test vice-captain following the recommendation from

managing director of England men's cricket Ashley Giles and ECB chief executive Tom Harrison."

Australia holds the Ashes, but England has not lost a Test series at home since 2001.

The squad for the first Test: Joe Root (Capt.), Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler (wk), Sam Curran, Joe Denly, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Olly Stone and Chris Woakes.

Alex missing the squad is the biggest shock particularly after his batting during the World Cup and being the second best gloveman."

Skipper Warner was also stunned at Carey's omission.

"Very surprised/disappointed that Carey didn't make the Aussie squad," he said on Instagram in posting what he believes will be Australia's team for the opening Test at Edgbaston.

Warner has Bancroft opening with Warner and Wade coming in at number six, while opting for fast bowler James Pattinson instead of Mitchell Starc alongside Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon.

Former Australia captain Taylor said opener Burns and middle-order batsman Patterson missing out was tough to take given both made centuries in Australia's last Test, against Sri Lanka.

"I was disappointed Kurtis Patterson didn't make the squad. You can't help but feel a little bit sorry for both him and (Joe) Burns," Taylor said.



Tough luck! Alex Carey missing in the Australian squad for the Ashes series is the biggest shock, according to Mark Waugh. ■ RYAN PIERCE/GETTY IMAGES

Lord's pitch substandard: Root



Joe... going to the root of the problem.

JULIAN FINNEY/GT/GETTY IMAGES

ANI
LONDON

After winning the one-off Test against Ireland, skipper Joe Root labelled the Lord's wicket "substandard", saying the match did not offer a fair contest between bat and ball.

"I don't like saying this but the wicket was substandard for a Test match. I thought it wasn't... not even close to a fair contest between bat and ball throughout the whole game," ESPNcricinfo quoted Root as saying.

"We weren't at our best by any stretch. We managed certain periods very well. We were put under pressure by Ireland," Root said.

"But we found a way to win a game. First innings, last innings, when you are getting scores like that, that tells a story in itself when the scores are as low as that," he added.

Nadeem spins India-A to victory



On the ball: Shahbaz Nadeem's 10-wicket match haul has put India-A in a winning position. ■ FILE PHOTO

The left-arm spinner returns a five-for; Siraj picks up three

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem took a five-wicket haul for the second time in the match to set up a six-wicket win for India-A over West Indies-A in the first 'Test' on Saturday.

Nadeem's five for 47 in 21 overs helped India-A bowl out the hosts for 180 in their second innings after they were comfortably placed at 159 for three on day three of the four-day game on Friday. Pacer Mohammad Siraj ran through the lower-order with a three-wicket burst.

Chasing 97 for victory, India-A was 29 for one at close before sealing the contest on the final morning despite some hiccups along the way.

Abhimanyu Easwaran (27) and Hanuma Vihari (28) chipped in for the visitors during the chase.

Saha shines

India-A, which resumed the day at 299 for eight in the first innings, went on to make 312 in 104.3 overs with wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha (66) the last man to get out, marking a successful return with both bat and gloves following a long injury lay-off.

West Indies-A, which conceded an 84-run first-innings lead, was steady in the second essay after the loss of openers Monticin Hodge (36) and Jeremy Solozano (11) at 51 for two.

Beginning of collapse

Captain Shamar Brooks (53) and Roston Chase (32) shared a 79-run stand for the third wicket, but the collapse began with the fall of the skipper at 159 for four.

The batsmen struggled to cope up with the guile and accuracy of Nadeem, who has been knocking on the doors of the Indian Test team with consistent performances in domestic cricket over the years.

The Jharkhand spinner had also taken five wickets in the first innings, taking his match tally to 10 for 109.

The scores: West Indies-A 228 & 180 in 77 overs (Brooks 53; Nadeem five for 47, Siraj three for 38) lost to India-A 312 (Dubé 71, Saha 66; Cummins four for 40) & 97 for four in 30 overs.

Second 'Test': July 31 to Aug. 3, Port of Spain

U Mumba begins home leg with easy win

Two all-outs seal Puneri Paltan's fate; Abhishek top scores for the winner

PKL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR
MUMBAI

Two all-outs inflicted by U Mumba sealed Puneri Paltan's fate in the opening game of the Mumbai leg of ProKabaddi League Season-7.

U Mumba walked away a comfortable winner at 33-23 in front of roaring fans at the NSCI indoor stadium.

Catchers called the shots in the first half, raiders came into their own after the break. Abhishek Singh (five raid points) top-scored for the winner. Surjeet Singh (six points) played his heart out for the losing side.

Fazel Atrachali and Surjeet, defensive specialists in U Mumba and Paltan respectively, were named captains and it reflected in the catching department.

Atrachali ended with four raid points, while Surjeet pulled off two Super Tackles.

Manjeet and Sanket Sapur displayed craft for Paltan, while Sandeep Narwal and Surinder were decisive in the back for the hosts.



Catchers on the mat: U Mumba defence wall of Fazel Atrachali and Surinder Singh prepare to trap Puneri Paltan's Sushant Sail. ■ COURTESY PKL

Fazel produced a Super Tackle to push U Mumba into the lead at 5-4, at the other end Surjeet failed to keep Abhishek in check at 9-9. Abhishek was the first frontline raider to scamper back with a raid point.

The home team kept its nose ahead (11-9) at the break.

Surjeet produced a Super Tackle to keep Paltan in the fray.

Rival raiders Arjun Deswal and Abhishek gave the home fans plenty to cheer about. Two all-outs were the highpoints.

U Mumba started the home leg with a dominant win over their State rivals.

the second in three appearances so far in the league after a win and a loss in the first leg.

Earlier, the Mumbai leg kicked off with India cricket captain Virat Kohli rendering the National Anthem.

The result: U Mumba 33 bt Puneri Paltan 23.

Challengers cruise against Mavericks

Archana and Amalraj provide the dramatics for the Goan side

UTT

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Young Archana Kamath produced a scintillating exhibition of speed and power to annihilate Manika Batra and set the pace for Goa Challengers' emphatic 11-4 triumph over RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata, in the Ultimate Table Tennis League here on Saturday.

Domination
Goa dominated every individual encounter. A. Amalraj won both his matches, with the conquest of World No. 53 Benedikt Duda being the icing on the cake.

The finishing touches were provided by World No. 8 Cheng I-Ching who stopped World No. 25 Matilda Ekholm in three games.

If Mavericks were straightforward put on the defensive, Archana's unrelenting attacks on Manika had everything to do with it. This clash between the country's top-ranked player and the National champion lived up to the billing.

Fast exchanges, interspersed with long rallies brought out the best in Archana and she stayed in control.

Archana enjoyed leads of 7-4, 10-4 in the first two games before racing away with the final seven points in the third to leave Manika in control.

After Spaniard Alvaro Robles, ranked 56th, overcame a slow start to tame Sanil Shetty 2-1, Archana and Cheng got the measure of

Duda and Manika. Again, it was the inconsistency of Manika's returns that made the decisive difference.

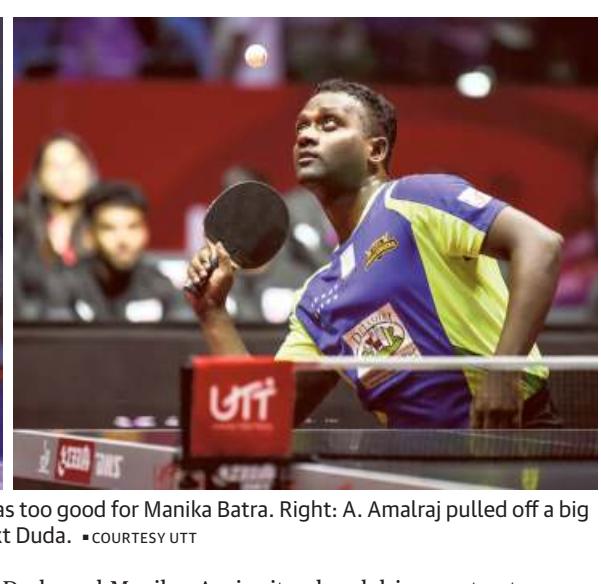
Upset
Amalraj went on to cause the other big upset. Rakesh Dada, a distant 122, Amalraj was quick to respond to any challenge thrown at him by Dada and captured the first game.

In the second, Dada was lucky to win the 'golden point' when Amalraj's forehand drive went out.

This miss resulted in Amalraj producing his best in dominating the decider.

The results: Goa Challengers bt RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata 11-4 (Archana Kamath bt Manika Batra 11-9, 11-7, 11-3; Alvaro Robles bt Sanil Shetty 10-11, 11-4, 11-5; A. Amalraj & Cheng I-Ching bt Benedikt Duda & Manika 8-11, 11-4, 11-9; Alvaro Robles bt Matilda Ekholm 11-8, 9-11, 11-5).

Sunday's fixture: Chennai Lions v Puneri Paltan (7 p.m.).



A ND-NDE



The Ferrari rides again: Mick Schumacher wore a helmet that paid tribute to his father's career as he drove the car which carried Michael to 13 victories and the drivers' title in 2004. • AFP

Hamilton takes his 87th pole

Double disaster for Ferrari — Leclerc begins 10th; Vettel forced to sit out

GERMAN GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HOCKENHEIM

Lewis Hamilton secured a gift-wrapped record-extending 87th pole position of his career on Saturday when he made the most of a double disaster for Ferrari in qualifying at the German Grand Prix.

The defending five-time world champion, who had struggled for pace and consistency in his Mercedes in practice, improved to clock a best lap in one minute and 11.767 and outpace Max Verstappen of Red Bull by 0.346 seconds.

Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas was third ahead of Pierre Gasly in the second Red Bull while Charles Leclerc, who had been fastest for Ferrari in final practice, failed to run in the Q3 top-10 shootout due to a fuel systems problem with his car.

The Monegasque will start 10th, 10 places ahead of his luckless Ferrari teammate Sebastian Vettel who was unable to take part in qualifying due to a turbo

problem and will start at the back of the grid for his home race.

Kimi Raikkonen was fifth for Alfa Romeo ahead of Romain Grosjean of Haas, Carlos Sainz of McLaren, Sergio Perez of Racing Point and Nico Hulkenberg of Renault.

"Congratulations Lewis — you never stop amazing us," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff as the Briton drove his slow-down lap. "Thanks, Toto," he replied. "A great job guys — I don't know how we did that."

Cause for celebration

Hamilton's lap was the only one in the 1:11's all weekend at the Hockenheimring, where he last took pole in 2008, and gave his team a perfect cause for celebration on the anniversary of 125 years of motorsport and their 200th Formula One race start.

Verstappen said: "We could have been closer, but went a bit wide and bottomed out and I lost the rear end, but this is a good result."

Bottas said: "I think the weather is going to play a big part tomorrow. I'm a bit dis-

appointed, especially with the pace in Q3. Ferrari had been very quick here... so we're in a good place."

On an overcast and much cooler day after heavy overnight rain, the Williams team were first on track for Q1, in front of an enthusiastic crowd boosted by Verstappen's 'orange army' and many local supporters for Vettel in Ferrari red.

Luckless Vettel

Leclerc was soon on top for the 'scarlet scuderia' ahead of Verstappen, but it was bad news again for the luckless Vettel. After sitting in his car, stranded under repair in the Ferrari garage, he climbed out, condemned to start from the back of the grid.

Mick takes father's car out for a spin

Mick Schumacher completed an emotional three-lap demonstration run in his father Michael's championship-winning Ferrari F2004 car on Saturday before qualifying.

The 20-year-old son of the seven-time world champion said it felt like "torture" as he waited to emerge from the

pit-lane in front of a big crowd at the Hockenheim circuit. Now a Formula Two driver, Schumacher wore a helmet that paid tribute to his father's career as he drove the car that carried his father to 13 victories and the drivers' title in 2004.

"I just wanted to go out and I just wanted to drive," he said. "Obviously, having to wait, even in front of the pit exit, was more like torture. I never lost a smile. It was always on my face. Even when I was locking up, I was smiling! It was really cool."

Starting grid (provisional):

Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Max Verstappen (Red Bull), Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes), Pierre Gasly (Red Bull), Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo), Romain Grosjean (Haas), Carlos Sainz Jr. (McLaren), Sergio Perez (Racing Point), Nico Hulkenberg (Renault), Charles Leclerc (Ferrari).

Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo), Kevin Magnussen (Haas), Daniel Ricciardo (Renault), Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso), Lance Stroll (Racing Point), Landi Norris (McLaren), Alexander Albon (Toro Rosso), George Russell (Williams), Robert Kubica (Williams), Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari).

Desert God well tuned

BENGALURU: Desert God, who has been well tuned, is expected to score in the Tetrasoft Inc. Bangalore St. Leger (2,800m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Sunday (July 28).

False rails (width about 7 fm from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

1 MANITOU PLATE (1,400m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 2-30 p.m.; 1. Cavaliere (3) Antony 56, 2. Jai Vikram (6), Ramu 56, 3. My Vision (4) Arshad 56, 4. Silver Eclipse (2) Md. Asif Khan 56, 5. Tenno Shio (1) Trevor 56, 6. Adela (7) R. Sheler 56, 7. Agaba (5) Indrajeet Singh 54.5 and 8. Legendary Princess (8) Sandesh 54.5.

1 TENNO SHO, 2. LEGENDARY PRINCESS, 3. CAVALIERE

2 LIVELY EMPREY PLATE (1,200m), rated 00 to 20, 3-00: 1. Darashinasi (1) John 60, 2. Zafrina (2) S. Shareef 60, 3. Debonair (9) A. Imran 57.5, 4. Bellerophon (4) A. Ramu 58.5, 5. Show Girl (10) Vinod Shinde 58, 6. Smile Of Courage (3) M. Naveen 58, 7. Have A Nice Day (12) Noor-nabi 57.5, 8. Majestic Rajkumar (7) Md. Asif Khan 57, 9. Arrigance (11) Yash 56.5, 10. Gia Daisey (5) Dhebe 55.5, 11. Country's Pearl (6) R. Sheler 52 and 12. High Tide (13) A. Merchant 52, 13. Astron (-) 51 and 14. Scorching (8) Arshad 50.5, 1. DARASHINASI, 2. DEBONAIR, 3. HIGH TIDE

3 MARILLINGAIAH MEMORIAL TROPHY (1,200m), rated 45 to 65, 3-20, 1. Noahs Ark (11) Zervan 60, 2. War Hero (7) R. Manish 59.5, 3. Life Awaits (10) Rayan 59, 4. Side Winder (14) Chetan G 59, 5. Miniver Rose (2) Vaibhav 58.5, 6. China One (6) Irvan 57.5, 7. All-setto (5) A. Merchant 57, 8. Fair Warning (1) Antony 57, 9. Super Success (13) T.S. Jodha 56, 10. Treasure Delight (3) Suraj 55.5, 11. Constantinople (4) Trevor 54.5, 12. Teodoro (12) S. Shareef 54.5, 13. Harley Quinn (9) Md. Asif Khan 53.5 and 14. Siyouni (8) M. Rahbaran 53.

1. TREASURE DELIGHT, 2. WAR HERO, 3. MINIVER ROSE

4 TETRAISOFT INC. BANGALORE ST. LEGER (2,800m), 4-y-o & over, (Terms), 4-00-1. Desert God (4) Sandesh 58.5, 2. Reunion (3) Yash 58.5, 3. Salazar (2) Suraj 58.5, 4. My Opinion (1) A. Imran 57, 5. Point To Prove (6) Zervan 57 and 6. Roberto (5) Trevor 55.5.

1. DESERT GOD, 2. SALAZAR

5 SMART CHEFTAN CUP (Div. II, 1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4-y-o & over, 4-30; 1. Call Me Maybe (8) Sai Kiran 60, 2. Tarini (3) Yash 60, 3. Wings Of Desire (10) Zervan 60, 4. Secret superstar (4) R. Manish 58.5, 5. Kvaris (2) Srinath 58, 6. Albertetta (1) S. Shareef 57.5, 7. Another Rainbow (9) Md. Asif Khan 57.5, 8. Varcasva (6) Trevor 57, 9. Angels Kiss (7) Antony 57, 10. Emidio (5) Vaibhav 57 and 11. Romantic Helen (11) A. Merchant

54.5, 1. KVASIR, 2. ANGELS KISS, 3. WINGS OF DESIRE

6 ALLIED FORCES PLATE (1,100m), rated 15 to 35, 4-y-o & over, 5-00; 1. Florencia (7) A. Merchano 60, 2. Princeceazem (1) T.S. Jodha 58.5, 3. Princess Holly (4) K. Raghu 56.5, 4. Nawabzaadi (3) Sal Kiran 56, 5. Hafnium (6) Arshad 55.5, 6. She's Superb (11) S. Shareef 55.5, 7. Fantastic App (9) Zervan 58, 8. Santorini Secret (12) Khurshad Alam 54.5, 9. Queen Isabella (10) Nazerul 54.5, 10. Happy Dancing (8) M. Kumar 53.5, 11. Simon (5) Rayan 51.5 and 12. So Quick (2) Dars han 51.

1. FANTASTIC APP, 2. NAWABAADI, 3. HAFNIUM

7 SMART CHIEFTAN CUP (Div. II, 1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4-y-o & over, 5-30; 1. Interesting (9) Chetan 60, 2. Beond Reach (2) M. Naveen 59.5, 3. Panama (1) Arshad 59.5, 4. Amazonite (4) S. Shareef 58.5, 5. Decisive (11) A. Imran 58.5, 6. Pink Smile (7) Irvin 58, 7. Armin (6) Anthony 58, 8. Depth Charge (3) R. Pradeep 57.5, 9. Hellenka (10) Zervan 57, 10. Halfies (5) A. Merchant 56.5, and 11. Red Galileo (8) Sai Kiran 55.5.

1. ARMIN, 2. HELENKA, 3. AMAZONITE

Day's best: TENNO SHO

Double: TREASURE DELIGHT-DESERT GOD

Jkt: 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; Tr (i): 2, 3 and 4; (ii): 5, 6 and 7.

Bhakti crowned champion

Vantika finishes second after splitting the point with Mrudul

NATL. CHESS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KARAIKUDI

Defending champion Bhakti Kulkarni of Air India played out a draw against Pratyusha Bodda of Andhra Pradesh in the 11th and final round to emerge champion of the 46th National women's chess championship at Chettinad Public School on Saturday.

The final round was just a formality as she was already assured of the title after having beaten K. Priyanka the other day. But Bhakti was eager to sign off with a win. Both had their chances of winning, but were content with a draw after 62 moves. With a final tally of 10 points, Bhakti not only went home having lifted the title, but also became richer by ₹4 lakh.

Vantika Agrawal of Delhi, with 8.5 points, finished se-

Hat-trick of golds for Dressel

Retains 50m freestyle, 100m butterfly titles

WORLD SWIMMING

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE GWANGJU (SOUTH KOREA)

American superstar Caeleb Dressel produced more fireworks on Saturday as he romped to a hat-trick of golds, taking his tally to six on a dark day when a fatal nightclub accident shook the swimming World championships.

Day seven also threw up further doping controversy with Australian officials announcing freestyle relay world-record holder Shayna Jack had tested positive for a banned substance, explaining her mysterious no-show in South Korea.

But Dressel helped refocus attention on the pool as he retained his 50m freestyle and 100m butterfly world titles in style, before leading the American mixed 4x100m freestyle team to a new world record.

"I just wanted to go out and I just wanted to drive," he said. "Obviously, having to wait, even in front of the pit exit, was more like torture. I never lost a smile. It was always on my face. Even when I was locking up, I was smiling! It was really cool."

Bouncing on his toes like a prizefighter before the 50m



True grit: Katie Ledecky displayed a champion's heart to win her fourth successive 800m freestyle gold. • AFP

free, Dressel exploded from the blocks and never looked back, clocking a champion ship best 21.04s, clear of Brazilian Bruno Fratus and Greek Kristian Golomeev, who tied for silver in 21.45.

Dressel, who scooped seven gold medals at the 2017 Worlds in Budapest, let out a roar of delight but had very little time to savour the moment. The 22-year-old was back for the 100m butterfly final and after a long, hard stare down lane four, he got it done again.

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TV PICKS

Badminton: Japan Open, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 8 a.m.

Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh: 2nd ODI, Sony Six (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m.

TNPL: Star Sports 3, 3 p.m. & 7.15 p.m.

Tennis: Hamburg Open final, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

Formula One: German GP, Star Sports Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.35 p.m.

England Women vs Australia Women: 2nd T20I, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.

Ultimate Table Tennis: Star Sports 1 & Star Sports Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.10 p.m.

PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.15 p.m. & 8.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Bale close to Jiangsu Suning move

Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale is on the verge of signing a £1million-a-week deal with Chinese Super League outfit Jiangsu Suning, reports on Friday claimed. The 30-year-old Welshman has already been told by Real coach Zinedine Zidane that he does not form part of his future plans. Spanish daily Marca claimed that Bale will earn €22 million per season in China. However, later reports by Sky Sports suggested the player's representatives were negotiating a mind-boggling £1million-a-week contract before the Chinese transfer window shuts on Wednesday. AFP

Play abandoned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

Play was washed out by rain in the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament here on Saturday.

Faisel Qamar was leading 6-4, 2-2 against Ahutosh Tiwari when the semifinal was abandoned owing to rain on Friday. The match will continue on Sunday.

Fardeen Qamar has already reached the final from the top half of the draw.

'Opportunity to raise Commonwealth TT's profile'

First priority is to regularise the championship: Vivek Kohli

CTTF

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

Last week, Indians accomplished an unsurpassable feat of sweeping all seven gold medals at stake in the Commonwealth table tennis championship in Cuttack.

Concurrently, in a significant development in Bhuvaneswar, India claimed the post of chairman and secretary-general of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation (CTTF) for the first time.

These Indian triumphs were not unexpected. The players capitalised on the lack of quality opposition while for the two elected representatives – chairman Vivek Kohli and secretary M.P. Singh – the election arithmetic was never a concern.

As it turned out, M.P. Singh was elected unopposed and Kohli won 22-6.

Though the margin of Kohli's victory was a reflection on the support he enjoyed, England's Alan Ramsome proved a reluctant outgoing incumbent as he vacated the chair after 26 years.

"This change provides India with an opportunity to raise the profile of Commonwealth table tennis," Kohli told *The Hindu* on his return to the Capital.

Kohli, 50, is actively attached to the sport since turning up for Uttar Pradesh as a junior. At present, he is the co-chairman of Stag International, a well-known equipment and apparel-mak-

Momota rallies to beat Sai Praneeth

The Indian squanders early lead to go down to the top seed yet again

JAPAN OPEN

IANS
TOKYO

India's campaign at the ongoing Japan Open came to an end as B. Sai Praneeth lost his men's singles semifinal clash to World no. 1 Kento Momota at the \$750,000 tournament on Saturday.

Praneeth lost 21-18, 21-12 to Momota in a match that lasted for 45 minutes.

Great start

The unseeded Indian started off the match on a great note as he took an initial 3-1 lead in the first few minutes.

However, Momota came back with a great fight and took an 11-8 lead at the mid-game break.

Praneeth, who had been in great touch in the tournament so far, tried to up the ante and earned some points but ultimately lost the game in 23 minutes.

Overtuns deficit

In the second game, the top-seeded Japanese didn't let Praneeth take a long lead from the start and overturned a 6-9 deficit to make it 12-9 with the help of six straight points.

From there on, the World No.1 raced to a seven-point lead and eventually won the match 21-12 in 22 minutes to make it to his second consecutive final.

The result: (semifinal):

Men: Kento Momota (Jpn) bt B. Sai Praneeth 21-18, 21-12.



Well played! Kento Momota of Japan is congratulated by B. Sai Praneeth. ■ AFP

Lanning makes highest individual score ever in women's T20Is

Her 133 n.o. sees Australia coast to victory over England

ANI
MELBOURNE

Skipper Meg Lanning's unbeaten 133, the highest individual score ever in a women's T20 International, helped Australia defeat England by 93 runs in the first of the three-match series on Friday.

Chasing 227, England got off to a horrendous start as it lost its first four wickets with just 22 on the board. Danielle Wyatt (0), Amy Jones (0), Tammy Beaumont (8), and Heather Knight (3) all failed to put up substantial scores.

Natalie Sciver and Laura Winfield put up a brief partnership of 36, but their resistance was cut short as Sciver (28) was sent back by Sophie Molineux.

Katherine Brunt came out to bat next and she, along with Winfield, added 39 runs. However, Winfield (33) was dismissed in the 15th over by Megan Schutt.

With Winfield's dismissal, England could not do anything substantial with the bat as it was restricted to 133 for nine, handing Australia a



Into the record books: Meg Lanning sent the England bowlers on a leather hunt, hitting 17 fours and seven sixes. ■ HENRY BROWNE / GETTY IMAGES

victory by 93 runs. Schutt was the leading wicket-taker as she scalped three England batters.

Earlier, Lanning's undefeated knock of 133 off just 63 balls with 17 boundaries and seven sixes propelled Australia to a record total of 226 for three in 20.

After the game, the destructive Lanning laughingly

said she tried to hit the final delivery of the innings for a 12. "I tried to hit it for 12," Cricket.com.au quoted Lanning as saying.

"I was just really pleased and proud of the group that we were able to win at such a ground, The Fortress."

"To come here and play so well was great," she said.

Atletico humbles Real

REUTERS
NEW JERSEY

Diego Costa scored four goals as Real Madrid was embarrassed 7-3 by rival Atletico Madrid in the final match of the United States tour on Friday.

Real fielded a strong side once again, with new signings Eden Hazard and Luka Jovic starting up front and Gareth Bale again on the bench, but was 5-0 down at the end of a shambolic first half.

Atletico fielded a host of new arrivals, including club-record signing Joao Felix, who immediately caught Real cold on the counter before playing Costa in for his opening goal in the first minute.

Felix got among the goals himself seven minutes later before Angel Correa, an early substitute for the injured Alvaro Morata, shocked

Vishnu, Chirag dazzle on day one

Syed Muzammil unstoppable in the Gixxer Cup

MOTORSPORTS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

Chennai's Vishnu Prasad and young Chirag Ghorpade stole the show on the opening day, winning in contrasting styles in the first round of the 22nd JK Tyre FMSCI National racing championship here on Saturday.

The revamped opening round saw 27 young guns line up for the first time to have a shot at the Novice Cup. And, Bengaluru's Chirag (Momentum Motorsports) clinched the pole at the start of the day and went on to win the first race.

The 14-year-old timed 13:37.912s to beat the aggressive field by 0.338s, leaving his teammate Aaroh Ravindra and Mohamed Ryan (MSport) fighting for the other two places on the podium.

He exhibited speed and skill to wrest the second race as well.

However, all eyes were on the Formula LGB4 which had seven national champions in the fray. It was a three-way fight between Vishnu (MSport), Rohit Khanna (Dark Don Racing) and Ashwin (Dark Don Racing)



Exhibiting his skills: Seasoned racer Vishnu Prasad, who won Race 1 in the LGB Formula 4 category, negotiates a curve. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and Ashwin (Dark Don Racing).

Ashwin shot into the lead, going past MSport's Sohil Shah who began on pole at the first opportunity. He hung on to it all the way to the final lap but the safety car that had come out a couple of laps earlier hurt his flow as Vishnu and Rohit stepped up the heat to over-

take him for the top two positions.

Syed Muzammil Ali was

the other lad from Bengaluru who was unstoppable in the Gixxer Cup. He topped the practice rounds, grabbed the pole in the qualifiers and later finished on top in the race.

The results (provisional):

JK Tyre Novice Cup: Race 1: 1.

Chirag Ghorpade (Momentum

Motorsports); 2. Aaroh Ravindra (Momentum Motorsports); 3. Mohamed Ryan (MSport).

Race 2: 1. Chirag; 2. Aaroh; 3. Parikshit Dardali (DTS Racing)

JK Tyre Suzuki Gixxer Cup: Race 1: 1. Syed Muzammil Ali; 2. Tanay Gaikwad; 3. Amul Angadi.

Formula LGB4: Race 1: 1. Vishnu Prasad (MSport); 2. Rohit Khanna (Dark Don Racing); 3. Ashwin Datta (Dark Don Racing).

Indians grab eight medals

Ashish Kumar bags his first international gold

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Asian Championships silver medalist Ashish Kumar on Saturday bagged his first international gold, even as Indian boxers finished their campaign with a rich haul of eight medals at Thailand Open International boxing tournament in Bangkok.

India finished with a gold, four silver and three bronze.

The Costa onslaught ended abruptly, with he and Real's Dani Carvajal both red-carded for fighting, adding further drama to an incredible friendly.

Vitolo added a seventh for Atletico, before Karim Benzema and Javi Hernandez scored late for Real.

Ashish (75kg) was in impeccable form and out-punched Korea's Kim Jinjae 5-0 for the biggest medal of his career, just two months after claiming a silver in the India Open.

Strandja Cup gold medalist Nikhat, who pocketed a bronze from the Asian Championships as well as the India Open, faced a tough opponent in Asian Games gold medalist Chang Yuan.

The Chinese proved too strong for Nikhat as the Tele-gama pugilist was handed a 5-0 blow.

In 56kg, reigning India Open champion Chatchai Decha Butdee of Thailand continued his fine form to inflict a 5-0 defeat on Hussamuddin (56kg), and India Open silver medalist Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg), and India Open silver medalist Brijesh Yadav (81kg).

While Ashish succumbed to a 1-4 defeat to Thailand's former Asian Games champion Wuttichai Masuk, Kachari was outplayed 0-5 by China's Rio Olympic bronze medalist Li Qian.

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Gagan Narang. ■ FILE PHOTO

port to potential and qualified athletes, facilitating smooth logistical arrangements for participation, ensuring seamless acclimatization and hospitable environment for the contingent in Tokyo and coordina-

tion among all stakeholders," he said.

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IN BRIEF



Giant dinosaur bone found in France

PARIS The thigh bone of a giant dinosaur was found this week by French palaeontologists at an excavation site in southwestern France where remains of some of the largest animals that ever lived have been dug up since 2010. The animal probably weighed 40 tonnes. REUTERS



Underwater glaciers melting at rapid pace

NEW YORK Underwater melting of glaciers is occurring much faster than was predicted, a study published in *Science* said. Scientists used a new approach to directly measure submarine melt, which could improve projections of sea level changes. IANS



A\$AP Rocky fans join in protest against Sweden

WASHINGTON U.S. fans of rapper A\$AP Rocky have issued a call to arms, including meatball moratoriums and an end to binges at Ikea, in protest at Sweden's move to put him on trial for assault. Several fans on Twitter sought a boycott on Swedish products. AFP



Swarms of grasshoppers invade Las Vegas Strip

LOS ANGELES Massive swarms of grasshoppers descended on the Las Vegas Strip this week, startling tourists and residents as the insects pass through town on their northbound migration. Even street pavements were covered with the insects. AFP

Hill of soap suds claims victim

ASSOCIATED PRESS MEXICO CITY A towering hill of soap suds floating atop a heavily polluted stream in Mexico has apparently claimed its first victim. A man who stopped to take a selfie fell into the quivering mass and disappeared.

Authorities in the central state of Puebla are still looking for the man who fell into a mound of suds about 20 feet high.

The local civil defence office launched a search on Monday, using fire hoses to compact the suds and a large fan to try to blow a path into the mass.

It took almost a whole day just to locate his car.

Authorities say excess detergents from homes that drain into streams feeding the Valsequillo reservoir caused the suds to accumulate.

When Santa takes a summer break

A group of people who live every day like it's Christmas get together for an annual cruise

Aaron Reiss

During the Christmas season, Santa may circle the globe in a flying sleigh, but during the summer, he vacations on a cruise ship.

In May this year, 77 Mr. and Mrs. Clauses embarked on a seven-day, Alaska-bound voyage aboard the *Royal Princess*. This was the 11th annual Santa Cruise, an event conceived by Santa Tim Connaghan, a 50-year veteran of the red suit, as a chance for professional Santas to gather, schmooze, and stay sharp during the off-season.

The men on this cruise are "real bearded Santas", as opposed to "designer bearded" or "skin chin" Santas. They introduce themselves as "Santa Steven" or "Santa Bill", the same way another professional might introduce themselves as "Doctor Jacobs" or "Professor Bryant".

"I had read some stories of people – like real estate agents or doctors – having training conferences on ships, and I said, 'Why not Santa?'" Santa Tim said.



Time to cheer: (Clockwise from left) Santas on their way to the *Royal Princess*; relaxing on the ship; Christmas-themed cash for use on board and a cap for vacation wear. ■ NY TIMES/CHRIS MAGGIO

Aboard the ship, Santa Tim organises lectures and workshops covering logistical topics like the proper cradling of a baby, correct hand placement (to prevent law-suits), and beard-bleaching, as well as more philosophical topics, such as how to be true to the teachings of the



green. Mrs. Claus Debbie and Santa John renewed their vows for their 45th anniversary in North Pole, an Alaskan city that is known for year-round Christmas-themed decorations.

Of course, being Santa year-round isn't always easy. You can never be naughty.

"You've always got to be aware of the children around you, and be ready to act as Santa at the drop of a hat, even in July," Santa Dave Starr said. "If someone cuts you off on the expressway, you have to wave back with five fingers, not one," Santa Jerry Owens said. "You can't say anything slanted or particularly political, because you are Santa. You don't have those views. All you do is make toys."

And yet, for the fully committed, the sacrifice is worth it. "The wide-eyed wonder you see in a little one's eyes," Mrs. Claus Mary Shannon said, "or the smile that spreads across a child's face suggests you and that child are sharing a special secret that the adults don't know, and that is priceless." ■ NY TIMES

Santa Marcel painted his fishing boat in bright red and

WHO recommends use of innovative HIV drug

'Dolutegravir safe for pregnant women'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Based on new evidence assessing benefits and risks, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended the use of the HIV drug dolutegravir (DTG) as the preferred first-line and second-line treatment for all populations, including pregnant women and those of childbearing potential.

According to a release, initial studies had highlighted a possible link between DTG and neural tube defects (birth defects of the brain and spinal cord) in infants born to women using the drug at the time of conception.

"But new data from two large clinical trials comparing the efficacy and safety of DTG and efavirenz (EFV) in Africa have now expanded the evidence base. The risks of neural tube defects are significantly lower than what the initial studies may have suggested," the release said.

It noted that DTG is more effective, easier to take and



Dolutegravir pills

has fewer side effects than alternative drugs. It also has a high genetic barrier to developing drug resistance, which is important, given the rising trend of resistance.

In 2019, 12 of the 18 countries surveyed by WHO reported pre-treatment drug resistance levels exceeding the recommended threshold of 10%.

All the above findings informed the decision to update the 2019 guidelines, WHO noted.

In 2019, 82 low- and middle-income countries reported to be transitioning to DTG-based HIV treatment. The new recommendations aim at helping more nations improve their HIV policies.

Vanishing wildlife: 22 species have gone extinct in India

Ministry lists habitat degradation as one of the causes

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Four species of fauna and 18 species of flora have gone extinct in India in the past few centuries, according to wildlife survey organisations.

The data was tabled earlier this month in the Lok Sabha by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

A.A. Mao, Director of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) said India is home to 11.5% of all flora in the world. According to the International Union for Conservation Of Nature, a new study has shown that since 1750, more than double the number of plants have disappeared from the wild than birds, mammals and amphibians combined.

As per information given by the BSI, 18 species of



Cheetahs once lived in the Indian sub-continent.

plants – four non-flowering and 14 flowering – have gone extinct. The notable among them are *Lastreopsis wattii*, a fern in Manipur discovered by George Watt in 1882 and three species from the genus *Ophiorrhiza* (*Ophiorrhiza brunonis*, *Ophiorrhiza caudata* and *Ophiorrhiza radicans*), all discovered from peninsular India. *Corypha taliera* Roxb., a palm species discovered in Myanmar and the Bengal region by William Roxburgh is also extinct.

Among mammals, the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) and the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) are considered extinct in India.

The pink-headed duck (*Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*) is feared extinct since 1950 and the Himalayan quail (*Ophrysia supercilios*) was last reported in 1876.

Kailash Chandra, Director of ZSI, said that the four animals can be found in other parts of the world. India has about 6.49% of all the fauna species in the world, he said.

Factors like "competition, predation, natural selection, and human induced factors like hunting, habitat degradation" are some of the important reasons that have led to these extinctions, the Ministry said.

Selfie museum clicks in Budapest

Pink palm trees and a banana swing a hit with visitors who love social media

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BUDAPEST

A new so-called 'selfie museum' in Budapest that lets visitors pose by pink palm trees and frolic in multi-coloured sprinkle baths has proved to be a hit with social-media savvy locals and tourists alike.

With almost 30,000 visitors since it opened last December, the 400-square-metre large "Selfie Museum", billed as the first of its kind in Europe, is already one of the Hungarian capital's most popular attractions.

Its creators say their idea, inspired by a similar venue in the U.S., is targeted at the younger generation looking for an edge to their status updates or profile pictures.

However, recently a pair of pensioners also popped in to top up their photos for an annual calendar they present to each other, said Lilla Gan-



Picture perfect: Visitors taking pictures in the pink room of the Selfie Museum in Budapest. ■ AFP

gel, who co-founded the museum with her partner Balazs Koltai.

Visitors entering the first of 11 exhibition rooms are met with palm trees growing from the walls and pink-coloured surroundings.

"Here you can stand out from the crowd, perhaps by finding a crazy new perspective like an aerial photo, or by play-

ing with the quirky props," said 33-year-old Ms. Gangel.

"There are more and more places on the Internet where you can share photos, we're living in this type of world now, whether we like it or not," she said.

The 11 interactive installations at the museum include a ride on banana swings, a climb on a unicorn, or a

lounge on giant macaroons.

"We play with shapes and colours, and try to push people's borders and let their creativity bloom," Ms. Gangel said.

Word about the new museum has spread fast, unsurprisingly, on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat.

"They're typical teenagers, they like Instagram and photos," said Oli, an Israeli tourist, while her young daughter threw exaggerated poses behind her. "These are the times we are living in, what can you do," she laughed.

Panka Major, an 18-year-old Hungarian student, said she was an avid user of social media but lamented that "nowadays everyone checks their phones every minute".

"It's a natural thing but also bad, as you do not live in the moment, and instead reach for a phone to record it," she said.

Pakistani policeman channels life stories into gritty novels

Books explore crime and violence in Karachi

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KARACHI

His father was assassinated by a notorious Karachi hitman, while his police partner was murdered by the Taliban.

Personal tragedy haunts the hard-boiled novels that are turning top cop Omar Shahid Hamid into one of Pakistan's most popular English-language authors.

For nearly two decades Mr. Hamid has worn a badge in Karachi. Now a deputy inspector general, he is also fast becoming one of Pakistan's most recognisable writers, publishing four books in quick succession since 2011.

His work has even nabbed the attention of major streaming outlets on the hunt for new original material from South Asia, including Netflix, which has already seen major success with similar material in TV series such as *Sacred Games*, about Mumbai's corrupt underworld.

Mr. Hamid said the secret to his success is his unflinchingly accounts of political corruption, contract killers, and crooked cops alongside nuanced portraits of Karachi's divided neighbourhoods.

"Books like mine wouldn't work if I pulled punches," he says. "It's that grittiness, that uncompromising reality that I think a lot of readers enjoy."



Omar Shahid Hamid

At times, the reality has hit dangerously and heartbreakingly close to home.

Mr. Hamid did the bulk of his writing while he was on sabbatical after being advised to leave Karachi and take a break from policing in 2011 when he was threatened by extremist groups.

Personal loss

Weeks after the release of his first novel *The Prisoner*, his mentor and police partner Chaudhry Aslam – the inspiration for one of the book's protagonists – was killed in a Taliban-claimed suicide blast.

In his third novel, *The Party Worker*, Mr. Hamid portrays the rise of a brutal hitman who killed at the behest of a fictional political party ruling the city with an iron fist.

For Karachi insiders, the character mirrors the life of feared hitman Saulat Mirza, who served as the feared enforcer for the once-powerful Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) party, and whose list of victims include Mr. Hamid's own father, Shahid.

"It's less a thing of making a sketch of Saulat Mirza," explains Mr. Hamid, calling the character a "sketch of a particular type of young man... who kind of in the last 30 years or so essentially gave their lives away to these ideologies thinking they were doing the right thing."

"What he has written is fiction but it's very close to reality," says Faheem Siddiqui, Karachi bureau chief for Geo News. "As a crime reporter, I know what had happened in the city. It took a great deal of courage to write about these events."

Writing, Mr. Hamid explains, is a release.

"I had a lot of frustrations about things that had happened in my career until that point," says Mr. Hamid. "I felt a need to vent about them."

Though he often takes aim at Karachi's dangerous and powerful, he has received little blowback, he says. But he says his latest novel *The Fix* released in June may ruffle more feathers, as he explores corruption in cricket.

For a nation of cricket fanatics and conspiracy theorists, it's strangely been an area that has never really been explored," he explains. Mr. Hamid remains hopeful for his beloved home town. "It may not be everyone's cup of tea," he shrugs, "But as a city, it will keep going."

Born free



Pop of colour: Participants of the Christopher Street Day gay pride parade walk through the streets of Berlin on Saturday. ■ AFP

Kidnapped triathlete talks her way to freedom



Natalie Birli during a practice session. ■ INSTAGRAM

27-year-old was abducted while on a bike ride

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
VIENNA

An Austrian triathlete kidnapped while riding her bike talked her way to freedom by complimenting her captor's orchids, a police source said on Saturday.

Professional triathlete

suffocated her. However, she managed to placate the man by complimenting him on the many orchids growing in his home.

Though he was initially "filled with hate", the man suddenly became "nice to me" and confided that gardening was his passion before opening up about his troubled childhood, she said. Finally, he agreed to let her. Police arrested the man on Wednesday.

The man forced her to drink alcohol and tried to

by a car on Tuesday and broke her arm while falling to the ground near Graz in southeastern Austria, press reports said.

The driver then knocked her out with a piece of wood and took her to his isolated home. "When I regained consciousness, I was naked and tied up in an armchair in an old house," Birli told the *Kronen Zeitung* newspaper. The man forced her to drink alcohol and tried to